

Intimations of Hope



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Prov. 17:28, Job 13:1–15, James 2:20–22, 1 Cor. 15:11–20, 1 Pet. 1:18–20, Gen. 22:8.*

Memory Text: “He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him” (*Job 13:16, NKJV*).

Man is the only animal,” wrote British essayist William Hazlitt, “that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be.”

Things certainly aren't what they ought to be. However, for a Christian who lives with the promise of the Second Coming, there is hope—a great hope of what things will become (*2 Pet. 3:13*). They will become something so wonderful that we, with sin-darkened minds (*1 Cor. 13:12*), can barely imagine it now. This is a hope that the secular mind, in all its narrowness and parochialism, has lost long ago.

This week, as we continue to explore the question of suffering in the book of Job, we will find that, even amid the unfair tragedy that befell him, which made no sense and was not justified, Job could still utter words of hope.

What was that hope, and what does it tell us that we can hope in as well?

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 26.

Forgers of Lies

“Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent” (*Prov. 17:28, RSV*).

Whatever one wants to say about the man Job, one can't say that he was going to sit there amid his sorrow and quietly listen to what his friends were throwing at him. On the contrary, much of the book of Job consists of Job's fighting back against what he knows is a mixture of truth and error. As we saw, these men were not showing much tact and sympathy; they were claiming to speak for God in justifying what had happened to Job; and basically they said he was getting what he deserved or that he deserved even worse! Any one of these lines of thought would have been bad enough; but all three (and others) were too much, and Job answered them back.

Read Job 13:1–14. What approach is Job taking here as he responds to what is being said to him?

We saw in chapter 2 that when these men first came and saw Job, they said nothing to him for seven days. Considering what eventually did start coming out of their mouths, this might have been the best approach. That's certainly what Job thought.

Notice also: Job says that not only are these men talking lies, they are talking lies about God. (That's interesting in light of what happens toward the end of the book itself. [See *Job 42:7*.] Surely it would be better not to speak than to say things that are wrong. (Who among us hasn't experienced how true that is?) But it seems that to say things that are wrong about God is much worse. The irony, of course, was that these men actually thought they were defending God and His character against Job's bitter complaints about what happened. Though Job remained at a loss to understand why all these things came upon him, he knew enough to recognize that what these men were saying made them “forgers of lies” (*Job 13:4*).

When was the last time you said things that were wrong and that shouldn't have been said? How can you learn from that experience so that you do not make the same kind of mistake again?

Though He Slay Me

When we started this quarter, we went right to the end of the book, and we saw how well things eventually turned out for Job. We saw that, even amid his terrible suffering, Job really had something to hope for. In fact, living when we do and knowing the end of the whole book, i.e., the Bible, we can see that Job had a whole lot more to hope in than he could possibly have imagined at the time.

But when his children died, his property was taken, and his health was ruined, Job didn't have the advantage of knowing how things would turn out. What he knew, instead, was that life had suddenly turned nasty.

At the same time, even amid his bitter laments about wishing he hadn't been born or wishing that he had gone from the womb to the grave, Job still expressed hope, and this hope was in God—the same God who he thought was dealing so unfairly with him now.

Read Job 13:15. What hope is presented here in this verse? What is Job saying?

“Even if He will kill me, I will trust Him.” What a powerful affirmation of faith! With all that had happened to him, Job knew that very possibly the final thing, the only thing that hadn't happened to him, death, could come—and God could cause it too. Yet, even if this happened, Job would die trusting in the Lord anyway.

“The riches of the grace of Christ must be kept before the mind. Treasure up the lessons that his love provides. Let your faith be like Job's, that you may declare, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.’ Lay hold on the promises of your Heavenly Father, and remember his former dealings with you and with his servants; for ‘all things work together for good to them that love God.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 20, 1910.

From a purely human perspective, Job had no reason to hope for anything. But the fact was, Job wasn't looking from a purely human perspective. If he had done so, what hope could he possibly have? Instead, when he makes this amazing affirmation of faith and hope, he does it in the context of God and of trusting in Him.

A logical question could be: How did Job retain his faith in God amid all that had happened to him? Read Job 1:1 and James 2:20–22. How do they help answer this question, and what should the answer tell us about the importance of faithfulness and obedience in our Christian life? (See lesson 13.)

Intimations of Hope

“ ‘He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him’ ” (*Job 13:16, NKJV*). This verse follows right after the one we read yesterday. How does it affirm even more the idea that, despite everything, Job had hope, and that his hope was in God?

What an interesting line to follow what came before. Even if Job were to die, *even if God killed him*, Job still trusted in his God for salvation. Though on one level it’s a strange contrast, on another it makes perfect sense. After all, what is salvation other than liberation from death? And what is death, at least for the saved, other than a quick moment of rest, an instant of sleep, followed by the resurrection to eternal life? Is not this hope of the resurrection to eternal life the great hope of all of God’s people through the millennia? This was Job’s hope, as well.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:11–20. What is the hope presented to us there? Without this hope, why would we have no hope at all?

Also, after this strong affirmation in salvation, Job says that the “*hanef* will not come before Him.” The root means “profane” or “godless,” a word with very negative connotations in Hebrew. Job knew that his salvation was to be found only in God, only in a life surrendered in faithful obedience to Him. That’s why the evil and godless man, the *hanef*, didn’t have that hope. Most likely Job was expressing what he understood as his “assurance of salvation.” Though Job faithfully offered animal sacrifices for sin, we don’t know how much he understood of their significance. Before the Cross, most faithful followers of the Lord, such as Job, surely didn’t have as full an understanding of salvation as we can have living after the Cross. Nevertheless, Job still knew enough to know that his hope of salvation was to be found only in the Lord and that those sacrifices were an expression of how this salvation was to be found.

Hope Before the World Began

Who among us, having gone through what Job did, could utter such a powerful affirmation of hope? His words are an eternal testimony to the reality of his life of faith and obedience.

Job had hope because he served a God of hope. Even amid all the sordid stories of human sinfulness, from the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden (*Genesis 3*) to the fall of Babylon at the end of time (*Rev. 14:8*), the Bible is a book brimming with hope, brimming with a vision of something beyond what this world itself offers.

“The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210. And who is the Savior other than the great Source of our hope?

How do these texts affirm the wonderful hope expressed in the Ellen G. White statement found in today’s study? *Eph. 1:4; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 1 Pet. 1:18–20.*

These texts teach the amazing truth that, in His foreknowledge, God knew even before the Creation of the world that humanity would fall into sin. The Greek in 2 Timothy 1:9 says that we have been called by a grace given to us in Christ Jesus “before eternal time.” This is a grace given us, “not according to our works” (how could it have been “our works” if we didn’t even exist then?) but through Jesus. Even before we existed, God put a plan in place that offered humanity the hope of eternal life. The hope didn’t arise after we needed it; instead, it was already there, ready for us when we did need it.

As Christians, we have so much to hope for and to hope in. We exist in a universe created by a God who loves us (*John 3:16*), a God who redeemed us (*Titus 2:14*), a God who hears our prayers (*Matt. 6:6*), a God who intercedes for us (*Heb. 7:25*), a God who promises never to forsake us (*Heb. 13:5*), a God who promises to raise our bodies from death (*Isa. 26:19*), and to give us eternal life with Him (*John 14:2, 3*).

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (*Rom. 8:31*). How can you make this hope your own even amid whatever struggles you are facing now?

Images of Hope

Read the following texts. What hope does each of them reveal?

Gen. 3:15 _____

Gen. 22:8 _____

Lev. 17:11 _____

John 1:29 _____

Gal. 2:16 _____

Phil. 1:6 _____

1 Cor. 10:13 _____

Dan. 7:22 _____

Dan. 12:1, 2 _____

Matt. 24:27 _____

Dan. 2:44 _____

Follow the progression of thought presented in these texts. Together, what do they tell us about the hope that we as Christians can have in Jesus?

Further Thought: From cover to cover, the Bible is filled with wonderful words of hope. “ ‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’ ” (*John 16:33, NKJV*). “ ‘I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ ” (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (*Gal. 3:13, NKJV*). “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (*Psa. 103:12, NKJV*). “For 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” (*Rom. 8:38, 39, NKJV*). “ ‘The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth’ ” (*Gen. 9:16, NKJV*). “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (*1 John 3:1, NKJV*). “Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (*Psa. 100:3, NKJV*). These texts are just a small portion of what is revealed to us in the Word about what our God is like and what He offers us. What reasons would we have for hope at all, were it not from what is revealed to us in the Bible?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What other Bible texts speak to us of hope? Which ones are especially important to you, and why?
- 2 Of all the specific doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which ones do you find especially hopeful?
- 3 Amid the personal trials and sometimes tragedies and hardships of life, how can we learn to rejoice in the hope that is presented to us in the Bible? Why is it so easy to get discouraged by events, even with so much hope presented to us? What can we do, on a practical level, to keep this hope ever before us and to rejoice in it?
- 4 “Talk hope and faith and thanksgiving to God. Be cheerful, hopeful in Christ. Educate yourself to praise Him. This is a great remedy for diseases of the soul and of the body.”—Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 492. Why is praise so important in helping us to stay hopeful in the Lord?