

THE HABIT OF HOPE

The night seems like it will never end. For some reason the bed is not as comfortable as it was the night before. Sleep is continuously fleeing from your presence. Your mind is now racing a hundred miles an hour. Thoughts you never dreamed possible are bombarding you from every side. Through the darkness you sense the grasping fingers of fear endeavoring to take hold of you. You get up ever so quietly to seek refuge from the raging war of your emotions. Despairingly you fall beside your couch while reaching for your Bible on the end table. "Anything Lord, anything" escapes your lips as the scriptures fall open. Like a billboard staring you in the face: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." Not exactly the words of comfort that you are seeking.

Despondency starts to rise. You turn the pages of the Holy Writ. Your eyes seem to easily fall on the scriptures that depict the bad and evil that happened to all those form centuries long ago. You wonder, "What's the use", and you slam the Bible shut.

It is true; You are facing the worst crisis of your entire life. Despondency, despair and discouragement have now become unwelcome visitors. And you feel just like the disciples crossing the sea while Jesus lay asleep in the back of the ship and murmur, "Does Jesus even care that I'm in the midst of a storm?"

A portrait of hopelessness; I'm sure you can identify with this scenario because we all have been there at one time or another. Have you ever noticed when a trial or test comes your way the enemy uses the same pattern of strategy against you. He does not want hope to reach its full potential in our lives. The devil is not going to bother the believers who are only interested in making sure they have "fire insurance" (keeping them from Hell). But when someone decides they want to grow in grace and develop their hope, ensuring this year will not be like last year, Satan unleashes his fury. His ultimate goal is to destroy your HOPE. God's goal is to help us learn how to ***keep from losing our hope***. The following scriptures from the Amplified Bible helped me to clearly understand hope.

Romans 5:3-5,

“Moreover – let us also be full of joy now! Let us exalt and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance.

And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character – that is, approved faith and tried integrity. And character (of this sort) produces (the habit of) joyful confident hope of eternal salvation.

Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.”

Do you see what Paul is saying to us? When we submit ourselves to God and NOT TO CIRCUMSTANCES, then He will take what was meant for evil (tribulation, trial or test), and turn it around and make it work for our good. How do I submit to God and not to the circumstances? By rejoicing and exalting **IN** the midst of the tribulation, trial or test and not **FOR** the tribulation, trial or test.

God does not inhabit the grumbles, gripes and complaints of His people. But He does inhabit His people’s praises. When we understand, comprehend, and realize that we can rejoice in the midst of the storm, then we will **KNOW** that tribulation will produce (develop) patience, and patience will develop experience, and experience will produce THE HABIT OF JOYFUL AND CONFIDENT HOPE – intensely, and earnestly expecting God to come through for you again with the manifestation of the victory that He promised in His Word. That earnest expectation (Hope) will **NEVER** disappoint, delude, or ever bring shame to you.

GOD IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR ANY EXCUSE TO SPOIL HIS KIDS!

God's heart is yearning for us to have hope so that the faith He has dealt to use may have something to give substance to. This is the purpose of God's Word.

Romans 15:4,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have HOPE."

Let us encourage you to make a determined effort to allow the God of Hope to fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants to show Himself strong in these last days to those whose hearts are perfect toward Him.

As you continue to give yourself to the Word of God, you will find unbelief giving way to hope. May you continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jerry