

The Christian Hope

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[0 : 00] And it's funny, isn't it, how the way we live in our present is determined largely by our outlook for the future, isn't it?

For all of us. How happy you are today depends on what you think is going to happen to you tomorrow or next week or next year. It works like that for all of us.

You know, if you've got holidays coming up soon, then work doesn't get you down as much, does it? If you're getting married soon or some other great event is coming up in your life, then you're excited about it and you're looking forward to it.

And life is good at the moment because of what's coming. If you've got retirement coming up, it's the same story. Something you're looking forward to. It's almost like we always need something to look forward to in life to keep us going, isn't it?

And the opposite is true as well. If you've got nothing to look forward to in life, you're generally depressed and unmotivated. And that's how it is. You see, unlike animals, we are beings who live very much in the future, don't we?

[1 : 02] We're constantly planning and anticipating and thinking about our future, thinking about what's to come in our life. We can't ignore it. It occupies our thoughts day to day and when we go to bed and when we wake up.

And everybody, like it or not, everybody has a particular outlook on their future, a particular understanding of what's going to happen to them in the future. Whether they think about it consciously or not, everybody has a view on their future.

Because we're not animals. We do think about the future. We can't avoid that. And the Bible has a special word for that, outlook on your future. It's called your hope. That's what the Bible calls your outlook on the future.

Whatever you anticipate about what's going to come in your life is called your hope. And your hope is the thing that determines how you live in the present. Whatever your outlook for the future is will determine how you live and how you think and what you live for today.

Now the Bible also says something about a Christian's hope. And it says that the Christian's hope is really a key feature in how we live on earth.

[2 : 07] It's one of the famous three hallmarks of the Christian life from 1 Corinthians. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, these three things remain, faith, love, and hope. It's the thing that God uses even in suffering to build in Christians.

Romans 5 says suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul describes hope as the Christian's helmet that we fight spiritual battles with.

Hebrews calls a Christian's hope the anchor that anchors our soul with which we survive the storms of life. And in 1 Peter, we're told always to be ready to answer when people ask us about what?

About our hope. That is, it's something that's so evident in the Christian's life that people will ask us about it. So throughout the Bible, a Christian's hope is seen as the strongest single determining factor for how they live day by day.

And so let me ask you, what is your hope today? What is your hope? What is your outlook on the future? What do you know for certain about your future? And to what extent does that knowledge affect how you live your daily life in this week to come?

[3 : 23] Think about that for a second. What is your hope? What are you looking forward to in your future? And how does it affect how you live today? Well, Paul writes this passage in Romans to describe the hope that a Christian can have.

And to describe also how that changes the way we live today. And so let's have a closer look at just what this Christian hope is. Now, we looked two weeks ago.

We were in chapter 8. We ended off with verse 17. And Paul said how suffering in life is something that all Christians go through just as Jesus did. But then look what he says next, verse 18.

He says, He says, Okay, so this passage is teaching us that our world, this creation around us that we see every day, is subjected to frustration in the present time.

Which means that creation is not what it should be. In fact, it can't be what it should be. And so it's frustrated. It's frustrating. You know how frustrating it is when you have something that just doesn't work like it should.

[5 : 00] You know, if you've got a pen that doesn't write, what's the point? You're frustrated and you're trying to get it right but it doesn't work. Or you've got a fridge that doesn't keep things cold like our fridge at home is starting not to do.

It's frustrating because that's the whole point you got it. And so if it's not doing the one thing it was meant to do, then it's frustrating. And you see, creation itself is also subject to that kind of frustration.

In other words, the world is broken. It doesn't work like it's supposed to work. So things like disease and sickness and natural disasters, they are not supposed to happen.

They are not natural. Death is not natural. Okay? Disease is not natural. This kind of frustration is not supposed to happen. These things happen because the world is malfunctioning.

The world is malfunctioning. But now why is the world like this? Well, Paul says, interestingly, not by its own choice but by the will of the one who subjected it.

[5 : 58] So let's get this right. The Bible says God caused the world to be broken. Okay? The Bible says God caused the world to be frustrated. Now why would he do that?

Why would a God who cares for people and cares for his world cause it to be broken like this? Cause it to... Why would he subject it to frustration? Well, we find out back in Genesis 1-3, which Pearson read a little bit for us earlier.

And for your homework, you can read Genesis 1-3 again just to remember how it all started. And it's there we discover that there was once a world that worked like it should work.

There was once a perfect creation in Eden working the way it was supposed to. And we read about that in Genesis 1-3. And when we read about it, we long to be there. We groan when we read that there was such a world.

And it was real. Imagine that. A world where there was no death. And there was no sickness. And there was no sadness. And there was no suffering. It worked like it was supposed to.

[6 : 58] And you know what? We all deep down inside know that this world should be like that. We all deep down inside know that this world is broken. Nobody even has to teach us that.

We don't even have to open our Bibles. And deep down inside, we know, wait a minute, this is not how it should be. And it's in Genesis 1-2 we read how it should be, how it was once.

And we also discover there that God made people, you and me, people, to be the pinnacle of this creation, this beautiful creation, and the stewards of this creation.

And everything was good and it worked well, except when people decided to turn away from God and reject His rule. And when that happened, it brought the judgment of a holy God down on us.

When we thought we could live without God, like many, many people do still today, that brought God's judgment on us. And not only did that mess us up, but it also messed up the creation that we were meant to rule over.

[8 : 01] And so nothing in this world works like it's supposed to anymore. So do you see what's going on? In Genesis 1-3, it explains to us how the world is messed up because we turned away from God.

And that had a ripple effect on the creation that we were the pinnacle of and we were meant to rule over. Our sin doesn't just affect us. It affects your dog, Fido.

It affects your kitty cat. It affects every animal and plant in this world. Our sin has ripple effects in the whole of the created order. And we must understand that sin has messed things up.

Not just in our hearts, but out there as well. And so Paul's point here is that it's really quite silly to pin our hope anywhere in this world, is it? And yet that's what we do naturally.

We pin our hopes and our desires and our aspirations to things in this world, forgetting that this world is messed up. It's broken. It's not going to satisfy you.

[9 : 01] It's silly to pin your hopes. It's pointless to pin your hopes in this world because you'll only ever get frustrated. Because this world is broken. It'll never satisfy you. Even the best things in this world will never make you completely happy.

They're temporary at best. And you and I know that. You know, the happiest moments we've had in life, there have only been moments. We've wanted to cling on to them and have them carry on, but they don't.

Our happiness passes away. And moments pass. And even the best things are just temporary. Even a relationship, a beautiful relationship we have with someone, you know what?

It ends in getting old and dying. Nothing lasts. And that is why a Christian's hope, what a Christian is to live for, is not in this world.

Not in this broken world. The Christian's hope is to live in the world to come. When, verse 19, when the children of God are revealed, when God finally destroys sin and evil once and for all, and his people are cleansed of their sins and given new bodies, not subject to sin and death, it's then when his people are finally fixed, you know what?

[10 : 11] Then creation will be fixed as well. When God's people, the people that he's chosen to be in his family, when the last of those people have come in, the skies are going to roll back like a scroll and God is going to come down and remake the world.

And we will finally be who we were made to be. And this world will finally be what it was made to be. And that is the world a Christian is to live for, not this world.

That world, to come. That's what we should be looking forward to every day. That's what should get us up in the morning. That's where we should be pinning our hopes and our happiness, in that world to come.

But let's be honest with ourselves. We don't do that, do we? We pin our hopes here. We very infrequently wake up and live for the world to come.

We live for this world. That's the natural thing. It's hard to live with the world to come as our focus. Let's be honest. And the reason is because we're still here in this broken world and we haven't seen the world to come.

[11 : 12] And that's why it's hard to live for a world to come. And so just as creation is groaning under decay, look what Paul says in verse 23. We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Okay, so he's admitting here that it's hard to cling to this Christian hope of the world to come. Not least of all because we haven't seen it yet.

And so we're called to wait patiently for something we haven't yet got. Now how do we do that? How do you wait patiently for something that you haven't seen yet?

Well, you know how the only way that you can wait patiently for something that you haven't seen is to be absolutely sure that you will have it one day. To be absolutely sure.

[12 : 17] Because it's only when you're 100% sure that you will really be able to live for the world to come that you haven't seen yet while you're still in this one. Only when you're absolutely sure that you will be there.

Because if you're not quite sure, then you will automatically default back to living in this world, pinning your hopes in this world. You've got to be sure where you're going. And so you'll notice in Romans chapter 8, that's exactly what Paul goes on to do in the rest of the passage.

He explains why, if you are a Christian here this morning, if you've put your faith in Christ, he explains why you can be sure of your future. And he tells us it's because of three special things that God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is doing right now to make sure that you are going to the new creation.

If you're a Christian. And I want us just to see this morning what those three things are. Firstly, the Spirit is interceding for God's people. That's the first thing that God is doing to make sure you know where you're going.

Look at verse 26. The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

[13 : 32] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. Let me ask you.

If you're a Christian, what are the things you typically pray for? I'm assuming you pray. If you're a Christian, you do. It's part of being a Christian. But what do you pray for?

What are the things that you typically pray for? Mostly, you pray for things you need. Sometimes you pray for things you want. And, of course, God grants those requests according to his will.

And the thing we often forget is prayer does work. You know, we mustn't just think that prayer is some kind of mantra that makes us feel better.

No, prayer, the words we say to God, actually, he hears them and he acts in response to them. It's an amazing thing. And we can't quite get our heads around how a God who's already planned everything already is still responding in reality to the prayers we pray.

[14 : 32] But, of course, it's because he's chosen that it's through our prayers that he's going to carry out his will. So, the prayers we pray still cause God to act. In other words, get this, God does things in your life that he wouldn't have done if they weren't prayed for.

Just think about that for a second. And so, prayer is important. God does things in your life he wouldn't have done if they weren't prayed for. But, now, that leads to a problem because, honestly, we're pretty bad at prayer, aren't we?

Most of us don't pray nearly as much as we should. And, not only do we struggle to make the time to pray, but we struggle to know what to pray for, the right things to pray for. You know what I'm talking about?

If you're a Christian, what do I pray for? What does God want me to pray for? And so, often we don't pray for things we should pray for. Let me ask you, how many blessings could you have enjoyed if only you had prayed for them?

Well, if you're a Christian, the answer to that question is none. The reason is because, you know what? When you failed to pray for what you needed, the Holy Spirit prayed it on your behalf.

[15 : 46] That's what it means that the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. The Holy Spirit is praying for you every day, picking up all the things that you miss, and praying for them.

Think about that. And, much more than physical blessings, what we really need and don't often pray for is spiritual blessings. Patience, love for others, faith, hope, the power to obey God and live His way, sanctification, holiness.

You know, we should be praying for those things, and as we grow as Christians, we learn to pray for those things. Although, we often don't pray for those things. But, if you're a child of God, you can know, even while you forget to pray for those things, the Spirit will be praying for them in secret, without words, that we can hear or understand, on your behalf.

The Spirit is praying on your behalf if you're a child of God. Isn't that an encouragement? Hmm? And, He does that to make sure that you are lacking nothing for the Christian life, so that your own weakness to pray won't ever threaten your hope of getting to the new creation one day.

If you're a child of God, your Father has you covered, because He sent His Spirit into your life to make up for your weaknesses, even in prayer, to pray for the things you forget to pray for, to make sure you have everything you need to get where God has destined you to be.

[17 : 12] And that is the first way that God is working every day to secure your hope, if you're a Christian. Secondly, the Son is interceding for God's people.

Look down to verse 33 with me. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns?

No one. Jesus Christ, who died more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God, and He is also interceding for us. Okay, so, not only is the Holy Spirit interceding for us here on earth, but the Son, Jesus Christ, is interceding for us in heaven, at the right hand of God.

Because not only do we fail to pray what we should pray, but we also fail to do what we should do, don't we, in life? And we do the things we shouldn't do, we sin.

We still sin, despite being Christians. That's one of the things we've picked up over the last few weeks, as we've been looking at Romans, the struggle that we have of living this new life that God has brought us into, but also having the old body that wants to sin.

[18 : 22] And so this battle that we face until the day we die as Christians, we sin. And it's at those times, let me tell you, that when you sin, that Satan, Satan is real, by the way.

And Satan, you know what his name means? His name means the accuser. Because you know what he does? He accuses. When you sin, he says to you, ah, you're no good for God.

He says to you, you failed. Again, you're not going to make it into heaven. Just give up. Just give up. You're no good. That's what Satan does. He accuses you.

But it's at those times. It's at those times that you've sinned, and you've fallen, and you've stumbled, and Satan is accusing you, it's at those times that if you are a child of God, and you've trusted in Jesus, you know what?

He is in heaven representing you as your defense attorney. And he's saying, no, I took that sin. Oh, that one. Oh, I took that sin as well. No, I took that one.

[19 : 24] And no matter how much Satan tries to accuse you with all the sins you've committed, Jesus is always standing in God's holy courtroom saying, no, no, I've paid for those. That person, she's mine.

Her sins are covered. Because I know her. She's in me. If you're a Christian, Jesus daily, every day, is standing in God's courtroom pleading your case and defending you because of his blood that he shed on the cross to cover your sins.

Now, isn't that an encouragement? But that's not the last thing. There's one last thing that God does every day to ensure our hope.

The Holy Spirit, the Son, and there's something that the Father does as well. Have a look. The Father, verse 28, tells us, We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.

For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. And so here we learn what the Father is doing as well every day. He is working in all things to make us like Jesus.

[20 : 34] Now, that's an incredible verse. Look at verse 29 again. Those God foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

And that means, you know what that means? That a Christian was known by God before they were even born. God knew them.

By the way, that does not mean, as commonly misunderstood, it doesn't mean that God knew in advance that they would trust him and so he saved them. No, the Bible says that we were dead in our sins.

We have no ability to trust God. We're rebels. That's all we know how to do. And so what it means that God foreknew is that before we were even born, God chose particular people out of a world full of rebels destined for hell who could do nothing else but rebel against him.

He chose particular people to take over their rebellious world, to override it and recreate them from the inside out, to conform them to the likeness of his Son, Jesus, so that they can be part of his family for eternity.

[21 : 40] That is what God did for his people before they even existed, before this world existed. And if you are a Christian this morning, that is God's goal for you.

That is God's ultimate plan for you. That is what he has destined you for before you were even born, and that is to make you like Jesus. That is God's goal for you, to make you like his Son.

That is to make you what he originally intended humans to be, with a perfect character, and a perfect love, and perfect righteousness, just like Jesus.

And what's more, this verse tells us, verse 28, that he uses, get this, God uses every single event and circumstance in your life, good and bad, to take you to that destiny, to make you like his Son.

God's priority for you while you're on this earth, is not primarily your comfort, it's your conformity to Jesus Christ. And he will use every circumstance, to do that, to conform you to the image of Christ.

[22 : 47] I don't know if you've ever watched a movie, called The Minority Report. Anybody watched it? It's with Tom Cruise, and it's a science fiction. You might not be into that, so that's okay.

But I watched that movie, it was quite a long time ago. And it's a sci-fi, science fiction, where people are able to see into the future, they're able to get glimpses into the future, and they've got these, Tom Cruise is this policeman, who catches people before they commit the crimes.

It's an interesting movie. Anyway, Tom Cruise, he, his character, sees a little bit into his future, that he doesn't like. And so the whole movie is, is him trying to do everything he can, to avoid what he's seen, of his future.

But it turns out, as you watch the movie, and the kind of twist in the tale at the end, is that every action he took throughout the movie, actually contributed, to the very thing unfolding, that he was trying to avoid.

Because that was his destiny. And the kind of point of the movie, is that you can't avoid your destiny. Even if you know what it is, there's nothing you can do to change it. But you know what? For a Christian, that's good news, because we know what our destiny is.

[23 : 51] And no matter what we do, good or bad in life, we can't change it. Because God has already, predestined us for it. That's what destiny is. The Bible says, God has already, decided on your ultimate destiny.

And that is to become like Jesus. And if you're a Christian, nothing you do can change that. And no matter what happens in your life, good and bad, every circumstance, every day, God makes sure, that all of that, actually contributes, to fulfilling the destiny, that he's already planned.

And you don't know how, he does that. You don't know how, all the things in your life, are working together, to make you more like Jesus. You don't know how, not getting that parking space, is making you like Jesus. You don't know how, losing a loved one, is making you like Jesus.

You don't know how the sickness, is making you like Jesus. But you can know, because God has told us in his word, that if you are a child of him, everything is working together, to get you to the destiny, that God has planned for you.

And so when you are going, through a difficult situation, no matter how hard, or painful it is, and we will go through, difficult, painful situations, despite that, you can know, that God is allowing this, because in some way, it is conforming you, to the image of Christ, which is necessary, for you to reach the world, to come where there will be, no more pain.

[25 : 15] And so it's worth it, no matter how painful it is, it's worth it, because it is necessary, to get you to the world to come, and God is making sure it will, conform you to the image of Christ.

And so, do you see why, this morning, if you're a Christian, you can be sure, of where you're going? Do you see why? Because God, in all his persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is working, every day, to make sure, you are heading for the new creation, and nothing you do, can mess that up, because God, is in charge of it.

God the Spirit, is helping you, and praying for the things, that you need, when you forget to pray for them. God the Son, is in heaven, making sure that your sins are covered, and those prayers are received, and God the Father, is answering those prayers, by working out, every event in your life, to make sure, you are like Jesus, to get you into heaven.

And so, if you're a child of God, you can know, that your future is secure, when you remember, what God is doing, every day, to make it certain. So the question, I want to end this morning with, is, is that true of you?

Can you say, that you are a child of God? Can you, honestly, in your heart of hearts, can you say, that I'm a child of God? Well, you know how you know? You know how you know, if you're a child of God?

[26 : 40] Look with me, again at verse 28. And we know, that in all things, God works for the good, of those who, love him.

And who have been called, according to his purpose. How do you know, that you're a child of God, and all these things apply, to you? Well, you love him. You love God, as your father.

That is, the mark, of, a Christian. That is the mark, of a child of God. And that's something, you've got to seriously, ask yourself, this morning.

Do I love God? Do I really love him? And if you find, that you don't, love God, this morning, that doesn't mean, that God hasn't chosen you.

So don't despair. But it means, that you still have to, come to him, and put your trust in Jesus, and receive the Holy Spirit. And maybe, maybe God is, calling you to do that today.

[27 : 41] Because he calls, all those he, has predestined, to be conformed, to the image of his son. And maybe, he's calling you this morning. And maybe, you need to go home, and speak to him.

And come to Jesus, and give your life to him. Maybe you've been coming to church, for 10, 20, 30 years. But you don't yet, love God. Or Jesus is waiting, God is waiting, for you to come into his, family, and become his child.

And he will give you, his Holy Spirit, and fill you with, a love for him, and a love for Christ. And he will change you, from the inside out. And if you have, done that. If you are a child of God, and you love God, if you believe, these things, that we've seen this morning, that God has already, secured your future, for you.

Then, live every day, for that world to come, and not this one. Wake up, and make your hope, in the world to come. Pin your hopes, and aspirations, and dreams, and desires, there and not here.

And no matter, what this world, throws at you today, or tomorrow, as Paul says, in verse 37, if you do that, if you pin your hopes, on the world to come, then you can be, more than a conqueror, in every situation, in life.

[28 : 57] Because you know, that whatever it is, that is coming your way today, God will use it, to bring you to the world to come, and so you can fix your eyes there, even while you're still, living here.

Because you know, what your destiny is. And there's, there's no greater thing to know, to change your life. So let's pray, that'll be the case for us. Heavenly Father, we've been reminded, of these amazing truths, from your word this morning, that your children, you have already destined, to be conformed, to the image of your son.

We've learned that, you use every circumstance, in life to carry that out. And so I do pray, for everyone here this morning, Lord. I do pray that, those who do not yet love you, that they would come to terms, with that, that they would admit, that that's the case.

And that they would, seek out Christ. And we know Lord, Lord Jesus, you said, that whoever comes to you, you will never turn away. But Lord, give those people, the courage to take that step, to cross the line, and to come into your family, through what you've done for them.

And Lord, we pray for those of us, this morning, who are your children, those of us who love you. And we ask Lord, help us to remember, every day, what you are doing, to bring us, to glory one day.

[30 : 18] And help us to live for that. Help us to pin our hopes, and our happiness, and our joy, in the world to come, so that we will live, in accordance with your will, here and now. And that we will glorify you.

And we pray for your help in this, in Jesus name. Amen.