

CHARACTER MATTERS

Week Eight | February 24, 2019 | Hope: Revealing the Gospel with Our Future

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's texts. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

The hope we have in the gospel gives us endurance and encouragement to persevere as we wait for the Lord.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

Hope helps us fight the good fight of faith and shows where our treasure really is.

MEDITATE

"For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Romans 8:24–25).

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” If anyone knew about holding on to hope, it was King. A man who worked tirelessly for racial reconciliation and fought endlessly for civil rights in America, King knew a thing or two about disappointment. He experienced defeat and loss and rejection. But he held on to hope.

Hope is an anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19). It doesn’t promise a life of ease and comfort. Instead, it reminds you of truth and gives you peace in the midst of circumstances that are anything but easy and comfortable. Hope reminds us that this world is not our home. We have an inheritance and a kingdom still to come that far outweigh this one.

Hope isn’t just the wishful, positive thinking our culture often makes it out to be. Hope is rooted in something. It gives us strong encouragement because its foundation is so secure, so strong, and so truthful that it is worth expecting and desiring. As King reminds us, loss and disappointment are only temporary, but true hope is not only living, it is lasting and eternal.

🔗: *Who else in history has displayed extraordinary hope in the adversity they experienced and persevered through?*

🔗: *How do you believe the lie of our culture that says hope is merely wishful and positive thinking, and not rooted and grounded in something firm and secure like Christ?*

📌 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Hope gives us salvation. It provides us with patience. It reminds us that our light, momentary afflictions are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17). Hope allows us to persevere and encourages us that true life is found beyond this life. It enables us to endure and find joy and contentment in the here and now because of the living hope we have in the perfect life Jesus lived and the death He died on the cross for us. Hope, primarily, does four things for us:

1. HOPE SHOWS US WHO OUR SALVATION IS IN

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2. HOPE CHANGES WHERE OUR TREASURE RESTS
 3. HOPE ENABLES US TO PATIENTLY ENDURE
 4. HOPE PROVIDES LIFE AND HOLINESS IN THE PRESENT

GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

HOPE SHOWS US WHO OUR SALVATION IS IN

☐ ROMANS 8:24-25

Q: *What is Paul referring to when he says, "In this hope we were saved?" What is that hope regarding?*

Q: *Hope, clearly, is something that cannot be seen. How are hope and faith similar in this regard? How can you distinguish between hope and faith, and how are they different?*

Who hopes for what he sees? (Romans 8:24) It appears to be a straightforward and simple question. No one would say they hope for what they see. If you see something, you don't need a desire or expectation for it. The desire and longing are taken away the minute the longing is fulfilled. If you see something and already have it, there is no need to hope for it.

It's a lot like a child waiting for Christmas. There is a longing for Christmas Day to arrive, for the presents under the tree to be unwrapped and played with. The child doesn't currently have the gifts because they are still wrapped up. The items themselves cannot be seen, even if the wrapped boxes can be. The child has a hope to be able to open the presents. Once Christmas Day arrives, that hope and longing are removed because the gifts have been opened. The toys and presents are in their possession.

Although Paul's question in Romans 8:24 seems straightforward, it goes a lot deeper than first assumed. We are waiting for the redemption and adoption promised to us in the gospel (Romans 8:23). But if we are told that we are saved based on our hoping for it, it is not something we currently possess and have. At least not fully.

Yes, Jesus's death on the cross grants us redemption of our sins and adoption into His family as sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:16). But living in this present age, we do not fully experience redemption until Jesus returns. Jesus's death has taken away the penalty of our sins, but the power of sin still remains temporarily. So, we hope and long with great expectancy for the day when our salvation is fully experienced and we are welcomed into our Father's arms as fully redeemed sons and daughters of God.

♀: *How is it hard to hope in things that are partially given to us but that we cannot yet fully experience? How is the image of an unwrapped Christmas present helpful?*

♀: *Are you a naturally patient person? How does waiting patiently to experience full redemption and adoption make patience easier or harder for you?*

HOPE CHANGES WHERE OUR TREASURE RESTS

❏ **MATTHEW 6:19–21; PROVERBS 13:12**

♀: *When it comes to money, are you more of a spender, a saver, or a steward?*

♀: *What things do you treasure most? What does your heart love and value most?*

An unwavering hope in the gospel and in God's promises to those who trust and believe in Him changes where our treasure rests. Where your hope lies will impact where and what kind of kingdom you are building. If your hope

is in this present world, in the here and now, your treasure will follow your hope. You will lack the patience that is provided through biblical hope and instead build an earthly kingdom that ultimately will not last.

On the contrary, having a hope focused on the eternal will shift your perspective from building a temporary kingdom in this present age to building one that will last forever. Hope has absolutely everything to do with where your treasure rests. If you don't have any eternal hope, your treasure will be based on the present. If you do have eternal hope, your treasure will be based on the future.

The whole concept of hope is that it will eventually be fulfilled. The essence of hope longs for fulfillment. That's why Proverbs says that hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12). The real test lies in whether you are willing to defer your hope in this age and this earthly kingdom and wait to find the fulfillment of it in the world to come. Deferred hope may sicken the heart, but our hope is not deferred forever. It will be fulfilled. And the reward of waiting for that day is worth it, because no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). Show me where your treasure is and I'll show you where your hope lies. Your hope changes and impacts your treasure.

Q: *How has deferred hope made your heart sick with longing?*

Q: *How can changing where your treasure lies impact what your hope is in? For your treasure doesn't just follow your hope, but your hope also follows your treasure.*

HOPE ENABLES US TO PATIENTLY ENDURE

■ **ROMANS 8:25; HEBREWS 10:19-25**

Q: *If someone were to ask you what your confession of hope is, what would you say? Look at a document like the Nicene Creed to see one type of confession.*

Q: *Based on Hebrews 10:19-25, what things does an unwavering hope result in?*

Hope and patience must go together. You cannot have one without the other. If you struggle to have gospel hope, there is a strong likelihood that you are not a very patient person. Likewise, if you are by nature a patient person, then you are going to be more inclined to be able to hope and endure.

But just because your temperament is not necessarily patient doesn't give you an excuse to not have hope. Hebrews shows how necessary, pivotal, and most importantly, natural hope ought to be. We live in hope because we have a full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). We live in hope because our God is faithful (Hebrews 10:23). We live in hope because we have a family of believers who encourage us to press on (Hebrews 10:25).

Hope and patience are hard because they are most necessary in the hardest times. You don't need hope and patience when life is easy and everything is wonderful. You need them when things are not going well. If you need patience on a particular day or with a specific person, you need it because there is some difficulty there. Hope is most necessary when the cares and worries of this world are many, when you need to endure. Hope reminds us that the here and now is temporary and that the unseen is eternal.

The reality of gospel hope is that things do not automatically get better. Hope isn't the answer that solves your problems. Hope allows you to endure. It helps you to last. It doesn't remove the suffering or the pain or the struggle, but it does remind you that those things are temporary. It reminds you that God is faithful, His kingdom is eternal, and His promises are sure.

Q: *What situations and seasons have you had to patiently endure? How has patience and endurance made it easier or harder for you to trust God?*

Q: *How can fellow believers help you to persevere in hope and encourage you to endure patiently?*

HOPE PROVIDES LIFE AND HOLINESS IN THE PRESENT

❏ 1 PETER 1:3-16

Q: *According to 1 Peter 3, what is the cause of us being born again to a living hope? Why do you think Paul says it this way?*

Q: *Based on 1 Peter 3:13, what are we to set our hope on? When will that occur?*

Hope is necessary for us to endure the struggles and sufferings of this present world. But at the same time, hope provides life in the day-to-day. We have been born again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3). The fact that we've been born again changes our approach to life. Jesus came that we might have life to the full (John 10:10).

The struggles we face fade away when we remember and hold on to the reality that God is keeping and preserving an inheritance for us that will be revealed one day (1 Peter 1:4–5). This causes us to rejoice.

Peter also writes that, by setting our hope on Christ, we are empowered to not give in to sin, but to pursue holiness (1 Peter 1:13–16). Holiness is easier when our hope is anchored in Christ and we remember that His promises and His kingdom are better and more satisfying than what this world has to offer. We are more inclined to obey God when our hope is in Him. Our obedience is almost always guided by where our hope is. We pursue the things we desire, expect, and long for.

Additionally, it is our holiness that provides life itself. Sin always promises to satisfy, but it never does. When our hope is wrongly anchored, we are drawn to pursue things that lead to death, not life. But when our hope is rightly anchored, not only does Christ's resurrection provide us with a living hope, but our desire for and pursuit of holiness will also lead us toward life. Both hope and holiness give us life.

Q: *Why does Peter mention the resurrection as the means by which we have a living hope? How does 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 support this important connection?*

Q: *How has your experience borne out the connection between hope and holiness? When has your hope in things of this world guided you toward the things of this world?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- 🕒: *What most easily steals your hope? In those moments, how can you be reminded to preach to yourself to "hope in God" (Psalm 42:5)?*
- 🕒: *Take some time to evaluate where your treasure lies. Is it in your kingdom or God's kingdom? How can making some changes in where your treasure is increase your hope for God and His kingdom?*
- 🕒: *What is your greatest struggle right now? How can having hope help you endure it more patiently?*

PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

Our most gracious heavenly Father:

- Give me patience so I might have hope for the things I cannot see.
- I want my hope to impact where my treasure lies and whose kingdom I am building. By the power of your Holy Spirit, may my generosity show that Your kingdom has first place in my life and that my hope lies in the world to come, not the world now.
- I am struggling and suffering right now. My soul is downcast. Help me to hope in You. Give me strength to endure and not waver in my trust in You.
- I am born again to a living hope. I praise You for how You have saved me according to Your mercy. Thank You for giving me salvation, for conquering sin and death on my behalf, and for granting me an inheritance as a redeemed and adopted child of God.

ROMANS 8:24–25 This truth of our redemption and adoption not yet being fully experienced is what theologians refer to as “inaugurated eschatology.” This is more simply referred to as the “already and not yet” aspects of the kingdom of God. In the here and now there are certain things about the gospel and God’s kingdom that have already happened, but they have not necessarily been completely fulfilled. For example, on the cross Jesus defeated sin and death once and for all, but sin and death still exist for now. But when the kingdom comes fully and completely, those things will be gone forever. God’s kingdom already exists here and now, but it does not yet exist as it ultimately and eternally will. Inaugurated eschatology has seen the beginning of some of these things, but not yet the completion and consummation of them.

