

Do Christians Need Hope in Their Lives?

Romans 12:12: (NASB) Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.



Everyone needs hope. With a clear hope, we can conquer all kinds of obstacles. Without it, we lose our motivation to continue on. The problem is that life moves fast - so fast that we rarely slow down enough to realize what is, or should be, driving us. This means that we rarely ever drink in the inspiration that our hope can readily supply. In other words, we often go through our daily routine feeling thirsty instead of refreshed. How do we reverse this trend? We need to define what our hope is, how well we truly understand and commit to it, and how far it reaches into our present and future. This can only be done by examining what the

Bible describes our hope to be. Once we as Christians establish this hope as personally obvious, it can then also become publicly observable.

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

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

A hope is *not* a wish.

Merriam Webster Dictionary:

Wish: to have a desire for (as something unattainable) <wished he could live his life over>

The Hopelessness of Hedonism: Let's begin by being truthful about what humans seek and find.

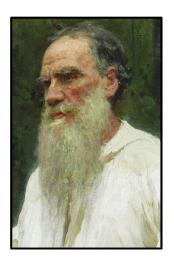
Merriam Webster:

Hedonism: the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life

How often have we seen those who have everything from talent to fame to fortune crumble from within because of loneliness and desperation? This has happened through all of history.

Leo Tolstoy was a Russian writer (1828 - 1910) and is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. His most famous novels were *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

He believed a true Christian could find lasting happiness by following the commandments to love God and love your neighbor rather than looking to organized religion or government for guidance. Because of Jesus' teachings, Tolstoy was a pacifist and directly influenced Mahatma Gandhi and other nonviolent resistance movements. Gandhi called Tolstoy "the greatest apostle of non-violence the present age has produced."





Shortly after turning 50, he finds himself rich, in good health, having a wife and 14 children and huge literary success. But he was on the brink of suicide, tormented by trying to answer the question, "What is the meaning of life?" He detailed his struggle in an autobiographical memoir called, *A Confession*.

His incredible honesty from 150 years ago could drop right into today's world. The human condition does not change no matter how many advancements in technology we make.

(1) Hopelessness, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

• Today or tomorrow sickness and death will come (they had come already) to those I love or to me; nothing will remain but stench and worms. Sooner or later my affairs, whatever they may be, will be forgotten, and I shall not exist. Then why go on making any effort? ...How can man fail to see this? And how go on living? That is what is surprising! One can only live while one is intoxicated with life; as soon as one is sober it is impossible not to see that it is all a mere fraud and a stupid fraud! That is precisely what it is: there is nothing either amusing or witty about it, it is simply cruel and stupid.

<u>Ecclesiastes 1</u> details King Solomon similarly lamenting at the end of his life. He had all the wealth in the world but looked back and proclaimed it all as vanity - meaningless.

God showed us the simple principle of always honoring Him first:

Romans 1:21-25: (NASB) ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Self-aggrandizement ends up empty. In our earthly wisdom, we build our idols which look and feel so "right," but how do they sustain us?





Our societies are wallowing in the hopelessness of hedonism, seeking pleasure as the hope for our lives. It always ends up empty. If we want life-changing hope, it cannot be based in "ME."



Now that we are sufficiently depressed, what do we do? Where do we look to lift our hopes?

One of the most powerful things about true hope is realizing that it is rare and needs to be sought out. By concluding that the earthly and enticing ways of our world often replace hope with a sense of helplessness and apathy, we are giving ourselves permission to look elsewhere, to look higher.

We will present four steps to life-changing hope. The key is to arm yourself with these four steps *before* things fall apart. When we are in the midst of a crisis, we are not thinking right, sleeping enough, emotions are out of balance and we are in a flight-or-fight mode. This is like making preparations before a big storm. We do not need the flashlight and wind-up radio right now, but we will, so get them ready! We must anchor ourselves steady so the waves will NOT wipe us out. The Scriptures in this podcast will be like our "hurricane preparedness kit." Hope goes beyond just a feeling; it is a tool, an intentional plan, to prepare us against the storms of life.

FOUR STEPS TO LIFE-CHANGING HOPE



While it is a really important step to look for something higher as we realize how empty a sinful life is, this can also be a treacherous step as well. Just finding that which is higher does not inherently bring hope. What we find must have SUBSTANCE and TRUTH.

A warning of the consequences of wrong hopes:

Job 8:11-15: (NRSV) ¹¹Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? ¹²While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. ¹³Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish. ¹⁴Their confidence is gossamer, a spider's house their trust. ¹⁵If one leans against its house, it will not stand; if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.

Something of significance needs to be fed. Hope feeds a life of significance, and to find true hope, we need to look higher.



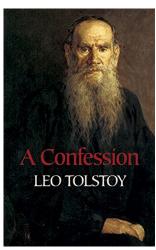
CQRewind (1)) My Question, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

• My question ... was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man from the foolish child to the wisest elder: it was a question without an answer to which one cannot live, as I had found by experience. It was: "What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? What will come of my whole life?" Differently expressed, the question is: "Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything?" It can also be expressed thus: "Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?"

Tolstoy then turns to both science and philosophy, neither of which provided satisfactory answers.



<u>Job 11:20</u>: (NRSV) But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of escape will be lost to them, and their hope is to breathe their last.



A Confession is the autobiographical story of Tolstoy's struggle searching for the answer to the ultimate philosophical question, "If God does not exist, since death is inevitable, what is the meaning of life?" Without the answer to this, life had become impossible for him.

The story begins with the eastern fable of the dragon in the well. A man is chased by a beast into a well, at the bottom of which is a dragon. The man clings to a branch that is being gnawed on by two mice (one black, one white, representing night and day and the relentless march of time). The man is able to lick two drops of honey (representing Tolstoy's love of his family and his writing), but because death is inevitable, he no longer finds the honey sweet.

Tolstoy goes on to describe four possible attitudes towards this dilemma:

The four ways, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

• I found that for people of my circle there were four ways out of the terrible position in which we are all placed. The first was that of ignorance. It consists in not knowing, not understanding, that life is an evil and an absurdity. From [people of this sort] I had nothing to learn — one cannot cease to know what one does know....



- The second way out is Epicureanism. It consists, while knowing the hopelessness of life, in making use meanwhile of the advantages one has, disregarding the dragon and the mice, and licking the honey in the best way, especially if there is much of it within reach...
- The third escape is that of strength and energy. It consists of destroying life, when one has understood that it is an evil and an absurdity. A few exceptionally strong and consistent people act so. Having understood the stupidity of the joke that has been played on them, and having understood that it is better to be dead than to be alive, and that it is best of all not to exist, they act accordingly and promptly end this stupid joke...
- The fourth way out is that of weakness. It consists in seeing the truth of the situation and yet clinging to life, knowing in advance that nothing can come of it. People of this kind know that death is better than life, but not having the strength to act rationally to end the deception quickly and kill themselves they seem to wait for something...

Tolstoy saw himself in the fourth category and likened it to living like King Solomon by writing, "Knowing that life is a stupid joke plagued upon us and still to go on living, washing oneself, dressing, dining, talking and even writing books. To me this was repulsive and tormenting, but I remained in that position."

Humanity has always sought something new, exciting and promising to seek after. Paul in Athens:

Acts 17:18-22: (NASB) ¹⁸And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, What would this idle babbler wish to say? Others, He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities, because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? ²⁰For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.

Paul is in a place where there is a lot of philosophical thinking going on around him.

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers - two opposing Greek philosophies developed to free people from the concerns of the present life, trying to give them hope.

Epicureans believe the way to happiness was through maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. But to the purest form of this philosophy, pleasure was derived by living modestly not hedonistically. They believed gods were like men only of a higher order, residing out in space somewhere enjoying a life of quiet pleasure like the Epicureans, having nothing to do with men. The founder, Epicurus, said, "He who is not satisfied with a little is satisfied with nothing."

Stoicism says you can find happiness by relying on your inner self. The path to happiness is found in accepting the moment as it presents itself. You are not controlled by the desire for pleasure or fear of pain. Things are the way they are and cannot be changed. To find true happiness, they believed one should understand the course of nature through reason and simply accept things the way they are.

Neither of these fit in with Christianity.



²¹(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.) ²²So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

I observe that you are very religious in all respects - Building on the crowd's search for hope, he starts witnessing God's truth to them by drawing them in and showing them something actually worthy of hope.

Even within Christianity, it is told to us that some would have access to the hope of truth but would ignore it:

<u>2 Timothy 3:6-8</u>: (NASB) ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

Simply looking up is really not enough - we need to look with humility, reverence and godliness.



The names *Jannes and Jambres* never appear in the Old Testament but they are thought to be Pharaoh's magicians of the 10 Plagues from Exodus 7:11,12. They opposed Moses by doing something similar to what he did, which confused the people. Satan draws attention from the truth by counterfeiting it.

The following Psalm walks us through these four steps to life-changing hope.



First, keep looking up:

<u>Psalm 121:1</u>: (NASB) I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come?

Hope is built on something higher than us.





Finding real and lasting hope for our lives can be a challenge. How will we know it when we see it?

Complete hope, like anything of lasting value, looks and feels different than other things that bring us temporary hope. Complete hope by definition carries us through the present, has a positive effect on others and lasts into the future. There are few places that even offer such hope.

FOUR STEPS TO LIFE-CHANGING HOPE



The hopefulness of higher thoughts can open the door to faith. Once the plan of God begins to be understood, faith can become a foundation upon which true and unrelenting hope can be built.

"True and unrelenting hope" is important. How many times do we have unrelenting anxiety or depression? What about finding a hope that is so strong and powerful that it never goes away? This is what these steps are about - building an unrelenting hope.

Hebrews 6:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hope is based upon God's plan and His promise! Jesus accomplished his mission, and because of this we have hope.



The Hebrew verses before these reference the promise, or covenant, given to Abraham three times in Genesis, then again to Isaac and again to Jacob - in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. By God's word and His divine oath, we can have absolute confidence that in His due time, that promise will be absolutely and

literally fulfilled. The seed was eventually Jesus, and because of his ransom sacrifice, we have hope.

The contradiction, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

- Rational knowledge presented by the learned and wise denies the meaning of life, but the enormous masses of men, the whole of mankind receive that meaning in irrational knowledge. And that irrational knowledge is faith, that very thing which I could not but reject. It is God...
- By faith it appears that in order to understand the meaning of life I must renounce my reason, the very thing for which alone a meaning is required...
- A contradiction arose from which there were two exits. Either that which I called reason was not so rational as I supposed, or that which seemed to me irrational was not so irrational as I supposed.

He is considering that faith might seem irrational but is necessary.



Our hope is based on God's actions - Jesus was raised, so we can therefore look forward in hope:

1 Corinthians 15:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

If Jesus is not raised, the whole Christian faith is worthless, as it is based on that event. But Paul was an eyewitness to the risen Jesus (Acts 9) so he knew this fact of the resurrection to be true. He is assuring us this is real.

Not only does this provide Jesus' followers hope, it opens the "hope door" to everybody else:

<u>1 Timothy 2:3-6</u>: (NASB) ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.



Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth - this is not God's "wish list." When He says something, it happens. His son, Jesus, gave himself a ransom so that ALL men could be saved, regardless of what you believe now.

Notice the order:

- 1. He desires all men to be saved AND
- 2. to come to the knowledge of the truth

It does NOT say, "He desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth so that they can be saved."

There is a plan: Because of the ransom of Jesus (ransoming Adam's race from death - a perfect man for a perfect man), ALL men will be saved. Then in the resurrection, in God's kingdom, they will be able to finally learn about God and righteousness without the influence of Satan and their own inherent sin.

The raising of mankind from the dead gives them the <u>ability</u> to come to the knowledge of the truth.

To learn more about how the Day of Judgment will work, please search our archives for Episode 934 "Will Sinners Be Happy on Judgment Day?"

Romans 8:20-22: (NASB) ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

But because of Him who subjected it - by reason of Adam's sin, God allowed the permission of evil for a time.

In hope - God allowed sin to happen but with HOPE to be set free from the slavery of death and dying.



For those going through difficult times, what should they put their hope in? It may not go well in this world, but think bigger. God has a plan and it is guaranteed to work out. All people have the opportunity for resurrection. Adam's sin affected every human being; therefore, Jesus' death also affected every human being. There is future hope.

The magnitude of this hope for the world seems unnoticed by most, but the Scriptures are plain:

<u>1 Timothy 4:10</u>: (NASB) For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Notice the two-part plan of salvation:

- 1. The Savior of all men
- 2. The Savior especially of believers

How can one be *especially* saved? The believers are saved first and given a heavenly reward. All others will be resurrected on earth. There is a difference in their pathway, but Jesus is still the Savior of ALL men. We should not limit the hope given to us in the Bible.

<u>1 John 2:2</u>: (NASB) And he himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

- 1. For our (Jesus' followers) sins
- 2. Also for those of the whole world

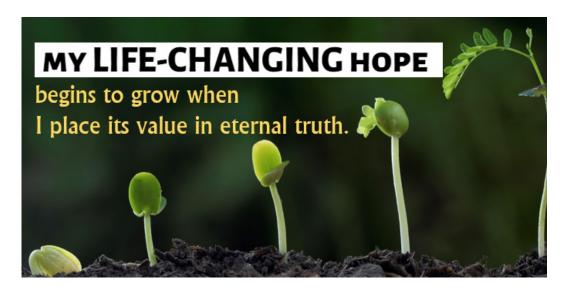
This is the hope and our firm foundation! Everyone can hold onto this hope.



Psalm 121 and our second step - connect our looking up to looking to the power of God:

Psalm 121:2-4: (NASB) ²My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. ³He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Who made heaven and earth - We can look no higher!





Faith is a strong foundation as a result of these powerful connections. What do we build upon it?

This is the next area where people often get derailed. We proclaim to have faith in God and His son Jesus, but the only vision that comes from this is one of pearly gates, angels with wings or God bringing us lots of stuff. We get stuck between imagination and wishful thinking but do not develop real hope.

FOUR STEPS TO LIFE-CHANGING HOPE



A Vibrant Vision means we have energy, focus and drive! With a viable faith in place it is natural for a clear vision to begin to develop, but it is still not easy. Our spiritual vision that will feed our hope must be firmly based and clearly focused.

Our hope can only be strong when it is truly internalized and therein we find its meaning:

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.

The eyes of your heart - the ability to see and appreciate with the eye of faith things not physically seen as of yet. "I pray you will make the hope of your calling your own. It will lodge in your heart in the core of your very being." Knowing intellectually is incomplete without knowing in the heart.

This happens as we are filled more and more with the Holy Spirit, which is God's power and influence. In order to have that hope, we need to immerse ourselves in these Scriptures. The *hope of His calling* points us to something bigger than us - God's ultimate plan of redemption for mankind.

The strength of life, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

- Faith is the strength of life. If a man lives, he believes in something. If he did not believe that one must live for something, he would not live. If he does not see and recognize the illusory nature of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he understands the illusory nature of the finite, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith he cannot live...
- For man to be able to live he must either not see the infinite, or have such an explanation of the meaning of life as will connect the finite with the infinite.

Tolstoy continued by saying, "Faith makes it possible to live. Faith still remained to me as irrational as it was before, but I could not but admit that it alone gives mankind a reply to the questions of life, and that consequently it makes life possible."

What can connect the finite (us) with the infinite (God)? He gives us His plan for humanity through His word. This can connect us to the infinite! This is a powerful, concrete hope.



Our hope is the last best hope for the world. To receive such hope we want to emulate the attitude and obedience of the prophet Habakkuk.

He had just finished crying out to God about the misery and injustice of the world:

Habakkuk 2:1-3: (NASB) ¹I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved. ²Then the LORD answered me and said, Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. ³For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.

Though it tarries - while waiting thousands of years for God's kingdom to be established is nothing in comparison to eternity, we can expect anything worthwhile to take a long time.



What practical advice can we give people in the midst of despair? Hopefully they have prepped BEFORE the "storm" struck, but...

Consider memorizing short, impactful texts, such as:

Psalm 34:4: (KJV) I sought the Lord, He heard me and delivered me from all my fears.

We may not be delivered from our circumstances, but we can be delivered from our fears because we can find contentment in knowing who He is and what His plan is. Making Scripture a part of our lives is great preparation to get us through.

Another suggestion is to rely on those around us who we can see have a greater, stronger spiritual hope. "Borrow" their hope. Reaching out for each other helps us through hard experiences. The more vibrant our vision, the better able we are equipped to provide hope to others.

It actually makes sense that the greatest hope that the world has ever seen seems to take forever to develop:

<u>1 Corinthians 13:12-13</u>: (NASB) ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. ¹³But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

We cannot see all of the details clearly now, but it is okay we do not. What matters is we are searching into the word of God, the greatest source of hope. Now we are meant to live through *faith in God* and strive towards the *hope of God*. This can all be accomplished if we, as a body of Christ, strive to adopt in our lives *the love that IS God*. This love connects us and builds us up in the hope of our faith.

The hope of Scripture is for everyone!



The Bible overflows with the vibrant vision of hope for God's earthly creation:

Revelation 21:4: (NASB) And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

Look where this is placed in the Bible - at the end! This is the end of the book! We read how the human story ends. Genesis started out as Paradise Lost, and now we see Paradise Restored. All of this had purpose and meaning. It brought us to know right from wrong. In the end, no more tears, death or pain. This is what we are all longing for.

Is this our vision for living?

Because either you have a belief in God which is unconditional, which you maintain under each and every condition, or the faith is too weak and sooner or later will break down. — Viktor Frank!

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997)

- Successful neurologist and psychologist
- Holocaust survivor
 deported to camp in 1942
 lost his wife & family
- Writer of 'Man's Search For Meaning'





Psalm 121 and our third step - follow through on the power of God by seeing that it can apply to you:

<u>Psalms 121:5-7</u>: (NASB) ⁵The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. ⁶The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.

If God is our protector we have every reason to have hope according to His plan.



Our "higher" hope now has a foundation of faith and focused vision. What else does it need?

Hope CAN transform our lives, but it cannot accomplish that by itself. It needs to be absorbed into our minds, and it needs to find commitment in our hearts. Whenever anyone has their heart and mind convicted in this way, their ability to act can be engaged which gives them the Power of Purpose.



FOUR STEPS TO LIFE-CHANGING HOPE



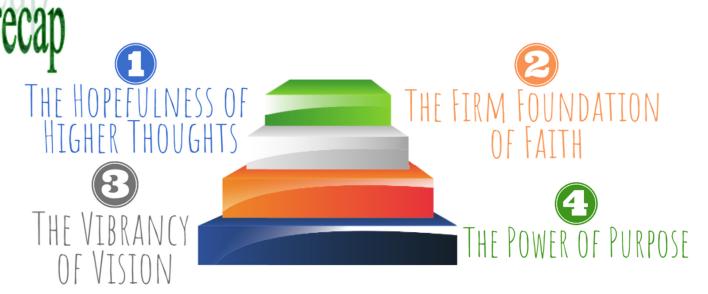
Power of Purpose!

By attempting to live with a higher purpose, life takes on a new level of meaning. There is something very special about having a purpose founded in the eternal hope God gives us.

Hebrews 12:2-3: (NASB) ²Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus died for those who persecuted and killed him, not just for his followers. He had his sense of purpose, driven by the desire and expectation to fulfill God's will. He had hope!

FOUR STEPS TO LIFE-CHANGING HOPE



Life with meaning, A Confession, Leo Tolstoy

In contrast with what I had seen in our circle, where the whole of life is passed in idleness, amusement, and dissatisfaction, I saw that the whole life of these people was passed in heavy labor, and that they were content with life.... In contradistinction to us, who the wiser we are the less we understand the meaning of life, and see some evil irony in the fact that we suffer and die, these folk live and suffer, and they approach death and suffering with tranquility and in most cases gladly...



- In complete contrast to my ignorance, [they] knew the meaning of life and death, labored quietly, endured deprivations and sufferings, and lived and died seeing therein not vanity but good...
- I understood that if I wish to understand life and its meaning, I must not live the life of a parasite, but must live a real life, and taking the meaning given to live by real humanity and merging myself in that life verify it.

Believing in God today is sometimes met with derision. This misses the point that the universe was created for a purpose for humanity.

Once we get to this fourth step, we can be "hope bearers" for others, learning to freely hand out hope. It should flow through us and from us.

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.

What role does hope play in this text?

First, verses 1-2:

- Being justified by faith (made right in the sight of God through faith in His son, as accepted by God) brings us peace with God through Jesus. (Foundation of Faith)
- Peace with God brings access to God's grace. Because we are now sons
 of God, we have peace and can approach the throne of God. The degree
 to which we live in accordance with the will of God is the degree to
 which God will answer our prayers and have His providence in our lives.
- God's grace brings us the opportunity to exult the hope of God's glory. (Vibrant Vision)



Second, the practical living aspect in verses 3-5:

- Because of the spiritual promises, we now KNOW tribulation brings perseverance.
 (Power of Purpose) Tribulation is not there to break us in pieces and traumatize us. It is allowed to build perseverance, just like Jesus. (Hebrews 5:8)
- Perseverance brings proven character.
- Proven character brings hope. This hope lives up to expectation because it is driven by God's love and spirit.





OUR MISSION



In accordance with God's grace and providence, to make the gospel available through podcasting and social media. To plant seeds of hope for the burdened and those searching for answers in their lives by leading them to truth and an understanding of God and His plan for us.

Christian Questions is all about planting seeds of hope! The plan of God is so encompassing, the hope of God is for everyone. If someone is feeling hopeless, they can borrow the "hope" of Christian Questions by listening to archived programs and watching Christian Questions.com/youtube.

Our hope is strong when it narrows and focuses our objective:

Philippians 3:10-14: (NRSV) ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹If somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead - the Apostle Paul is saying, "My past life and all of my indiscretions no longer matter." Paul persecuted Christians thinking he was honoring God, even to the point of authorizing the murder of Stephen. His past was only relevant to propel him forward to accomplish the will of God. He became the greatest purveyor of hope the world has seen since Jesus himself. Wherever we come from, God's hope can override our story and be more powerful than our past.



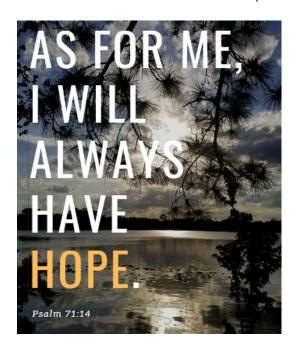
Psalm 121 and our fourth step - step out based upon having seen God's power to protect:

<u>Psalm 121:8</u>: (NASB) The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.

These are our footsteps. Everywhere we go, God will be with us.







When we think about the power of hope, think about what is in our hands - the word and will of God. Take these seriously and build a Foundation of Faith after looking up higher. Let it permeate our being so the "eyes of your heart" can see it and act on it. We can then be a walking pillar of hope for the people around us. Delve into the word of God and make it your own.

So, do Christians need hope in their lives?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on April 8, 2019: Ep. #1068: Do I Have a Sound Christian Mind?



Bonus Material!

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. — Anne Lamott



More on Leo Tolstoy:

(Source: Wikipedia) Born to an aristocratic Russian family in 1828, he is best known for the novels War and Peace (1869) and Anna Karenina (1877), often cited as pinnacles of realist fiction. He first achieved literary acclaim in his twenties with his semi-autobiographical trilogy, Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth (1852-1856), and Sevastopol Sketches (1855), based upon his experiences in the Crimean War. Tolstoy's fiction includes dozens of short stories and several novellas such as The Death of Ivan Ilyich (1886), Family Happiness (1859), and Hadji Murad (1912). He also wrote plays and numerous philosophical essays.

In the 1870s Tolstoy experienced a profound moral crisis, followed by what he regarded as an equally profound spiritual awakening, as outlined in his non-fiction work A Confession (1882). His literal interpretation of the ethical teachings of Jesus, centering on the Sermon on the Mount, caused him to become a fervent Christian anarchist and pacifist. Tolstoy's ideas on nonviolent resistance, expressed in such works as The Kingdom of God Is Within You (1894), were to have a profound impact on such pivotal 20th-century figures as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Tolstoy also became a dedicated advocate of Georgism, the economic philosophy of Henry George, which he incorporated into his writing, particularly Resurrection (1899).

The Tolstoy article that inspired today's podcast content: https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/06/03/tolstoy-confession Leo Tolstoy on Finding Meaning in a Meaningless World, by Maria Popova



A Psalm of Trust

This psalm focuses on how we should trust in God. It shows us that a great amount of strength in our lives simply comes from our trust and hope in God. The beginning talks about how treacherous our lives can be when we stand up for God.

<u>Psalms 56:1-2</u>: (ISV) ¹Have mercy on me, God, because men have harassed me. Those who oppress me have fought against me all day long. ²Those who watch me all day have harassed me, for there are many who fight against me out of conceit.

These verses point out how large and threatening the enemy can be at times. Whether the enemy is our flesh, people who persecute us, or even laziness, all these forces together can feel overwhelming at times.

<u>Psalms 56:3-4</u>: (ISV) ³On days when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I put my trust. I will not fear what mortal man can do to me.

The writer of this psalm expresses his cure for anxiety or fear: putting his trust in the Lord. Our mentality has great power over what is in front of us. By simply acknowledging the sovereignty and power of God, our anxieties should, in theory, pass from us. This requires us to look to what the future holds with God in command. It requires a firm hope. Not all days will be great and joyful, even when we are focused. The psalmist expresses this feeling in the following verses.

<u>Psalms 56:5-8</u>: (ISV) ⁵All day long people distort what I say; all their schemes against me are for evil purposes. ⁶They gather together and hide in ambush. They watch my every step as they lie in wait for my life. ⁷Cast them away because of their wickedness. In wrath, God, cast down these people! ⁸You have kept count of my wanderings. Put my tears in your bottle - have not you recorded them in your book?

The psalmist is deeply troubled despite his trust in God. He even asks God to bottle up his tears! Shouldn't his trust and faith in God have delivered him, or



at least saved him from the pain? It seems that it is not the case. He does have a source of strength to overcome it, however.

<u>Psalms 56:9-13</u>: (ISV) ⁹My enemies will retreat when I call on you. This has been my experience, because God is with me. ¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ¹¹in God I will put my trust. I will not fear what mortal man can do to me. ¹²God, I have taken vows before you; therefore I will offer thanksgiving sacrifices to you. ¹³For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living!

Simply calling on the Lord causes his enemies to retreat. This does not mean that they are literally disappearing, but that the enemies no longer have influence over him. He no longer fears what mortals can do to him because of his hope in God. God has delivered him from death. Our hope is in the resurrection, that Jesus has saved us. This hope does not make the current trouble go away, but it gives us the strength to look ahead to something better. This is why hope is so important to the life of a Christian. It is our source of comfort and strength amidst the overwhelming trials of life.

More details on this Hebrews text:

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.

Two unfailing testimonies: The word (promise) of God and the path of God.

Elements of the above-stated hope:

- God's promise
- The unchangeable character of His purpose
- 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

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.