



Where Can We Find True Hope?

Romans 5:5: (NASB) *...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.*

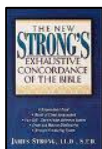


When we look around us these days, what do we see? The world is on fire with social unrest, the financial markets are riding tidal waves of volatility, our national debt is about 900 miles high, unemployment just doesn't seem to go away and to top it off, the average person seems far more restless and unhappy than ever before! We have all heard the saying "hope for the best," but the best of *what*? And what does it mean to hope? Stay with us as we look into hope - what it is, how it works, and how it can truly be a positive and life-changing experience in such a troubled world.

What is hope?

Hope literally means, "desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment."

Desire + Expectation



Biblical definition of hope:

Hope: Strong's #1680 elpis (el-pece'); expectation (abstractly or concretely) or confidence
KJV-- faith, hope.

Expectation + Confidence

As we go through most of our audio clips today a key question will be, does this audio instill hope or not?

According to Wikipedia, Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, computer scientist, philosopher cognitive scientist, and activist. He is an Institute Professor and Professor (Emeritus) of in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT. Chomsky has been active in left-wing politics.



Christians are anti-Semitic, Noam Chomsky, Naked Emperor news

- *If you have Armageddon then the souls that are saved rise to heaven and Jesus Christ comes for 1,000 years of peace.*
- *The Pro-Israel Christian right are the most anti-Semitic people in the world. They want all Jews to be exterminated, except for 144,000 who are somehow converted.*

Does this type of statement build up hope? True hope is transformative. Does true hope drive us to do things that we wouldn't normally do?

Romans 5:1-5: (NASB) ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through 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. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and 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.

There is a cause and effect relationship shown here.



Verses 1-2: These are some of the things that drive us:

- Justification (meaning "made right") by faith brings us peace with God through Jesus. In such a world as this, peace with God is a very good thing,
- Peace with God brings access to God's grace. We can rely on something bigger than our circumstances,
- God's grace brings us the opportunity to exult the hope of God's glory! This was one of the promises given to the followers of Jesus - that the followers would be like him.

Verses 3-5: Back to the practical living aspect:

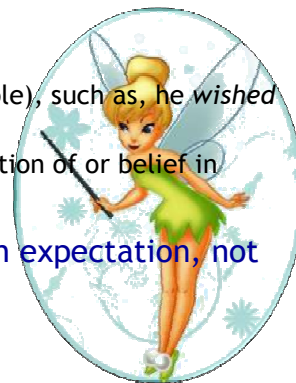
- Because of the spiritual promises, we now KNOW tribulation brings perseverance,
- Perseverance brings proven character,
- Proven character brings HOPE,
- This hope lives up to expectation because it is driven by God's love and spirit! It comes through our development and transformation to become more Christ-like.

Is a wish different than a hope?

A wish is defined as: to have a desire for (as something unattainable), such as, he wished he could live his life over.

In contrast, hope is defined as: a desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.

Both things look "beyond what is," but hope is an exercise in expectation, not just an exercise in imagination. Don't confuse the two.



"When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires will come to you, If your heart is in your dream, no request is too extreme, when you wishd upon a star as dreamers do..."

- Jiminy Cricket



Matthew 7:8: (NASB) ⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

There is action involved - asking, seeking, knocking. You have to do something to receive something. This is what true hope is based upon.

James 4:1-3: (NASB) ¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have



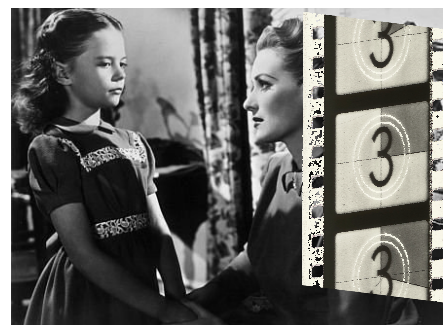
because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

We start out with Jiminy Cricket and we end up with this? When you are too focused on yourself, you can't see the bigger picture. Life gets in your way. Part of true hope is driving towards something so big that it helps to drive you beyond yourself.



Suzie's dashed hopes, *Miracle on 34th Street*

- *It doesn't matter, I didn't get it. I knew it wouldn't be here... You couldn't get it because you're not Santa Claus, you're just a nice old man with whiskers like my mother said and I shouldn't have believed you...*



We need to be mature enough as Christians to follow after Christ and take action, not just sit back and hope he will take care of us.

Our hope should provoke great self-discipline:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (NRSV) ²⁴Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. ²⁵Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; ²⁷but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

The Apostle Paul tells us to focus! Hope provokes us to:

- not run aimlessly, but with direction;
- not fight pointlessly; and
- captivate our very selves towards its fulfillment.

Hope KNOWS what it is looking for:

Ephesians 1:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.

Are there wrong hopes?

Wrong hopes:

Job 31:24-28: (NASB) ²⁴If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, ²⁵If I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; ²⁶If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, ²⁷and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, ²⁸That too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.

Gold is not to be the hope of our lives. We are looking for something bigger than this.



Wall Street sell-off August 9, 2011, *Euronews, The Blaze*

- *...with investors full of fear with the state of the U.S. economy and high levels of public debt.*



The stock market is incredibly unsettling. Does this volatility bring us hope? Is this where our final, truest hopes are or should they be in something bigger?

2 Chronicles 7:14: *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

This gives the essence of what this program is about. True hope has a condition attached where if we fulfill that condition, we can firmly expect something in return.

Consequences of wrong hopes: (selfish hope for revenge, coveting, etc.)

Job 8:11-15: (NASB) ¹¹Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water? ¹²While it is still green and not cut down, yet it withers before any other plant. ¹³So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish, ¹⁴whose confidence is fragile, and whose trust a spider's web. ¹⁵He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; He holds fast to it, but it does not endure.

Your hope has to have a solid basis. The hope of the godless will end because it is not eternal. Hoping in God is very different than hoping in the stock market!

Foundations of a true hope:

Hebrews 11:1: (NKJV) *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Titus 1:1-2: (NKJV) ¹Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began...

God made a promise, so there is true hope. True hope must be based on faith because although God's promises are eternal, they are not immediate.

Hebrews 6:13-18: (NRSV) ¹³When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, I will surely bless you and multiply you. ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. ¹⁷In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us.

Elements of the above-stated hope:

- God's promise - therefore it is going to happen.
- The unchangeable character of His purpose. We change our minds, but God's purpose does not change.
- It is impossible that God would prove false.
- We who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us.



- We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. This gives us the greatest sense of security, because the anchor can hold firm regardless of the currents of the world.

If who God is makes a difference as to how firm our hope can be, then who we are makes a difference in our fostering hope to one another...

What tells us that our hope is sure?

Isaiah 55:7-11: (NASB) ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ⁸For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

First, if we return to God, we will receive compassion and forgiveness. He then assures us that He has everything under control. Not only is our hope as sure as the word of God, but it stands in an open invitation for all to join! True hope transforms everything in our lives - it is beyond just an emotion.



London Riots, AP News, British Prime Minister David Cameron

- *These are sickening scenes of people looting, vandalizing, robbing, scenes of people attacking police officers and even attacking fire crews trying to put out fires. I have this very clear message for those people...you will feel the full force of the law. If you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to face the punishment.*

Why do people do this? They feel hopeless.

We, however, have a basis that tells us our hope is sure:

2 Timothy 3:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy, his spiritual son. He tells him to build his hope in that which Timothy grew up with. The bottom line foundational principle of true hope is the tangible word of God. The hope we are given also gives us the tools to accomplish it.

The next audio clip is from the Hope Experience. Hope Experience merges the best parts of a youth camp with the active service of an intentional "missions" camp. Participants are split into "crews" and are sent out to various initiatives all throughout the Memphis, TN, community. Their goal is that each crew rotates between initiatives on a daily basis, giving each student an opportunity to experience all the different initiatives. This engages young people in positive action within the community.



I love little kids, 2011 Soft Highlight, *The Hope Experience*

- I love seeing kids smile. I have wanted to be a kindergarten teacher for such a long time. I love experiencing laughter and smiles with little kids. They are just so innocent and fun...it makes you forget that the world is hard. It makes you realize that being a kid and not having to worry all the time is so much fun and it's ok to do that.*



Kids have incredible enthusiasm for the opportunities in front of them. We should be like that with God. "Do you know what My plan will reveal next?" We should be excited about what He has in store for us. We have so much to be hopeful about.

Can a wish become a hope?

Our hope should regulate our behavior beyond our conscience:

James 2:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

There is action involved in living with true hope. Belief is not enough - even the demons know God and believe in Him. We should live our faith in the way that shows our hope. The world around us does not bring us hope because there are so many things going wrong.

Parents watch! *Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, Fox News, August 2011*

- ...That's when 20-30 kids, one as young as 11 years old descended...punching, beating and robbing innocent bystanders. One victim beaten so bad he landed in the hospital with a fractured skull. The Mayor takes aim at the parents.*
- Parents who don't know where their children are, don't know what they're doing, don't know who they're hanging out with, you are going to find yourselves spending some quality time with your kids in jail. Just giving them cash - that's not being a father. That's a human ATM.*

Why did we open this program with the statement: "...our national debt is about 900 miles high...?" If you took \$1,000 bills and stacked them four inches high, you would have \$1 million. If you stack those same bills up 33 feet high, you would have \$1 billion. \$1 trillion would be a 65-mile high stack! Our national debt is over \$14 trillion, so it would be over a 900-mile stack of \$1,000 bills.





Driving from Connecticut to Chicago (about 900 miles) takes about 16 hours. If you laid a stack of \$1,000 bills alongside your car the whole way, this gives you a sense of the size of our hopelessness. Our hope is in the character and plan of God, and should lift us above our daily concerns of life.

Hope understands that:

- God orders His natural creation.
- We are the height of His earthly creation.
- We are therefore of great importance to Him, because we have been given the ability to have dominion over what He created.
- Human anxiety is a symptom of our hope being misplaced. We get stuck in the small things.

When first things are first, back into perspective, hope's return is evidenced through peace. God will provide what is needful if we put out the effort and our focus is right.

Matthew 6:25-34: (NRSV) ²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.



I wish the ring had never come to me, *Frodo and Gandalf, Lord of the Rings*

- *Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me, I wish that none of this had ever happened.*
- *Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All you have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to you.*

Really, all we have to do is decide what to do with the time that is given to us.



Our hope should lift our perspective beyond the moment of difficulty:

1 John 3:1-3: (NRSV) ¹*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* ²*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.* ³*And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*

This promise should generate an excitement in us, as it gives us tremendous, real expectation. Transformational hope comes from living one day at a time, living the will of God. That's hard, but it's worth it.

Hope says that we don't need to know everything - we just need to know what has been given to us and we are responsible for only that.

Where does true hope bring you?

Our hope should guide us in faith to the unseen:

Hebrews 11:8-10: (NRSV) ⁸*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.* ⁹*By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.* ¹⁰*For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Even though sometimes God's blessing comes through trial and difficulty, blessing is inevitable.



I don't suppose we will ever see them again, Lord of the Rings

- *Frodo: Mordor - I hope the others find a safer road...I don't suppose we will ever see them again...*
- *Sam: We may yet Mr. Frodo, we may...*

(Sam gave him the ability to have hope...just take the next step.)

Our hope should prepare us for the difficulty of the road set before us:

Philippians 3:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.* ¹³*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Our hope should always keep the "why" before our eyes:

1 Timothy 4:10: (KJV) *For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*

There are two different parts of salvation - there is a message of hope for all men, and especially to those that believe.

1 John 2:2: (NIV) *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

That presents great and deep hope. We are redeemed! We should feel relieved that we have an open door for communication with God through Jesus.



Micah 4:1-5: (KJV) ¹*But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. ²And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁴But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. ⁵For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.*

These include nations that aren't Godly now, but they will be in the future. This is full of great and deep hope - nation not lifting up sword against nation. There is a sense of finality with a "happily ever after" ending. There is great hope for the future of all mankind.

We can find real hope if we follow the will and the way of God.

*So where can we find true hope...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



Ezekiel 37:1-5: (NASB) ¹*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. ²He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. ³He said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, You know. ⁴Again He said to me, Prophecy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.*

Ezekiel 37:11: (NASB) *Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.*

This is a very graphic illustration of a prophecy we have begun to see come true. That gives us great hope because if God says it, God does it. It is important that our hope is based upon this.

A little bit more of the transforming power of the hope that we have - our hope should give us "grace under pressure:"

Acts 16:16-33: (NRSV) ¹⁶*One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation. ¹⁸She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." ²²The crowd joined in attacking*



them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted in a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here. ²⁹The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. ³²They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay.

This is a great story that captures the essence of the hope that we have - it reminds me of the child-like enthusiasm that we can choose to possess in our daily Christian walk:

Keep Your Fork! Quoted from www.lifeofhope.com

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and was given three months to live. As she began getting her things 'in order', she called her pastor and asked for him to come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she wanted read, and what dress she wanted to be buried in. She also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible in her left hand. Everything was in order and as the pastor was preparing to leave, the woman suddenly remembered one final request that was very important to her. "Please Pastor, just one more thing," she said excitedly. "Sure, what is it?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important to me," the woman continued ... "I want to be buried holding a fork in my right hand." The pastor gazed at the woman, at a loss for words.

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked. The pastor replied, "Well to be quite honest, I am puzzled by the request."

The woman explained. "You see, Pastor, in all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I remember that when the dishes were being cleared after the main course, someone would inevitably lean over to me and say, 'Keep your fork' ... it was my favorite part of the meal because I knew that something better was coming, like velvety chocolate cake or deep dish apple pie. Something wonderful to end the meal!"

The pastor listened intently and a smile came upon his face. The woman continued, "So, I just want people to see me there with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder ... 'What's with the fork'... then I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork ... the best is yet to come."

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman good-bye. He knew that this would be one of the last times that he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of Heaven than he did.

She knew and trusted that the best was yet to come. At the funeral, everyone that walked by the woman's casket saw her wearing a beautiful dress with her favorite Bible held in her left hand and a fork held in her right hand.

Over and over the pastor heard people ask the question, "Why is she holding a fork?" and his smile began to get larger and brighter each time. During his message, the



pastor told the people about the conversation that he had with the woman shortly before she died. He explained the fork and what it symbolized to her. The Pastor told everyone how he could not stop thinking about the fork and how he hoped that they would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

So the next time you reach for your fork, let it remind you, oh so gently, that the best is yet to come ...