

Our Hope

In December of 1776, after losing New York to the British and having 11,000 colonial troops return to their homes and farms, Thomas Paine published a pamphlet called *The Crisis* which start off with these words: ***“THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated”***

The first few words have been quoted many times and many different situations. Perhaps even now we find our souls are tried by the times we currently endure. Finding a reason to maintain our hope has never been more important now. For this reason, we will focus on a few verses found in Romans as we look for a reason for our hope.

The 8th chapter of Romans begins with a message of reassurance. In the very first verse, we are told: **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 NASB)** After Paul has told us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), he presents the fact that when we are in Christ Jesus we are no longer under the condemnation of our sin.

Paul goes on to tell us that we are given life through the spirit.

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:10-11 NASB)

Remember the other day when we were counting our blessing? Well, here's another one. The Spirit that lives in us. The Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead. This Spirit will give us life. Think on this for a moment. The same Spirit that brought Jesus out of that tomb is the same Spirit that lives in us and gives us life. Can we live without this Spirit? Yes, but it is not to the same level or intensity as we live when we have this Spirit within us. Remember what Jesus said in John: **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10 NASB)** Jesus sent this Spirit so that we could have a life; not just a life but an abundant life. We have a life that is filled with all of the best that God and Jesus have to give.

Sadly, the next verse speaks of something that is almost unknown in today's society: obligation. There was once a time when someone did a favor and the recipient felt an obligation to reciprocate. Paul has just presented the facts that we have this life-giving spirit living in us and that it was given to us by Jesus. He then suggests that we have an obligation. No, it is not that we are paying for anything, we are acknowledging that we received a gift and are, as best we can, reciprocating.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:12-13 NASB)

Our obligation is to put to death the deeds of our fleshly life. All those lustful thoughts and actions, all those hurtful and hateful words and deeds are to be removed from our life. This is the transformation that we read about in various scriptures. This clearly points out that this is the way we are to live as a result of the Spirit living within us not as a payment for our salvation.

Perhaps the biggest blessing that comes from having His Spirit living within us is that we become children of God.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! “Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. (Romans 8:14-17 NASB)

Abba is an Aramaic word used to address a father on personal terms. It appears in the New Testament three times. It was forbidden for a slave to address the head of the house by this term. Some have substituted the word Daddy for Abba and that is not a true match. It lacks the reverence which is conveyed by the term Abba. However, Abba denoted a close personal relationship.

In this passage, you will note that we are no longer slaves but children and thus we have the right to address God as our personal father.

Next, Paul pauses to reflect on the tribulations and trials that we face in living a godly life. In doing so, he puts it into the perspective of the entire creation.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:18-19 NASB)

The idea of suffering in this present age or present situation is not new. For Paul, the suffering we might endure during this life is temporary and by comparison insignificant when compared to the glory we will see and actually be a part of when we are revealed as children of God.

Approximately a year earlier, Paul wrote to the church in Corinth using similar terms as found in 2 Corinthians the 4th chapter.

Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NASB)

In a broad sweep, Paul goes back to the early days of creation. He goes back to the time when sin entered into God’s perfect creation and sullied the beauty as originally created and intended.

We remember that sad day in human history found in the 3rd chapter of Genesis when God placed the world under a restraint that was not according to His original plan.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:17-19 NASB)

Paul points to that dark day in our history and also directs us to look forward to the time when this would change back to the glory God planned.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:20-21 NASB)

Paul then addresses the anticipation that all of creation eagerly awaits along with all of those who have received the Spirit. All of the tribulations and trials since the Garden of Eden are compared with labor pains.

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also, we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:22-23 NASB)

This perspective is based on the hope we have in Jesus the Christ. This hope is not like the world expects. It is not based those things which we see, touch, and feel in this world. It is based on our faith (Hebrews 11:1) and is the hope for the spiritual things that are not seen.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Romans 8:24-25 NASB)

Our hope should guide us as it did the people of faith of whom we read in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Our hope should cause us to live a life that is focused on the things not seen by this world.

As the writer of Hebrews is naming the people of faith, he stops about half way through his narrative and comments on their hope and focus. Let's read a few verses starting with verse 13 of Hebrews 11.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16 NASB)

What hopes do you have this morning? Are they the hopes of someone ready to see the blessed country where Jesus sits on His throne and God provides for our every need?