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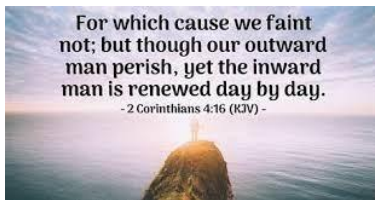
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## The Theology of Hope for the Downcast in a Pandemic

We live in an increasing hopeless and helpless world as we are fighting an unprecedented and fast spreading virus in this pandemic that has brought despair to many spiritually, socially, physically and economically. More than 3.4m have died with 167 million infected by this deadly virus worldwide till date. About 400 people took their lives in 2019 in Singapore and committed suicide in utter desperation. Most of them were depressed and some have lost all hope for living. They could not find any other workable options to stay alive. Some despaired to the point of death which they felt was the only way out.

For the Christian we are different from the world for we are a covenant people of a true glorious hope because of Christ. It is a real biblical hope, a hope that grows out of that which is eternal—not temporal and a lasting hope that can deliver us from eternal death and condemnation. (Psa 33:19)

Consider this definition of hope, "*Hope is confident expectation in God to be faithful to fulfill each and every one of His promises.*" The biblical definition of hope includes "*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" (Heb 11:1) Hope is a firm assurance regarding things that may be unclear and unknown to us now but is promised to us by God.



Hope is only meaningful if we have the right object of Hope which is not man or self or the world but of the almighty God who created the heavens and the earth. The Christian hope is found in no other person but in Christ who is God and who died for our sins. Even though we are down emotionally or physically, we are not totally out spiritually. We do not lose heart as "our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). What then are the elements of true biblical hope? Consider the following (adapted, expanded and edited from Paul Tautges in his letter to a suicidal person) below.



1. **Hope is Theocentric.** “And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.” (Psa 39:7). Ultimately, a genuine hope that lasts is not found in anything or anyone, outside of the eternal triune God.



2. **Hope is related to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.** “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;” (1 Tim 1:1). “Hope in God” is not possible unless we have been reconciled to Him through His Son, the one and only Mediator between God and sinners (1 Tim 2:5). In Christ, we have “a better hope” (Heb 7:19) and it is a sure and everlasting hope.

3. **Hope is the divine Work of the Holy Spirit.** “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Rom 15:13). This is the basis of our faith and our everlasting hope.

4. **Hope is Rooted in the victorious Resurrection of Christ .** “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (1 Cor 15:19-20). Through Christ we are “believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that [our] faith and hope might be in God” (1 Pet 1:21). The prospect of our victory over the grave one day is found in the Christ and that is the hope of every regenerate soul.

5. **Hope is Not Dependent upon the Present Circumstances.** “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom 8:18). Even in the midst of a raging health calamity, we can still have hope in Christ who is our Rock and our Refuge in times of trouble like this global pandemic.

6. **Hope is Founded on God’s Infallible Promises.** As believers, we live “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;” (Tit 1:2). The absolutely reliable and inspired Word of God is the basis and foundation of all Christian hope and we do well to know and apply its inerrant content.



7. **Hope is Reliant upon God’s Faithfulness and Grace.** “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.” (Psa 33:18-19). Biblical hope grows well in the garden of Sovereign grace and mercy and we continue in the fellowship of saints and the corporate worship of God

in the beauty of His holiness every sabbath day with due diligence and all safety precautions.

8. **Hope Grows in the Mind that Remembers God.**

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”* (Lam 3: 21-23). Our mind is important and we need to discipline our mind to pray and think of edifying thoughts that our Lord would have us to and that will encourage faith and assurance in Him.



9. **Hope develops with the Understanding and Application of the Scriptures and Prayer.**

*“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”* (Rom 15:4). *“My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.”* (Psa 119:81). Yes, the sufficient Word of God and daily importune prayer give us consolation and solace in times of great despair and depression.

10. **Hope is Found in the Glorious Gospel.**

*“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;”* (Col 1:5). There is no hope for any who rejects the gospel of Christ but for the one who believes, he will be eternally secured and saved and safe forever.

11. **Hope is Laid Hold of by Faith.**

*“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”* (Gal 5:5; cf. Rom 5:2). Faith comes by the hearing and reading of the word of God and we need to do that if we want to increase in our unwavering faith in Christ.

12. **Hope stems from a Transformed Character, often in suffering.**

*“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:”* (Rom 5:3-4). Suffering and pain do not diminish our hope but instead it enhances as it builds maturity in us and brings eternal rewards for the faithful to the end.



The Christian has a glorious hope that is found in the victory of Christ over the grave and hell and sin. He is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises. Our hope is rooted in our faith in Christ who is the only way of

salvation. He is the Saviour of our souls. The Hope of Christians is sealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit in our hearts with the future hope of the resurrection of the dead, the glory in heaven with eternal life, the inheritance of the saints and the soon return of Christ to rule and judge the world.

## Conclusion

Even in the midst of a raging global health calamity, Christians are not hopeless and helpless. Let us remember the inspired Word of God that gives us the reality of everlasting hope. Christ who is God Himself is able to give us eternal peace, joy and comfort, and a glorious hope by His Sovereign grace and mercy. He will strengthen our hearts in every good work and word till the end as we continue with vigilance and carefulness in these perilous days. (2 Thess 2:16-17)



Jack Sin

*(Read Iain Murray, The Puritan Hope, Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, which is a study of the Biblical and Reformed teaching on the Christian Hope in this world by the triumph of the gospel.)*



Pray for the safety and salvation of our foreign workers and for Aunty Jenny for her physical health and spiritual strength in the Lord.





## How can a Christian have Victory through Christ during trying times?

That is a good question, As I was meditating on the Word of God on the theme, Victory through Christ in the midst of this severe health crisis, I read Rom 8:31-39 last week and noted the following 4 Ds.

### Victory through Christ:

- **Demands Faith.** Fighting a spiritual warfare requires us to put on the full armour of God and the shield of faith is one of them. We are to be ready, fit and disciplined soldiers of Christ as we have an enemy and we can fight with trust and reliance on the strength of God, taking all precautions as advised seriously and not relying on self or men but with much fervent prayers.
- **Dispels Fear.** Phobias during this present pandemic context are a real concern and can be a potential hindrance to spiritual growth and vitality and a powerful weapon used by the evil one to impede our spiritual progress and service in the Lord. But God gives us the victory over fears when we remain steadfast in faith and in the worship of God. Let us look up to the Lord, focus on His Word and fully trust His promises.

- **Diminishes Frustration.** We are often downcast, anxious, confused and discouraged in the present public health conditions and for some, even despair of life. But the comfort, prompting and guidance from God's Word and the indwelling Spirit gives us peace, joy, consolation, solace and victory over these difficult moments that we can press on with endurance and strength in the Lord, praying in the Spirit with alertness and not complacency.
- **Directs our Future.** We live in a troubled and uncertain world. We need to discern God's will for our relationships, work, studies, ministry and our lives and to look up to God. We are a covenant people of God and the scriptures give us spiritual guidance and directions in what we do with our spiritual convictions founded on the Word. We have a glorious hope and expectation of the future through the soon coming of our Lord and our resurrection one day.

May these biblical precepts above guide and lead us in the straight and narrow way of victory in Christ daily as we live for Him by His Sovereign grace and strength and with due diligence in the midst of a turbulent and fallen world.



Jack Sin

# Lessons in Godly Prudence from a Wise King

Studies into Ecclesiastes



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## 04

APRIL 2021

- 2 Good Friday: Who killed Jesus? (Luke 23:1-26)
- 4 The Implications & Impact of the Resurrection (1Cor 15:1-21,51-58)
- 11\* The Matters of the Heart (Eccl 1:1-18)
- 18 The Meaningless of Labour under the Sun (Eccl 2:18-26)
- 25 The Opportune Time for Everything (Eccl 3:1-12)

## 05

MAY 2021

- 2 The Beauty of Two in God's Economy (Eccl 4:4-21)
- 9\* The Management of the Tongue (Eccl 5:1-13)
- 16 The Mindless Pursuit of Wealth (Eccl 6:1-12)
- 23 The Basis for True Spiritual Discretion (Eccl 7:1-17)
- 30 Reverence and Fear of God (Eccl 8:1-13)

## 06

JUNE 2021

- 6 The Intervention of God (Eccl 9:7-18)
- 13\* Speech and Danger of Laziness (Eccl 10 :12-20)
- 20 Wise Counsel for Young and Old (Eccl 11:1-10)
- 27 Gospel Sunday: Fruitful Aging and the Chief Purpose of Man (Eccl 12:1-13)

## Memory Verse

*Ecc1 8:12* Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

## Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Bro Joseph Wee speaks today on “**Reverence & Fear of God (Ecc1 8:1-13)**”, continuing the quarterly sermon series on “Lessons on Godly Prudence from a Wise King – Studies in Ecclesiastes”.
3. Pastor Jack speaks next Sunday on “**The Intervention of God (Ecc1 9:7-18)**”.
4. In compliance with the Covid19 Phase 2 (Heightened Alert), the following Sunday School classes will be suspended till 13 Jun 2021 or when the heightened measures are lifted:
  - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
  - New Testament Survey – Dn Choo Siang
  - Studies in Numbers – Dr Kwong Leen
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The May prayer list is available from Dn Choo Siang.
7. Monthly Neighbourhood Bible Class meets on the first Friday of each month in church on the study of 2 Samuel. The class on Fri 4 Jun is postponed in compliance with the Phase 2 (Heightened Alert)
8. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at [sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com](mailto:sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com).
9. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
  - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
  - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
  - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

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