

Hope Grows Through Testing



Hope (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week. Our theme this week has been "Hope." I trust you have found it inspiring.

I want to recapitulate once more, briefly, the lessons that I've been drawing from this theme in my previous talks this week. That will give you a good basis for understanding what I'm going to say today.

First of all, there are three abiding realities in the Christian life: faith, hope and love. Second, hope is produced by the new birth. Third, hope is based on Christ's resurrection. Fourth, hope looks forward to Christ's return. Fifth, the source of hope is God's love. Sixth, this hope motivates us to holy living. Seventh, it produces radiant Christians, confident Christians. And eighth, hope is an essential part of salvation.

Let me just present to you the contrast that I dealt with in my talk yesterday: the contrast between those who have hope and those who do not have hope. It's so simple but so real and so vital. Colossians 1:27 Paul speaks about the mystery that was hidden from previous ages and generations, now is revealed to God's people. And he sums it up in such brief words: Christ in you, the hope of glory. So when Christ is in you, you have the hope of glory.

And then Ephesians 2:12, speaking about those who are without Christ, he says they are without hope and without God. So you see, there are just two alternatives for all of us: if we have Christ in us, we have hope of glory, eternal life with Christ; but if we are without Christ, we are without hope and without God. Let me ask you to ponder on that and let me suggest to you that you make sure that you are in the category of those who have Christ in you and know what it is to have the hope of glory.

In my talk today, I'm going to share how hope grows strong through testing. I'll turn to Romans, chapter 5, verses 1-5:

> "Therefore having been justified by faith [justified means acquitted, made righteous by faith], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith

> into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. [The word 'exult' means to rejoice, to be very confident.] ...we exult in hope of the glory of God. [Notice that hope produces that joy, that confidence, that boasting. But that's not the end. Paul goes on:] And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations..."

Now that's something different. We can understand exulting in hope but how do we understand exulting in tribulations and trials and testings? Maybe you've never thought about that. How do you react to tribulation? Do you exult in it? Why do we exult in our tribulations? Paul goes on to explain:

> "...knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

So there's a progression, you see. When we come into tribulation if we hold onto our faith, then we can hold on to our hope. Now what does tribulation do? There's a progression there which is essential for the building of Christian character and for giving us a real strong stable confident hope. Hope has to be tested by tribulation in order to be proved genuine and become strong. So notice the progression: tribulation produces perseverance; perseverance produces proven character; and proven character produces a hope that is not disappointed.

Now let me tell you something about perseverance. You know the key to perseverance? It's persevering. There's just no other way to learn perseverance but to persevere. It's like swimming. You can have all of the theory of swimming, you can have all the motions, you can know all the facts about breathing, but the only way to learn to swim is to swim. The only way to learn to persevere is to persevere.

So when we come into tribulation, we need to hold on to this fact. This is for our good, it's helping us. God is permitting us to go through this because it's the only thing that will produce what's needed in us for that final strong, confident, radiant, unshakeable hope. Tribulation produces perseverance.

Perseverance produces proven character. A person that's been through tribulation and come out victorious has proven character. Paul says that we are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." What does it mean to be "more than conquerors"? I understand it this way: you come out of tribulation with more than you went into it. You don't just hold your own, but you've gained a victory. That's how it is when we persevere in tribulation, we come out with proven character.

And proven character establishes our hope. We had hope of the glory of God before this started, but when we come out of it, we have an altogether different degree of hope and this tested hope does not disappoint us but opens us up to the fulness of God's love. You see, to receive the fulness of God's love you have to have proven character. You have to have stability. You have to have a vessel strong enough and large enough to contain all the love that God wants to pour into you.

Now I'd like to illustrate this process for a moment from a passage from the prophets in the Old Testament. In Hosea, chapter 2, God is telling Israel how He's going to deal with them and He speaks about bringing them into a time of tribulation. But then He says:

> "Then I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope."

Now you need to know that the word "Achor" means trouble. So the Lord is saying, "I'll let Israel come into trouble but I'll so work through that trouble that it will become the door of hope." Well, that's a principle that when God brings us into trouble, remember there's a way out, there's an exit and it's the door of hope.

Now I want to explain briefly to you two further requirements for cultivating this kind of strong, confident hope that we're speaking about. The first is that we need to give heed to the Scriptures, to what the Bible says. Paul states this in Romans 15, verse 4:

> "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction [and when he says 'whatever was written,' he's talking about the Scriptures. They were written for our instruction. All Scripture is written for our instruction. There's nothing in any part of the Bible that is not for our instruction. What was the purpose?] ...that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

We've already pointed out that perseverance is essential to cultivating this kind of hope. Notice also that we need the encouragement of the Scriptures. When you're in tribulation, when you're having a hard time, turn to the Scriptures, read them, believe them. They'll encourage you, they'll strengthen

your hope. Don't deny yourself this wonderful, God-given source of hope, which is the Scriptures. Sometimes you might not feel like reading the Bible but just make up your mind, "I'm going to read the Bible until I hear from God. Until I get something out of it that strengthens my hope and gives me grace to go on persevering." Remember that's what the Bible was written for, to instruct us that through it we might have hope.

Then the other requirement is that hope can only come to us in its fulness in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. A little further on in that same fifteenth chapter of Romans, verse 13, Paul comes out with some really beautiful words:

> "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [Think of what that means, to be filled with all joy and peace in believing. What's the result? He goes on:], that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

So, God wants to fill us with all joy and peace that we may "abound in hope." That means that we may have more than just enough hope for ourselves, that we may have hope to minister to others. When others are downcast, we have a word of hope, a word of encouragement for them. But notice, it's by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have to open ourselves up fully to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only agent who can minister this kind of victorious hope in our lives in its fulness.

And then, just to close, notice the beautiful phrase with which Paul begins that thirteenth verse of Romans 15: "Now may the God of hope fill you…" Notice, He's the God of hope. You cannot know God without having hope. He is the only ultimate source of all true hope, the God of hope. May He fill you. That is my prayer for those of you who listen. Let me read it once more as a prayer:

> "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

That's my sincere prayer. Consider these words, meditate on them and when you're in trouble and affliction, turn back to them. Read them again, over and over, until they become completely real in your life and your experience.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you next week at this same time Monday through Friday. Next week I'll continue with this theme, "Hope."

My special offer this week is my book, Appointment in Jerusalem. This is the dramatic, true-life story of my first wife, Lydia; how Jesus appeared to her in her native Denmark and led her to Jerusalem to become mother to a family of fatherless children from many racial backgrounds. "I just couldn't put it down," is the comment I've heard countless times. The title again: Appointment in Jerusalem. Also my complete series of talks this week on "Hope, Part 1," is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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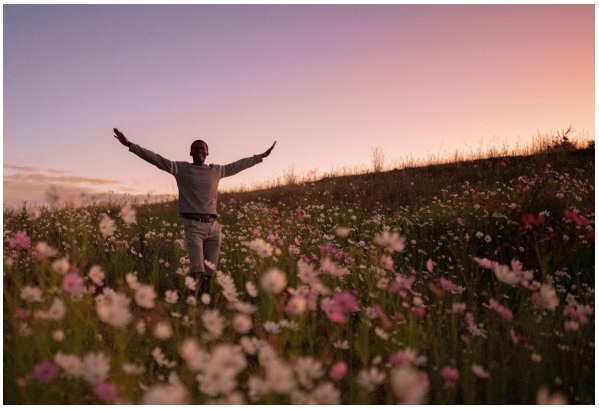

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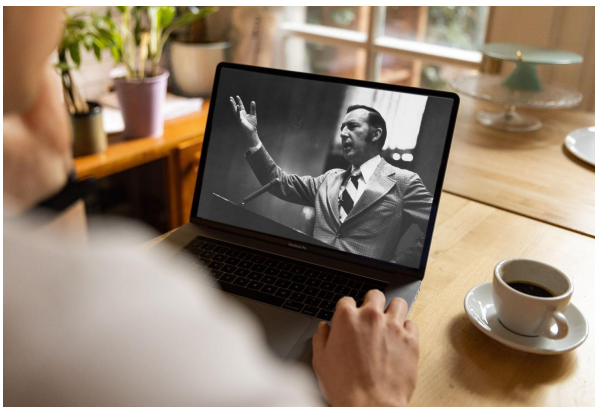

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