

More Hope

July 20

1 Thessalonians 1: ²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Three remarkable pieces of life with Jesus. Many of us spend much more time asking God for things rather than thanking God, especially for people in our lives. Spend some time this time reflecting on the blessing that specific people are to you. If you are reading this, you are doing works of faith and labors of love. Yes, we need to do these with humility and with the understanding that this is what we are created to do. Are our works of faith and labors of love to seek something from others or because we love and are loved by God? Paul acknowledges their efforts as well as their steadfastness of hope. What does that look like to you? Who do you know that emulates that reality in their lives—and yes, it can be you!!

Wonderful Savior, I give great thanks you love me, that you fill me with hope even in difficult times, and that your desire is to deepen my faith and labors of love. Amen

July 21

Psalm 62: For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation, fortress; I shall not be shaken.

Perhaps one of the biggest questions that Christians talk about but don't fully understand is the soul. What is it to you? How is it connected to your intellect, emotions, and body? As some of you know, I'm a bit biased, having written a book that seeks to answer these questions. What is important is what you feel/think it is. What does it mean for the soul to wait in silence? Lots of questions today. Lol. How is God your rock? Your salvation? Your fortress? Which of those this day do you "feel" most?

Holy of Holies, give me courage to look into the deeper questions of faith, listening to your wisdom, knowing you want me to find hope comes from you. Help me to know that no one has the authority to tell me I'm wrong, save you alone. Amen.

July 22

1 Peter 1: Praise be to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Most of us enjoy seeing babies – especially, when you are my age – not our own. Lol. They are amazing creatures. Fully dependent, curious, needy, expectant, scared (having been in a wonderful and warm environment for a long time and now thrust into the world), and happy. When we come to know the risen Christ, we should be all those things. The difference is that, like caring parents, we have a gracious God who cares for us and gives us what we need to get through. None of us has been a perfect parent. Our hope is a living hope, not a dead one. We get that hope because of and through faith in the resurrection. Christ overcame all things, including death, so that we may have hope. How would you say your hope is “alive?” Do you feel others can sense that in you? Does that matter?

Gracious Savior, even as I look with hindsight to what I could have done differently, even yesterday, may I this day be your child of hope, seeking to bring hope to all relationships. Amen

July 23

Hebrews 6: ¹⁹We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain,

All humans have an internal anchor – The Trinity, the Christic Spirit – that we can accept or deny. The curtain is the façade all humans create, even Christians. When we allow the curtain to be pulled back, unlike in the Wizard of Oz, we find the Trinity in all their brilliance. We all open the curtain to some degree and at times, we close it. This does not affect the anchor, only the anchor’s ability to wed the soul to the divine, other than the anchors of human making that, in the end, don’t. We need to choose what the anchor is that gives us deep and lasting hope. Hope in this life and in the life to come. What anchors do you have in your life- do they bring hope?

Lord, pull back the curtain, give me courage to wed myself to your anchor and not to those the world offers. Amen

July 24

1 Peter 3: ¹⁵But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

What is the reason for your hope? Do you share that with those who may be losing hope? I work or talk with a lot of people who, in the end, are losing hope. When I ask where they have found hope, many will say, “internally, friends, and sometimes, faith. When I don’t feel hope as a person of “faith,” I need to ask why. Do I feel that God has let me down? (By the way, that is an OK feeling – God can handle it). When we have confidence of where our hope comes from, why wouldn’t we share it? Yes, they may laugh, they may reject you, how do you know? Perhaps they will be grateful. As Peter says, we need to respect everyone and deal with them gently. Our “presence” to others matters. Our presence to ourselves matters. Our presence to God and God’s presence to us matters. What do gentleness and respect look like to you?

Merciful Lord, may I this day be a person of gentleness. May I respect all your creation, not just what I desire to. Help me catch myself when that is not true and seek the answer as to why. Amen.

July 25

Romans 15: ¹³May 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.

What does a person who overflows with hope look like? It’s fine if it’s you. Have you asked those people where that comes from? Faith, hope, and love, are without question the three most powerful forces in the world. Yes, I believe the Christian Trinity represents that. In the end, all religions talk about them. We judge other traditions because we are fed lies about their essence. You can’t read the Old Testament and now see that God was a God of faith, hope, and love. Yes, things changed when God arrived in human form. Ultimately, to overflow with hope, means you are deep relationship with the Trinity where you feel that hope and are driven to share it. Why would we not share that treasure? It’s OK not to feel it – you/we are human. God gets it. We need more and more each day to trust God wants the best for us, aches when we don’t get it, and accepts our humanity. We also need more fully to accept the presence of the Holy Spirit. A gift almost, yes, almost, as powerful as the death and resurrection of Christ. is with us for eternity!!!! Wow.

Most powerful Lord, may I feel the power of your Spirit this day. Whatever I find in my life, may I feel your presence. May I find your joy, hope, and peace, and may I find ways to share it with others. Amen.

July 26

Ephesians 1: ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

For all Paul's issues, he is remarkably insightful. "the eyes of your heart" is key. Our hearts -emotions- matter. They are a check and balance to our "intellect," which many of us trust far too much. Our feelings perceive – not our "minds." This is not to say we can't perceive hope rationally, but to ignore what we feel is not smart. Our culture demeans "feelings," a psychological and theological massive mistake. Deep relationships are based on feelings – not just intellect. Our glorious inheritance is infinite. Think – and feel- about it, God's power, love, hope, and faith are infinite and can be found now. Please don't feel guilty if you don't – you are human. Do you feels it's "available?" We are called to this, it's a free gift. My son is 37. Many of you know George. He believes in Santa, and it brings him immense joy all the time. Trust your faith.

God, may I have the faith of the innocent this day. I want to trust in you and believe that you believe in me and walk with me. May I be your presence to others even as others are your presence to me. Amen