

## Reason to Have Strong Hope

The Apostle Paul firmly believed that when Jesus comes back, he would be resurrected and would dwell with Jesus forever. Therefore, he possessed GREAT HOPE! But while he was still physically alive on earth, he did not merely assume that he would receive this salvation. Rather, his faith caused him to run with all his might (spiritually speaking) towards the finish line. He took nothing for granted.

Paul taught that it is very important for all of us to have a strong hope of salvation. While I could point to many passages, let me illustrate using Romans chapter 8.

If we are believers, then we are already fully convinced of the gospel's promises. Like Paul said, we believe that there is now NO CONDEMNATION to all who are IN CHRIST. (See Romans 8:1.) But our hope of salvation increases or diminishes depending on how much evidence we observe of Christ's life in us (proof that we actually believe in the first place). Nevertheless, our hope of salvation is extremely important. Without it, our faith will not endure. So, Paul gives us instruction to help us in our hope.

In Romans 8:1-14, Paul teaches how the believer thinks, feels and lives compared to those who have not been born again. This instruction can help us determine which group we are in. If we cannot identify with Paul's instruction, then we have reason to be concerned. But if we can identify with Paul's instructions, then we automatically have reason to hope. Consider Paul's acclamation of truth that is designed to bring hope and encouragement to all those who can identify with Paul's instructions in the preceding verses:

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

No matter how poorly we have fought the battle of faith in recent days, let us stand firmly on this truth and rejoice that we are God's beloved children. As we do, we will be able to face the trials that will come our way with great hope that we will soon be delivered and be with Jesus forever more as Paul explains in the next part of Romans 8:

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.*

For the rest of Romans 8, Paul feeds the fire of our hope with truth that is rich with encouragement. First, he reminds us of the fact that the Comforter is always interceding for us no matter how confused we might be at the moment.

*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Then Paul goes on to make glorious statements about God's loving involvement in our present lives and the glory of our future:

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

In light of these things, we can be at peace fully knowing that God loves us deeply and will always defend us as His beloved children:

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:*

*"For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

As a result of Paul's instructions and words of encouragement, we do not have to go through life downtrodden. Rather, it is the opposite. If we can identify with Paul's instruction in this chapter, then we should be able to say with Paul:

*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*