

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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AN OLD HOPE

We don't enjoy being told “no” or having our requests denied. We like being told our favorite word, “yes,” when it comes to getting our way. When we don't get our way, it conflicts with our plans and desires. That may lead to that which makes us nervous - the uncertainty of the future. We struggle with ambiguity. We hate not knowing the answer to “what is going to happen to me in the future,” “why won't you grant me this,” and “why do bad things happen to ‘good’ people” among other questions. To complicate matters, sometimes “yes” brings its own uncertainty and ambiguity. In our requests and prayers,

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we want a simple, single, “yes,” because we would like our requests granted unequivocally: our way, on our timeline, and in the way which gives us exactly what we wanted. However, God grants on His time based on His mercy and grace as fits His plan. This is far more complex than the simple “yes” we so desire. The answers to our requests are often more along the lines of this: “You will get what you need, and this is not what you need.” We don’t hear these answers out loud, of course. Many of God’s responses to our pleas aren’t made evident until years after we’ve prayed. In many cases we will never understand entirely why we saw the outcomes we did regarding our prayers. Today we see tumultuous times in society, and maybe that causes us to worry about where we’re heading as a people. Whether we think we don’t seem to know or we don’t seem to understand, God does. Also, just because we are without a simple “yes,” to any of our pleas, it does not mean we are without hope. In fact, the recognition of hope is exactly what we must remember to get through times of uncertainty.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul details that access to the opportunity of salvation is open to all, Jew and Gentile alike. Your heritage, lineage, background, and social status neither prohibited you nor gave you a “free pass” to count as God’s people. Rather, your faith specifically through Jesus Christ granted this access to be reconciled with God to our original purpose of a sinless people serving God in love. The result of this brings hope to people who thought they were without it and is summarized succinctly in Romans 5:1-2:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hope is so important. The removal of hope renders one to feel helpless. Helplessness leads to giving up, lying down, and then getting caught along whichever directions the currents of society are flowing. The most helpless we will feel is when we’re in

a position where our actions can do nothing to affect an outcome. It's like running in deep, loose sand. If you want someone miserable, put them in a job, relationship, or situation where they feel as if they can change nothing, no matter what they say, do, or however hard they try. Unfortunately, we feel this way with uncertainty. However, Paul continues in Romans 6 detailing that we gain this hope by putting away our enslavement to sin (of which the wages are death) via joining the death that Jesus died through baptism. Then, we rise up in newness which brings benefits we should see on a daily basis. Primarily, we become joint heirs with Christ through God's adoption. We put tribulations in perspective, and the Spirit intercedes on our behalf knowing what we need (rather than what we want). Of particular importance is to note that tribulations and groanings are not promised to be removed. The benefits we see as Christians are not the removal of pain and suffering, but rather that we take those trials and tribulations with a perspective understanding the current time is but a minuscule fraction of eternity. Our faith is not made evident by having a pain-free or carefree life on this physical earth. Our faith is made evident that the joint inheritance with Christ in eternity is always there despite the worldly sufferings. This is the incorruptible hope.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

The seeds of doubt are sown during uncertainty. We've somehow fooled ourselves into thinking that every good outcome we receive on this earth is based on a good deed we have done, and every bad outcome is the result of something sinful we've

done. This one-to-one ratio of deeds-to-outcome thinking has contributed to the questioning of the existence of God (i.e., “why do bad things happen to ‘good’ people?”). Somewhere along the way society has gotten the impression that if one chooses to serve or even merely believe in God, then nothing bad is supposed to ever happen again to this person. The promise, the incorruptible hope, is not a pain-free life void of uncertainty on this earth. The hope is that through our belief and joining in Christ’s death and resurrection through baptism, we have access to the inheritance in eternity:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:18-23)

Here, Paul specifically points out that not just people at large (“*the creature*”), but also those who have answered the call (“*ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit*”) have pain, suffering, and internal groanings - often manifested as the uncertainty of not understanding what we see around us. Yet, the hope lies not in a good life here on earth, but rather the adoption and inheritance with God in eternity. Paul continues in 8:24:

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. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:24-28)

The things we don't understand, why we aren't getting the simple "yes" we want, all work together in ways we don't understand and in ways we very well may not see in our lifetime. But, they never mean our hope is gone. Only we can remove our hope by throwing it away (e.g., the prodigal son in Luke 15). Adoption under Roman law was a very deliberate process. The father chose the adoptee (often an adult) based on seeing this person conducted themselves well and would carry on the family name in an honorable fashion. The adopted could not be disowned (while the biological children could). This is the bond God has for us, and what hope that brings. Paul concludes this thought by asking us, "What more could you want than this incorruptible hope?!"

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:31-32)

Perhaps the fast nature and instant gratification of modern society has spoiled us. We want a similar instant gratification

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when we pray to God. We want a simple “yes” to our request, but God has so much more in His plan for us. Often we need to wait. Often, it’s not what we need, no matter how much we want it or how “good” we think we’ve been to deserve it. How blessed we are to not get what we actually deserve right away. We are human, we are sinners, and as such, all we deserve is death. The incorruptible hope is not achieved by any number of good deeds we conduct. We can’t earn or buy our way to salvation. It was a gift given by God’s grace, but it is up to us to open this gift. All of God’s people have been met with uncertainty. Many of those we revere as great stewards of God had hard times and uncertainty. By our reckonings we would claim they didn’t “deserve” it either. David had done nothing wrong, yet faced life on the run from Saul. Job lost everything. There are many more we see as examples through God’s word, but they too asked for something of God at that time. They wanted “yes.” God’s answer was more complicated, but it worked together in ways to bring about the greatest example we have: Jesus, the lone sinless human to walk the earth. Without deserving it, Jesus took unimaginable pain to sacrifice himself for us. God has not abandoned us and the hope is not gone just because we’re in a situation in life where we can’t seem to get the “yes” we want. In fact, it’s the opposite. Yes, we’re often uncertain, but this is what we must remember:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38 -39)

BEN

WHEREVER THERE IS A HUMAN BEING
THERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR KINDNESS

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: ABOUT DECEIVING YOURSELF

For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. (Psa. 36:2)

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. (1 Cor. 3:18)

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (Gal. 6:3)

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (Jas. 1:22)

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (Jas. 1:26)

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (Rev. 3:17)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In which book of the Bible do we read of David and Goliath?
2. What punishment was given to Gehazi for his greed?
3. How did the sailors discover Jonah was responsible for the storm?
4. Who thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money?
5. Who had a slave named Onesimus?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...

(cont. on page 8)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
June 5 - 6	Freefield State Line, MS	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
June 6 - 9	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 13 - 18	Mt. Carmel Woodland, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 13 - 16	Ashlock Near Celina, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 17 - 20	Marrowbone Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 20 - 25	Ephesus Ephesus, GA	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

Masks and social distancing are recommended at these meetings.

(cont. from page 7)

And remember last month's questions?

1. Who deceived Jacob by giving Leah as a wife instead of Rachel? LABAN (Gen. 29:25)
2. What was the name of Ruth's second husband?
BOAZ (Ruth 4:13)
3. Complete this common phrase of thanksgiving found in the Bible: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his _____ endureth for ever." MERCY (Psa. 106:1)
4. What did Jesus send disciples to fetch on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
DONKEY AND COLT (Mat. 21:1-2)
5. What does James say we should say when we make our future plans?
"IF THE LORD WILL, I WILL DO THIS OR THAT" (Jas. 4:15)