

#249 "Hopefulness"

T.H.R.I.V.E. part 2

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Hope is the antithesis to despair, depression, and giving in or giving up. If we have the hope of heaven, it encourages us to live for Christ now. If we have hope that God has a plan for our good (Jeremiah 29:11), it gives us inspiration to persevere. Satan would love for Christians to lose the hope of answered prayer, victory over sin patterns, and the restoration of relationships. He would love for believers to give up on evangelism because of a loss of hope that people will still get saved. Faith, hope, and love are central to the abundant life in Christ. If hope is lost, faith shrinks back and love grows cold. We must hold fast to hope, not in some abstract sense but in the promises of God. *We don't just "have hope" but our hope is in the Lord (Psalm 31:24).*

Our hope is founded in the lovingkindness of God. "Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness" (Psalm 33:18). The concept of lovingkindness is the idea of God's inalterable merciful, loving, good, and gracious disposition to those whom He loves. As Christians, we should be able to look in the rear view mirror of our lives and see God's goodness and deliverance. This gives us hope for deliverance in the present and that God will only do good for us. Lamentations 3:19-25 says,

"Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.' The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him."

This passage is saturated with truths related to the whole goal of thriving despite barely surviving. Jeremiah recounts how he feels beaten down by the trials of his life, his affliction, and his feelings of futility given the hardness of hearts of those to whom he preached. But he realized that he could still have hope if he recalled to mind the fact that God's mercy and love toward Him never ceased and never will cease. Every morning, there was yet a new compassion, a new hope, and a new portion of God's goodness and love. Because the Lord is good to those who seek Him and wait for Him, hope always can abound anew. *If there was ever a day that God decided not to love His children or to be evil, then hope would be gone. But because such a day is impossible, there will always be hope.* Even if God allows grief into our lives for a time, it is for our good, and in the end we will see evidence of His compassion and abundant lovingkindness (Lamentations 3:26-33).

Our hope is founded in the promise that God hears our prayer and does act in response. Psalm 38:15 says, "For I hope in You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord my God." Hope is directly related to the fact

that God hears and answers Spirit-led prayers. God always will be faithful to us to give us what we need even if we don't always pray as we ought (Philippians 4:19). This is the ministry of the groanings of the Spirit within us (Romans 8:26-28). The Spirit will speak to God what our hearts are poor at discerning, and God will in His great mercy minister lovingkindness toward us in giving us what is good, right, and pure at the best and proper time. He does hear, and He does answer. Therein is great hope. We are not alone in this life, but we have a Sovereign power to go to for help in our time of need. "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Our hope is founded upon God's constant and faithful presence with us in our hearts. Psalm 42:5 says, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence." Despair of the soul and being disturbed and distraught in the inner man is a sign of a loss of hope. The command for believers is to hope in God because we can confidently say and know that He will help us because He is always with us. We can be so confident, in fact, that we can be assured of praising Him for the fact that He will help us even before He has helped us. Thus, we see the interconnectedness of thanksgiving and hope in the life of the believer who desires to thrive in the abundant life of Christ. *Hope makes us more ready to give thanks, and thankfulness reminds us of why we have hope.*

Our hope is founded upon God's Word. Psalm 130:5 says, "I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope." Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Yes, we read the Scriptures to grow in our knowledge of God. Surely, we study them to better know how we should live. Certainly, we meditate upon them to avoid the snares of the devil. But we also read them to be encouraged so that we might have hope. Enduring faithfully gives us reason to hope as we look back and see how God has changed our hearts. But in addition to the legacy of God's goodness and mercy in our own lives is the legacy of His lovingkindness in the lives of those who testify of Him in the Scriptures. Sometimes we can be so desperate and blind that we cannot see the goodness of God. Thus, we must go to the Scriptures which tell us of how God has been faithful to those who love Him throughout the course of human history. The same God Who showed mercy to faithful men and women of old is also ready to show us mercy today.

Our hope is founded upon the fact that God helps us. Psalm 146:5 says, "How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God." Sometimes, it is possible that we treat God or view Him as nothing more than the powerless idols of the nations of old. Baal could not make it rain, but our God did. Therefore, we can have hope that God is not dead, not busy, not unreachable, and not useless and irrelevant. He is our help, and this is a great privilege and blessing of being a believer. We are not on our own, and we are not left to ourselves. We have a great help and thus a great hope because the Lord, the God of the Universe, is on our side. He gave us the Holy Spirit as our Helper (John 15:26). He has not left us hopeless and abandoned, but He is with us, fighting our cause. Deuteronomy 3:22 says, "Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you." Our God is alive and working, and He is our help in time of need, fighting for our cause. And when the Lord of Hosts takes up our cause as our Help which He has promised to do, there is profound reason for hope.

Our hope is founded in heaven. 1 Peter 1:13 says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The early Christians in Peter's time suffered greatly, and persecution was severe. How would they have hope in their inner man despite the external travails? They needed to stay grounded inside, remembering their spiritual purpose, and holding tightly to their spiritual promise of heaven. In fact, they needed to set their hope completely on heaven and on their future glorification. One day Christ will return, and we will be reunited with Him and see Him face to face. It will be an even deeper connectedness and intimacy than it is now. *Faith, which is now the evidence of things hoped for and the conviction of what is unseen, will then be hope fulfilled and proof fully seen. We must look forward to this blessed hope (Titus 2:13), and it should be so compelling as to give us hope in the present.* The weight of glory is far better than anything else, and it is what should drive our hope (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Romans 15:13 says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." We are not just to have a little bit of hope or a decent amount of hope, but we are to be filled with hope. Sometimes we can gloss over just how extreme the language is, but it is about a hope maxed out and a hope that is abounding. God's will for us is to have an abundant hope, for it is part of the abundant life. To thrive we must live fully alive which we cannot do if we do not have hearts full of hope. If our hope is lacking, let us pray according to Ephesians 1:18 which says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." May God increase our hope as we better fixate upon the inheritance which is ours in Christ and which cannot be taken away. May it move us to rejoice, to be thankful, and to give us rest.

Next up: Rest

What is T.H.R.I.V.E.? God has promised His children the abundant life (John 10:10), even when life is full of trials (John 16:33). Like the Israelites wandering in the desert, sometimes life feels like surviving more than thriving. Yet, even there, God provided for them bread from heaven and water from a rock. More importantly, He helped them learn that man does not live on bread alone but upon His Word (Deuteronomy 8:3). It is feasting upon the inviolable truths of Scripture that can enable us to endure. Even in times of earthly abundance, we will starve without the food of doing God's will (John 4:34). 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." This six part series will feed our souls so that we do not lose heart by strengthening the inner man despite what may be happening to us on the outside. To thrive is to live life fully alive.