



# REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

31-DAY DEVOTIONAL





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A photograph of three white tulips with yellow centers, standing on green stems with long, pointed leaves. The background is a soft-focus image of a tree with many small white blossoms, creating a bokeh effect. The text "FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**FAITH,  
HOPE  
AND  
LOVE**

# DAY 1

*"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

- 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)

God's people have always had to navigate challenging times and try to make sense of them in their relationship with God. As we adjust to this unprecedented season, how can we do this well with Jesus?

I want to really encourage us all to set patterns of prayer and Scripture reading. In the Anglican tradition that I am a part of, our daily offices of prayer come with regular readings of Scripture. Many of you may choose to use other daily Scripture devotionals. God is present to us in the Scriptures and this is a time when we can really choose to dwell deeply in them with God.

I want to offer us one potential anchor from Scripture to help guide us as we come to the Bible in this season. This comes from the culminating passage in Paul's great hymn to love: *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."* 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)

As we come to our daily readings of Scripture, I want to encourage us to ask, "where do I see faith in this reading?", "where do I see hope in this

reading?", "where do I see love in this reading?" These are helpful questions to guide us into the world of the Scriptures. Then, take time to ask the Holy Spirit what faith, what hope, what love God wants to gift to us for our days and our lives now. Then, ask the Holy Spirit what ways we can be bearers of faith, of hope and of love to others. In a season when we can easily become overwhelmed, I want to offer this practice as a way of taking simple, small but significant steps with our God every day.

Let us come to times of Scripture reading with a conscious choice to believe in God's deep unconditional love for us and an expectation that we can grow in that love ourselves. My prayer is that we will all grow in faith, in hope and in love during this season. Choosing to dwell even more deeply in the Scriptures will help us to do this, particularly when we come to them with a confidence in God's love for us and for the world.

**Bishop Ellie Sanderson**

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AOTEAROA



# DAY 2

*"...the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel..." - Colossians 1:5 (NIV)*

The revelation of the gospel is that we were included in the greatest step of faith and obedience that Jesus Christ has taken in His death and resurrection. We died with Christ, but we also were raised up with Christ into a new life.

To be a follower of Jesus Christ is not about having a better life, but we are followers of Christ because we have a better hope! Our new life in Christ is infused with hope.

This passage talks about this hope that was the outcome of the good news and how it encouraged believers to be transformed in their minds, affecting their actions, and the fruit was that their faith in God was immovable and their love for one another was contagious.

We live in a time where people are spiritually lost and experience pain in so many areas of their lives. What is the answer then for the brokenness of our society?

We, the body of Christ, the church, are the answer! The deepening of our faith in God and our compassionate love for one another can affect the lostness and pain of people in our society.

The question is, does your faith reflect and declare the lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of your life? Does your love for people move you from a place of concern, to a place of compassion?

This means that we have to sacrifice some of our own man-made plans and desires and put God first.

This means that we move into action to address the pain and need of people around us.

This means that we live beyond ourselves.

I am so encouraged not just by the good news that transformed the individuals in this passage, but also the good news of the faith, love and hope of the individuals that were spreading so much that it was recorded in this magnificent letter from Paul the Apostle.

My prayer is that the whole of Aotearoa will be flooded with news about the faith, love and hope, modelled by every believer, the body of Christ, in the years to come!

**Pastor Jaques Van Wyk**

DOXA DEO AUCKLAND





# DAY 3

*"But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armour of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation." - 1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NLT)*

News and noise bombards us at every moment. In every silent moment we are tempted to bring out our devices and fill the space with the latest update. Everywhere we hear warnings about 'disinformation' and 'misinformation'. Some have lost belief that our news sources can be trusted. How are we to stay 'clearheaded' when we don't know what we can believe?

Today's verse is from a precious letter written by the Apostle Paul to the early church in Thessalonica. This town was under the domination of Rome. 'Peace and Security' was touted as the outcome of Rome's unflinching domination, under which no contrary views were permitted.

Taking the view that Jesus was their ultimate Lord led to great hardships for the believers there. Yet they persevered, even to death. While those around them lived sexually exploitative and alcohol muddled lives, Paul encouraged these followers of Jesus to live purely and think clearly. They were not asleep and dreaming, they were awake and focused. Truth would grant protection from the misleading and coercive clamour around them. Sanity was their beacon amidst the delusions of the world.

So how do we today protect our minds from getting misled? From falling asleep or becoming intoxicated by the deluge of viewpoints and information that may or may not be accurate?


This letter to the Thessalonians gives several ways to keep clearheaded: We are to give each other comfort and encouragement. We are to resist evil and dishonouring practices. We are to rejoice, be thankful, and pray. Furthermore, we are to realise that our Lord Jesus will return for us. Even if we feel our world is in a dark night, Jesus will return and bring His light. Of this we can be certain.

As we wait with certainty and hope, let us look regularly into His Word, the Bible. For it is there that we find unchanging truth. We can keep our minds clear, despite the changing social mores and invasive lies around us, for His Word is timeless and shines light in all circumstances.

Be clearheaded. Remember sanity is not found in the correct YouTube channel or Podcast, but in holding onto the Word of God as truth. It is found in living peacefully and rightly together and trusting in His sure return.

**Jonathan Dove**

GRACECITY CHURCH

A photograph of a person's hands holding a white mug and reading an open Bible on a wooden table. The text 'HOPE IN GOD AND HIS WORD' is overlaid in large white letters. The Bible is open to a page with a red bookmark. The background is a plain white wall.

# HOPE IN GOD AND HIS WORD



# DAY 4

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."  
- Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

His Scripture was part of a prophetic word given by Jeremiah to the people of Judah who had been taken captive in Babylon. They must have felt like God had abandoned them in this dry and barren land.

When we are facing overwhelming challenges, and are struggling to pray and read God's Word, we can easily lose our perspective and lose hope. Our problems seem larger than life – it is as though we are looking at them through a microscope!

Today, we may feel that we are living in a strange land with many of our relatives, neighbours and work colleagues having a different belief system to us. Some may even despise us because of our faith in Christ.

If your vision is blurred and your life seems out of focus, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith! If you are suffering persecution because of your faith, struggling with life, and feeling isolated, don't despair!

You can find comfort and hope in the Words of God.

Because God is all-knowing and all-seeing, we can have confidence that our present circumstances or location is not a problem to God! He can cause rivers to flow in desert places and provide quail to feed us!

We may be surrounded by enemies, but God will protect and provide for us! He declared to the people of Judah that they would prosper! Nothing is impossible for Him! Similarly, God can work a miracle in your situation!

He is a way-maker, and He will complete the good work that He has begun in you. (*Philippians 1:6*).

We can get a new outlook on life by adjusting our viewing lens! If we look through a telescope, our perspective is completely different! There is greater depth and distance to our vision, where new possibilities can be seen on the horizon and exciting discoveries to be revealed!

You can be full of hope today because God knows you intimately. He protects you, and your future is secured in His mighty plans!

**Pastor Craig Munro**

KING OF KINGS CHURCH





# DAY 5

*"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet  
and a light for my path.  
You are my refuge and my shield;  
your word is my source of hope."  
- Psalm 119: 105, 114 (NLT)*

We live in a world of increasing disinformation, misinformation, deliberate misleading titles and articles, as well as fake media, designed to suit any type of agenda. As we become flooded with all these opinions and attitudes, all purporting to be facts and a single source of 'truth,' we can become overwhelmed, fearful of being betrayed, as well as distrusting of news and the people who share it. Our survival instinct is to retract back into ourselves, to cut out the world around us, and focus on what we believe to be true. This can lead to further suffering as we become vulnerable to more false information, seeking ideals that match our own, and can develop into an unhealthy resentment towards anybody who believes otherwise. When we begin to lose trust in the world and the people around us, we begin to lose hope, too.

But there is good news for those who believe in our God and His Word, which is the ultimate source

of everlasting Truth, and in the One who proclaims himself to be *"the way, the truth, and the life"* John 14:6 (KJV)! Our Lord and Saviour is the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13), knows all things (Hebrews 4:13) and has all things under His control (Isaiah 43:2-3). His Word was given to us as a gift of enduring truth. As Isaiah states, *"the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever"* - Isaiah 40:8 (ESV).

Instead of retreating in bitterness and fear from this world of lies, let us read our Bibles with confidence, allowing the Word of God to truly be our source of hope!

May we fully rely on, and restore, our trust in God's Word to show us what is true in any given situation. Let it show us how we are to conduct ourselves, what we can confidently believe, and let it fill us with His love for Him and those around us, as we continue to walk with His Words as a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.

**Stephanie Heeley**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 6

## One Day at a Time

*"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness."*

- Lamentations 3:22-23 (NKJV)

I'm grateful to God that I was drawn to a wonderful passage of Scripture found in all places in the book of Lamentations *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness."* Lamentations 3:22-23 (NKJV)

One of the keys in this COVID-19 crisis is to face one day at a time. Don't look too far ahead. God gives us new mercy and grace every day. You have enough grace to get successfully through today, but you don't have grace for tomorrow. As you take one day at a time you will find you have enough of God's mercy and help to get you through today, then tomorrow, then the next day for as long as is necessary. Always remember you are stronger than you think, smarter than you realise and more loved by God than you could ever imagine.

Another key is the word expectation, which can be seen as similar to faith. The Bible says *"according to your faith be it unto you."* Matthew 9:29 (KJV). We tend to get in life what we expect or believe will happen. I want to encourage you to have a positive expectation, that with God's help you can successfully come through stressful situations in good heart and in great shape. Expect God to do amazing things during this time. If you have children expect them to behave incredibly well, to become like angels. Have a positive and not a negative expectation. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NKJV). God is always working for your good and for the good of each day – his working will be there.

You will get through all stressful situations and come out stronger, closer to God and others.

**Pastor Tak Bhana**

CHURCH UNLIMITED





# DAY 7

*"Listen to me, O house of Jacob,  
all the remnant of the house of  
Israel,  
who have been borne by me from  
before your birth,  
carried from the womb;  
even to your old age I am he,  
and to grey hairs I will carry you.  
I have made, and I will bear;  
I will carry and will save."  
- Isaiah 46:3-4 (ESV)*

I have just read the book "Nomadland" by Jessica Bruder, which has also been made into a documentary film. This is a warm, sad, hopeful, scary depiction of old age in America, following the great financial crash of 2008. Thousands of older, retired people have lost their homes and many more have chosen to leave them and spend life on the road in caravans, house-buses, and RVs. They earn their petrol money and meagre living expenses being exploited at below-liveable wages by Amazon in its massive warehouses, and in beet harvesting and other casual work. They migrate around the USA based on seasonal work availability.

The hopeful and warm part of the book is seeing the resilience, initiative, and comradeships of the human spirit in many of these people, whom the author spent years befriending and

following. Most of them consider themselves "houseless" rather than "homeless" and their communal identity is with others in the same situation.

The sad and scary part is to realise that they represent tens (perhaps hundreds) of thousands of people who have been left behind by a ruthless and exploitative economic system, people who have nowhere to go in their old age but the road ahead, and no one to look after them but themselves.

*Isaiah 46:3-4* gives the people of God the hope and assurance of the never-ending love and care of an almighty God. From birth to "old age and grey hair" this God has carried, nurtured, cared for us, and promises always to do so. If the greatness of a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members, then God is the inspiration and model of the very best of the best. Our divine midwife and old-age caregiver never grows weary of supplying all that life needs, promising to sustain and to rescue those he has brought into being.

I have made, and I will bear.

I will carry and will save.

**Stephen Pattemore**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

# DAY 8

*"The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.  
Those who know your name trust in you,  
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."  
- Psalm 9:9-10 (NIV)*

Throughout history, we read accounts of Christians who have been persecuted, betrayed and martyred because of their faith. This Scripture tells us that God is our refuge – a present help in time of need! When we cry out to God in our prayers; He hears us! When we worship God; He draws near to us. When we experience stormy times and seek His face, His Word becomes clearer to us. It anchors our souls, and provides us with comfort, peace, and hope.

The Psalmist says that God is a stronghold in times of trouble. A stronghold is a structure that provides safety from the enemy. Picture in your mind a large castle or a fort with thick walls. It is very difficult to gain entrance into a structure of this size

and magnitude. Just as people are kept safe from the enemy in a fortress, similarly the Lord will protect us in our battles. The Lord's presence and power surrounds us and we are kept safe in Him!

Can I encourage you to seek God afresh in this season? Tell God about your struggles and invite Him to be your refuge and stronghold. He promises that we will never be abandoned or forsaken. In *1 Peter 5:7* we are exhorted to cast all our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for us!

We know that faith comes by hearing God's Word, so we need to replace any doubt, anxiety and confusion, with the truth. When you are feeling oppressed or overwhelmed, put your trust in God.

Make a daily commitment to meditate on the promises of hope found in God's Word. It will build up your faith and transform your thinking!

**Sonia Munro**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ





# DAY 9

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*  
- Romans 15:13 (NIV)

"God is good. *All the time.* And all the time. *God is \_\_\_\_ !*"

How many times have we heard this in our Christian walk... But, deep down do we actually believe it? In the midst of a turbulent last two years, do you believe that God is good?

As we trust in God's unchanging goodness, we should expect him to work all things for good Romans 8:28. No matter how difficult and unclear our circumstances may be, a hopeful heart knows deeply that God will come through and ultimately work everything out for our good.

Imagine if we had faith for God to come through like Moses and the Israelites as they were penned in at the edge of the Red Sea. Or like Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem as they were encircled by the Assyrians. Or if we had a trust

in God to work our circumstances for good like Joseph in his years in slavery and prison. Or the hope and perseverance of Paul to keep moving forward amidst beatings, abuse, shipwrecks and multiple stints in prison... The church of Aotearoa would be truly unstoppable!

As we live like this, continually growing in hope and trust in God, it brings peace and joy. A deep internal peace that no matter what's going on, God's got us and is in control; And a contagious joy in everything we do, perpetually filled with an unshakable expectation for good.

## Prayer

God in heaven, I believe you are good. I trust you. I love you.

I ask that you would fill me afresh with joy and peace as I trust in you, so that I may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Michael Jenkins**

CATALYST MOVEMENT





A photograph of a forest scene. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of trees, creating a bright, glowing effect in the upper center. The foreground is filled with a field of purple flowers, possibly lupines, and some dark, mossy logs or stumps are visible. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

**HOPE  
KILLS  
FEAR**



# DAY 10

*"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."*

- 2 Corinthians 1:19-20 (NKJV)

Have you ever noticed how we love to regale each other with travel stories? Especially stories of travel gone wrong! Tales of flights missed, delayed, or diverted to exotic (or less than exotic) places. Luggage lost or left behind. Wrong trains that took us where we hadn't meant to go. Cruises that bore no resemblance to what was on the website. Even in the 21st century, with the best technology at our fingertips, travel doesn't always go to plan.

We should all, then, have some sympathy for Paul. The context for our reading is Paul having to change his travel plans. He doesn't tell us why (although we can be pretty certain it didn't involve airlines). But it's not the change of plans that has riled Paul. It's something else. Paul's critics have

latched onto Paul's change of plan and portrayed it as disarray. "Paul's message is about as reliable as his travel arrangements," they hoot.

Paul's response is strident! "Yes, our travel arrangements have changed, but our message has been 100% rock solid. Your hope resides in God's promises, and God doesn't change."

Disrupted travel plans are usually just inconvenient at the time, and before long we are laughing as we tell our friends about them. It can be a different story when life doesn't go to plan. When loved ones die, or our health fails us, or people we love betray us, or careers end abruptly. Those events can leave us feeling as if there is nothing to hope for, that all hope is lost and God is nowhere to be found. But Paul reminds us that even in those times there is hope. Others may fail us, and we may fail ourselves, but God's promises are 100% rock solid. To that we can say "Amen", to the glory of God.

**Allan Davidson**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

# DAY 11

*"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*  
- Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

Our God is the ultimate encourager. Three times in Joshua 1 God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. Joshua has already shown much strength and courage in previous chapters, but he will need more strength and courage to complete his task of taking the Israelites into the Promised Land. Joshua then goes on, in verses 10–15, to encourage the Israelites and remind them of God's promises.

God's Word contains many stories of encouragement, but the story of Joshua is one of my favourites. Moses,

Gideon, David, Elijah, Ezekiel, Peter and many others are examples that illustrate God encouraging His people. Maybe you have a favourite Biblical character that encourages you. Share this with others; they may need to know the encouragement of the Lord at this time.

With this COVID-19 crisis, we are in a wilderness season and we need to encourage each other to stay strong and courageous. This is the time to share the Word of God with your family, friends and neighbours.

Remember: The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

**James Williamson**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 12

*"God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear though  
the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved  
into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its  
swelling."  
- Psalm 46:1-2 (ESV)*

On Boxing Day 2004 an undersea landslide off the coast of Sumatra unleashed one of the deadliest tsunamis we have experienced in modern times, ravaging Aceh, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia, sweeping away homes and places of worship and work, buildings and boats, and the lives of a quarter of a million people: Muslims, Buddhists and Christians alike. In the aftermath of that, we visited our friends among the Urak Lawoi people of South Thailand. They had miraculously suffered no loss of life, but homes and boats had been destroyed and a whole way of life dependent on the sea had been dealt a critical blow. We were deeply moved by the Christian community's response of thankfulness to God and solidarity and support for their people. Psalm 46 became dramatically relevant and meaningful to them and to us.

This Psalm does not promise that those who trust in God will escape human disasters arising from natural events that have always played such a formative role in shaping our world.

But in the middle of those disasters, they affirm "God is our refuge ... therefore we will not fear."

Tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions are unpredictable. Extreme weather events often give us some warning, but are equally devastating. Pandemics like COVID-19 ebb and flow in a mixture of randomness and statistical predictability. War has human greed and hatred as its immediate (and avoidable) cause. Whether the source is human, partly human or natural, predictable or unpredictable, preventable or not, in all such situations the people of God are encouraged to recall that "God is our refuge." This is the source of true security and hope. The unchanging and powerful love of an Eternal God. In the face of events we cannot control, whether mountains shaking in the heart of the sea, or the decisions of politicians and leaders, this Psalm forces us to look back to the greatest power at the heart of the universe, the God who is "with us" in the midst of everything.

*"God is our refuge ... therefore we will not fear." Psalm 46:1-2 (ESV)*

**Stephen Pattemore**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

# DAY 13

*Prayer of Protection*

***My Refuge and My Fortress***

*"Those who live in the shelter of the Most High*

*will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

*This I declare about the LORD:*

*He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;*

*he is my God, and I trust him.*

*For he will rescue you from every trap*

*and protect you from deadly disease.*

*He will cover you with his feathers.*

*He will shelter you with his wings.*

*His faithful promises are your armour and protection."*

*- Psalm 91:1-4 (NLT)*

This Psalm is a prayer of protection and contains reassurance that God is watching over us and protecting each one of us.

Can I encourage you to meditate on this Psalm over this time and read it to the Lord as a prayer? This is a prayer for you, your family, your home, your work or business. Let's pray it in faith and believe knowing that the Word of God is true *"The very essence of your words is truth; all your just regulations will stand forever."* Psalm 119:160 (NLT)

Isn't it amazing that God knows us so personally? So let's pray this prayer not just for ourselves but also for our family, our businesses and our country. Make it personal by inserting the names of your family members, friends, workplaces and businesses.

***James Williamson***

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 14

*"But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you.*

*O Israel, the one who formed you says,*

*"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.*

*I have called you by name; you are mine.*

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.*

*When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown.*

*When you walk through the fire of oppression,*

*you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.*

*For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.*

*I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom;*

*I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place."*

*- Isaiah 43:1-3 (NLT)*

As you reflect on your present circumstance, do you believe in the Word of God, which tells you not to fear for He has saved you? Do you believe that you will not drown, be burned up, consumed, or left alone when all the world has turned against you?

He is the Lord, your God, your Saviour, your Redeemer, and He declares to you today: 'Do not be afraid! He has already saved you from your present and future circumstances, and He has already declared that 'you are mine.' We know and quote Romans to ourselves often, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" *Romans 8:31 (NIV)*. But do we really believe in the hope that is made so easily available to us, which covers all our fears and removes all obstacles to our peace?

Listen, today, to the Lord who created you, who knows you by name, and who has ransomed you so you may be free. Believe in His Words, trust in His salvation, and above all things, hold to the life-giving hope of our Lord and Saviour.

May you be blessed and your hearts be uplifted as you take hold of this truth today.

**Stephanie Heeley**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

# DAY 15

*"So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your  
God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous  
right hand.  
'All who rage against you  
will surely be ashamed and  
disgraced;  
those who oppose you  
will be as nothing and perish.  
Though you search for your enemies,  
you will not find them.  
Those who wage war against you  
will be as nothing at all.  
For I am the Lord your God  
who takes hold of your right hand  
and says to you, Do not fear;  
I will help you."  
- Isaiah 41:10-13 (NIVUK)*

I was walking along the beach the other week and stopped and watched as a small girl, maybe 2 years old, ventured out into the waves, her dad not too far behind keeping a close eye on her. As a wave rolled in, she turned, looked up at her dad and reached out to him. Instinctively he grabbed her hand, and they spent the next few minutes jumping waves.

Precious moments are created when your child reaches out and grasps your hand. Hand holding, physical support, tangible presence provides us with added strength, security and an ability to get through life's challenges.

My kids are teenagers now and not so inclined to want to hold my hand crossing the road. However, their reach out is "Dad, how do I sort

out insurance? Can you take me for a driving lesson?", or whatever 'wave' they are attempting to jump over at any given time.

There is added strength and confidence that flows just by having someone alongside, walking with you through a situation, within arm's length. But imagine having the creator of the universe saying to you, *"I am the Lord your God"* as He does in Isaiah 41:10

It's one of those 'I have chosen you, you are part of the family, I'm your Father' moments of identity. He follows it up with these encouraging words:

*"Do not fear, do not be dismayed,  
I will help you, I will strengthen you,  
I will hold you up.  
I will hold your right hand."*

Right now, allow that strength, that support, the 'I've got you' flow into your spirit and your soul. Then go out and jump some waves.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father

I thank you that you are with me,

That I have no need to fear or be dismayed.

That you will strengthen me and help me;

That you will uphold me with your righteous right hand.

Amen

**Pastor Glenn Bilby**

C3 EASTERN SUBURBS



# DAY 16

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*

*Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." - Deuteronomy 31:6-8 (NIV)*

When God promised His people that He would be with them, He didn't promise an easy journey. In fact, the journey to the promised land was filled with deserts to cross and giants to slay. God will take us to the promised land, but He needs something from us.

*"Be strong and courageous"*. These were the words Moses spoke to Joshua privately and also publicly before the nation of Israel when he appointed him to be his successor. When God calls Joshua this phrase is repeated another four times (Joshua 1).

When a phrase is repeated this many times, we have to stop and consider its meaning and importance. Let's consider two observations:

- **Strength** comes through exercise. We condition our bodies through exercise to become strong. In the same way, our spirit and mind needs conditioning to be strong and ready for battle.
- **Courage** is a position of the heart. It is the willingness to stand on the promises of God in spite of the fear of the giants that pose a threat to us.

The invitation to enter the promised land requires the discipline

to become strong and the faith to demonstrate courage. Our strength is built through the disciplines we practise and our courage need not come from our own abilities, but from the hope in our Father's faithfulness.

Further, in the book of Joshua, we read that God called Joshua to meditate on His Word day and night: *"...For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success..." Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)*

God doesn't simply leave us with an unrealistic demand of being strong and courageous, instead He gives us His Word, filled with all His promises. He calls us to spend time daily in His presence and His Word. In doing so, we will see the fruit of strength and courage develop in our lives. Strength and courage founded in the hope of God's promises, are what He needs to take us into our promised land.

May we learn how to strengthen ourselves in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6) and be courageous as we place our hope in Him. May we find ourselves in the Scriptures daily to strengthen our faith, and may we walk into our promised land through the grace of God.

## Prayer

Our Father, thank you that you've promised to never leave or forsake us. Thank you that we have access, through faith, to every promise in your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me how to meditate on your living Word every day, and help me maintain the spiritual disciplines that keep me focused on your calling for my life.

Amen

**Wynand Jacobs**

FAMILYLIFE NZ

# DAY 17

*"The LORD will guide you continually,  
And satisfy your soul in drought,  
And strengthen your bones;  
You shall be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water, whose  
waters do not fail."  
- Isaiah 58:11 (NKJV)*

Last winter I sat on the banks of Huka falls in Taupo. I witnessed the raging river pressing around 220,000 litres of water per second, down the rocky 11 metre drop, generating an almighty roar and an ethereal atmosphere. The rushing waves and swirling pools surged forward, crashing against the volcanic banks, causing fine mist and water droplets to settle on my face - embodying the sense of power and force beneath me. The water flowed so rapidly, and yet quickly seemed to disappear as it traversed down the falls into the gushing river below.

Despite all its brilliance and power, that water could not wash me and make me heaven worthy. This experience reminded me of the time when Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman, promising her water which was "life giving", truly satisfying, and able to give her eternal life.

How appealing that well of water must have sounded to this woman who found herself drawing well water at the well in the middle of the day! Jesus explained to her that drinking water from a physical well doesn't truly quench your thirst, because you need to return to the same well day after day.

As a despised and desperate woman, being able to access the well of "living water" that never ran dry and satisfied her thirst was certainly an answer to her prayers.

The life-giving words found in the Scriptures cleanse us, refresh us, and restore us when we seek Him for our daily needs. Jesus is teaching us about the living spring of the Holy Spirit which resides in every Christian believer, which quenches our spiritual thirst, empowers us for life, and qualifies us for heaven!

Today we can find hope and encouragement in God's Word. We can rest in the assurance that despite our sins and short-comings, like the Samaritan woman, God still pursues a relationship with us. If you are in a dry and weary place, drink afresh from the well of living water that resides in you. Drink often and drink as much as you need, knowing that there is no limit to the supply! Remember the words that God has declared over your life. Like the refreshing touch of water vapour on your face, so the words of God will lift your spirit, and His words will propel you forward, into the overflowing life He promises us (John 10:10).

## *Prayer*

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge your awesomeness! Thank you that I have a fountain of life-giving water within me that quenches the hunger and thirst of my soul. May this fountain overflow in me so that my words and actions encourage others around me. I thank you that we have hope in You and that because of You we can be full of hope! May I flow in the Holy Spirit all the days of my life! In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray!

Amen.

**Pastor Raj Kumar**

KING OF KINGS CHURCH





# HOPE IN THE HARD TIMES

# DAY 18

*"Love the LORD, all his faithful ones.  
The LORD protects the loyal,  
but fully repays the arrogant.  
Be strong, and let your heart be  
courageous,  
all you who put your hope in the  
LORD."*  
- Psalm 31:23-24 (CSB)

We live in a dangerous world filled with moral evil. It is a world that suffers from wars, nasty talk, and wicked people. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we all face enemies in life – it is to be expected when there is sin in the world.

There are different ways that people respond to the enemies in their lives. Some choose to strike back with 'an eye for an eye' mentality. Some choose to suffer in silence and become bitter. But there is only one refuge worth turning to in this kind of situation.

In Psalm 31, the psalmist David tells us who we should have for our refuge. In this Psalm, David mentioned that he sought refuge in God (v. 1), requested refuge from God (v. 2) and recognised that God was his refuge (v. 4). God was the refuge for David from the enemies that he faced, and he should be our refuge as well.

Before you think that those whom David faced were not as difficult as those you face, consider how he described what he was going through

*"I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within. I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbours—even my friends are afraid to come near me. When they see me on the street, they run the other way."* Psalm 31:10-11 (NLT).

When we face enemies in our lives, we need to seek refuge in God like David did (v. 1). We ought to have our trust in him (v. 14). We also need to pray to him. How? We can start by praising him for His faithful love, His knowledge of our situation, and His protection over us (vv. 7-8, 19-21). We can then share what we go through with him (vv. 9-13). Lastly, we can bring our requests to him regarding the situation (vv. 15-18).

David ended his Psalm with a word of encouragement to God's faithful ones – *"Love the Lord, all his faithful ones. The Lord protects the loyal, but fully repays the arrogant. Be strong, and let your heart be courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord."* Psalm 31:23-24 (CSB). This ought to be our response and comfort knowing that God is our hope for deliverance and refuge from our enemies.

**Abraham Suryantyo**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ





# DAY 19

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

- Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

These words of Jesus were spoken to those who had become tired and weary because of the many burdens and unrealistic expectations, which had been placed upon them by certain religious leaders of the day.

As the people sought to adhere to and observe these unhelpful teachings, they became overwhelmed and weary from trying to carry something, which in reality, was not really theirs to carry.

Knowing this, Jesus offered the only real solution which in turn would bring freedom and release from their ongoing struggle and the weight of such expectations, a freedom that has its roots firmly established in the words... "Come to me".

Jesus invited the people to come to Him, to draw aside and to learn a new way: a way that speaks of humility, gentleness, and lowliness of heart. He invites you and me to do the same. We can come as we are, weary and worn out, tired and torn, and

under pressure from the weight and the burdens that others have either placed upon us, or that we ourselves have taken on.

As we begin to draw near to Jesus, listening to Him and learning from Him, we will start to see that His ways are different, and His burden is light.

Jesus promises us rest for our weary souls, a rest that can only truly be experienced and found in a relationship with Him. As we come to Jesus, we can do so with an absolute assurance and an unquestionable hope that He will both accomplish and achieve all that he has promised to do.

For those of us who are tired, weary, and worn out from the different worries, concerns and burdens of the day, Jesus says, "Come to me". No longer do we need to try and get by in our own strength or our own abilities, which are not sufficient. Jesus says come, "Come to me ... and I will give you rest", a rest that can be found in no one else and in nothing else, other than in Jesus Himself.

**Steve McRobie**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 20

*"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.) And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words." - Romans 8:18-26 (NLT)*

The question "Why?" is one of our earliest responses to the world – as anyone who has to do with children knows well! But it's a complex question. On one level it asks for causes. Here, the question "Why COVID-19?" has some sobering answers. Humans have not treated animals with respect as God's handiwork. So, the virus leapt species. And we have lived as though the resources (and the atmosphere) of

our planet have no limit. So, the virus spread. These answers are important when we think about the world beyond COVID-19 but they are cold comfort in the middle of a pandemic.

When we ask "Why?" we are more often interested in purpose. And to that there is no easy answer. But an important part of a Christian understanding is that our world is not the way it should be, nor the way it will be. We, along with our whole world, are in the middle of a much bigger story which begins with Creation and heads towards Re-Creation. And we, as people who have already made God our king, have an important role in that process.

But caught in the middle of the story, one of our most authentic responses is to join in Creation's lament (vv. 22-23), as does the Spirit Himself (v. 26). This startling fact opens us up to the most important Christian response to the "Why?" question – but that deserves another whole meditation in itself.

For people of faith, answering the "Why?" question is closely tied up with God's goodness. Why does a God who is all-good and all-powerful allow suffering? Many answers are offered, many of them helpful, but none truly satisfactory. Yes, God wants us to grow individually, and our experience is part of his larger plan which works through suffering to glory.

But the deepest response is not an answer to the "Why?" question at all. It is to realise that in Jesus, God has joined us in the middle of our desperate plight. God is with us.

**Stephen Pattemore**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 21

*"Hope in the Lord  
Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can  
fathom.  
He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the  
weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint."  
- Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV)*

In difficult times like the current pandemic many of us have faced difficult situations regarding our families, our health and our futures, which have caused us anxiety as we seek solutions and ways to move forward.

Today's Scripture reading in *Isaiah 40* reminds us that in the midst of our genuine concerns and worries – we can confidently place our ultimate hope in our God who is the Eternal Creator of 'the ends of the earth' (and that includes New Zealand), the One who spoke our world into existence.

He understands our concerns and is always available, to strengthen and energise us when we become weary and burdened with life's issues.

We can take huge encouragement from these verses to look up to our powerful God and to 'place our hope in Him'. Other Bible versions use the expression '*trust in the Lord*' (NLT) or '*wait on the Lord*' (NKJV).

The promise is that as we place our trust and hope in the Lord (as we wait upon Him in prayer and faith), that He in turn will indeed renew our inner strength and enable us to 'soar on wings like eagles.'

**John Watson**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 22

*"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 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."*  
- Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)

I think we can all agree that the last two years of the pandemic have been hard for most families. We have all seen the economic impact and cost of the pandemic but what about the invisible impact on our children? As parents, regardless of the ages of our kids, we all share similar concerns about the impacts of the pandemic on their emotional well-being. It seems that during the current pandemic children are deprived of so many 'normal' things that are considered vital in shaping healthy normal human beings.

As a parent it is good to be reminded that regardless of what is going on in the world, God wants us to be flying high the banner of HOPE in our households. We need to ensure we are being 'real' with our children and admitting that being a Christian does not mean life will always be easy. God allows certain hardships and challenging seasons in our lives, so that we can be cultivated into someone stronger and more resilient.

The truth is that, YES the last two years have been challenging, but

be encouraged that regardless of the present sufferings we face, we know that through perseverance, God can cultivate character and hope in us. We can be encouraged that He who started a good work in us will see it to completion and that there is definitely more to come! We need to continue shouting our praise even when we are faced with hard seasons. God's Word promises that troubles and tough times can develop passionate patience in us. As this patience develops and grows in us it forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we are never left feeling short-changed. Quite the contrary— *"we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit."* (Adapted from the Message)

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for HOPE. Thank you that you allow certain hardships and challenging seasons in our lives in order for us to grow into someone stronger. I pray that you would saturate every member of my household not only with your faith and love but also with your HOPE. I pray that you will give us the strength to persevere and always hold fast to your HOPE. Thank you that you walk with us and that when we are in YOU, we will never be forsaken. We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

**Wendy Smit**

FAITH4FAMILIES



# DAY 23

*The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green  
pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of  
righteousness  
For His name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the  
valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they  
comfort me.  
- Psalm 23:1-4 (NKJV)*

It could be argued that the most comforting image for God in the Bible is that of the shepherd. Mark 6 draws on Psalm 23 extensively. Note the references in Mark 6 to 'banquet', 'anointing', 'green pastures', as well as the explicit mention of the shepherd.

Psalm 23 is the narrative we need to have playing in our heads when the dominant narrative of the day is "I'm lost and hungry". The 'poor in spirit' can move on from self-condemnation and victimhood if the loudest voice that they can hear in their heads is, 'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.' Although

we are without comprehension, alone, rejected and condemned, the shepherd is placing us on His shoulders leading us to fresh and green pastures.

Our drooping spirits are acknowledged, but are not the last word. The resurrection of Jesus is anticipated. Death and sin are defeated. The battle is still being fought, but victory has been achieved. Our wounds are being anointed by our loving God. We are being fed by a generous God.

## *Prayer*

Thank you, Lord, that you are my shepherd and you and only you can lead me to true calmness.

Help me to hear your voice of encouragement and love towards me so that I will not fear what I see in the world around me. Comfort me when I hear the roar of fear in my day and deliver me through the uncertainty that can surround me.

Help me to see and feel your presence all around me as I walk through my day.

Amen.

**Peter Hay-McKenzie**

CHAPLAIN



# DAY 24

## Rumours of Glory

*"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" - Romans 12:9-12 (NIV)*

The high seas are pounding, the shoreline eroding with each new beating. The sea-level is rising they say. Extreme weather all around the globe. We're at peak Covid and the restrictions are ending, but there's a long tail. Prices are up, shelves emptying. The disruption has people in a spin ... there is no new normal.

War is raging in Ukraine, whole cities flattened, refugees fleeing across the borders. There's talk of World War 3. Social Media amplifies every fear, divides us; even the simple truths we once took comfort in are under attack as double mindedness challenges mental wellbeing. The evil in the world is finding new platforms to assail us, seeding doubt like weeds in the cash crop.

In the midst of seeming chaos, the waves pound out a rhythm on the shore, the Autumn equinox aligns night and day as we move into Matariki, at last celebrating a Pacific New Year. All the crops should be harvested by now as balance is restored in the night sky.

We remember those who have passed on, reflect, plan and prepare for the next step on our journey. The

heavens still declare the glory and the earth and all of us belong to our Creator. No matter what. No matter what.

These cycles the ancients knew have become dim under the city lights of a world searching for love in all the wrong places, wearied by the tight routines of this, that and the other thing in our busy-ness. Desperate for distraction at the end of the day, the week, the year.

In need of remembering the higher call, that great light of eternal love that draws us with a magnetic pull to realign with Christ the true centre of gravity for our thought worn hearts.

In responding, we are shaken from our insularity, alerted to the needs of others, the call to be alongsiders.

Lord of the Heavens, renew us with your holy breath; softly urge the zeal, the spark, once diminished by drudgery, routine and religion, back into flame.

With heads rising and patient perseverance help us rediscover the joy, even laughter, as we gaze beyond the static, the endless bad news, to that other stream that comes from on high, vitalising, unblocking, clearing the way.

Keep it coming. Top up this neglected God space, flow over with inspired insights and conversation that cuts through with fresh vision, and enough love, to love life into our neighbours, no matter where they live. No longer crashing waves of doubt and rumours of war, but waves of hope and rumours of glory.



*Prayer*

Father of Lights, resurrected Son,  
brooding Spirit of recreation, guide us  
as we cling to what is good and hope  
for better days and ways to express  
your gift of life. We ask for strength  
in dark times and boldness to step  
beyond mediocrity, to amplify the  
light and love you have granted us,  
that others may be drawn to Christ  
and changed by your presence. May  
your light pierce through doubt and  
darkness as we become prayerful  
ambassadors of hope.

***Keith Newman***

AUTHOR - BIBLE & TREATY



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a small green plant branch with several leaves. The person's face is blurred in the background, showing a smile. The text "HOPE FOR LIVING TODAY" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

**HOPE  
FOR  
LIVING  
TODAY**



# DAY 25

*"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,  
whose confidence is in him.  
They will be like a tree planted by the water  
that sends out its roots by the stream.  
It does not fear when heat comes;  
its leaves are always green.  
It has no worries in a year of drought  
and never fails to bear fruit."  
- Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NIV)*

Faithful people are like trees that grow beside a river where their roots extend deep to where there is a continuous source of water to sustain them. We, who are faithful people are not immune to the heat and adversity of life, but we are assured that we will overcome life's challenges when we put our faith and trust in God, for He is the source of living water, a very present help in the time of trouble (drought) and our refuge and strength in times of weakness.

Verse 7 begins with "But ...," a conjunction signalling a contrast in which living a life of faithfulness to God is compared to a life that trusts only in human strength and ability (vv. 5-6). Jeremiah says a life that trusts only in human ability is like a shrub that lives in the desert. It is stunted and has no hope for survival for any length of time.

Trusting completely in the Lord necessarily implies walking closely

with Him – allowing His presence to soak into our hearts and standing firm on His Word. When you place your confidence in God, you become confident, for you know that God is in control.

Trusting God does not mean that you are in denial, but that you have placed an issue before God, and you have faith in Him to work it out on your behalf.

We have nothing to fear when we trust God. We do not have to worry about heat or drought, nor be afraid when tough times arise, for God has promised that our leaves will be always green and we shall continuously prosper because our hope is in our Creator and our Provider, not in humans nor in this world.

Trusting in God and the promises of God causes us to never fail to bear fruit. Keeping the commands of the Most High gives us life and protection from drought. Trust in the Source, our Creator, from whom flows abundant life and the provision of all our needs. Do not trust in human beings, because they can fail us, but God will never fail those who trust in Him.

*Jeremiah 17:7-8* contain beautiful words of wisdom, promise and knowledge. Today, take courage and stand on the Word of the Lord, and be blessed!

**Lesley Clarke**

MANNA CHRISTIAN STORES

# DAY 26

*"Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.  
Wait patiently for the LORD.  
Be brave and courageous.  
Yes, wait patiently for the LORD."  
- Psalm 27:13-14 (NLT)*

Read the passage above, and then read it again. *'I am confident'* - Wow, where has this passage been all this year? For the last two years? Have we been meditating on this truth as our world undergoes wars and conflicts, death and suffering, restrictions and broken relationships, distrust and hatred towards our neighbour? I must admit that I have not, but now that I read it, I cannot help but be filled with an overwhelming sense of hope that God's will prevails over circumstances we may face.

As Christians, we are often told to take comfort in the hope that will come after this life, believing *"our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us later"*. Romans 8:18 (NIV).

When all seems lost, Paul's words on our future glory instil in us a hope that is eternal and, at the very least, allows us to depend on a future that is after this life.

But this is *not our only hope*. No, we may be confident that *today*, in this moment, while we still walk in the "land of the living", we will see the Lord's goodness prevail; this is a goodness that shines through all war and darkness, conflict and divisions, and lifts our spirits and provides a peace that transcends all human understanding.

And what does the Lord require of you? To wait *patiently* for Him, be *brave and courageous*, and again, to *wait patiently* for the Lord.

May we together wait patiently, with an expectant hope for our God of goodness, power and glory, who is the ruler of all, and welcome, with open expecting arms, His goodness to wash over us once more.

**Stephanie Heeley**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 27

*"The LORD your God is in your midst,  
A Warrior who saves.  
He will rejoice over you with joy;  
He will be quiet in His love [making  
no mention of your past sins],  
He will rejoice over you with shouts  
of joy."  
- Zephaniah 3:17 (AMP)*

War. Famine. Plague. Throughout history, and until quite recently in historical terms, these threats loomed large over people and nations. In the absence of any real mastery over their destinies, people could only choose between fate, and hope.

War, famine and plague were ever-present in the Old Testament, and were often seen as agents of God's judgment. Zephaniah's prophesied cataclysm, almost certain to be at the hands of a nearby warring nation, would not come as a surprise to the prophet's temple listeners. That was the way things generally went in 600BC. It would have been easy to be a fatalist!

In a startling change of tack, though, Zephaniah ends his sermon by telling his listeners that there is still room to hope. Zephaniah's soaring (and surprising) song of joy reminded his listeners that it is in God's hands

that our destinies ultimately lie. And God is for us, not against us!

Thankfully, threats of war, famine and plague have been largely neutralised now. War between neighbours is rare (although it might not seem so right now). Vaccines can contain infectious diseases. Famine is rare and more often the fault of bad policies and politics rather than the vagaries of nature! In the 21st century more people die of suicide than war, preventable diseases than infectious ones, and overeating than starvation!

Today we face different threats and fears, as if our controlling the major threats has opened the way for a myriad of more subtle and complex threats that don't so readily take our lives, but certainly rob us of life in all its fullness! So, what then of hope? As Christians we have God's promise, as God promised Zephaniah's listeners, that God continues to be for us and not against us! As Christians we live as those who can see beyond the visible and the immediate. We live as those who have 'read the last page of the book' and know that our story ends well.

**Allan Davidson**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 28

*"But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect." - 1 Peter 3:15 (AMP)*

We are certainly living in challenging and interesting times, and it has become obvious that many have lost their spark and joy for living. Because of this, many have no hope and rather than praising and worshipping God through the storm, some have thrown in the towel, given up on hope and are living in survival mode. Peter knew well enough what it feels like to live through moments of despair and disappointment but, in the end, he discovered the hope that can only be found in Jesus.

In this text, He urges us to *"Always be ready to give a... defense to anyone who asks you to **account for the hope** and confident assurance... that is within you"* 1 Peter 3:15 (AMP emphasis added). What does it mean to be ready to account for the hope? How are we to get ready and stay ready and hopeful? As I reflected on these questions another text came to

my mind, where Jesus says something about readiness for witness. In the last week of his life, Jesus warned His disciples, in Luke 21:12 that they will be persecuted by unbelievers but then He follows up by saying *"This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate beforehand how to make your case. **For I will give you a mouth and wisdom** which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."* Luke 21:14-15 (AMP emphasis added)

So, in summary, this means that the way to get ready to give an account for your hope is to get hopeful. If our own hope does not spring up from something Christ did and said, then it is a mere sham to try to encourage others to hope in Christ. But if we search out the promises of Christ and meditate on his character and work for the sake of banishing our own fear and kindling our own hope, then this very act of reverencing Christ for ourselves will be the best preparation for giving that account for our hope to others.

**Neels Janse van Rensburg**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ



# DAY 29

Now faith **brings our hopes into reality** and becomes the **foundation** needed to acquire the things we long for. It is all the evidence required to prove **what is still unseen**. This **testimony of faith** is what previous generations were commended for. Faith **empowers** us to see that the universe was created and beautifully coordinated by the power of God's words! He spoke and the invisible realm **gave birth** to all that is seen.  
- Hebrews 11:1-3 (TPT, emphasis added)

I think we'd all agree that our world has never been shaken, at least during most of our lifetimes, like it's shaking now. But in times of shaking, we need more than ever to strengthen our foundations by activating hope.

This passage from Hebrews 11 offers some practical ways on how we can take hold of and live out a resilient, expectant hope for today, in spite of what we may see around us.

## Hope is the starting point for faith

Hope is a word we tend to use without really thinking about it: "I hope it's sunny tomorrow ... I hope there's no traffic." Yet a "Hebrews 11" kind of hope isn't a vague wish that may or may not be fulfilled, a half-hearted thing that you could blow out with a single breath. Hope is the necessary precursor to faith. As the NKJV translation of verse 1 puts it: "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" When we combine faith and hope together, we can see "our hopes brought into reality" – made substantial.

Hope is integral to create an unshakeable foundation – "*our handle on what we can't see*" Hebrews 11:1-2 (MSG). It creates certainty in times of shaking. Earlier in the book, hope is described as an "*anchor for the soul, firm and secure*" Hebrews 6:19-20 (NIV). An anchor stabilises a boat by keeping its bow facing into the wind and waves, thus diminishing their effect on the boat. In the same way, our hope in Jesus tethers us to something beyond what we see on the surface and brings us into the presence and promises of God, helping us withstand the storms of life.

## Hope sees beyond the natural

So often, we focus only on what we can see with our natural eyes. And when we don't understand what we're seeing (or not seeing!), it can be easy to give up hope. The Bible encourages us that while we now "*see things imperfectly*" there are some things we can count on – faith, hope, and love 1 Corinthians 13:12-13 (NLT). Together, they will help us endure what life throws at us, until the time when we will eventually see "*with perfect clarity*".

## Hope flourishes through our testimony

In the NIV translation of verse 1, we're told that we can have "*confidence*" and "*assurance*" in what we're hoping for. Why? Because we're putting our hope in the character and trustworthiness of God. Then, in verse 2, God's people are "*commended*" for their "*testimony of faith*". Again, why?

Because they are able to look back on what God has already done, and trust that He will do it again.

When we look back on what God has already done – both through Scripture and in our own lives – that testimony will strengthen our hope.

### **Hope has power to birth something new**

Here's a thought: the level of hope we live with today determines the potential of our tomorrow. Did you realise, as people created in the image of God, we are designed to dream big? As children, we're born with a sense of expectant hope – a wide-eyed wonder where everything seems full of possibility. Yet so often, as our acquaintance with the world grows and life serves up the unexpected, that hope – that expectancy – can start to evaporate.

But listen to this: a Hebrews 11 hope *"empowers us to see that the universe was created ... by the power of God's words!"* How amazing is that? When what we're placing our hope in is the Word of God, hope is powerful! God spoke, and His Word *"gave birth"* to what was previously unseen. We need to be reminded: hope always births something new. It quite literally paves the way for miracles.

### **Hope requires our activation**

We all experience situations and seasons which challenge our hope, where our feelings dominate us by telling us there's no hope.

And that's the final ingredient we need to build a firm foundation: our activation. We need to choose hope – to decide to hope, to persevere in hope – even when we can't see the details or outcomes. To trust in who God is, to believe in His Word, to align our natural perspective with His eternal one.

Hope is the birthplace of faith, the starting point for miracles. Place your hope not in what you can see today, but in the God who is bigger than it all – in the expectation of a greater tomorrow.

#### *Prayer*

Father, help us embrace a life of hope today, trusting in you for the things we cannot yet see. Despite everything going on, we give you glory. Jesus, we thank you for everything you've already done for us. You are faithful, and your promises are trustworthy. Holy Spirit, we ask for a word of hope from you – a fresh "now word". And breathe into us an attitude of expectancy as we walk into tomorrow.

#### **Paul de Jong**

FOUNDING PASTOR, LIFE CHURCH  
AUTHOR OF NOW HOPE



# DAY 30

## The Secret of Contentment with What We Have

*How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. - Philippians 4:10-13 (NLT)*

We live in a world where some people live with abundance while others lack material things. Life is not always like a box filled with delicious chocolates. Rather, God has shown us in the Bible how to approach life with whatever it is that we have materially. The apostle Paul knew what it meant to have things or not to have them. Writing from prison (which is not a pleasant place), he wrote that he had learnt the secret of how to be content in whatever situation he faced. He spoke from personal experience. He was once an important religious figure, but lost his status when he converted to Christianity, resorting to making tents to support himself. Paul knew what it meant to be lacking and also to be in abundance! As Christians we may experience times of lack and times of abundance, but regardless of where we are right now, we are to learn the secret of being

content with our circumstances. Maybe we have faced times when food and possessions are plentiful, but now things have changed. Maybe we have learned how to be content in our abundance, but have we learned to be content when food or possessions are lacking? So, what is the secret of contentment that Paul was referring to? Paul shares this with us, *"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."* *Philippians 4:13 (NLT)*. The Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again! He is the one who is able to give us contentment when we face abundance and contentment if we are lacking. Can we, like the Psalmist David say, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."* – *Psalms 23:1 (NIV)*? Do we rely on our great Shepherd? Christians, it is time to show where your contentment comes from. Have you learned the secret of contentment like Paul has? Can you show to everyone you know that your reliance is on Christ no matter what you have? This is where the rubber meets the road. Let us all rely on Christ who strengthens us - even when times are tough.

### Prayer

Father God, please help me to rely on the Lord Jesus through a time of abundance and through times of lack. I pray that you'll help me learn the secret of contentment like your servant Paul did. In Jesus name I pray.

**Abraham Suryantyo**

BIBLE SOCIETY NZ

# DAY 31

*But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*

- John 4:14 (ESV)

Did you know the human body can only survive about 3 days without water? If this is true for our physical body, how much more is it true for our spiritual lives? How long do we allow ourselves to go through spiritually thirsty seasons (or times) before drinking from God's endless supply of living water? God's Word provides a clear promise of this in John 4.

Water has always symbolised hope and where there is water there is hope for all forms of life. Jesus promises that when we choose Him as 'our water source' we will never be spiritually thirsty again and we will become like a spring welling up, living water of hope and eternal life. As a family, we once visited the magnificent Te Manaroa Spring. This spring is often referred to as the 'Living waters of Waikite Valley'. What makes this spring truly special is that it releases 1,800 litres of boiling water per minute, making it the single largest natural source of boiling water in New Zealand. I must admit it was very impressive to witness such a natural wonder and to me it was so symbolic of God's living water, flowing with such force and bubbling from an eternal source of endless supply.

When you are faced with challenges in life (*thirsty*), which source (*water*) do you turn to? In a world focused on instant gratification

it can seem appealing to turn to worldly sources, but these are likely to result in merely temporary and shallow relief. We need to remind ourselves that only God's living water will really satisfy our deepest desires and quench our spiritual thirst. The water that Jesus gives will become like a spring of water, satisfying our thirst for God, welling up and continually flowing and bubbling within us, enabling us to live lives filled with HOPE and eternal life. The best part is that the living water inside of us can be enough to satisfy not only our thirst, but also that of everyone around us. Just like a river that flows through an arid land can bring new life to every area it touches, so you can bring hope and eternal life to people you meet. Jesus wants us to drink from His fountain of eternal life so that we can live a life filled with hope for ourselves and for those around us, regardless of what challenges we are facing.

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for YOUR living water of HOPE. Thank you that you are a source of living water that can never dry up. Thank you for your living water in my life and that it contains exactly what I need for every season that I face. I pray that you will always be my source and I thank you for my eternal purpose. We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

**Wendy Smit**

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