

"Christ is our Hope"

When you belong to Christ, you have the greatest hope in the world. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." With Christ in your life, no one can steal your hope. So stay tuned and learn about this hope!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Through His word, the Father in heaven opens our eyes to the truth. The Scriptures provide us a perspective to see more than the struggles and troubles. They give us hope and promise of God's care. They teach us God's love and His desire to save us. They give us hope in every aspect of life. Give me the Bible, nothing else will do. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Several years ago I took my first commercial airplane flight. I boarded an old plane of a small company on a snowy, cloudy, December day. They had to de-ice the plane twice before we took off. Oh I was cold, I was alone, and more than a little nervous. I listened closely to the safety speech about seat belts. Well the plane was a blend of jet and propeller from the 1950s. And I admit it was tense! The plane slowly got off the ground. And up we climbed into the clouds, and I was not prepared for what happened next. I should have realized the obvious. We passed above the clouds into the brightness of the day. You see, the sun still shines above the clouds.

Clouds move in and out with their rain and shadows. And they can temporarily mask the sun, but they cannot stop it from shining. And so it is with the Lord! When you're tempted to think all is lost, it's helpful to remember: the Father is still on the throne. Remember the blood of Jesus still cleanses from sin. The Bible stands as Jesus said "It is written." The Lord Jesus is still coming again for His people. The gospel still has power to save, and prayer still reaches the ear of the Heavenly Father.

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Romans 5 verses 1 to 5, and we'll consider Christ our hope!

Our reading today is from Romans chapter 5, verses 1 thru 5. "Therefore, having been justified 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. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, 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." That's a precious reading from the book of Romans. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for hope, and even in the toughest of times we know that You loves us and that You watch over us and bless us with good things. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Wasn't that beautiful singing. I love Edward Mote's hymn, because I know it's true. I grew up singing it. He wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand." Someone has said, that "Hope is as necessary

to the spirit as oxygen is to the body." As Christians, we have hope even in the hardest times. Hope in Jesus Christ is our confident expectation that God will meet all our needs in this life and bless us with life in heaven. In Christ we have a wonderful living hope!

The inspired apostle Paul promised the church in Philippi, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4 verse 19). When we become Christians through our faith, repentance, and baptism, all out of love, we can count on our Father in heaven washing away our sins with the blood of Christ. By His grace we can count on being added to His church, His family, becoming His children, and enjoying His favor. Christ is our hope and our rock. Jesus, you remember said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." The whole world may change under our noses, but nothing changes the fact Jesus is Lord and the way to heaven.

The early church went through some terrible times at the hands of the Roman Emperors. Early Christians faced gladiators, wild beasts, prison, and crucifixion from the hands of people who did not understand them, but all their troubles did not remove the love of God. The Bible says in Romans 8 verses 31 to 39, "What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather He who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Holy Spirit wrote in Romans 15 and verse 4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The Scriptures do indeed give us hope; they help us see the problems of life are not new. Others have suffered through the same struggles that you and I face and have succeeded with God's help. If God could help them, He can help us. If God could forgive them, He can forgive us. If God has kept His promises to them, we know He will keep His promises to us.

The Scriptures teach us of God's mighty arm bringing Israel out of Egypt, of the crossing of the Red Sea, it teaches us of the manna in the wilderness, and of the falling of the walls of Jericho. In his last days, Joshua could proclaim to all Israel, "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; and not one of them has failed" (Joshua 23 and verse 14). Now the Scriptures teach us how God liberated Israel through the judges and how David won over Goliath through the help of God. When the people followed God, God was with them and blessed them. Now hope is our confident expectation, an expectation that God will provide what He promises.

Because God has all power, because God loves us with a great love, and because God keeps His promises, we can have true hope. Jesus is our hope (1 Timothy 1 and verse 1)! He is our hope in every

aspect of our lives. When people draw near the Lord, they find peace and meaning in life. They have the ability to endure, even in the harshest times.

Now when life tumbles in, Christians find solace and comfort in the Lord. God's prophet Jeremiah watched his world tremble, and stumble and fall in Jerusalem when it fell to the Babylonians. He wrote in Lamentations 3:21 to 24, "This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD'S loving-kindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.'"

Oh every day God gives us life and the things that we need to sustain life. We breathe God's air, eat God's food, and drink God's water. God is so good to us. And even when ugly and hurtful things happen to us, God knows how to use those hurtful things for good. The Bible says in Romans 8 and verse 28, "And we know (not we think or we feel, but we know) that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." God can use our defeats and disappointments to shape and mold us, so that we become better people.

Even when God says no to our prayers, He does so for our best interest. The Bible records when God said no to an apostle. 2 Corinthians 12 verses 7 to 10 says: Paul's speaking, "So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times (he says) I pleaded to the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He (God) said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' (Paul said) Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I'm content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

God sees our needs even before we do. He knows what is best for our character and what will help us spiritually. He gives us great hope by forgiving our sins. You might think there is no way God would ever forgive you of all your sins; but if you think that, you'd be mistaken. Before Paul was an apostle of Christ, he was the persecutor Saul of Tarsus. By inspiration he wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16, "That the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." Now if the blood of Christ could wash away the sins of the worst sinner of all, it'll also wash away your sins.

You can go to heaven, no matter how many sins you've committed, because of the grace of our God and how it is greater than our sins, and the Lord gives us the opportunity and the ability to change. Now this change is repentance, and repentance is an opportunity full of hope. You don't have to be stuck in your old life. The Lord can help you turn your life around. And this ability to change comes from our faith in the Lord and His teaching through the Word, the Bible. The more we read and understand about the Lord, the more we'll love Him. And this love for God in our hearts gives us strength to make lasting changes.

God can break us free from enslavement to sin. The Lord Jesus said in John 8 and verse 34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." Well enslavement to sin kills hope and has filled our prisons and our cemeteries, but the Scripture says more. The Lord also says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." God can set us free from the enslaving hold that sin has on our lives. Hope means I do not have to be entrapped by my past sin. God can turn my life around and strengthen me to become the person that He desires.

Hope also means that this life is not all there is; that there is life beyond the grave far better than our lives here. The Lord Jesus promised in John 14 verses 1 to 3, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am there you may be also." We not only can live eternally, we can live in heaven with Jesus. In heaven we can have His blessing and comfort forever.

The Scripture says in 1 Peter 1 verses 3 to 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Wouldn't you like to be in a place that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away? Wouldn't you like to be in a place without disease, death, weeping, or sin? Wouldn't you like to live forever in the presence of God and Christ who love you?

Some people think it's impossible to be a Christian and live a holy life, but the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 to 30, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Friend, you can go to heaven; you can bear the easy yoke of Christ and bear His light burden. Christianity is a livable faith. But you must take up that yoke and follow Christ with faith and love.

Well why does all this matter? It matters, because our hope is not dead. It's alive and well! We have hope in Christ because of the cross and we have hope in Christ because of the resurrection. We don't have to die in sin; we can live eternally. Christ paid the price for our sins. And we don't serve a dead Lord but a risen one who lives forever! And because He lives, we have the hope of living with Him in heaven forever and ever. I tell you, there is a big difference between those who belong to Christ and those who do not. Don't you want to belong to Jesus? Let's pray together. Oh father help each of us to place our hope firmly in You, and in Your Son Jesus, who dies for our sins, and whom You raised from the dead. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Can you imagine how empty and sad life is without hope? Some scoff at God, and others deny He exists. Those who belong to Christ greatly differ from those who don't. Paul reminded the Ephesian pagans of their past before they became Christians. In Ephesians 2 and verse 12 Paul said, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Oh I tell you, God is no crutch, as some think. God is your only real hope. He is your Creator, He sustains your life, and His Son is your only Savior. Without Him, you have no hope! But with Christ, "you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (or family)" (Ephesians 2 and verse 19).

As I have said, those who belong to Christ greatly differ from those who don't. That's why it matters whether you are right with the Lord and whether your sins are forgiven. Is your life right with God? Have you been washed in the blood of Christ? You're washed in the blood, when you put your faith in Christ, lovingly repent of your sins, confess the name of the Lord, and are baptized into Christ. In the act of baptism, God washes away your sins and adds you to His family the church. When you have the hope of God in your life, because He's washed away your sins and added your name to the book of life, you can have confidence to face every trouble and trial life hands you. In Christ, the Father will hear your prayers. And with God's book, the Bible, you have the Divine truth. Wouldn't you like to

have your sin forgiven today? Why not place your hope in Christ today by being baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins?

We hope that today's study has stirred you to consider your soul and to place your hope in God. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch the Search program anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs online and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So get involved with a church of Christ near you, and we'll be happy to help you find a Biblical, healthy church. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Sp keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.