

# Moments *for* You

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Theme: Hope



## WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE?

Most people understand hope as wishful thinking, as in “I hope something will happen.” This is not what the Bible means by hope. The biblical definition of hope is “confident expectation.” Hope is a firm assurance regarding the things that God has promised (Romans 8:24-25; Hebrews 11:1). Hope is a fundamental component of the life of the righteous (Proverbs 23:18). Without hope, life loses its meaning (Lamentations 3:18; Job 7:6). The righteous who trust or put their hope in God will be helped (Psalm 28:7), and they will not be confounded, put to shame, or disappointed (Isaiah 49:23). The righteous, who put their hope in God, have a general confidence in His protection and help (Jeremiah 29:11), and are free from fear and anxiety (Psalm 46:2-3).

The New Testament idea of hope includes the recognition that the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises is found in Christ (Matthew 12:21; 1 Peter 1:3). Christian hope is rooted in faith in the divine salvation in Christ (Galatians 5:5), and is brought into being through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:24-25). It includes the future hope of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6), the redemption of the body and of the whole creation (Romans 8:23-25), eternal glory (Colossians 1:27), eternal life and the inheritance of the saints (Titus 3:5-7), the return of Christ (Titus 2:11-14), transformation into the likeness of Christ (1 John 3:2-3), and the salvation of God (1 Timothy 4:10)—which are all found in Christ Himself (1 Timothy 1:1).

The certainty of this blessed future is guaranteed through the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:26), the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:23-25), and Christ in us (Colossians 1:27). Hope is refined by endurance through suffering (Romans 5:2-5) and is the inspiration behind faithfulness (1 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:11). Those who hope in Christ will see Christ exalted in life and in death (Philippians 1:20). Trustworthy promises from God give us hope (Hebrews 6:18-19), confident hope (Hebrews 3:6), and great boldness in our faith (2 Corinthians 3:12). By contrast, those who do not place their trust in God are said to be without hope (Ephesians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Along with faith and love, hope is an enduring virtue of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love springs from hope (Colossians 1:4-5). Hope produces joy and peace in believers through the power of the Spirit (Romans 12:12; 15:13). Paul attributes his apostolic calling to the hope of eternal glory (Titus 1:1-2). Hope in the return of Christ is the basis for believers to purify themselves in this life (Titus 2:11-14, 1 John 3:3).

Do you have the Christian's hope?

—GotQuestions.org, adapted

## THE REALITY OF HOPE

I believe hope is one of the most emotionally packed words in any language. When it is spoken, the impossible suddenly becomes possible, darkness is overtaken by light and despair turns to joy. And that's exactly what happened when a group of women arrived at Jesus' tomb early on a Sunday morning to anoint His body with spices.

Days before, they had watched Jesus die horrifically, along with all their hopes. Though they believed He was the Messiah, who had come to rescue His people and establish His kingdom in Israel, He had died. As they approached the tomb, they expected to find a body, not a bright angel sitting on the stone that had once blocked the entrance. Nor were they prepared for his message: “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay” (Matthew 28:5-6).

Imagine their amazement when Jesus met them on their way back from the tomb (Matthew 28:8-9). In those moments, everything changed. Their tears were replaced with unspeakable joy because Jesus was victorious over mankind’s most formidable enemy. The women felt revitalized faith that day, and we as believers can live with similar confidence. Because of Christ’s resurrection, we have hope—not only for the future but also for the past and present.

#### HOPE FOR OUR PAST

If the women had, as they’d expected, found Jesus’ dead body, we would all be in deep trouble. When the apostle Paul confronted the false teaching that claimed there was no resurrection, he pointed out the hopeless result: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

The good news is that Jesus’ resurrection proves the Father found the offering sufficient; it assures us that all our failings—past, present, and future—have been completely covered by the Savior’s blood. Paul makes this truth very clear in Romans 4:25, when he says Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” The day Jesus came out

of the grave, He affirmed once and for all that every person who has or will ever accept Him as Lord and Savior has been forgiven and accepted by God, not on the basis of behavior, but by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. That empty tomb is the reason we can rejoice.

#### HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE

The resurrection is also the reason we can be confident about our future. Why should we have any hope of eternal life if our Savior is still in the grave? That would mean He didn’t conquer death for either Himself or us. But because Jesus did vanquish death, He has the power and authority to give us eternal life. Though our bodies may perish, our spirits remain alive and go immediately into the Lord’s presence.

And having already been justified by Christ, we will also be glorified with Him (Romans 8:30). This is the culmination of our salvation and the blessed hope that sustains us during life’s hardships and pain. When our flesh weakens with age or succumbs to illness, we know that we will one day receive strong immortal bodies that will never become tired or sick. This life is a mere breath compared to eternity.

#### HOPE FOR OUR PRESENT

It’s all well and good to rejoice in our salvation and hope for our future glorification, but what does Christ’s resurrection do for us right now? Before He died, Christ made this promise: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). Christ had to die, be resurrected, and ascend into Heaven before He could send His Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who transforms and empowers believers to live the Christian life as new creatures. This means that as



the Spirit sanctifies us—by giving us understanding of God’s word, empowering us to overcome sin, conforming us to Christ’s image, and encouraging us through life’s trials—we can walk in newness of life.

Considering what’s at stake, Christ’s resurrection is the best news we could ever hear. Now we have confidence that we are forgiven and declared righteous. All we need has been provided for us by God’s Spirit and word. And we know with certainty that we will one day be glorified when Christ returns. As was true of those women who found an empty tomb, our hope is real. We have been “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Knowing that, we can’t help but be encouraged—today and every day hereafter.

—Charles Stanley, condensed

## HOW CAN I KEEP ON HOPING?

*“Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).*

Let’s focus on three truths from this verse.

### 1. ALL THE SCRIPTURES ARE FOR OUR INSTRUCTION

We are prone to short-circuit this step. All of us who have been born again are hungry to be encouraged by the Scriptures. Therefore we are often impatient with the need to be instructed by them. We would often rather have the fruit without laboring in the vineyard.

So the first lesson in this verse is that the Scriptures are for instruction. Literally: for teaching. We must be willing to learn what the Scriptures teach

if we expect to be encouraged by the truth of Scripture.

### 2. ALL THE SCRIPTURES ARE INTENDED BY GOD TO GIVE STEADFASTNESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Steadfastness means endurance. It’s what you need to have to keep on going in a path of obedience when you feel miserable and when you meet all kinds of opposition.

Where does endurance come from? It comes from the Scriptures. This is exceedingly practical! Again and again the Scriptures will give you God’s perspective on things, and that biblical perspective will make a hard situation endurable. The Scriptures are given to us for our encouragement and our endurance in hard times. If you want to have staying power, if you want to endure to the end in the path of costly obedience, then make space in your day to meditate on the Scriptures.

### 3. ALL THE SCRIPTURES HAVE THIS GOAL: TO SUSTAIN OUR HOPE

There are stories of endurance in the Scriptures. There are words of encouragement. But the way these stories and these words actually make a difference in our lives is by sustaining our hope. It’s hope that keeps us going in tough situations. Christian endurance is not just teeth-gritting will power against all odds. We are driven and sustained by hope.

That is where the word of God becomes absolutely essential; because your own feelings and all the wisdom of the world is going to tell you again and again, “It isn’t worth it.” That’s what your feelings will often say, and that is what the world will often say. But it is *not* what the Scriptures say.

The Scriptures say, “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for My sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold

now in this time ... and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

Obedience is always worth it. The battle to cope with the daily temptations to disobey and throw in the towel on your responsibilities can only be fought with the weapon of hope.

—John Piper, condensed

*“Hope is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity.”*

—C.H. Spurgeon

## HOPE: THE ANCHOR FOR YOUR SOUL

It was a phone call I’ll never forget. It was from a young woman whose life lay shipwrecked on the California beach from where she was calling. She had a terminal disease, leukemia. Her husband had left her. Her child had recently died at only two and a half months old. Her friend had just been killed in an auto accident. Wave after wave of loss had crushed this woman’s spirit, and she couldn’t take another day of pain. In whispered tones, she told me that she held a loaded revolver and wondered why she shouldn’t use it to end her misery.

Hope. It’s the one thing you and I cannot live without. But trying to hold on to hope can take all your strength, particularly when hope’s old enemy, doubt, drags you toward despair.

When you’re in despair, logical thinking will not help. You will exhaust yourself trying to sort out God’s reasons for allowing bad things to happen. Even if you could fathom despair’s depths, you’d still be lying in the same hospital bed. Or standing beside the same grave. Or sitting alone in the same empty house. Your head would hold some answers, but your heart would still be aching.

You need more than logic when

you’re sinking beneath the waves. You need something solid to hold on to! What can you hold on to when life’s storms crash over you?

The better question is, *Whom* can you hold on to?

In his magnificent letter, the writer to the Hebrews ushers us into a soaring realm where he highlights the answer: “It is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls” (Hebrews 6:18-19, NLT). The writer underscores a fact about God that cannot be said of anyone else. Scripture openly states that “it is impossible for God to lie.” What a great truth on which to fasten your hope!

But don’t stop. Follow the writer’s thinking into the next phrase: “This hope ... leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary” (Hebrews 6:19, NLT). The writer is referring to the inner sanctuary of God! The heavenly Holy of Holies where the blood of the sacrifice is poured and mercy is given.

Look through the veil and observe whose face the writer illumines: “Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest” (Hebrews 6:20, NLT). How great is that! We see Jesus—the One whose sacrifice pulled back the curtain so you and I can enter God’s refuge. And we hear our Savior say, “Come in. Find here, in the presence of God Himself, relief from the blast of doubts. Receive His mercy.” God’s mercy in your most desperate hour is found only in Christ—the anchor for your soul.

Remember the young woman on the beach? She and I spoke calmly and quietly. I did a lot of listening. I made no promise that she would ever

be healed. I spoke to her about Christ and the hope He alone could provide. After a sigh, she hung up.

About thirty minutes later, my phone rang again. It was the same young woman. She told me that she had read from a New Testament a friend had given her. She had called back to say, “I decided, Chuck, to give myself completely to Jesus Christ. I’m still afraid. I still don’t know what tomorrow’s going to bring, but I want you to know that I’m trusting Jesus through this. He has given me new hope ... the one thing I really needed.”

If your sorrow has led you to that same lonely shoreline of despair, let me say to you that this hope—this anchor for your soul—is the only way through your pain. I have no other answer than Jesus Christ.

I can’t promise you healing. I can’t promise your world will immediately turn right-side up. But I can promise He will receive you as you come in faith. I can promise He will be your strength when you cannot go on. He will be trustworthy when everyone betrays you, when nothing else is certain. He will anchor you to the refuge of God’s mercy and no storm will break His hold.

Can I leave you with some solid theology? Remember, God cannot lie. Because His promises are absolutely certain, you will not lose. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus will never leave you.

On this hope, you can be sure.

—Charles Swindoll

## LIVING HOPE

Hope is in short supply these days, and I’ve heard a lot of people bring up the word. But “hope” without any substance isn’t hope at all. In the first few verses of 1 Peter, we see three aspects of *living* hope. No surprise, all three relate to Jesus:

### 1. THE BELIEVER’S HOPE IS TO KNOW CHRIST

“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory” (1 Peter 1:8). The goal of our salvation, the hope that sustains us in trials, is not an end to our suffering. It is knowing God, loving Him, and enjoying Him. God isn’t the means; He’s the end.

In college, I signed up for a theater class, thinking we were going to do skits and learn improvisation. I probably should have read the catalog better because it was a class on the history of drama in the theater. We spent our entire semester learning about great plays. As a college junior, I was not interested in theater, so the class turned out to be a challenge. But I studied and did well in my theater class so I could get a good grade. After all, good grades lead to good jobs, and good jobs lead to paychecks.

In college, theater was a means to an end. I studied it only as a way to (eventually) get money. Now it’s flipped: I use money to enjoy theater. What was once a means has become an end. Theater used to be useful to me; now it is beautiful.

Is God useful or beautiful to you? Do you seek Him because He is a means to the good life, or because He is the good life?

### 2. THE BELIEVER’S HOPE IS TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Peter talks about God refining and purifying us because we are “obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9). In the preceding verses, he alludes to all three dimensions of our salvation.

- We are freed from the penalty of sin (v. 3). In theological terms, this is called “justification,” and it happened

in the past. “He has caused us to be born again,” Peter says. When you embraced Christ as your Savior, you received, at once, forgiveness for all your sins. You were given a perfect record, the righteousness of Christ, and stood blameless in His sight. This was all given to you when you received Christ.

- We are freed from the presence of sin (vv. 4-5). This is called “glorification,” and it happens in the future. It’s something that will be revealed later. We will have a perfect, pure heart; we’ll love the right things; we’ll no longer struggle with pride and hatred and rebellion and deceit and racism. We’ll be like Jesus.

- We are freed from the power of sin. This is “sanctification,” and it happens right now as God grows us more into Christlikeness day by day.

All three—justification, glorification, and sanctification—are part of our salvation and all are activated by faith, which means believing that Jesus has done it all for us and will do it all in us. We rest in Him, let Him do the work, and become Christlike.

### 3. THE BELIEVER’S HOPE IS TO BE WITH CHRIST

Peter points us to “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). “Imperishable” means it cannot be destroyed. “Undefiled” means it will not ever spoil. “Unfading” means it will last forever and never get boring. “Kept in Heaven” means no one can ever take it away. It’s an inheritance preserved from disease and corruption and protected from poverty, where justice reigns, disease is taken away, oppression ceases, relationships are finally and fully healed, there is no more pain or crying, and God wipes away every tear.

Our current trials are not small, and they are not easy to bear. But if we are in Christ, we can be sure that these trials help purify our hearts for the best part of our salvation and our true hope: knowing Christ, being like Christ, and being with Christ.

—J.D. Gear, condensed

## THE BLESSED HOPE

*“The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13).*

My head may be filled with prophecy, and I may think and say that I am “looking for that blessed hope,” but unless divine grace is teaching me to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” then I am deceiving myself. Make no mistake on this point. To be truly “looking for that blessed hope” is a spiritual attitude—it is the longing of those whose hearts are right with God.

Now our “hope” is something more than a future event; it is more than the next item on God’s prophetic program. It is something more than a place in which we are going to spend eternity. The Christian’s hope is a *Person*. Have you noticed how prominently and emphatically that fact is presented in the Scriptures?

- “I will come again and will take you to Myself” (John 14:3).
- “We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).
- “Serve the living and true God, and ... wait for His Son from Heaven” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).
- “The coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

Our focus should not be, “The great Tribulation draws near,” nor “the Millennium draws near,” nor even “the Rapture draws near.” Rather, our hearts should be occupied with His own blessed Person. The “blessed hope” for which the Christian is to be looking and longing, is not an event, but a Person—Christ Himself. He alone is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), our life (Colossians 3:4), and our hope (1 Timothy 1:1).

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20). —Arthur Pink, condensed

## A SURE HOPE

The Christian who studies the Bible is neither indifferent nor fearful concerning the future. They are hopeful. I have listened to the “wise” of the world—scientists, politicians, world leaders, and educators—express themselves about the future. All of their hopes are clearly marked by an element of uncertainty. But the Christian hope has a positive and certain ring to it, the reason being that it is identified with the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The foundation of my hope is the greatest event in world history, namely, the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

One wonderful thing about our hope is that it is associated with Heaven. It is no wonder that those who are not heavenly minded are without hope. Living for the world, they do not care at all about heavenly things. Instead, they live only for that which they can see and touch and taste in this world. They hope for prosperity,

pleasure and prominence in this life, because Heaven is not real to them and Christ is not real to them.

Now although our hope is a heavenly hope, Heaven itself is *not* the Christian’s hope. In writing to the Colossians, Paul discussed “the hope laid up for you in Heaven” (1:5). He goes on to explain that our hope is not a place, but a Person: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). This is truly “the hope of the gospel” (1:23). Heaven is where Christ is, thus Heaven is where our hope is.

The fact that our hope is “laid up” means that it is safe, secure, sure. No one ever needs to fear about the future when their hope is laid up in Heaven. Our Lord had this in mind when He said: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Does Christ have your heart? If so, then your hope is not misplaced. The Colossian Christians were a heavenly minded people and this gave to them a sense of security. And why not? Anything—or anyone—deposited in Heaven is safe. When Jesus comes again He will bring a reward for those who have maintained hope in Him. That reward is also “laid up” for us in Heaven. Paul testifies to it in the following words: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). —Lehman Strauss, adapted