

Living a Hope-Full Life

We use the word 'hope' all the time. Usually it means wishing for something, or wanting something that ultimately might or might not happen. But this is the world's hope. Christian hope is totally different.

It is one the most important differences between a Christian and a non-Christian. The main reason is that a Christian's hope is not just wishing. Let me explain why.

Two reasons why Christian hope is more than wishing:

Reason 1: The Cross

When we think of Christian hope we usually think about the future. You might be surprised to know that it all starts at the cross. When the Bible talks about Christian hope, it almost always means salvation. So if someone says they "put their hope in God" it's another way of saying "I'm a Christian!" That's why when Paul describes a Christian's armour in 1 Thessalonians he calls the helmet "the hope of salvation" (v. 8), or check out 1 Timothy 6:17. Hope because of what Jesus did on the cross.

That means that when the judgment day comes and God sees all our sin, we will have hope because Jesus who died on the cross will be there for us. We're not wishing that Jesus will save us, but we know that he will because he has already come and died on the cross. Christian hope is knowing that we are saved.

Reason 2: God's Promises

I've got a friend who I meet for coffee most weeks. He promises to meet at a certain time and place. But he can be forgetful. So I sit there waiting, hoping that he turns up. This is the hope the world has. Promises that we don't know will ever be kept. The world hopes that everything will turn out for the best and problems will be solved but has no guarantees that it ever will.

Christian hope is the opposite. When God makes a promise he keeps it. He never forgets and he's never too busy. We can hold on to hope because God is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

The Bible describes hope like an anchor, which is "firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). When there is a storm at sea and we feel we are getting blown around everywhere, hope in God's promises keep us secure. We're not going to get dragged out to sea where we can't cope.

What does Christian Hope do?

Stops Worry

"No matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Let me give you one of the promises I cling to most. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) If God was willing to give his precious Son to us, he will not begrudge giving us anything else. When we are worried or hurt, he promises to give us whatever we need. Did you notice the word

‘graciously’? This means he will give us what is best for us, even though we don’t always know what that is.

Gives boldness

Christian hope also gives us boldness. I play for a football team every week. Outside of playing the team does a lot of things that as a Christian I don’t like. But I’m under pressure to join in. When I hold on to God’s promises I have boldness and confidence to say, “No, I don’t want to do that”. I can say this because I can trust in God’s promise that will be with me even if they laugh at me or tease me. Paul says, “Since we have such a hope, we are very bold” (2 Corinthians 3:12). This means we can be bold when we come to God as well as when we stand up for him.

Loves others

This hope also helps us to love others. I heard man called John Piper (one of my favourite authors) talk about this recently. He was asked why hope was important. In his answer he said, “we can be there for others, because we know Jesus will be there for us.” Loving others usually means that we have to give something up. This might be loving a brother or sister, or loving a friend. Maybe giving up our time for them, or something that we really want. But Christian hope tells us that we can do this and God will provide for us, even when we don’t know how.

Shares the Gospel

Finally hope helps us share the Gospel. You might have heard the verse, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). It doesn’t say, “be ready to explain scientific proof for the Bible”, or the Trinity, or the resurrection (although all these things are important). It says, be ready to “give the reason for the hope you have.” This is how you can share the gospel with your friends. You can explain the hope you get from the cross, and that hope means that we can be secure because God won’t let us down.

So when you wake up in the morning, you don’t have to just wish for a good day. Think about the hope from the cross and God’s promises. This hope tells you “don’t worry, be bold, love others and share the Gospel”.

Matt Ford

Day 1

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Lord, thank you that I can have hope through Jesus. He is my advocate before the throne. Thank you that I can approach the most holy place with confidence. Amen.

Day 2

Romans 8:31-33

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Lord, the sacrifice of your Son shows your great love and provision. Help me not to worry or be anxious, because you will provide. Amen.

Day 3

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Lord, in a world that is constantly letting us down, how great it is that your hope will never disappoint us. Help us to cling to this hope today. Amen.

Day 4

1 Corinthians 1:18-22

But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Lord, your promises are amazing, and they are all 'yes' in Christ, we praise you for this. Teach me your promises and help me to hold on to them. Amen.

Day 5

1 Peter 3:13-16

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to

give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Lord, thank you for the hope that you have given me. Help me to be ready to share this hope with those around me. Prepare me for the harvest that you have. Amen.