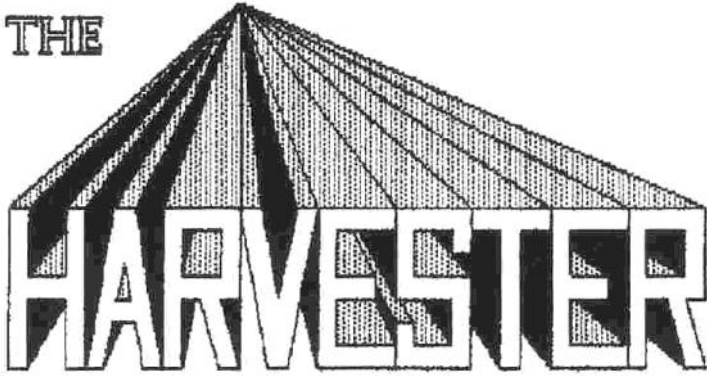




"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

October 2026

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HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGY

A baseball manager during a difficult stretch of a losing season was once asked how his team planned to reverse its fortunes. He bluntly replied: "Hope is not a strategy." His response contrasted the common refrains losing teams often use: "Hope our luck turns," "Hope we get healthier," etc. The premise is straightforward in this context: A baseball manager who merely hopes his team gets healthier or begins hitting the ball, without scouting reports, fundamental drills, and corrective mechanics, will soon find himself out

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of a job. Leaders in the secular realm understand that substituting passive optimism for disciplined preparation is a certain path to ruin.

Tragically, this same mistake has become one of the most pervasive spiritual blunders of our time. Countless individuals approach their eternal souls with a hope to reach heaven, hope they overcome sin, hope they become more patient, and hope their local congregation thrives, yet they exert no deliberate effort to follow the blueprint God has established.

To say that hope is not a strategy is not to diminish the profound necessity of biblical hope. As Christians, we do have hope, and it is an incorruptible, living hope (1 Pet. 1:3-5). That hope exists solely because it was provided by God's grace through the ultimate sacrifice of His sinless Son on the cross. In His infinite mercy, God intervened and provided the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, paying a debt we could not pay. Paul writes 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.

Notice carefully what that marvelous sacrifice accomplished: it provided us the access and the opportunity to be saved. God did not remove human free will, nor did He pre-select specific individuals for salvation while condemning others without choice. Instead, the sacrifice of Christ

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opened the door to reconciliation and gave every accountable person both the responsibility and the ability to access that grace should we choose. God's grace is a free gift, but it is a gift that must be accepted on the Giver's terms.

However, a critical distinction must be made between the foundation of our hope and our strategy for Christian living. Hope is the confident expectation of the eternal outcome, "*an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*" (Heb. 6:19). It anchors us to eternity so that we are not swept away by the trials and sufferings of this life. But an anchor is not an engine. Hope is the destination and the assurance; it was never designed by God to serve as our daily operational strategy for living the Christian life.

The original Greek word for hope used prominently throughout the New Testament, *elpis*, is stronger than the current way we apply the word "hope." *Elpis* specifically denotes a confident expectation, even translated as an "anticipation." In contrast, today we tend to use it as passive wishing. We prefer passive wishing because it demands nothing of us in the present moment. In religious circles, this passivity is often dressed up in pious language. We say, "I am just leaving it in the Lord's hands," when at times, we are simply refusing to do the work God commanded us to do.

Consider how this shows up in personal spiritual growth. Many of us say "I hope I get more patient." Yet patience is not something God sprinkles into our hearts overnight while we sleep. God does not hand out "patience points." Scripture tells us that "*tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope*" (Rom. 5:3-4). If we want patience, we must exercise self-control when provoked, endure trials without murmuring, and deliberately mortify our quick tempers. Merely

hoping to be more patient while refusing to govern our reactions is not faith; it is self-deception.

We also say, “I hope I stop struggling with this sin.” Paul did not tell the Colossians to hope their sins away. He commanded:

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (Col. 3:5).

Mortification is violent, deliberate execution. It requires eliminating the broken windows, throwing away the rocks of temptation, and actively removing the means, motive, and opportunity to do wrong (Mat. 5:29-30).

“I hope I grow in Bible knowledge.” Wisdom and understanding do not come to those who passively wait around for them. Paul charged Timothy: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). Growth requires the labor of open pages, dedicated hours, and quiet meditation (Psa. 1:2).

Hoping for spiritual maturity without disciplined daily execution is like a farmer hoping for a crop while leaving his seed in the barn and his plow in the shed. Throughout scripture, whenever God extended His grace and offered hope to mankind, that hope was always tethered to an explicit strategy of human obedience.

When God warned Noah of the impending flood, Noah possessed the hope of deliverance (Heb. 11:7). Yet that hope did not build the vessel. God gave Noah an explicit blueprint: the type of wood, the dimensions, the pitch, the window, and the door (Gen. 6:14-16). Genesis 6:22 records the critical strategy: “*Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.*” Had Noah merely stood

on dry ground hoping God's mercy would keep his family afloat, they would have perished in the deep.

When King Hezekiah was sick unto death, he wept and prayed to the Lord (2 Kin. 20:1-3). God graciously heard his prayer and promised to add fifteen years to his life. But God did not heal him through Hezekiah's passive wishing. The prophet Isaiah gave instructions with action items: *'Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered'* (2 Kin. 20:7). God provided the healing power, but Hezekiah was required to execute the command.

God has given us the hope of heaven, but He has laid down the exact strategy for reaching it. God's plan to deliver a soul from sin is not ambiguous. He commands hearing His Word (Rom. 10:17), believing in Christ (John 8:24), repenting of sins (Acts 17:30), confessing the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:10), being baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16), and remaining faithful (Rev. 2:10). To bypass any step in His blueprint and merely "hope" that God will save us anyway is to reject the very counsel of God (Luke 7:30). Imagine if Noah had skipped any step in building the ark.

As congregations, each of us frequently look at increasingly empty pews and say, "I hope the Church grows." But a congregation does not grow on wishes. I should ask myself, "What have I done to help the congregation grow?" The local congregation is not an independent corporate entity that acts on our behalf; it functions through the individual labor of each member. Jesus pointed to the fields and said,

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.
(John 4:35)

Opportunities must be recognized and seized. We must sow

the seed, knock on the doors, study with our neighbors, and support the truth.

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the familiar account of two builders (Mat. 7:24-27). Both men wanted a secure structure. Both men possessed the identical hope that their house would withstand the coming tempest. The difference was entirely in their strategy and execution. The foolish builder rested in passive optimism, building upon the loose sand without digging deep. The wise builder took action: he heard the sayings of Christ and did them. When the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, the house on the rock stood because its foundation was laid in obedient action.

God has graciously supplied the hope. He gave His Son to make that hope possible, and He placed within our hands the power and accountability to choose it. But let us never make the fatal mistake of substituting hope for obedience. Hope is our anchor, but God's Word is our strategy. Let us put away idle wishing, pick up the tools God has provided, and work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phi. 2:12).

BEN

Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted within me?
hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise
him, *who is* the health of my counte-
nance, and my God.

(Psa. 42:11)

RESCUE THE PERISHING

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
waiting the wandering child gone astray;
plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;
He will forgive if they trust and obey.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
cords that are broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it—
strength for your labor the Lord will provide;
back to the narrow way patiently win them,
tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

FANNY J. CROSBY

1820-1915

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many stories were in the ark?
2. What caused Hezekiah's sickness?
3. When does the blessed man meditate on the law of the Lord?
4. What happened to the house built upon the sand?
5. How do you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What happened to Lot's wife?
TURNED INTO A PILLAR OF SALT (Gen. 19:26)
2. Where did the division of languages begin?
THE TOWER OF BABEL (Gen. 11:5-9)
3. How long was Solomon king over Israel?
FORTY YEARS (1 Kings 11:42)
4. In the Sermon on the Mount, what did Jesus say would happen to the meek?
THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH (Mat. 5:5)
5. Into what did Jesus say the merchants had turned his house of prayer? A DEN OF THIEVES (Luke 19:45-46)



FELLOWSHIP GATHERING

Saturday, October 17, 2026 at 12:00p.m.
The Venue at Smith Farm
1821 County Road 112
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