

The Hope of God

*Hold fast to the Truth so that no one takes your crown;
the one who has an ear, let him hear!*

Fred R. Coulter—December 10, 2022

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Sabbath services!

We're having a pretty good rain out here in California, and that's very encouraging, because the drought was really getting critical. It's been raining off and on now for a little over a week, and we're happy for all the water we can get.

We're thankful that God is merciful to give us the water that we need. There were even some small cities that were having to have water trucked in.

On this Sabbath Day I would like to report that we had a very excellent Elder's Conference on Sunday. We covered all the things that we needed to do with the past current upheaval that we had.

We're sorry that it took place, and hoped that it wouldn't, but it did! This brings up another thing, and stop and think about it: ***the apostles did not know that Judas was going to betray Christ!*** Even on the last Passover night when Jesus said that 'one of you is going to betray Me.' They all asked one after the other, 'Is it I?'

Jesus said, 'It's to the one whom I give the sop.' Sometimes things come along and you never have any forewarning. Or there may be some forewarnings like there was in this situation that other elders had noted—which I was not aware of—that give a little tipping point of understanding. Our final thought for those involved is:

- that they will come to God
- that they will understand what happened
- that the Word of God is the most important thing

Because we can't have the Word of God unless we come to God for His understanding! We cannot have the Holy Spirit without the Word of God, and without the sacrifice, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! So, all of these things come together.

The Bible is the greatest book ever:

- it's the only book in the world that can tell us about God
- it's the only book in the world that can tell us why we have evil and human nature
- it's the only book that tells us why there are wars
- it's the only book that tells us of rises and falls, and prophesies and predictions of

those rises and falls of countries and empires

- it's the only book that talks about the return of Jesus Christ

Which, when you understand the book of Revelation, it's entirely different than the world's concept of it through their *fake* Christianity!

However, ***WHEN*** we go through trials and difficulties—and we draw close to God because of it, which we need to—***THEN*** we need to realize that ***our hope is always in God, regardless of what the circumstances may be or appear to be! Christ is the One Who***

- is our hope
- gives us hope
- helps us in everything that we do

Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore..."—*because of everything else up to this point and especially concluding in Heb. 11 with:*

- what is faith
- who had faith
- who stood for the Truth

"...since we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight..." (v 1).

What is the weight that we have to lay aside? *That weight is when you get down and feel oppressed and discouraged!* We have to lay that aside!

...and the sin that so easily entraps us... (v 1). *That's the way it does sometimes!*

"...and let us run the race set before us with endurance" (v 1). *Let's keep that in mind especially when we understand that Jesus said that:*

In the end times there are going to be great and difficult times and wars and rumors of wars. All of those things are going to come.

We're seeing it! Here's what we need to do in all circumstances:

Verse 2: "***Having our minds fixed on Jesus...*** [Jesus is our hope] ...the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith..." *Remember that there are three great things:*

1. faith
2. hope
3. love

The greatest of these is love!

“...who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross...” (v 2).

Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen, and how tragic it was going to be. But He looked beyond that, which is what *hope does!* **Hope** helps us look beyond the present circumstances that may be difficult, so that we know that:

- God loves us
- God has called us
- God is for us
- God is there to help us
- He will intervene

Verse 2: “Having *our minds fixed* on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; **Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured the cross, although He despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.**”

Just think about what’s going to happen to us at the resurrection. The first resurrection is going to startle the world! It is going to be an absolute astonishment to them.

Verse 3: “Now **meditate deeply** on Him...”
Meditation means:

- take time
- stop
- think
- analyze what God has said
- analyze your prayer and let that be your meditation
- think on how good God is
- think on how powerful God is
- think of God’s great creation that He made

Remember we put online {truthofGod.org} about those four fantastic photos from the James Webb Telescope reaching out supposedly 13-billion light years and seeing those stars and what God has made. That’s absolutely incredible! For us to be able to have those things that we can see far exceeds what Abraham could have ever thought would be when God told him to ‘look at the stars of heaven and number them if you’re able to count them.’ *So, when we meditate on Christ:*

- we meditate on His Word
- we meditate on His creation
- we meditate on His promises

“...Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself...” (v 3).

Isn’t that something? The Creator of the earth came in the flesh and the world hated Him.

The religious leaders—who were supposed to be teaching the Truth at the temple, what happened to them? *The succumbed to Satan the devil.*

So, we focus on that and understand what He went through! The reason that we do is:

“...so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds” (v 3).

Some people do! Some people just give up because it’s too much for them! Well, when things become too much for you, you go to God and you ***hope in God*** and you ***trust in His promises!*** One thing we can know is that throughout the Bible everything that men and women would do, the feelings and all of those emotions that we have are also all in the Bible, mainly in the book of Psalms.

Verse 4: “You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin.”

Let’s also see about Christ and what He was thinking and doing. Remember, go back and study all the Scriptures leading up to the crucifixion of Christ.

All of us are going to go through difficult times, every one of us! Sometimes it will seem like: How am I going to get through this? We just had the formula given: ***keep your mind fixed on Christ and what He went through!*** Now let’s read a little bit more about it here:

1-Peter 2:19: “Because this *is* acceptable: if, for *the* sake of conscience toward God, anyone endures sorrows, suffering unjustly.... [that will come and it will be unjust] ...For what commendation *is there* if, disobeying and being beaten, you endure it?...” (vs 19-20).

That may happen! Look at how much the thought toward Christianity has happened just here in America. They don’t even want someone to read Biblical Scriptures from a book to help children understand that there is God and what they need to do. The public library will not let them hold and hour’s session of reading that book. An amazing thing, isn’t it? Look how quickly that the tide has turned on those things.

“...But if *while* doing good you endure suffering, this *is* acceptable with God” (v 20).

Don’t worry about it! Don’t get frustrated over it! ***Put it all in God’s hands!***

Verse 21: **“For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us...”**

You lay all your problems, all your difficulties on God, because Christ is our Savior! He is our sacrifice! Remember that He lived a perfect life! How was He able to do that? *Even though He*

had human nature, He didn't do anything from Himself! He said, 'I do nothing of Myself' — meaning '**out from within Me!**' So, this is a perfect example for us!

“...suffered for us leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps; Who committed no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; *when* suffering, He threatened not, but committed *Himself* to Him Who judges righteously” (vs 21-23).

Think about that, and remember the first thing that Jesus said when He was lifted up on that cross: **Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing!**

Verse 24: “Who Himself bore our sins within His own body on the tree...”

How could He carry all of our sins this way. Paul writes that human nature has what he calls *the law of sin and death!* In order to human nature, Jesus had to have that law of sin and death within Him! **Yet, never sin!** *In doing that His sacrifice covers all the sins of all people who repent!* God is going to give all a chance to repent, as we know.

“...so that we, being dead to sins, may live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed” (v 24).

That's quite a thing that we need to understand that Christ has done for us. Let's see the whole process of Christian living and what it is to do for us. It's quite a thing to experience all of the emotions, facets, sin, forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit. That's quite a thing that all of us have gone through in order to come to where we are with God.

Paul starts out with “Therefore...” because he gave the example of Abraham and Sarah—he at 100-years-old and Sarah being 90-years-old—she gave birth to Isaac. Imagine if something like that happened today with all the television and newspapers and everything like that. That would be quite a thing!

Romans 5:1: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.... [notice how Paul builds on this faith]: ...**Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...**” (vs 1-2).

That's quite a thing! Remember that the greatest thing of grace is not the forgiveness of sin, but that it gives us direct access to God the Father through prayer and study! Think about that! That's why everything that we do is so important. It's by the Word of God:

- with the Truth of God
- with faith
- with hope
- with love

All of that comes from God!

Verse 2: “Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...”
Remember:

- ***we stand in grace***
- ***we walk by faith***
- ***we believe in hope***
- ***we live in love***

Put that all together and remember that!

“...and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God” (v 2).

That's what gets us through all the difficulties, discouragement, depression and all of those things that come upon us, because they will.

Verse 3: “And not only *this*, but we also boast in tribulations...”

Paul had come to that point. Go back and read 2-Cor. 11 and everything that Paul went through. What did he say that it was for? **For serving God to serve the brethren!**

He went through some mighty tough things, so if you think you're going through some tough things right now, read about that in 2-Cor. 11.

“...realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance, and endurance *brings forth* character, and **character brings forth hope**” (vs 3-4).

What does this tell us? *That there are experiences in life and with our relationship with God that we go through!* Many of us have been in the Church for decades and decades. We have got to exercise our faith and come to God continuously with this kind of “...**endurance brings forth character, and character brings forth hope.**”

Character means *always standing for the Truth of God in everything that you do!* Not just come to Sabbath services and you put on your 'happy Sabbath face' and say to everybody, 'Happy Sabbath!' Then the rest of the week you're literally a different person.

That's not what God wants! He wants us, on the Sabbath Day, to be taught of His Word, to draw close to Him so that in the coming week we can rely on Him all that week and then come to the next Sabbath and repeat it over and over again.

Verse 5: “And the hope of God never makes us ashamed **because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy**

Spirit, which has been given to us.”

That’s quite a thing! Look at it this way: Every experience you will go through, Christ also experienced it. Every experience that you go through other people also have gone through, regardless of what it is.

Think about all those poor people in any war you want to take, and think about all of those people that lived and suffered through it and made it to the other end. A lot of them trusted in God with the best knowledge of God that they had. Notice how David approached God when he had trouble.

Psalm 70:1: “Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.”

That’s quite a way to start out a prayer. We don’t know exactly what the circumstances were when he came to this, but it was there.

Verse 2: “Let them be ashamed and confounded, those who seek after my soul; let them be turned backward and put to confusion, those who desire my hurt.”

Put it all in God’s hands and ask God to take care of them ***His way***, and He will do it.

Verse 3: “Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame, those who say, ‘Aha, aha!’ ... [against God] ...Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say without ending, ‘Let God be magnified’” (vs 3-4).

Regardless of what the circumstances may be, God is going to work it out, and it will magnify to His glory, and to His intervening to help each one of us. That’s what’s important, ***each one of us!***

Verse 5: “But I am poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God; You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, wait no longer!”

So, David was a little impatient here at this point. But that’s interesting. What are the things that we go through. What we experienced with this recent development within Christian Biblical Church of God, many of us went through all of these different emotions. Yet, we all come back to the same thing:

- God the Father
- Jesus Christ
- the Word of God

And everything associated with that! That’s what’s going to help us and encourage us and lead us along.

Psalm 71:1: “In You, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.”

Doesn’t matter what the world does to us, *but don’t be put to shame in your relationship with God!*

Verse 2: “Deliver me in Your righteousness...”

- Can God give deliverance in everything?
- Can He even work and change people’s minds?
- ***Yes, He can!***

“...and **cause me to escape...**” (v 2).

I don’t know what sort of trap David may have found himself in, but he needed to get out of there!

“...incline Your ear unto me, and save me. Be my strong Rock of refuge to which I may always go...” (vs 2-3).

In other words, whenever there’s a time of trouble, ***you go to God!*** Don’t get discouraged and let frustration take you down. ***Go to God!***

“...You have commanded to save me; for You are my Rock and my Fortress... [notice, David is crying out to God]: ...**Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked...**” (vs 3-4).

This must have been after the rebellion of Absalom, because everybody was against David at that time!

“...out of the hand of the unrighteous and ruthless man, for **You are my hope...**” (vs 4-5).

Whenever we’re in difficulty and need a way out, ***God is our hope!***

- He will provide a way
- He will make it happen

“...O Lord GOD, my trust from my youth” (v 5).

Then David talks about how God was with him even from birth.

Verse 8: “**Let my mouth be filled with Your praise, with Your glory all the day.**”

- How do you get your mind off yourself? *By getting your mind on God!*
- How do you get your mind off your difficulties? *By putting them in God’s hands!*

You need that in order for God to reveal to you what you need to do if there are some things you need to do with the difficulty you’re in.

Verse 9: “Cast me not off in the time of old age...”

I don't know how old David was, he died at 70, and we have no idea what his age is here. There are a lot of us, including me, who are way up there in age. I think we have a good number of people who are with Christian Biblical Church of God who are past 85 and into their 90s. I got a letter from a couple saying they have been married 61 years! They're both 88 and still going!

Verse 9: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; **forsake me not when my strength fails.**"

It is true that when you get older you're not as strong! There comes a time like Jesus told Peter about how he would die: *There's going to come a time when someone who is going to lead you about!*

Think about that with Peter and how strong and rambunctious he was concerning everything that he did.

Verse 10: "For my enemies speak against me; and those who watch for my soul plot together, saying, 'God has forsaken him; pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him'" (vs 10-11).

That's what they were saying in the rebellion of Absalom to take over the crown. Notice that here's this desperate time that David was in:

Verse 12: "**O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me.**" *God will! He can help you with:*

- your thoughts
- your emotions
- your circumstances

He can give you understanding:

- so you know what to do
- so you know what to say

But we've got to come to God like this!

Verse 13: "Let them be ashamed; let those who are enemies of my soul be consumed; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, those who seek my hurt. But **I will hope without ceasing**... [all the time] ...and I will praise You more and more. My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know how many they are. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD..." (vs 13-16).

That means that you come to God and you pray like this:

- trust in Him
- trust in His Word
- trust in Christ
- trust in Their intervention
- believe in your prayer that God will answer

This is what's going to happen!

Verse 16: "**I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD I will speak of Your righteousness, even of Yours alone.**"

This is quite a thing what David wrote here! This helps us in every way! Now let's see some things about hope, and some of the things that give us hope, and how we can trust in God in this way.

Psa. 119 really shows the attitude that we need:

- to have to God
- to His commandments
- to His Laws
- to His precepts

Psalm 119:49: "Remember the Word to Your servant upon which **You have caused me to hope.**"

You read the Scriptures and the encourages you! That gives you hope and cause to overcome the difficulties and the times when you're down, depressed and so forth.

Verse 50: "This is my comfort in my affliction, that **Your Word has given me life.**"

What does this tell us? *When you have troubles, don't go around fretting and stewing about the troubles, you get into the Word of God!*

Read the Scriptures, go to the Psalms and see the promises there and how God will intervene and help you; *without a doubt, He always does!* Many times He will help instantly; other times the help will come quite a while later. "...**Your Word has given me life**"—*hope!*

Verse 51: "The proud have utterly scorned me, **yet, I do not turn aside from Your Law.**"

How many trials come where you have to choose what is right. Many times it doesn't look profitable to choose what is right. But nevertheless, that's what God wants us to do. There it is right there!

Verse 52: "I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself. Burning indignation has taken hold upon me because of the wicked who forsake Your Law. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered Your name, O LORD, in the night, and **have kept Your Law. This I had because I kept Your precepts.**" (vs 52-56).

This will tell us why we have afflictions, and one of the difficulties that people have concerning Christianity is that they think that once you're a Christian, everything is joy, happiness,

goodness and everything is going to go through smoothly. You won't have any troubles. *That's not so!*

Why does God let us be afflicted with different things:

- sickness
- circumstances
- other people
- the authorities in the land

Because that helps us to bring character (Rom. 5)!

Verse 66: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed Your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept Your Word" (vs 66-67).

What happens every time you make a mistake and it has to do with either a sin or something against the Law of God? When you understand it and you correct it, and you go back and keep the Word of God upon repentance and all of that:

Verse 68: "You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes."

This is what we need to do. Everything of God is a matter of teaching to bring us to completion in this life so that we can be in the resurrection and be with God and be in the Kingdom of God. ***Our first task is going to be all of us together saving the world with Christ!*** That's quite a thing!

Verse 69: "The proud have forged a lie against Me, but I will keep Your precepts with all my heart."

That's why we have these afflictions! To not come and crush us, ***but to give us strength through Christ so we come to God and lay it all before Him!***

Verse 70: "Their heart is gross like fat, but I delight in Your Law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted..." (vs 70-71).

- Doesn't that tie in with what Paul wrote about tribulation? *Count every tribulation joy!*
- Why? *Because it brings us close to God!*

"...I have been afflicted **so that I might learn...** [that's the key] ...**Your statutes**" (v 71).

- all of the laws and precepts of God
- all of the things that Jesus taught
- all of the things that we have that the apostles have written

That's quite a marvelous thing!

Verse 72: "The Law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

Let me bring out something else that I've mentioned before, but worth mentioning again: all of the singers at the temple had to learn all their songs by memory. Can you imagine learning all of Psa. 119 by memory? *That's quite a task!* But it shows you the importance of the Word of God!

Verse 81: "My soul faints for Your salvation; **I hope in Your Word.**" *That's what God wants us to hope in:*

- His Word
- His Word alone
- Jesus Christ

What was one of the foremost names of Christ? *The Word!*

John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!"

That's where we have the hope! How many times do we get off and do things according to our own understanding and get ourselves in trouble? *We do!*

God will remind us while we're in the trouble, we better get right back with Him because He is there to help us!

(break 42:08)

The hope of God is also tied in with the:

- love of God
- Truth of God
- His Word
- God the Father
- Jesus Christ
- all of us praying for each other

When Paul was in prison in Rome, he wrote Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Those three contain some of the most inspired New Testament writings! Think of this way: Paul was able to write those because while he was in chains he stayed close to God.

Also, you read Acts 27-28 and see how Paul got to Rome. He had free transportation as a prisoner, but that experience was mind-boggling. They went through a hurricane! So, you can't have Satan after you anymore than that, a big hurricane coming to try and take you away!

Then when they finally landed on that island and were getting warm by a big fire, Paul went out to get some more wood and a viper wrapped around his arm and bit him on the hand. They all thought that he would drop dead, 'he must be a murderer,'

but nothing happened to him!

Remember that all of these things teach us that the circumstances, even if they get really difficult! I don't know how much more difficult circumstances can get than to be on a ship in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea in a hurricane! That's quite a thing to go through! ***Yet, God preserved every single one of the crew and the other prisoners going to Rome!***

So, Paul was there two years in Rome and wrote Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. We're going to see that Paul constantly talks about:

- the love
- the hope
- the faith
- the promise of God
- eternal life

Colossians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossi: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 1-2).

Those two verses and the opening verses in every epistle are those verses that are the most important for us to realize. ***These set the tone for all the rest of the epistles!***

Paul wasn't writing it on his own, God was inspiring Him! As he wrote, ***all Scripture is God-breathed or God spirited!*** In other words, ***God's Spirit moved Paul to write these exact words!*** Paul had no idea whatsoever that this would come down 2,000 years later. *Think about that!*

This also shows how the words of God are the living words of God, because they apply to all people, at all times, in all circumstances down through the whole history of the world! That the Bible gives us:

- the true history from God's perspective
- the rise and fall of various kingdoms
- the troubles and difficulties in raising up the New Testament Church
- the book of Revelation showing the return of Christ in power

Verse 3: "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you continually... [you can know one thing for sure, that's something Paul did all the time] ...since hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love that *you have* toward all the saints ***because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven...*** [Christ is going to bring it with Him] ...which you heard before in the Word of the Truth of the Gospel,

which has come to you, even as *it* also *has* in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit..." (vs 3-6).

All the world back then meant the whole Roman Empire, but today *all the world* means literally ***ALL the world!*** The Word of God has gone to all the world in over 450 languages, the whole Bible has been translated. Over 2,300 the New Testament has been translated. Pretty close to 3,000 different languages and dialects the book of Mark has been translated. ***The Word of God, there it is to all the world!***

"...just as *it is* among you, from the day that you heard and knew the grace of God in Truth" (v 6).

Verse 9: "For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

This is what God want us to know and grow in grace and knowledge for:

Verse 10: "**That you may walk worthily of the Lord...**" How do you do that?

- in attitude
- in heart
- in mind
- in thought
- in keeping the commandments of God
- in praying for each other

"...unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God" (v 10).

Let's realize how this comes about. I know for me that every time I read these chapters we're going to cover now—Col. 1 and Eph. 1—those are very inspiring to me. After studying other parts of the Bible and coming back to it, there are layers of meaning and understanding, and feelings of emotion and spiritual connection that comes with it.

We're not isolated out here alone, and even though you may be alone from other people ***you're connected to God!***

Verse 11: "Being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy."

Talk about long-suffering and joy! Here Paul, in prison, is writing these encouraging words to all of the brethren back there to encourage them!

So, this is a good example of why we go through the things that we do. Like we read in Psa. 119, *it is good that I [David] was afflicted so that I many learn Your laws and statutes!*

Verse 12: “Giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified **for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the Light.**” *God the Father!* That’s an amazing thing!

Paul writes of this: ***our connection is with God the Father and Jesus Christ at His right hand!***

Ephesians 2:14: “For He is our peace... [so that we can have that connection with God the Father] ...Who has made both one... [Jew and Gentile] ...and has broken down the middle wall of partition, having annulled in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in *the decrees of men...*” (vs 14-15).

The traditional laws of the Jews and also whatever laws the pagans may have had in their religion.

“...**so that in Himself...** [notice the work that Christ is doing] ...**He might create both into one new man, making peace**” (v 15)—*creating both!*

Peace with God is the important thing we need to understand!

Verse 16: “And *that* He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.” *That is the enmity that people have toward:*

- the Truth of God
- the righteousness of God
- the forgiveness of sin
- the grace of God

Because the enmity was with their traditions! That was the battle in the New Testament Church!

Verse 17: “Now when He came, He preached the Gospel—peace to you who *were* far off and to those who *were* near. **For through Him we both have direct access by one Spirit to the Father**” (vs 17-18).

That’s quite a thing we need to understand, especially in troubling and difficult times, because those who don’t endure might give up! ***Never give up! Never think that anything is too hard!***

It might be difficult and trying and taxing to go through, that’s correct. You might lose sleep and lose your appetite, that’s correct. But nevertheless, when you come to God He will strengthen you with His Spirit and with His Word!

Notice what Paul is telling the Gentiles here. Remember that the Jews despised anyone in any other nation and made it a law that they could not associate with Gentiles. So, this was really quite a thing that they were up against! That’s why it’s

important!

Verse 18: “**For through Him we both have direct access by one Spirit to the Father.**”

That means you can pray anytime directly to the Father, because it’s by one Spirit!

Verse 19: “So then, you are no longer aliens and foreigners; but *you are* fellow citizens with the saints, and *are* of the household of God.”

Notice what God wants to do. This is way we have the whole Bible, here it is right here. We need it and we need to study it, read it and understand it continuously!

Verse 20: “**You are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone** in Whom all the building, being conjointly fitted together is increasing **into a Holy temple in the Lord;** in Whom you also are being built together **for a habitation of God in the Spirit**” (vs 20-22).

What does that mean? ***God living in you!*** Remember that Jesus said:

The one who loves Me will keep My Word, and the Father and I will make Our dwelling place within you.

That’s quite a thing! Having the Spirit of God becomes the greatest thing that we can have! It helps us get through all the troubling and difficult times that we go through.

Colossians 1:13: “**Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness and has transferred us unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love.**”

In other words, we are under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God *first!* We have ***the Spirit of God:***

- as a blessing
- as a begettal
- as the earnest and down payment for eternal life

because our hope is eternal life!

- Why do we go through the things we go through?
- Why do did those in the past go through the things that they went through?
- Why did they go through all the tribulations and difficulties that they endured?

Because of the power of God!

Verse 14: “In Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins;

Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* Firstborn of all creation” (vs 14-15).

- What does that mean?
- Does that mean that God created Him? *NO!*

This is talking about the creation of all spirit sons and daughters of God to be spirit beings **at the resurrection from the dead!** We will see that clarified in just a couple more verses here:

Verse 16: “Because **by Him were all things created**, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: **all things were created by Him and for Him.**”

That ought to give us all a lot of hope and strength of thought that:

- God is there
- His Spirit is there
- Christ is there

Verse 17: “And He [Christ] is before all, and by Him all things subsist. And He is the Head of the Body, the Church; Who is *the* Beginning, *the* Firstborn from among the dead...” (vs 17-18).

That’s what it means *the Firstborn of all creation!* The creation that God is doing within us now to build the character, the hope and love, everything like that that we are going to have as spirit beings at the resurrection.

“...so that **in all things He Himself might hold the pre-eminence**” (v 18).

When I think about that, what is it going to be on the Sea of Glass, and we’re all there, every one of us receive a new name. Then God the Father comes down right there on the Sea of Glass and Jesus presents us to the Father. He says, ‘Behold the children that you have given Me!’ (Heb. 2).

Think about how great it’s going to be whenever we need to come to understand that way of God even more, and be inspired out of our depressions.

Verse 19: “For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven” (vs 19-20).

That’s what God has called us to. This is why we need the help, inspiration and understanding that God wants us to have. I know that at this time of the year a lot of us go through a lot of difficulties and problems. So, we need to know how we can come through them, and God will see us through it.

Verse 21: “For you *were* once alienated and enemies in *your* minds by wicked works; but now He has reconciled *you* in the body of His flesh through death to present you...” (vs 21-22).

This is the goal of Christ in our lives, and what He wants to happen to us at the resurrection:

“...**to present you Holy and unblamable and unimpeachable before Him**” (v 22)—*that is God the Father!*

Think about that! That is what God wants! That’s why we can understand that we can take all the difficulties and set them aside and put them in God’s hands and He will work them out and help us to get through it.

Here’s something very important in v 23, because these things are also conditional! God wants our active participation through:

- prayer
- study
- fasting
- yielding to God
- desiring God’s Spirit
- desiring God’s way
- desiring the Truth

All of that is what God wants us to have!

Verse 23: “**If indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast**... [that’s why we get afflictions and have troubles come] ...and are not moved away from **the hope of the Gospel**... [Christ in us, an amazing thing to understand] ...which you have heard, *and* which was proclaimed in all the creation that *is* under heaven; of which I, Paul, became a servant.”

We can look at this as a prophecy of what’s taking place right now.

Verse 24: “Now, I am rejoicing in my sufferings for you...”

I don’t know about you, but I haven’t come to the point, yet—maybe I’m getting a little closer—to have joy in suffering. Suffering is the opposite of joy. So, this seems like a contradiction, but it is not! The joy comes once you get through the difficulties!

“...and I am filling up in my flesh that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ, for the sake of His Body, which is the Church” (v 24).

So, Paul understood all those things that he went through (2-Cor. 11). You read that and what he went through. The one that always amazes me is that he was a day and a night ‘in the deep.’ That is shipwrecked and holding onto a piece of wood.

Jonah was not quite as spiritually savvy as

Paul was, because Jonah didn't want to do what God said, because he said, 'Lord, I know they're going to repent.' God said, 'You're going to go.' Jonah tried to get away and not go. What happened, he got on this ship and God knew he was there and God caused a storm and trouble. All of the crew was wondering why they were having all this trouble.

God revealed that it was Jonah, because he wasn't willing to do what God wanted, **so God made him do it!** God created the giant fish that they threw Jonah overboard and the giant fish swallowed him. I think it was a whale, because you can get oxygen, because whales breathe. Three days and three nights, and then the fish came up to the shores of Niniveh and had a big vomiting session, and out comes Jonah!

He learned a little lesson there for a little while, and he went into Niniveh three days distance and preached repentance. Even the king declared fasting and praying and forsaking evil. One thing for sure, the only nation in the entire history of the Bible that repented in mass. Think about that!

Afterward, Jonah sat down and he was thinking, 'See, God, I told You they would repent.' Then God made this shade grow for Jonah and sent a worm to cut it down to teach Jonah: **'I'm going to do My will and you need to cooperate with Me!'**

That's a good lesson for all of us! We have peace through Jesus Christ.

Verse 25 [Transcriber's Correction]: "Of which I became a servant, according to the administration of God that *was* given to me for you *in order* to complete the Word of God; *even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints" (vs 25-26).

That's quite a thing to understand! What we realize and learn from the Word of God! Generations ago didn't have it and they couldn't learn it. Now, in this age, when they have it:

- Are they willing to learn it?
- Are they willing to turn to God?

IF they are

- Are they going to come to God a little bit?
- Are they going to come back to God a little bit more than that?

or

- Are they going to come to God 100%!

That's what God wants with us! Now v 27 is a key, important verse that helps us in everything that we do.

Verse 27: **"To whom God did will to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory."**

That's our hope! We're not hoping just for physical deliverance, ***we're hoping for the resurrection from the dead to be glorified spirit beings in the Family and Kingdom of God!***

- the greatest calling
- the greatest thing that could possibly happen to us

Verse 28: "Whom we preach, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

That's is the whole, as we discussed in the Elder's Conference, the purpose of the ministry.

- to serve God
- to serve the brethren
- to teach them the Truth
- to pray for them
- to help them

When we pray, and pray until we get the answers. God always does!

Eph. 1—here again, written from prison. This is why Paul went through all the afflictions and troubles that he went through in order so that God could inspire him to understand what we have written here; especially the spiritual things to uplift us and inspire us, helping us to think beyond our own circumstances that we are faced with right now. To realize that everything we go through, ***God is working out a greater plan and a greater thing for us!***

Eph. 1 is one of the most astounding parts of the entire Bible. As we go through this, I want you to remember this. When you get down and discouraged—because you will—go to Eph. 1, Col. 1, Philip. 2 and ask God for His Spirit to help you grasp and understand, ***and let His Spirit come to you to give you mental and emotional stability and drawing close to God.*** Here's what Paul writes; think about this in jail. He's so concerned with the brethren at Ephesus, which was 1200 miles away or farther. He's writing this letter and it's going to be delivered to them.

Ephesians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by *the* will of God..."

That's important to understand. What is it that we pray every day? ***Our Father, Who is in heaven, Holy is Your name! Your will be done! 'The will of God!***

- Is it the will of God that we go through difficulties? *Of course!*
- For what purpose? *That we can draw close to Him!*

That's the whole lesson of it!

“...to the saints who are in Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (v 1).

Which is a prophecy of all of those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. This epistle is also written to each and every one of us in particularly.

Verse 2: “Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ” (vs 2-3). *This is fulfilled in two ways:*

1. with the Spirit of God now, and to understand spiritually the things that are in the Bible
2. the resurrection when the full promise of everything given to us will be complete, and we will possess them

Verse 4: “According as He has personally chosen us **for Himself...**”

- How important are you to God?
- Has He called you?
- Did He give you His Spirit so that you could understand His Word?
- Did He give you the promise of the resurrection?
- Did He give you the hope in your life and everything?

“...for Himself...” *Think about that! **We will be His children!***

“...before *the* foundation of *the* world... [He had this plan before the ages of time] ...in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love... [same thing Paul wrote to the Colossians] ...having predestinated us for **sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will**” (vs 4-5).

There can't be anything greater than this for each one of us. Think of it this way: from you and me directly to God the Father and Jesus Christ. That's what it is. There can't be any greater thing, *not only in this life, but at the resurrection! That's when we will be changed from flesh to spirit!*

Verse 6: “To *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son.*”

Think about how much God looks down upon His children:

- to help them
- to guide them
- to correct them

- to let them have afflictions and trials
- to grow in grace and knowledge

Verse 7: “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence” (vs 7-8).

You might say that you're not educated. Well, that may not count too much. What is someone is highly educated? Well, that may not count too much, either. Here's the important knowledge for us to know; this is what God wants us to know:

Verse 9: “**Having made known to us the mystery of His own will...**”

That's quite a statement! If you do one of these surveys like you see on television every once in a while, they go out and ask people on the street: What do you think of this or that or the other thing. If you asked them: What is the will of God? *Today you probably would get the answer 'which god?'* There are so many gods that people are involved in.

What is the will of God? *That's His Plan and He's given us the knowledge of it!*

“...according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself” (v 9).

Directly involved in the Plan of God. That is a stunning thing to understand!

Verse 10: “That in *the* Divine Plan for the fulfilling of *the* times, He might bring all things together in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.” *That is going to be a glorious time!*

Verse 11: “*Yes*, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will; that we might be to *the* praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ” (vs 11-12).

Rom. 8—here's another very important chapter that Paul has written. When Paul wrote Romans, he was also in prison in Caesarea. This also talks about the Plan of God, the hope of God and our involvement in it; **direct involvement!** That's why we have the Sabbath Day, Passover and the Holy Days so that God can give us the knowledge of His Plan in a way that we understand, and in a way that will help us develop the character and everything that God wants us to have:

- His love
- His Truth
- His hope

Romans 8:15: “Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear... [that’s what it is in the world] ...**but you have received the Spirit of sonship**... [sons and daughters (2-Cor. 6:20)] ...**whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father’**” —*that’s our connection!*

That is the direct thing that we need to grasp a hold of and understand so that when times of trouble come we can go to God with full assurance, faith and understanding that He will be there to help us.

Verse 16: The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are the children of God. Now, **if we are children, we are also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**... [What does that mean?] ...**if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him**” (vs 16-17).

Here’s how Paul looked at everything He went through:

Verse 18: “For I reckon that **the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory** that shall be revealed in us.... [that’s a tremendous thing to grasp] ...For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God” vs 18-19).

Yes, the whole world in its troubles and its difficulties, *they don’t know it, but they’re waiting for God!* They’re waiting for us!

Verse 20: “Because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope.”

- we know the hope of God
- we know the hope of God *for those in the first resurrection*
- we know the hope of God *of those who are in the second resurrection, who will be enter into the Kingdom of God*

How many people in the world understand that? *Very few!* So, we can use that as inspiration in going forward.

Verse 20: “Because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope.”

Isn’t it interesting that this hope is spread out through the Old Testament, brought together in a good form in the New Testament, and then finalized in the book of Revelation.

Verse 21: “In order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all the creation is groaning

together and travailing together until now. And not only *that*, but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves, awaiting the sonship—the redemption of our bodies. **For by hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for why would anyone still be hoping for what he sees?**” (vs 21-24). *That hope is there!*

Let’s see what God gives to those who really love Him! Those who are part of those who overcome the world, love God and keep His Word. Let’s see if we are conforming ourselves to this:

Revelation 3:7: “And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write: ‘These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens.... [God is there directing everything through Christ] ...I know your works.... [God know all of our works] ...Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength...’” (vs 7-8).

When we have little strength and know that we need the strength of God, ***we go to Him, we look to Him in all circumstances!***

“...and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name” (v 8).

Sometimes that even causes division among people within the Church who are not of this mind.

Verse 9: “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan... [that big organization today that is taking over the world, which we are facing] ...who proclaim themselves to be Jews... [even claim themselves to be ‘God’] ...and are not, but do lie....”

Here is what God is going to do: ***They’re going to have to worship God in our presence!*** Think about that! We will be spirit beings! Here we are:

- the weak
- the few
- the scattered

Now Jesus is talking about being glorified:

“...Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you” (v 9).

Why does God love us in a special way? *This is ‘agape’ love!* Here’s the reason:

Verse 10: **“Because you have kept the Word of My patience...”**

That’s quite a statement! Always keeping the Word of God, the Truth of God—***always!*** That way we know that that we are doing the will of God.

Sometimes we do that without knowing what the outcome will be. But if we do it, we know the outcome will be the will of God.

“...I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth” (v 10).

How is God going to keep us from it? *A lot of people think they're going to a place of safety!* That may be one part. But there's another part that's going to happen, which is Isa. 57, that God is going to take those away from the time of trouble by taking their life. We can see that's going to happen in the Church of God, because we have a lot of older people who have been faithful, faithful through a lot of circumstances, difficulties and problems. God is going to take them to the place of safety being the grave! *That's how it will be done!*

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; **hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown.**”

- Who is going to be after our crown? *Satan the devil!*
- Who is he going to use? *Other people!*

Verse 12: “**The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God...**”

Because all of that strength comes from the Word of God and the Spirit of God!

“...and he shall not go out anymore; and **I will write upon him the name of My God...** [it's more than one name] ...and **the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name....** [and your individual name] ...**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**” (vs 12-13).

There we have it, brethren! That's why we go through the things we go through. We need *the hope of God constantly, the Truth of God, the Word of God and drawing close to each other with His Spirit!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 12:1-4
- 2) 1 Peter 2:19-24
- 3) Romans 5:1-5
- 4) Psalm 70:1-5
- 5) Psalm 71:1-5, 8-16
- 6) Psalm 119:49-56, 66-72, 81
- 7) John 1:1
- 8) Colossians 1:1-6, 9-12
- 9) Ephesians 2:14-22

- 10) Colossians 1:13-28
- 11) Ephesians 1:1-12
- 12) Romans 8:15-24
- 13) Revelation 3:7-13

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 11
- 2 Corinthians 11
- Acts 27-28
- Hebrews 2
- Philippians 2
- 2 Corinthians 6:20
- Isaiah 57

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