

# God's Sure Foundation, Our Greatest Hope

On my drive home from work, I turn off the radio. My mind is buzzing from the chaos of the workday as I try to prepare myself for more challenges at home. Do I need to add to my churning mind by listening to the day's news? So often the news is filled with reports of the world's atrocities. Not only do we hear about it in the national news, but it's also discussed in our communities and schools and even sometimes in visits with families and friends.

## **What Really Matters**

What is going on? "Is this a sign of the end times?" my wife sometimes asks. I try to sound positive or give her an indication that nothing is new under the sun, but I wonder the same: Are we witness to difficult times predicted at the end of the world? What do we, God's children, think of the future? What do we hope for?

That evening I carry our grandson into our children's bedroom. "Good night, God's peace, love you." I say it first to our son, Ladd's uncle, and Ladd repeats in his 15-month old way... "nigh, peace, luv ooh." Uncle gives his nephew one more kiss before laying his head on the pillow.

In his innocence, the presence of our grandson makes the good-night routine with our children all the sweeter and more precious. Our kids absolutely love their nephew, and it brings my thoughts to our children and grandchild: thoughts of love and peace, comfort and security. It also has a wonderful effect of erasing those moments of anxious unease experienced throughout the day.

Family life is busy. We have so much to accomplish with our daily work, caring for little ones, assisting with homework and household chores. Time keeps clicking by – days, weeks, months and years. The busyness doesn't seem to let up. When will I get a moment to rest? What am I doing this for? Does any of this matter? Our older ones, who were in grade school just yesterday it seems, have now graduated, moved out and started their own lives.

## **Our Lives Are God's Design**

We know that our lives are led by God's design. It's not by accident that we exist here and are so busy. God has given us our lot in life. As we think of the past and the fast pace of the present, it also gives us perspective on this question: what do we hope for in the future?

We are often refreshed by listening to God's Word. At times the sermons speak so powerfully that we find the frost of our heart melting. The music that God has given to His kingdom, the little sermons in songs we hear at church and at home, are a refuge from the world around us. We cherish moments of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in faith.

God promises to always care for His own. We don't need to be burdened by thoughts of the dark world around us. We don't need to carry the weight of our own sins and doubts. God has carried each of us to this moment. We can be thankful for all that He has given us, but most of all, that today we can still believe.

### **In God's Hands**

Although we see a crumbling world around us, God's spirit that lives within each believer is the most powerful force on earth. It has the power to overcome all and will continue to guide our lives. Trust and believe that the flickering candle of faith in your heart, the Holy Spirit that guides and protects from danger of sin, will continue to do its work as it has done to this moment. We can place our worries for the future in God's hands.

Hasn't God given us a wonderful way to care for one another? He's given the grace throne, the fountain of life, that we can turn to in time of worry and need. When we care for one another in God's kingdom by having love for each other's undying soul, by preaching and believing the gospel, it brings great comfort. The gospel allows us to experience the joy of heaven here on earth. We feel this hope and joy again and again as we are refreshed and renewed in faith.

Know that God, who created you and this world, also guides your life. He will continue to protect you and me as the world darkens around us. He gives a promise: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. 2:8).

### **A Child's Faith**

As God's children, we continue to grow old, but in our hearts we are still children in God's kingdom. The little ones among us are great reminders of the innocence of a believing heart. In children there exists a hope for the future! With my grandson in my arms I think how old I would be when he is the age I am now. I trust that God will provide for him and others his age as they grow into adulthood and middle age. My grandson will have a future too, exactly as God wills.

In faith, we look forward to the future with hope of our eternal home in heaven.

**Loren Keplinger**

# The Gospel Gives Strength and Hope

“The hope of the righteous shall be gladness” (Prov. 10:28). When I was a small boy I thought often of heaven and the kingdom of God. During that time I remained hopeful for heaven, as matters of conscience were clear.

## **The Enemy Preached His Sermon**

When I entered my teenage years the love of the world and the things of this world crept into my life. I began to listen to and believe the sermon of the enemy of souls, who told me that I was alone in my sin and could no longer be a child of God. I lost hope of heaven and hope for the future, even though I continued to attend services and the activities of the believers. I became a hypocrite and lived in fear of the future. “But destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity” (Prov. 10:29).

I clearly remember one Sunday afternoon playing a game with Dad and my brothers outside in the yard. I had become frustrated over a number of small things and verbally lashed out at those playing. Dad took me aside and asked me about my matters. Through that discussion I expressed my doubts of the glory of heaven but also came to understand that doubts and fears come from attempting to live with unforgiven sin on the conscience. I was finally able to care for matters of conscience and return to faith and live in hope for heaven.

## **A Precious Reminder**

The events from that time continue to remind me. When I become tired and weary in my daily endeavor, I find strength when I can believe the preached gospel. Apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthians give comfort: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

Apostle Paul writes to the Romans: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13). This is the hope that I live for. Though the love of the world is still close, though the tempter whispers his sermon of unbelief, though my flesh is tempted and weak, the Heavenly Father grants abundant blessings and the hope of heaven through the power of the gospel.

When we are filled with doubts and are weary in our endeavor, let us remember how Jesus comforted John: “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke 7:22).

**Phil Jurmu**

# In Heaven, I Will See from Both Eyes!

We all have goals and dreams for our future. We have ideas to pursue and experiences we hope to have. It was during a very busy time in my life that my future visions and entire concept of hope was put into perspective and magnified.

## **Denial and Disbelief**

In an emergency waiting room, I paced. It had been a rough couple of hours since I moved the hair from our daughter's eyes and kissed her goodbye. She was wheeled away by the Life Flight team on a stretcher that was much too large for her three-year-old frame.

The drive from our small rural home to the big city hospital, where we were told she'd be, was agonizing. Every thought crossed my mind. Finally, the doctor appeared in the doorway and called for "the parents of Olive Byman." We sat, waiting and praying for our accumulated worries to be lifted. The doctor spoke, "Your daughter has suffered a stroke, caused by a tumor pushing on her brain."

*A tumor? A stroke? She's three years old!* Only three, my thoughts raced. Disbelief and denial filled every cell in my body. I knew this stuff happens but not to my child, not to our family.

Our life was far from perfect, yet it was perfect for us and I felt that this news, this reality did not fit in our plans. We had a busy household with little children. My husband was in school full-time, working evenings and weekends. We were both working for degrees with no extra time and a tight budget to live on.

The following morning brought more confirmation that this was not a nightmare, this was real. The room was filled with new faces: the oncology team, they explained. Sleep-deprived and not even fully understanding, I tried to grasp what this would mean – for our daughter, for us, for our family, for our future.

## **Our Path Was Different Now**

We all have had or will have times of trial, events that change the course of our life. My selfish, trustless thoughts agonized me with the word "why." Why would this happen to us? And to her?

Thankfully, a dear believing friend shared something with me, "If everything on earth were perfect, we wouldn't desire heaven."

This perfect explanation filled me with comfort and contentment. I was able to focus on how fortunate our family was: we had hope of a future in heaven! And heaven had never looked more wonderful. I no longer needed to question God's intelligence, I no longer had to ask the question – why? I just needed to keep faith in our Heavenly Father and trust that this was all His plan, knowing that He does not make mistakes. I prayed that He would help guide our decisions.

Our future looked different now. Our daughter's sight had been severely impaired, Braille was part of our conversations and Olive had many medical needs. But God sent us precious escorts who carried us through the difficult times and rejoiced with us in the good ones – still today they are there, walking alongside us.

### **Renewed Hope for Heaven**

Although we had to modify our temporal plans and make room for our new reality, our hope for a future in heaven has increased one-hundred-fold. It looks even more beautiful now. There are times when the devil places doubts and fears in our minds, yet even those we can put away in Jesus' name and blood and once again trust in our Heavenly Father's plan. We yearn for the day when we can sing with the heavenly angels, free from all earthly trials.

Our daughter shared with me at the tender age of three: "Mom, when I'm in heaven I won't have a brain tumor and I will see from both eyes!" "Yes, sweetie, yes, that is true," I agreed. How blessed we are to have hope of an eternal life in the comfort and glory of heaven.

**Beth Byman**

## God Helped Me Trust

I walked through the grocery store, pushing my cart. I picked up a bag of apples, turned it over in my hands and put it back on the shelf – it was too expensive. I walked through the produce section, the meat section and the canned food aisles. I was almost to the registers and looked at my cart. It was nearly empty. I had to start over, as I had eleven children and a husband at home to feed. It was a financially and emotionally difficult period in our lives. A time that had many moments in which the future felt bleak.

### **God Spoke in a Simple Way**

It was in those days that the children's song, *Jesus Loves Me*, became personally dear to me. The words of the song were simple and reassuring. In my most desperate moments I couldn't plan or think far into the future, but I could trust that somehow things were going to work out. My life was in God's hands. Perhaps this trial helped to keep me humble and trust in God's promise of a "future and hope."

Going to services and being reminded of the hope of heaven was especially important at this time. There were also moments of temporal joy that offered hope, such as when a friend walked in the door and handed me a gift certificate to the grocery store. In time, my husband was again able to find work and the trial started to lift.

## **Going Forward in Prayer and Hope**

Some years later, my dream of going back to school to study medicine seemed to be a reality. How would this affect our family? Would I be preserved in faith through the new temptations that would be? We visited as a family and visited with other believers about the possibility. I prayed for God to lead my path in a way that would keep me as a child in His kingdom.

I started slowly, dipping my toes in the water of coursework, and then progressed to serious study with the support of those around me. My continual prayer was that God would allow my studies to move forward only if it was His will, and that my studies would not hinder my faith nor harm my family. It was good to trust in His guidance. God even blessed me with friends and escorts I could turn to when facing medical questions that were ethically challenging.

The trials we face in life can be reminders to trust in God. I am thankful to have the foundation of His Word and living faith to guide me now in my work as well as in daily life.

**Becky Randall**

### **Discussion Points:**

1. What do we fear about the future? Why do we fear?
2. What temporal things do we hope for in our lives?
3. How does God care for us? How has He cared for you?
4. What is the child of God's greatest reason for hope? How has this hope helped you in your life?