

Faith, The Reason to Hope

DEVELOPING A HOPE-BOUND MINDSET

Please turn to 1 Thessalonians 2. In the early years of our marriage before our daughters were born, we spent a year moving among and teaching people who were starting their own home fellowships in the African metropolis of Kinshasa in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the DRC. Unlike most of the expats living in the city, we resided on the edge of the Cité, the neighborhoods where 95% of the local population lived.

Our accommodations, in the corner of a large walled estate, were extremely simple. We lived in a whitewashed cinderblock house with a tin roof, no ceiling, and a ceiling fan. Though we had electricity, we had no running water. Our bathroom was an outhouse with two rooms. All that was in the first room was the toilet. The toilet was just a china bowl without a seat or tank; the only way we could flush it was with a bucket of water drawn from the rainwater tank next to our house. All that was in the second room was a drain in the floor. Instead of a bath or showerhead, our shower was a glass of water dipped from a bucket and poured over ourselves, one glass at a time.

That was our home for a year. Needless to say, our lifestyle was less than luxurious — but boy, were we fulfilled in our expectations. How could that be? Basically, because we loved the people we were ministering to and would rather have been there with them, doing that, than to be anywhere else on earth at that time. Sure, we looked forward every day to our eventual return to our familiar comforts. But we were able to look past any temporary physical deprivation for the rejoicing we had to be able to share God's Word with people who were so genuinely hungry and thirsty — and there were many.

1 Thessalonians 2:19,20:

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

For ye are our glory and joy.

What, after all, is our hope? Is it not you in Christ's presence at this coming? Yes, it is! That is what the Word of God is telling us here. Our hope is not just about us, but about everyone that God will bring with Christ at our gathering together. And we can have a hand in bringing others into that glory by speaking God's Word.

In African cultures, a man is not judged to be rich merely because he has great possessions. To be truly regarded rich, he must have progeny — and not just one or two! That is why when I read these verses, I am reminded that the most truly enriching thing we can do in life is to win others to the common faith and to set out on the path of believing God together. That is **a hope-bound mindset, living with our ultimate destination in mind.**

THE WORD OF GOD REVEALS OUR HOPE

How do we know about our hope?

The revelation of God's Word. We couldn't know anything about our hope without what the Word reveals about it.

1 Thessalonians 2:13:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Without the Word of God revealed to Paul and written for the Thessalonians, they could have had no knowledge of the truth of their gathering together. They couldn't have known that at that time Christ will gather, not just us and our loved ones, but the *entire* household of faith *for all time* — every single person who has believed and been born again since the day of Pentecost. What an incredible reunion!

WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE CANNOT SEE

1 Peter 1. Hope is not about what we see, it's about what we don't see. Though none of us has seen Jesus Christ, we love him, looking to the time he will return and we will see him face to face.

1 Peter 1:7-9:

That the trial of your faith [the faith of Jesus Christ, which will pass every test], being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Receiving the end [fulfillment] of your faith [the faith of Jesus Christ], *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

The fulfillment of the faith of Jesus Christ is the salvation of our souls. That glorious outcome will be fully realized when we receive our new bodies. What greater salvation could anyone hope for?

Hebrews 11. In this heavenly journey we're on, we keep our focus, not on the visible, but on the invisible. The things of earth are seen. Hope is unseen. As believing men and women, our conviction is in *the* Unseen, the invisible God Who made all things (visible and invisible) by the Word of God.

Hebrews 11:3:

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Romans 8. Hope is not about what we see, but what we don't see.

Romans 8:24, 25:

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1, please. We can **wait with patience** because we hope for what we cannot see.

1 Thessalonians 1:10:

And to **wait** for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Now onward to 2 Thessalonians 3.

2 Thessalonians 3:5:

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the **patient waiting** for Christ.

The love of God goes hand-in-hand with the **patient waiting** for Christ.

THE SCARLET CORD OF HOPE

The verbal root of the Hebrew word for “hope,” means “to **wait**” or “to **look for** with eager expectation.”

The Hebrew word for “hope” is תִּקְוָה *tiqvah* (spelled T-I-Q-V-A-H). It’s surprising to learn that the first two times *tiqvah* is used in the Bible, it’s translated, not as “hope,” but as “line” or “**cord**.”

However, this apparent anomaly is really not all that unusual. Hebrew frequently expresses abstract concepts in terms of concrete, everyday things. It is left to us to then discover how the underlying concrete concept (in this case, “cord”) informs our understanding of its abstract counterpart (in this case, “hope”).

Hope, then, **is a cord**. The first two occurrences of *tiqvah* — where it is translated “line” in the KJV and “cord” in numerous other versions — are both in Joshua 2. Each has to do with the tremendous believing Gentile woman Rahab that Robin taught us about yesterday. A scarlet cord has a significant role to play in Rahab’s and the spies’ deliverance. Take a look and watch for it.

Joshua 2:18, 21:

Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line [Hebrew תִּקְוָה *tiqvah*, **cord**] of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

And she said, According unto your words, so *be* it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line [Hebrew תִּקְוָה *tiqvah*, **cord**] in the window.

Recall that Rahab had earlier let the spies down from her window **on a cord**. It was a **cord** that enabled the spies to escape. It was also a **cord** — the scarlet cord in the window — that enabled Rahab and family to escape when Israel took the city. The scarlet cord of hope is also our means of escape from this troubled world — our ticket out of here!

In every other instance of the 33 times this word occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament, it is translated either “hope”, “expectation,” or something similar. There must be a reason that in its first usage, God chose to communicate something concrete to us that would lead us to a better understanding of the abstract concept of “hope.”

What does the first occurrence of “hope” teach us?

That **hope is our cord!**

Where is our cord tethered?

We are tethered for all time to our Father God & His Son Jesus Christ.

Thanks to our hope we are tethered, not to our earthly identity, but to our heavenly one. Please turn to 1 Thessalonians 1.

OUR REASON TO HOPE IS THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

What is our reason to hope?

Our reason to hope is the faith of Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8:

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith [embracing Christ's work], and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

What does it mean when it says “your faith to God-ward is spread abroad”? The Thessalonians were demonstrating the faith of Jesus Christ to others. The Thessalonians put on the faith of Jesus Christ as a finished reality in their hearts and minds.

Today we look back on Christ's accomplished work (the faith of Jesus Christ) and forward to his second coming (our hope) — the culmination of his promises.

1 Thessalonians 5:8:

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate [protecting their hearts] of faith and love; and for an helmet [protecting their minds], the hope of salvation.

Please turn to Acts 17. Upon leaving Thessalonica, Paul taught the Athenians about our hope and about what God was offering to man via the faith of Jesus Christ.

Acts 17:31:

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness [our hope] by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance [Greek πιστις — He

has offered the faith of Jesus Christ] unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Paul's appeal to the Athenians was made in acknowledgement of their existing ideas and beliefs, but he didn't water down the message. He clearly expounded Jesus' death and resurrection — the basis for our hope.

We'll now consider 1 Peter 3. Like Paul, we are to be prepared to courteously and respectfully **make a case for the hope to others.**

1 Peter 3:15 [Amplified]:

But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully.

The KJV rendering of this verse begins with the words, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts..." However, the reading "God" is actually "Christ," both in the Aramaic and the majority of critical Greek texts. The Amplified therefore correctly reflects the original when it reads, "But in your hearts set *Christ* apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord..."

Why is this important? Because **the reason we have hope is that we have the faith of Jesus Christ!** When we set Christ apart as holy in our hearts, we recognize that our hope could not possibly be based on anything that we ever do, but only upon God's grace and the accomplished work of Christ. What's more, as we walk out on the knowledge of what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did for us, we start learning to know God and to enter into an intimate relationship with Him as our heavenly Father.

The next excerpt says: "Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you..." The word for "logical defense" is the Greek *απολογία* *apologia*, an answer of truth in the face of accusation. We must have confidence in the

Word of God as the basis for our hope, and be ready to explain it to whomever wants to know “courteously and respectfully,” as it says.

Let’s say you’re telling someone about Jesus Christ’s return and they want to know what will happen if man destroys the earth before he comes. You could point out to them that man can neither destroy nor save the earth, and that you can’t “save the planet” when God’s plan is already for it to be dissolved. So we simply acknowledge God’s sovereignty and leave our future in His hands.

HOPE MUST BE MINISTERED IN LOVE, NOT FEAR

As we minister to others, we must remember that **hope must be ministered in love, not fear**. Too often Christians have had a fearful expectation of the future, their hope having been overshadowed by the genuine apprehension of living through hell on earth during the period of the tribulation. The Thessalonians knew that that is not what God’s Word teaches.

If we have been saved from wrath through him, then the tribulation is most assuredly off the table for us. We will have already departed with Christ in the gathering together before the wrath or the tribulation even begins.

Sharing the faith of Jesus Christ with our fellow believers, we have a common hope of being reunited when Jesus Christ comes back to gather the entire family of God — and not just those we know, but everyone who has believed since Pentecost. That is our joyous hope.

Hebrews 2. In contrast to that hope, we live in a time **today** when **many are enslaved by the fear of death**.

Hebrews 2:14,15:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [or slavery].

Another life lesson we learned during our time in Africa was to not dwell on risks, but on God. We lived in a country and a place where death was a constant reality that everyone had to deal with. Anyone of any age, of any means, in any situation, could die at any time; and we, too, faced those risks. Causes of mortality were rife: sickness, disease, water contamination, accidents, crime, insects, crocodiles, snakes, lightning strikes, stillbirth. You name it, people were dealing with it.

In this kind of environment as a Christian you look all around you and you finally decide to just *live* and refuse to be enslaved by the fear of death. You make up your mind to **focus, not on one or more hazards, but on the living God, on Whom we set our hope**. And you realize that first, foremost, and always, He's the One Who protects you and takes care of you day after day and time after time.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

Hebrews 6, please. Sooner or later, we must come to the realization that **our true anchor in life is our hope in Christ**.

Hebrews 6:18, 19:

That by two immutable things, in which it *was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Where is our anchor anchored?

Not in the deep blue sea, but in the wide blue yonder! **Above, not below!** We are anchored to our heavenly (not our earthly) identity.

Wow, isn't that something! Our hope is a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, it's weightier than gravity. When Jesus Christ comes back to get us, it will be impossible for us to remain earth-bound any longer due to the sheer spiritual gravitational force of his presence in the heavens. With the dead in Christ, we who believe will be drawn to him away from the earth, "to meet the Lord in the air" as it says in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Oh what a day that will be! Turn to Hebrews 12.

In the meantime, we look with joy and eager expectation to the founder and perfecter of our faith who is seated at God's right hand.

Hebrews 12:1, 2:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith [the faith of Jesus Christ]; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The word "look" in this verse means "to look away from one thing so as to see another." We look away from this troubled world so we can fix our gaze instead on the untarnished one to come, and this is what gives us joy in our hearts. **Our expectation in God is faith-based and hope-bound.**

Romans 15:13:

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let's walk out together believing God and abounding in hope. Our tether is strong, our anchor sure and steadfast, and His promises everlasting. **We have every reason to hope, knowing we will surely reach our final destination!**