

## Hope

*“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:22-25)*

Hope. For nearly two years the world has been groaning in travail with COVID-19. This dreaded disease has devastated many nations in our world, killed over five million people, and changed the way most of us live. Each time people think we have moved beyond the danger, a new variant emerges or a spike in cases arises. We live from day to day, hoping against hope, that the day will come when life can get back to “normal”—if we can even figure out what “normal” is or was....

In the world, we often use the word “hope” in a wistful sort of way—the “hope against hope” way—wishful thinking when something is unlikely to occur, but we sure wish it would. When we encounter the word “hope” in the Bible, we may not realize that the hope spoken of by the prophets and apostles means something quite different. In the text above, the Apostle Paul speaks of our hope in Christ Jesus. His meaning is reflected in the hymn, “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”:

*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....*  
(Edward Mote, 1834)

Christian hope is grounded in our faith and trust in the Lord God, the Creator of all things, our heavenly Father who loved humankind so much that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to take our sins upon Himself in His crucifixion—and to overcome our deserved punishment of death by rising from the dead on the third day. In John 3:16, our Lord Jesus gives us the “Gospel in miniature”, telling the Pharisee, Nicodemus (and us), that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. We can trust God’s promise because as we read the Bible—from Genesis through Revelation—we discover that through all the ages of time, the Lord has been working to fulfill His promise to send the Redeemer through Whom all people would be blessed. From Genesis 3:15, when God pronounced judgment on the serpent, through the promise of blessing for all nations given to Abraham and his descendants, consummated in the death and resurrection of Christ, and continuing into the future with the assurance that Christ will return at the end of time to rule throughout eternity, we find the same promise in the process of ultimate fulfillment. Cultures change, technology changes, people’s understanding of God’s world changes, but the assurance of God’s love for human beings has never changed.

Our hope is grounded in Christ Jesus, the embodiment of God’s love for us. He has come. He will come again. This is our hope. It’s not wistful, wishful thinking, but is based on God’s solid promise and built on our trust in the Lord who has proven Himself trustworthy through all the ages of time. Diseases will come and go. There will be wars, misunderstandings, disagreements in how life should be

lived or understood, and continuing distrust of those who think or live differently from us. But the love of God in Christ is eternal. Our hope is built on nothing less. On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand.