

Embraced by Hope

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

How many times have you said something—a faith statement—to encourage someone who was going through a rough time? “Things will work out. God is faithful!” you say, but all they can say is, “I hope so.” Wearing the valley they are going through, what they really feel is hopelessness.

As Christians, we possess something eternal, something that the world cannot grasp and we sometimes forget. What we possess is hope.

We hope for what we cannot see. Therefore, it can seem difficult to live in hope because the end of hope is unseen. But God has given us a lively hope. Our hope comes from the conviction that we were designed to have an eternal destination. It is a conviction that is based upon the Bible, the holy Word of God. That Book supplies us with faith that believes as we look upward and with hope that perceives as we look forward. When we hear the Word preached, it

stirs our capacity to face the mountains the form the valleys we go through. When we receive each of God's promises as a "done deal," guaranteed by One who cannot lie, we can rest in faith, which is the evidence of things not yet seen.

As this booklet reveals, we can live a life embraced by a fixed, lively, yet unseen hope, and allow that hope to carry us through to the end. Hope enables us to triumph over the giants of despair and defeat. In the place that was cursed forever because of sin, God has made a door of hope. Let's allow that hope to grab hold of us, take us as prisoners, and deliver us into His resting place.

Chapter One

THE EXCELLENT, PERMANENT, RELEVANT WORD OF GOD

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....

“And God said....and it was so” (Genesis 1:1-30).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

“The same was in the beginning with God.

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

Without the holy Word of God that was spoken, there would be no creation (Colossians 1:16), no people, no physical life. The world would not be fitly framed and the heavens would not declare God’s glory without the Word (see Psalm 33:6). Without Jesus Christ, the

living Word of God that became flesh, we could not comprehend the power of God that holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3) or the power of His love that held Him on the Cross. Without the Holy Bible, the written Word of God, we would lack the wisdom and the hope that comes from having the mind of Christ and knowing God's heart through categorical doctrine (Psalm 119).

This is why a ministry that stands on God's holy Word must declare what God says in His Word, what God thinks in His heart, and what God does with His power. He is the Creator who has all knowledge and is everywhere present. God knows our need for all that He is, so He has given us His Word, which defines the magnitude of His omniscience, His omnipresence, and His omnipotence, as it reveals His love, grace, and mercy for us and for a world that is lost.

Inspired for Correction and Doctrine

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

At the Bema Seat, the Word will perfectly judge every aspect of the believer’s life on earth. It will always do so in relationship to the Holy Spirit and His power in the believer. I am not referring to a sense of knowledge. I am speaking of the life of knowledge.

This is a very rugged pilgrimage we are on. There are many, many sharp curves, dangerous precipices, rugged cliffs, and steep inclines. Therefore, it is very important that we receive wise counsel for our daily lives, recognizing that all Scripture is inspired by God.

Sadly, much of the counsel that is given today is not inspired by God. Give me the man who knows the Book, and I will receive the life of its Author, the mind of Jesus Christ, as I learn how to live by His Word. No one can get away with fragmenting Scripture and taking it out of context with a man who knows the Book.

For Our Profit

All Scriptures—in their entirety—are given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). That means they carry divine authority in God’s divine knowledge because He breathed them. The

Scriptures are profitable for application in our lives. They are profitable for doctrine, which means they define God's highway for life. They are profitable for correction, as God adjusts us and puts us back on the right highway. They are also profitable for reproof, which means God gives us a red light, a warning to stop, when we are on the wrong road. The Scriptures are profitable for instruction in righteousness, thoroughly equipping us to live down here as if we were living up there.

The Word of God is irrevocable. It is indisputable. It is historically correct. No mistake has ever been found in it. The Word of God is the benchmark for all ethical behavior. Its spiritual and moral value excel every other standard.

The prophecies in the Word of God are indisputable. Thirty-three prophecies alone were fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the twenty-four hours that led up to the time of His crucifixion. By carefully and objectively studying Scripture, any real scholar will agree that the Bible is uncanny in its correlation, accuracy, and consistency.

Forever Settled in Heaven

The three primary qualities of the Word are its excellence, its relevance, and its permanence.

The Word's excellence is a quality I love so much. It declares that five hundred witnesses on fourteen occasions saw the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face in post-resurrection scenes.

The Word of God is relevant. It is relevant to the needs of those who are sick. It is relevant to those who need forgiveness and to those who need to forgive. It is relevant to reconciliation, to joy, to a lively hope. It is relevant to friendship and to unity in the Body of Christ.

Finally, the Word of God has permanence: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The Old Testament marks the preparation for the coming of the Son of God. The Gospels describe God's manifestation of Christ, the living Word. The Book of Acts demonstrates the propagation of the Word. The epistles are an explanation of the Word. Then in the Book of Revelation we have the consummation of the Word.

Consider this blessed Book, the precious Word of God. Nothing could make me happier than the Word of God. I live in the relevance and permanence of the Word, in the excellence of God's character. It is the reason I can have hope.

Chapter Two

FROM A CURSE TO A BLESSING

In Joshua 6, the children of Israel had entered the Promised Land. They were clearly told not to sin because they were establishing a new nation. The reason for the drastic discipline and chastisement that came to the nation of Israel is because a new nation could not be born in the midst of the carelessness of sin.

Joshua was a tremendous leader who demonstrated clearly that his hope was in God. He received specific direction from the mouth of God, and he was faithful to instruct his men accordingly. He clearly told the soldiers not to take anything that belonged to the enemies in Jericho once they were defeated, because they and their belongings were accursed (Joshua 6:18). But Achan, a soldier in Israel's army, did not heed God's command. After winning a great battle, he coveted the spoils and stole a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a

wedge of gold. These things he hid under his tent, but they were not hidden from God. Because of his sin, the little city of Ai defeated the great army of Israel. Joshua fell on his face and cried out to the Lord, and the Lord told him what was wrong.

Oh, how sin can hinder a family and a church. Oh, how sin can destroy the potential and possibility of a work of God—in a home, a business, a Christian school. Sin can destroy a careless pastor and his staff. Sin robs people of the treasures of the Finished Work and the happiness and joy of the lively hope we have in Him.

God commanded Joshua to stone to death Achan and his family. After that, everything about him—all of his tents and possessions—were to be burned and covered with a heap of stones. God's severe standard and policy were necessary in this case because the new nation had to be founded having respect for God's order. He disciplines seriously when something new is started. In Acts 5, as God's Church was being established, Ananias and Sapphira died because they lied to the Holy Spirit.

We must never be familiar with the Word of God. God does not wink at sin. He died for it.

When it seems the world is overtaking us and we begin to grow weary in the way, the Father longs to draw men and women unto Himself, to comfort and give hope to His people. But He will never compromise His holiness. He wants us to look to Him for a way out.

A Door Is Opened

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

“And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hosea 2:14-15).

Achan’s sin occurred in the valley of Achor, the valley of trouble that was cursed. But God turned the curse into a place for blessing. To “allure” speaks of God persuading and enlarging Israel’s capacity by manifesting His love for her while His people were in the desert.

“The valley of Achor I will give you as a door of hope,” God was saying to Israel. “You will sing as you did in the days of your youth when you came out of Egypt. There was trouble at Ai, and I cursed that valley. But I am going to

make it a door of hope. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will be the door.”

“Hope” means that faith has already been established as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). With encouragement and confidence, hope waits for its fulfillment. In Hebrews 6:19, hope is the anchor of the soul. Hope makes faith effective as faith is hope’s substance—you will not find one without the other.

No Hope for the World

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

The world has no hope. Some of your brothers and sisters have no hope. But God takes something that was cursed and transforms it into the door of hope. In every situation, we can go through that door and come out cleansed, purged, and brand-new, walking in the newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Because of the hope that embraces us, we are not passive or careless, having wandering minds. We take in everything from the Word of God as

if living this very hour depends upon it. We dogmatically receive God's messages for each of our moments.

Dogmatic Realities

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is not a sentimental tie that has you wishing something would happen. Hope is a dogmatic reality from God, who gives you joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit so that you may discover life.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy [Spirit]” (Romans 15:13).

I received a call from a man who is now an alcoholic and is dying of cirrhosis of the liver. He used to call me a lot, but he never would repent. This time he was sobbing and sobbing, saying, “I have no hope, and I am going to die this week.”

The best that I could, I encouraged him with the Gospel, which he did believe. I attempted to impart to him specific promises he did not possess so he could enjoy the substance of something that would give him evidence by grace through faith in the mercy of Christ. I wanted

him to receive something he didn't deserve. I don't know the result. Faith in the Word can restore a backslider instantly, so I can only hope and pray that he received those truths before he died.

Once, a man who had slandered and gossiped against Christians called me to the hospital. He had been in a very serious car accident. Badly shaken by what had happened, he was sweating profusely, and of all people, he called for me. When I got there, I tried to take the man's hand and present him with the Gospel. He pulled away and said, "Oh, no. I have run down Christians most of my life, and now I am going to hell. I deserve hell." At that point, this man could not see the door of hope that was before him. Together, we wept and I got on my knees. Taking the authority of the Word of God, with tears of compassion, I prayed for God to reveal His grace and mercy to this man who was crying out. I prayed that he could receive hope for a new life.

Finally, he clutched my hand: "I guess it isn't too late for me." Suddenly, the inspiration and divine impartation of hope stilled his soul. He came through and recovered to become a very wonderful, helpful believer.

In our outreaches in the city, we meet so many people of such diverse backgrounds, but all with the same need: to know the Savior. On one Saturday, we met a Muslim man who lost his family and all of his possessions. He became *gloriously* saved by Christians who were soul winning in his neighborhood. He lost all he had and all that he was, but he found Jesus. He walked through the door and was embraced by hope.

Chapter Three

TRIUMPH OVER GIANTS
AND VALLEYS

“And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

“And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

“For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

“And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

“And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much.

“And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

“Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies” (2 Chronicles 20:21-27).

The valley of Berachah was a valley in the wilderness where Israel’s army was greatly outnumbered. But God turned what at first looked like a curse into a tremendous place that was heavy laden with blessings through the door of hope. What could have been a place heavy laden with sorrows became a place where He exalted His mercy that endures forever and ever, a place where Israel was made to rejoice over her enemies.

Oh, I wish people could cast away the negativity they hold onto! At times, they are downtrodden when dealing with people, and they end up thinking the worst about their situation. I wish that they could understand that when we labor, we turn our labor over to Jesus Christ and yoke up with Him who is meek and lowly in heart. He takes the things that are troubling us and bears the load. Giving us hope, He upholds us, and we are not ashamed (Psalm 119:116; Romans 5:5; Philippians 1:20).

Sometimes we have trouble getting rid of old habits and negative thought patterns. We keep talking and talking about them, but in the valley of Berachah we can be transformed.

God Gives the Victory

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

“But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we” (Numbers 13:30-31).

“Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines” (1 Samuel 17:19).

Caleb desperately tried to prepare the peo-

ple for battle. He and Joshua recognized that God was with them and that He would defeat the giants of the land for them. But ten spies refused to believe: "The giants are too strong. We won't be able to win," they whined. These ten spies did not see the hope with which God would embrace them and carry them to victory. They refused to take the door of hope and march into victory.

Hope is not waiting for something to happen. It is trusting the reality that something *will* happen. In 1 Samuel 17, the valley of Elah was another place where it seemed as though Israel was destined for defeat. The giant Goliath was mocking the army, daring someone to come out and fight him. David lived in the embrace of hope and went out to destroy Goliath and give Israel the victory. There was a potential for defeat, but David went through the door of hope and triumphed for all of Israel.

Mountains Made Plains

"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and

all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:5).

Sometimes we enter valleys that are surrounded by huge mountains. These mountains are trying to keep us down, trying to defeat us and hinder us. But in the midst is a door of hope. Jesus comes in and gives victory in the midst of the valley between the mountains.

These truths are permanent. Everything about that Book—the precious Holy Bible—is permanent, relevant, and excellent for our lives today.

Wandering minds that cruise through the desert of truth cannot comprehend the promised land of faith. They miss the power God has for them. They fail to live in the embrace of hope.

As people who have been totally cleansed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, we should repent of any secret sins. That is the only way we can be totally dedicated to Calvary and committed to a life that obeys God's call with fervency. Only what passes through Calvary can live. What is not of God, Calvary keeps in the grave. As it passes through Calvary, it comes out in resurrection. Otherwise, we are operating in the natural man, in religious attire, doing the best we can, trying to relate to God.

More than words, we can have the power of

God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 4:20). Everything can be new every morning for us. Yesterday, it was new. Last night, it was new. Tomorrow, it will be new. Every time I study God's Word, it is new! Like His mercies, God can never be anything but new (Lamentations 3:23).

I have never been as happy as I am right now with Christ and the wealth of His riches. I have never been closer to God than I am right now. Why? Because everything is new each morning. I don't walk in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.

Every day is fresh and new with God. It is so good to be in the presence of God, learning that though we have trespassed against Him, yet now there is hope concerning these things (Ezra 10:2). Instead of withdrawing and training your emotions to react, recognize that hope is the place God has designated for us to rest. And we can only rest in hope when we allow ourselves to become prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:12), locked in God's embrace.

CONCLUSION

Don't let anyone steal your hope. I don't care if your situation appears devastating and impossible—don't let anyone destroy your hope.

We are the products of God's righteousness. We are the substance of the Father's plan for redemption. We reveal the reality of the Holy Spirit's power of resurrection. We are potential ambassadors of Jesus Christ, God's Son, as we live here on earth in His stead.

When we pray in faith, the door of hope opens to us. When we are focused on Him and refuse to let other things plague, nag, and distract us, not a single thing can break the embrace of hope.

We can be filled with hope in the midst of sickness and in times of financial need. Have hope in God's power to heal. We can dogmatically believe in the possibilities of God's divine fulfillment of our prayers through His promises.

Father, we ask that you solidify these things in

our hearts in Christ's name and according to the authority of Your integrity. With this, put a faith period of divine declaration at the end of these statements. Amen.