

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 26th Nov 2018)**Read - 1 Peter 1:3-9**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. v3

Life can be tough, and there is so much that can drive us to give up hope: financial worries, tragedies, problems in the family, health issues. The clouds set in, problems hit us and it is easy to despair. Our world too faces many big problems: global warming, corruption, poverty, disease, wars. There is a lot to make us give up hope. When we are young we think life will be all roses, but we soon learn that it won't be like that.

Some of the effects of living a life without hope are that we can get the “**if only's**” - if only things hadn't happened that way; if only I hadn't made that decision; if only I'd never met so-and-a-so. This is sad because these attitudes block the way to constructive action. Or we **become critical**: - finding fault, seeing nothing good in things around us. People who have lost hope can become very negative and critical. Or **our happiness goes** - there is no joy or laughter. Or it **destroys our balance in life** - we no longer see things in their true perspective; we make wrong judgements of people and situations; we don't act as we should – we only see the dark side. Life without hope can move us into **depression** and even **suicide**; a desire to end it all.

But at the centre of the Christian faith there is Hope, and we will be exploring this more deeply during this week.

My life is in you Lord, my strength is in you Lord, my hope is in you Lord, in you, it's in you.

DAY 2**Read - 1 Peter 1:3-9**

“This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” v 5-6

The hope that Peter speaks about in v3 points us to having hope in our trials and suffering. He makes it clear that the hope we receive from following Jesus is not for the short term, but for the long term. Peter points out that these difficulties and this suffering now are just *'for a while'* but our life with God is for eternity. This knowledge is what gives us hope, and keeps and sustains us in our times of having to persevere for a while.

There is no question that the hope Jesus gives us makes a huge difference to our lives here on earth: giving us His love and grace to deal with the ugliness of our sin; His presence every day to guide and direct us into making good decisions; His community to help us through life in love; and providing meaning and purpose to life.

And this hope also points us to the glory that awaits us when we eventually get to spend eternity with God. It is so easy to get caught up in the worries of this current life and forget that this is just the preamble to eternity, and that our place there is secure!

***Leave God to order all thy days
And hope in him whate'er befall
Thou'lt find him in the evil days
Thy all-sufficient strength and guide
Who trusts in God's unfailing love
Builds on the rock that nought can move.***

DAY 3**Read - Hebrews 6:18-20**

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul. v19

In the Greek legend of Pandora's box, Jupiter, father of the gods, sent a woman to earth endowed with every good gift (Pandora means “*gift of everything*”). She was given a box and told not to open it, but being a woman (!) she was curious and decided to take a peep. As she opened the lid all the bad things in the world came out of the box and went into the world; plagues, suffering, hatred, killing, evil. She slammed the lid, but it was too late, she could never get them back in. Then a voice in the box said, “Open me”. Warily she opened it again, and out came Hope.

The story tries to explain why there is evil and pain and all the bad things in the world. But it also tries to remind us that there is always Hope. After the rain there is sunshine and a rainbow. There may be suffering, despair, and pain. Life may get in a mess, and sometimes it seems like we are in a maze with no exit. But the one thing that distinguishes man from other animals is that we have the capacity to hope.

So what is hope? In order to live it is essential to have a future, and having a future means having something to hope for, good or bad. Thus the things we wait for and our manner of waiting for them, partly make us what we are. The Greeks thought it was possible to have hopes that are both good or bad. But the Bible employs the word only to denote waiting for something good and favourable. Hoping is seizing in faith, a promise of life and salvation. To have hope is to have a future which, even if it contains trouble, will be good

Be joyful in hope, and patient in affliction. Paul

DAY 4

Read - Rom 8:22-25

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. V25

Hope means having a positive view of the future. Things may be bad right now, but we believe they will get better. If we are ill there will be healing. If we are out of work, we look forward to being employed, finding a job, and we will keep trying. It may be dark now, but morning will come and the sun will shine.

Hope is an essential part of life, if life is to be meaningful. Hope is a psychological necessity. It enables us to strive, to work, to achieve, to overcome obstacles and win. Without hope life is bleak and we might as well give up. In 2011 about 100 Chilean miners were trapped underground. Was anyone looking for them? Would it be possible for rescuers to reach them? But hope kept them going. Imagine if there was no hope

Despair is when we have given up hope. Things are bad now, and they are not going to get better, they are going to get worse. We are ill and there is no cure. It can only get worse. We are out of work and there is no chance of finding employment. It is dark and there is no light at the end of the tunnel (or maybe the light at the end of the tunnel is a train coming in the opposite direction!)

Christian hope rests on our faith that God is in control of the future. As someone said, "I do not know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future". God never promised to shield us from all bad things. We might have to go through them. But he did promise to be **with** us in all things. He promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of life. Emil Brunner

DAY 5

Read - Hebrews 6:18-20

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. Heb 6:19

Christian hope is far greater than mere human hope. It does not spring from some inner psychological process. It is not merely positive thinking. It is not dependent on circumstances or feelings. It is not just about temperament (some people are more optimistic than others by nature). Christian hope is anchored in God; rooted in the victory that Jesus won over the powers of evil when he died on the cross and God raised him from the dead. As Peter says, *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Pet 1:3.*

Have you ever reflected on how often the three great words of the Christian faith, "Faith", "Hope" and "Love", go together. Six times in the New Testament these three words appear in the same text. In Cor 13:13 Paul says, *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. but the greatest of these is love.* Faith is the source and ground of hope - because we believe we have hope. And Love conditions our hope and our actions, so we don't hope for the wrong things, or act in ways that are not consistent with love, or God's love, or the kingdom of God.

Christian hope also brings Joy. The Hebrew word for "Hope" includes the idea of "strength". The Greek word for hope includes the idea that Hope brings joy. If we hold these two ideas together, Strength and Joy, they bring something special to our understanding of Hope.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?

DAY 6

Read - Romans 5:1-11

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." v 3-5

Most importantly, Hope makes a difference to how I face life and all its challenges. If I have Hope I can live my life positively, with joy and without fear. I can live in obedience to God's laws knowing that this is the only way life will work properly, and enabling me to live in harmony and in peace. I will seek to make a positive Christian difference in the world, knowing that the Kingdom of God is more important than any other treasure. I will strive to share the love and grace of God in whatever ways I can. My hope gives power to these things. These things I can claim in faith because of God's love for me.

Hope also makes a difference to how I face problems and difficulties, because I know that even if the world is falling apart, and the things I thought were permanent come crashing down, I never have to say: *O God, I've got such a big problem.* Instead I can always say: *O problem, I've got such a big God!!*

As we said in the beginning, life can be tough. So many people are battling and struggling to cope. But the hope I have, which is God's precious gift to me, enables me to stand firm, or to go forward with strength and with Joy.

Whatever you do, don't lose your hold on the two great ropes of life; faith and hope. If you do, God pity you, because then you are adrift without sail or anchor. William Brownell