



Light from the Word

Walking Hopefully, with Confidence in His Promises and His Provision

*"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"*¹

As believers, we know that God is almighty and has promised to provide for all of our needs while we live here on earth.² Most importantly, based upon our faith in the shed blood of His Son, He has forgiven our sins and has promised us an eternal home in His heavenly kingdom.³ As wonderful as this knowledge is, do we ever find ourselves doubting any of His promises or His provision? If we are honest, most of us have at one time entertained such thoughts, even if only temporarily.

As an illustration, many of us have accepted an invitation to spend a weekend with fellow believers in another of our congregations. As we are traveling, what words would describe our emotions and feelings? Do we for one moment entertain thoughts that we will go hungry because supper will not be provided as promised? Do we have any misgivings that there will be no singing afterwards as planned? Do we think that for some reason we will not go to church on Sunday? On the contrary, we more likely are guilty of taking such blessings for granted. We have no doubt in our brother or sister's ability and desire to provide for us, nor do we just wish for these blessings. We have learned to expect them!

This confident expectation defines exactly what our hope in God should be in much more important and eternal matters.⁴ We anticipate with confidence that He will fulfill His promises and that He really will provide for all our needs, both earthly and spiritual. Hope is an integral part and a result of the faith we put in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁵

Doubt reduces hope into a mere wish. Abraham rose above what seemed a doubtful situation when

God promised him a son at a time when both he and Sara were well past normal childbearing age: *"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."*⁶ In this verse, we see that hope was an enabling force behind Abraham's faith.

The widow of Zarephath is an example of walking hopefully, with confidence in God's promises and provision. She was not an Israelite, but lived in what is modern day Lebanon. In the midst of a grievous famine, God instructed her to give provision to the prophet Elijah, a man whom she had never met. She was in the process of gathering a few sticks to cook what she thought was to be the last meal for herself and her son when the prophet suddenly appeared at her home. Elijah first asked her for a drink of water, which she was willing and able to provide. However, he then insisted that she bake a cake for him, even after she protested that there was only enough food for one last meal. Yet, when Elijah told her, *"For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth,"* she believed God, and did as the prophet requested. Because of her obedience, God provided for her in a miraculous way, and her oil and meal lasted for the duration of the famine.⁷

God then sent Elijah to deliver a public challenge to King Ahab and the Israelites: *"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."*⁸ The story of the

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Lord's prophet with his servant on the one hand, and the 450 prophets of Baal on the other; the altars of stone drenched with water, culminating with the descending fire from God consuming both sacrifice and altar is one of the most inspiring accounts in the Bible. After this, Elijah commanded that the prophets of Baal be slain on the spot—not one escaped. After his fervent prayer for rain was answered, a mighty storm arose followed by his furious race across the plain to Jezreel—a distance of over 17 miles!⁹

In spite of these astonishing victories, Elijah temporarily lost his hope. Infuriated at the defeat of her prophets, Queen Jezebel sent a chilling message to Elijah, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."¹⁰ Afraid for his life, he fled into the wilderness of Beersheba where he became so despondent that he wished to die. The prophet's perception that he

was completely alone in his service to God was the major reason for his downward spiral into this feeling of hopelessness. "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."¹¹ This statement was not completely true, and God encouraged him, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."¹²

Hope is one of the saving elements in our life;¹³ it abides forever;¹⁴ it is the anchor of our soul;¹⁵ and it will cheer our dying hour.¹⁶ We gain hope by reading and believing God's Word.¹⁷ Being "instant in prayer" will help us to "rejoice in hope."¹⁸ Availing ourselves of fellowship at church will increase our hope.¹⁹ Most importantly, God's desire for us is to have hope in His salvation. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the

breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."²⁰

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Rom. 8:24
- ² Matt. 6:26
- ³ John 3:16
- ⁴ Phil. 1:20
- ⁵ Rom. 5:1-5
- ⁶ Rom. 4:18-21
- ⁷ 1 Kings 17:14-16
- ⁸ 1 Kings 18:21
- ⁹ 1 Kings 18
- ¹⁰ 1 Kings 19:2
- ¹¹ 1 Kings 19:14
- ¹² 1 Kings 19:18
- ¹³ Rom. 8:24
- ¹⁴ 1 Cor. 13:13
- ¹⁵ Heb. 6:19
- ¹⁶ Prov. 14:32
- ¹⁷ Rom. 15:4
- ¹⁸ Rom. 12:12
- ¹⁹ Heb. 10:25, 1 John 1:3
- ²⁰ 1 Thess. 5:8-11

John 10:10

*I am come that they might have life,
and that they might have it more abundantly.*