

Living in Hope

Dear Friend,

Jesus tells us, “When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away” (Luke 21:9 NIV).

In other words, don’t panic, have hope. “Then he said to them: ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences (like COVID-19) in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven’ (Luke 21: 10-11 NIV).

At such a time like this our Savior is telling us not only to have hope, but also to share it by being hope dealers.

God has called all of us to live in hope and share hope with a world drowning in hopelessness. Psalm 27:14 tells us to “*Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord*” [AMPC].

It may seem hard to wait, but we can wait and have hope knowing that God’s delay is not God’s denial. Without hope, which is the oxygen for our souls, we will give in to despair, hopelessness and depression. When there is no hope, we will feel that life is suffocating us with one endless problem after another.

As Hope Dealers we can offer direct help to the hurting and homeless, “*For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the expectation and hope of the meek and the poor shall not perish forever*” (Psalm 9:18 AMPC). Knowing this we will in these last days take our eyes off inflation and our own problems and become dealers of hope as we directly help those in need.

We are able to respond to the needs of the poor and elderly because as we live in hope, we will declare to the Lord, “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your Word” (Psalm 119:114 AMPC). The word of God, commonly referred to as the Bible, could also be called the book of hope. In it we find the promises, power and presence of God affirmed over and over. We are told to, “trust in the Lord (commit yourself to Him, lean on Him, hope confidently in Him) forever; for the Lord God is an everlasting Rock [the Rock of Ages]” (Isaiah 26:4 AMPC).

To trust in the Lord means to have faith in God. Faith is the substance of hope. As Hebrews 11:1 says, “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*” Without

faith, Hebrews 11:6 also says it is impossible to please God. It is faith in God which gives us the strength to be there with direct help when people are hurting.

We will live in hope as we daily immerse ourselves in scriptures like Jeremiah 29:11 where it says, *“For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope and a future.”*

In order to live in hope, we must grasp the reality that Ephesians 1:18 [AMPC] speaks of, *“Having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich His glorious inheritance is in the saints.”*

During this time of war, earthquakes, COVID-19, and terrors we have a living hope. As I Peter 1:13 says, *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

Setting our hope fully on the grace of Jesus Christ is possible only as we “flee idols” as Paul told us in I Corinthians 10:14. If we have our hope in the idols of this world, it won’t be long, and these idols will soon rob us of all hope.

When Jesus told the rich ruler in Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30 to sell all and give it to the poor, Jesus was challenging the man to transfer his hope based on his wealth to God the Giver and Source of all life. The man *“went away grieved: for he had great possessions”* (Mark 10:22 KJV). *“As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be proud and arrogant and contemptuous of others, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but on God, who richly and ceaselessly provides us with everything for [our] enjoyment”* (I Timothy 6:17 AMPC).

Those walking in the darkness of hopelessness see only despair and loneliness. The miracles of creation can be taking place all around them, but they do not recognize them as such. Everything is formless, empty, and filled with the darkness of discouragement and negativism. In Genesis 1:2,3 we read, *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.”* For there to be light, hope and order in our lives, we need the Spirit of God to hover over our troubled waters of hopelessness. Then we need the Word of God to proclaim light and hope in the midst of this dark hopeless situation.

If we are going to live in hope, we need Jesus, the Word of Life, to remove the darkness of sin from us and bring forth the light of His forgiveness. In order for this to happen, we must respond to the movement of the Spirit and repent of our sins and declare in word and deed “Now I surrender to you, O Lord.” This surrender means that we give God our actions, our words and all that we are and own. In order for all things to be brought into full harmony with His divine order of creation we must let go of our own habitually disordered fear, along with our runaway passions, desires and emotions.

I realize that as we live this new life in Christ, and express hope in the midst of hopelessness, many in the world will consider us foolish or even crazy. Leonard Sweet, in his book Jesus Drives Me Crazy, uses the word “nuts” as an acronym for Never Underestimate the Spirit. “Let the unbelievers consider us nuts! We have learned to never underestimate the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we learn that the more status that Jesus has in our lives, the more we find ourselves confronting the status quo. The more Jesus becomes the Prince of Peace, the more we recognize the social injustices and frequently disturb the peace of the rich and powerful”.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to hover over our troubled waters and let the Hope and Love of Christ enter the dark areas of our lives, we will learn to never underestimate the power of the Spirit. God’s miracle power at work in our lives will allow us to not only experience hope but share it with everyone we meet.

Sometimes we feel like Frodo in the Lord of the Rings, who said he wished the master ring had not been found in his lifetime. “So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.”

You and I must also decide. Are we going to live in the light, hope and harmony of creation or are we going to live in the darkness and hopelessness that our culture of death serves up daily? *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”* (The words of Jesus Christ found in John 3:19-21 NIV).

When everyone else is living in hopelessness and darkness, the one living in the light and hope of Christ will be considered by the world as being nuts. But if being considered nuts means never understanding the Spirit, who cares what others think?

We are able, through the grace of God manifested through Jesus Christ, live in hope because we know that “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man (and woman) availeth much*” (James 5:16).

Joshua prayed and the sun stood still. Nineveh’s inhabitants prayed and God reversed His death sentence upon them. Hezekiah prayed and God let him live fifteen years longer. Samson prayed and God restored his lost power. Joseph prayed in prison, was given an interpretation to Pharaoh’s dream, was made second in command of Egypt and saved his family from starvation. Daniel prayed and God shut the lion’s mouth. Elisha, Peter and Paul prayed, and the dead were raised to life.

As you move from darkness and hopelessness into light and life, you will discover you are “...*more than conquerors through Him (Jesus) who loved us*” (Romans 8:38 NIV). After all, Jesus said in John 12:46, “*I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.*” As the late Adrian Rogers said, “Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light.”

As we remain in the light, love, and presence of Jesus Christ daily, He promises, “If you remain in Me and my Words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7 NIV). That is God’s promise to us at this hour spoken through Jesus who said, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22 NIV).

We can have hope at this time of hopelessness because, “This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God’s gift to us” (Romans 5:5).

It’s a fact hope centered in God and His promises is hope that endures. He will meet all of our needs as reflected in Psalm 25:3, 20-21. The reason this hope does not disappoint is that God has poured out His love into our hearts (I John 4:8, 16). This love of God poured out into our hearts provides hope in the most difficult and seemingly impossible situations because we know that God is love.

God is not only our Eternal Hope Dealer, but Healer, Deliverer, Savior, Comforter, Provider and Sustainer. What a mighty God we serve!

Even the trials, tribulations, and afflictions we suffer on a day-by-day basis can serve to build character and hope within us as we look to our Risen Savior. *“For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory (beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease). Since we consider and look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen: for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting”* (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18 AMPC).

Glory be to God! Because of His infinite love, mercy, and grace we are people who can live in hope both now and for all eternity. Look at how Romans 15:13 [NIV], calls Him the God of hope as it declares, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

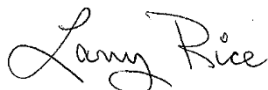
The key to experiencing all joy and peace is to trust in the God of hope. As you trust in Him remember you will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what will make you a hope dealer who shares hope with everyone you meet.

Hope involves faith. “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?” (Romans 8:24 NIV).

Hope is the oxygen for your soul. Continue to trust in the God of hope and let His hope flow into the essence of your being at this moment. Be a Hope Dealer sharing this hope with everyone you know. As you do this you will see Him do exceedingly far beyond what you can ask or think.

Remember at every moment, no matter what life may throw at you, there is hope, for Christ is Risen. Live in the reality of this hope and discover the joy of overflowing with hope as you become a Hope Dealer for the glory of God.

Yours in the hope that Christ provides,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice".

Larry Rice

Putting Biblical Principles to Work for Being a Hope Dealer

1. How can it be said considering Psalm 27:14 and Lamentations 3:21-26 that God's delay is not God's denial?
2. What is the reason that you can have hope no matter what the circumstances might be?
3. What must we do to experience hope in our daily lives? (See Jeremiah 29:11, Ephesians 1:18, I Peter 1:3)
4. How does one rest in the hope of eternal life? (See Titus 1:2, I Thessalonians 5:8, I Peter 1:21)
5. Do you agree that hope does not involve getting rich but living richly? If so, what role does faith have in having a hope that results in being richly?
6. How do we secure "this hope as an anchor for our soul" (Hebrews 6:19)?
7. In what ways can money be made into an idol? How does any idol in life rob us of the ability to let hope overflow?
8. How is hope centered in God and how do His promises create a hope that endures?
9. What does NUTS mean to a believer?
10. Study Psalm 27:14 and Romans 15:13 and state why God is called the God of hope?
11. Why can it be said that hope is the oxygen for your soul? In what ways are you allowing this oxygen to enter your soul each day?