

Finding Hope in an Age of Despair — June 17 & 18, 2017

Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Psalm 40:1-5

- Describe David's manner of waiting for the Lord (1). How did God respond to this (1)? What do you think David needed from the Lord? What do you normally think and do when waiting on God? What would help you to wait in a way that reflects your living, sure, full and protected hope in Christ? Ask God for these things now.
- What did the Lord do when he heard David's cry (2-3)? How would people respond to this (3)? Recall times when it felt like the Lord rescued you from a "slimy pit" or when he "put a new song in your mouth." How can you hold these memories more closely in your thoughts, and what reason do they give you to hope today?
- In whom do the blessed trust (4)? What false hopes do they forsake (4)? How do you think this keeps feelings of despair at bay? Why is it worthwhile to anchor your hope in God (5)? How does your own life testify to these truths about the Lord?

Day Two: Romans 5:1-5

- What justifies us before God (1)? Do you really believe that? How do your thoughts and actions convey this belief? As you reflect, ask the Lord to speak. What are the benefits of justification via Jesus (1-2)? How is this peace and grace displayed in your life?
- In what do we boast (2)? Unpack the phrase "hope of the glory of God" a bit: What makes this hope distinct? What does "glory of God" mean to you? In what ways do you boast about this? How do you think the Lord feels about such boasting?
- Why does Paul insist we "glory in our sufferings" (3-4)? When have you most sensed yourself on this journey from suffering to hope? When have you tried to avoid this journey? Contrary to what the world may think, why is Christian hope void of shame (5)? As you read this last verse, ask God to give you a greater sense of his Holy Spirit and to fill your heart with love overflowing.

Day Three: Romans 8:31-39

- What rhetorical questions does Paul pose (31, 33-34)? Since God offered his own son, what does this say about how he will provide for us (32)? In what ways are you struggling to believe this? Ask the Lord to grow your faith and fill you with a living hope.
- While at the right hand of God, what is Jesus doing (34)? Picture this scene in your mind's eye: right now, Jesus is praying for you! How does this visualization inform the hope you have in him?
- Summarize Paul's writing on our sure and protected access to the love of Christ (35-39). Reflect on how it's not freedom from suffering that we are called to hope in. Rather, it's that even in hardship we can still experience God's goodness and love. This is what distinguishes living hope from false hope. Conclude by re-reading verses 35-39 and asking the Holy Spirit to further testify to you about the living hope found in Jesus.

Day Four: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

- List off some reasons followers of Jesus should "not lose heart." If you know someone who struggles to do this, pray for her now. In what way do we experience decline (16)? What about renewal (16)? How does this help you to personally "not lose heart"?
- Contrast today's hardships with life on the other side of eternity (17). How does this verse compare to 1 Peter 1:3-6? How does the repetition of this theme – a reason to hope – found throughout the Bible help you in your faith journey? Talk to the Lord now

about any struggle you have to view your troubles as “light and momentary.” Ask him to set you free from thoughts of despair.

- As a people of hope, on what do we fix our eyes (18)? Why (18)? Meditate on this phrase: “the unseen is eternal.” How can you keep your spiritual eyesight sharp so that you can discern what truly matters to God? Ask the Lord to inspire you with a few ideas and make a plan to start walking one of them out this week.

Day Five: Hebrews 6:13-20

- What was God’s promise to Abraham (14)? Why is the Lord to be trusted with his promises (13)? What was Abraham’s experience of waiting for and then receiving the promise (15)? How do verses 13-15 relate to Psalm 40:1-5, the reading from day one?
- How do people other than God pledge themselves to their promises (16)? Why did the Lord make an oath (17-18)? Think about the writer’s assertion that “it is impossible for God to lie.” Do you think this is true? Assuming it’s true, what does this mean for Christian hope? How do you “take hold of the hope”? How does hope in Jesus “greatly encourage” you? Take a moment now to praise God for the sure hope found only in Christ.
- How does this hope feel in one’s soul (19)? Specifically, how does Jesus make it possible (19-20)? In your own words, write down what hope in Jesus, thanks to his death and resurrection, means to you. How is God responding to this offering?