



Letters of Hope
A Lambchow Bible Study
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Letters of Hope – Lesson One

Dear Friend,

How are you today? I hope you are well. My purpose in writing you is to share some thoughts on hope. Consider this the first in a series of letters.

I'm sure you may have said something like this – I hope it rains. I hope Mary gets better. I hope so. I really hope that (your favorite sports team) wins. I hope the car doesn't run out of gas before we get home. I've said all these at one time or another, perhaps you have too.

All the above "I hope" statements are common but place hope in the realm of optimistic wishful thinking. There's no reason, foundation, or promise anchoring these hopes, just a desire that things go the way we want. This kind of wishful thinking hope is like a candle flickering in the wind.

Recently, I did a study on the Bible's use of the word hope and found that hope is much more like the beacon of a lighthouse than that of a flickering candle. The writer of Hebrews calls hope an anchor for the soul. The Apostle Paul prayed for his readers to experience the hope of their calling. Paul also wrote of the supporting intersection of faith, hope, and love. In Romans, Paul expressed the forward-looking nature of hope. Peter called our walk with Jesus a living hope. Peter and John both recognized how hope changes our desires.

None of these are wishful thinking; all are steeped in the stick-with-it attitude of our step by step, day by day walk with Jesus. It's that kind of hope that will get you and me through our darkest days. To bring us hope even when we feel that all hope is lost.

My aim for this study is to hang our hope on something more substantive than our wishes and desires. That we'll both gain a deeper understanding of the hope found in God, in the finished work of Jesus, and in His promises.

So, whether you're filled with hope, down to your last hope, or have truly lost all hope, my desire is for you to discover with me a solid and sure hope by exploring what the Bible says about it.

My desire dear friend is for our conversation be a two-way street. So, with that in mind, permit me to ask a few questions. You are welcome to share them with me or to simply use them to ponder what has been written above.

How would you define "hope"?

Would you consider yourself to be an optimistic, hopeful person, a pessimistic, hopeless person or somewhere in between like the pragmatic "it will all work out somehow" kind of person?

What are your desires for this Bible Study?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Two

Hello again,

Hope is typically tied to wishful thinking or an innate sense of optimism. It is said that when looking at a doughnut that the pessimist sees the hole and the optimist sees the doughnut. In other words, the pessimist sees what is missing, and the optimist sees what is there. The Bible is neither optimistic or pessimistic but more pragmatic. A pragmatist looks at the same doughnut and seeing both the doughnut and the hole consider how to eat it.

With the Bible's pragmatism in mind, we see that when hope is discussed, it is not simply an optimistic viewpoint. Optimistic hope is like anchoring a boat with sewing thread. It doesn't take much for hope to be broken. But the writer of Hebrews calls hope a firm and secure anchor for our souls. But this anchor isn't just any hope.

In the book of Hebrews, the writer takes us on a long journey that connects Jesus' ministry and sacrifice on the cross with Temple worship and Jewish history. The writer states these things are, *"Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."* (Hebrews 6:17–20, NIV)

This is not the hope of optimism but one anchored in something real. First, this hope is anchored in God's nature – He doesn't lie, He keeps His promises. This hope is encouraging. It is a firm and secure anchor. Lastly, hope enters the inner sanctuary.

Let's talk for a moment about that last one. Everything may seem to make sense until then. What the writer of Hebrews is talking about is the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple. The place where the Ark of the Covenant and its cover, the Mercy Seat, rested. This section of the temple was only entered by the High Priest once a year. The purpose of this annual visit was to sprinkle the blood of the animal sacrifice on the altar as an atonement for their sins. Jesus did that for us. Because of His blood, we have access. Our hope brings us into the presence of God symbolized in the Ark and the Mercy Seat.

Ultimately a firm and secure hope is one found in Jesus. No matter what storms of life blow our way if our anchor of hope is in Christ, we will not be shipwrecked, lost at sea, or beached on an unknown island.

Would you call yourself an optimist, pessimist, pragmatist, or something else?

Why do you think that knowing Jesus and talking with God brings hope?

What has hope been for you? A sewing thread, light rope, steel cable, or a strong chain?

Considering what Hebrew's says how do we gain this hope that is an anchor for our souls?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Three

Hello again dear friend,

I don't know if this true where you live but, in my experience, hope is often related to light. When we're glum, depressed, or in despair, we see things as grey, dark, and gloomy. While a wonderful day is seen as one filled with sunshine and warmth. Hope is often referred to as a glimmer, like a pinpoint of light in the far-off distance. I'm sure that by now it doesn't surprise you that the Bible has a different view of hope.

Paul begins the body of his letter to the believers in ancient Ephesus with a prayer. He wrote, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength"* (Ephesians 1:18–19, NIV) In this prayer Paul identifies three things that we may be blind to, the hope of God's calling, the riches of God's inheritance, and God's incomparable power. For our purposes, we're only looking at the first one.

I find it extremely encouraging that we are called to a particular hope. God's hope is not just dangling from the ceiling like a piñata filled with candy that we wildly and blindly swing at hoping to hit it. God calls us to His hope. He wants us to take off the blindfold and find it.

Our moment may be dark, bleak, gloomy, and grey. We may not see a glimmer of hope. That doesn't mean that hope isn't there, it means that we are blind to it. As followers of Christ, we have a hope beyond anything our day can throw at us. It can be the worst, darkest, most hopeless day and in Christ we still have hope.

This is not a blind hope that all will be made right but that God will take that darkest day and work it for our good. Paul wrote, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28, NIV) We may not know how, what, or when but we do know that God will take what the world and devil meant for our destruction and bring good from it.

I too pray that the eyes of your heart would be open to see the hope of His calling. That the blindfold would be removed, the veil lifted so you can see the bright light of hope in Christ.

Has there been a bad day that looking back at it now you can see how God used it in your life?

Paul talks about knowing hope instead of just seeing hope. What do you think he means?

What does the fact that God has called you to know His hope mean to you?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Four

Hello again,

I trust that all is well with you. One of the best-loved and yet challenging chapters of the Bible is Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13, NIV)

Did you notice the final verse? *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV)* Love, of course, is defined by the verses you just read. The book of Hebrews says, *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1, NIV)* Faith is a powerful mixture of trust and confidence. We know even though we don't see it or can prove it. Hope is the glue that binds faith and love together.

Faith and hope without love are nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Hope and love without faith is powerless. Faith and love without hope is rudderless and without purpose. Bring all three together and something wonderful happens.

There is a synergistic multiplication when faith, hope, and love are combined. Synergistic in that the reality of the whole is greater, more powerful, than the sum of the parts. Peace and joy are discovered. Purpose and direction are uncovered in sometimes surprising ways. While the struggle may continue, we find rest.

It is difficult for me to express this truth in practical terms. But know this dear friend. If you seem directionless, powerless, or ineffective, ask yourself which of faith, hope, and love is missing or weak in your walk with Jesus. Without each of them, we become less than what God has made us to be.

Which of faith, hope, and love is your greatest strength? Which is your greatest weakness?

Why do you think that Paul says "these three remain?"

Why do you think that love is the greater of the three?

Do you have an example where either all three were working together or when one was missing or weak at a critical moment?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Five

Hello again dear friend,

It may not seem like it, but hope (Biblical hope and not just wishful thinking) is a source of great joy. Usually, we think of hope as a lifeline, some thin thread that we strive to grasp, a dim light at the end of the tunnel. But real hope is so much stronger and real.

Paul, in a list of what could be called rules for the normal Christian life, includes “rejoicing in hope.” (Romans 12:2) Earlier in this letter, Paul provides the reason and the focus of our hope. *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”* (Romans 5:1–2, NIV) Boast can also mean exult or even rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We don’t just hope for our lives to be better, but that God is glorified both now and in the coming age.

Immediately following Paul builds a progression which also includes hope. *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”* (Romans 5:3–5, NIV) So often our struggles and failures produce shame. But if God’s love is poured into our hearts, we have hope and not shame, regardless of the struggle.

In closing his letter to the Romans, Paul says, *“May 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.”* (Romans 15:13, NIV) So often we try to create hope out of thin air. Sometimes in our denial of facts, sometimes because there is nothing else to hold on to. But God is the God of hope and desires that hope would overflow through the Holy Spirit. This same hope brings peace and joy.

We can rejoice in hope because hope looks beyond the present. When our hope is based on trust and faith in God, we will rejoice. Our situation may be truly dire and hopeless, but the end of our chapter is not the end of God’s story for us. Our hope is not only grounded in the reality of His present work in our hearts but what comes next and for all eternity.

I would be remiss and fail you dear friend if I did not point out Paul’s “if.” All this is true “if” we have been made right by putting all our trust in Jesus Christ. That is the doorway of our hope.

Have you ever been in a hopeless situation when something changed and hope was suddenly found?

What was your reaction?

Where does our hope really come from? What is your reaction to that hope?

Have you put all your trust in Jesus Christ? Would you like to?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Six

Hello again,

Have you ever inherited something? Or you perhaps have the hope or expectation of inheriting something some day? Perhaps the inheritance had more sentimental value than real value. I have a few of those trinkets in my office. For instance, there is a railroad spike bent and painted to look like a caterpillar. It's only worth a few dollars to the rest of the world but priceless to me since my grandfather made it. Sometimes our hope in Jesus is like that, of little value to the world but priceless to us who believe.

Peter put it this way, *“Praise be to the God and Father 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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Peter 1:3–5, NIV)

A living hope. Not a dead hope or wishful thinking, but a hope that is alive, vibrant, and growing. Our hope in Christ is not a static, far off in the distance, kind of hope. There is a “we know that one day...” quality, but there is also a very real hope for today.

Peter went on to say a few verses later, *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:13, NASB95) Grace and inheritance are connected, both are freely given gifts provided by another’s labor and sacrifice.

Yes, we have a far distant hope of eternity with Christ and the completion of our salvation story. But we are also born again into a living hope. A hope that should affect our every moment as we fix that hope in Christ. The journey between new birth and eternity is one of expectation, of growth, of failure, of pruning, of sorrow, and of great joy. No matter what comes our way we have hope in Christ for today. The more Jesus is revealed to us and in us; the greater and more firm is our hope in Him.

How would you define life or living?

What do you think Peter meant by “living hope?”

Which is harder for you to see – Hope for today or Hope for an eternity with Christ?

Letters of Hope – Lesson Seven

Hello dear friend,

As we've explored hope and what it really means there has, so far, always been a forward-looking attitude. It may seem that hope has little impact on today other than steering us in the right direction. That would be inaccurate. Hope does more than provide comfort in the storm and anchor our faith.

Two verses from two different authors each reveal how hope is visible and meaningful today.

Peter wrote to the persecuted church, *"But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened. But 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,"* (1 Peter 3:14–15, NIV) Even in the tumult of a storm, even one as violent as persecution, our hope is to be a visible beacon to those around us. So much so that we are to prepare, to be ready, to explain this hope we have in the face of a hopeless situation.

John wrote, *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."* (1 John 3:2–3, NIV) John points out that our hope in Jesus drives us toward Christlikeness and moral purity.

Both Peter and John connect hope with our new life and the changes it brings. Where the verse from Peter above says "revere" other translations use "sanctify" and "set apart." That set-apartness leads us towards Christlikeness and purity. Not in an off-putting way, but in a way that shines with hope.

Taking these two together we get a sense of overflowing hope that not only affects our attitude and outlook but also affects others. They may not understand, it may seem foreign or without a logical basis, but hope is after all the anchor of our souls.

Well, dear friends, this is our last letter on Biblical hope. I trust that you found this time to be fruitful and enlightening. Be sure to explore our other resources and articles at Lambchow.com and consider joining our regular mailing list. <https://lambchow.com/join-mailing-list/>

In what ways do you think hope can be seen by others?

How does your hope in Jesus affect your everyday choices?

How has this study on hope been of help to you?

Final Words

This concludes our Bible Study on Hope. Please drop by our website at lambchow.com for other Bible studies, books, and articles for your walk with Jesus Christ.

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Thanks and blessings,

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