



TAKE UP THY SWORD



A newsletter with hope and encouragement from the Holy Bible

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword... (Hebrews 4:16)

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Hope from Heaven

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not... cease from yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

As young adults and still 'in the world,' my friends and I would always say: "hope for the best, expect the worst." It's how we dealt with the possibility of disappointment, knowing that someone or something could let us down at some point. And since we put our trust in man instead of God, we usually received the negative result which only fueled our departure from joy into despair. But praise the Lord for salvation, deliverance and sanctification, because we can now make a new declaration:

My soul wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved (Ps 62:5-6).

Similar to faith, hope is an action word and requires some work on our part. We know that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17); but we still have to long for, believe, and go after those treasures. When hope is used as a verb, it means to look forward to something with desire and reasonable confidence. So we need to take an honest assessment of our motives, pinpoint our wants and exercise this Word:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

Hebrews 11:1 states that "faith is the substance of things hoped for," and James 2:20 tells us that "faith without works is dead." God wants us to recognize that hope is a gift which needs to be utilized in order to possess our promised land. So whenever the spirit of fear, disbelief or discouragement causes us to doubt what the Lord has told us, we can meditate on this section of Lamentations:

This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord (3:21-26).

We've heard that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov 13:12), so how can we find the strength to have patience coupled with expectation? Here are a few tips:

◇ *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord (Ps 31:24).*

◇ *But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom 8:25).*

◇ *Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Ps 37:4).*

◇ *The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish (Prov 10:28).*

I had to learn this lesson the hard way: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Ps 118:8). So where is our trust now? The scriptures tell us to put our hope in God, His Word and His mercy. Many times I come to the conclusion that the solution to my problem is Jesus Christ, because He is the living Word! I constantly remind myself that my heavenly Father will never leave me nor forsake me. Oftentimes, the only thing that I have to hold onto is my Lord's hand:

Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word (Ps 119:114).

In the fourth chapter of Romans, Paul summarizes the story of Abraham's faith; and the third verse simply states, "Abraham believed God." When the Lord told him to leave his hometown, he obeyed. And when the Lord made a covenant with him regarding his seed, he "against hope believed in hope" (4:18)! Abraham did not focus on his wife's barrenness nor the frailty of this own body. He relied on the Word given to him, and "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (4:20). Abraham was counted as righteous because he was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (4:21).

Since we are considered Abraham's children, we can tell the enemy: "my flesh also shall rest in hope" (Ps 16:9)!

THUS SAITH THE LORD: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever..." (John 6:51).

PRAYER: *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope (Ps 130:5).*

"Be encouraged in the law of the Lord" (2 Chron 31:4):

Psalm 28:7, 42:5, 71:14, 119:49; Proverbs 23:18; Isaiah 40:29-31, 64:4; Mark 11:24; Luke 8:15; Romans 5:3-5, 15:4; Hebrews 6:12, 10:36-37; James 4:2-3; 1 John 3:22

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