

## Rejoicing in Hope

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:1-5 NKJV emphasis mine).*

There's something about the beginning of a new year that causes one to reflect on past accomplishments and failures and future plans and hopes. Thankfully, believers have good reason to hope. It is promised by God. Throughout the holiday season, God has been speaking to me about hope.

Hope in a believer's life is not a "hope so," "maybe my wish will come true." The hope of scripture is promise fulfilled. For instance, take prayer for salvation of a loved one.

Even before my sons were born, I began praying for their early salvation. I wanted them to have the resources of God's Holy Spirit well before their adolescent years. True to His promise, God drew them to Himself when they were just six and seven years old. Since I knew of friends who had "walked an aisle" when they were very young only to discover in later years that they had not really given their heart and life to the Lord, I also prayed for confirmation that the decisions my sons made were real. God also answered that prayer in a remarkable way. I have been able to give testimony to others about their salvation and the unique confirmation I had for each one from the Lord.

Now I am a grandmother. For years, my husband and I have been praying for the salvation of our three grandsons. Although they are only six, three and three, we are aware that God is molding their thinking through the teaching and leadership of their godly parents. Some months back, in a September Sunday service in Berlin, Germany, I was heavily impressed to pray for my oldest grandson and his clear understanding of God's hand in his life and His invitation to join His family. Upon returning to our Berlin apartment, my husband voiced another prayer for our grandson and his relationship with our Lord. Wanting that confirmation to come from his family, I waited for the phone call telling me that my grandson had made a decision to invite Christ into his life. That call did not come, but I continued to feel impressed to pray that he would understand God's voice clearly when He spoke to him.

This Christmas season, something happened that may not happen again. All of the family was able to be at our house for Christmas. What a joy! Our house was full of sons, daughters-in-law and grandsons. Earlier in 2009, God had spoken to my spirit and given me the hope and anticipation that this would be a reality during this holiday season. So, even when one of the families could not determine whether they would be able to come or not until just before Christmas (because of job circumstances), I was still believing and hoping that it would come to pass. And it did.

During preparation for Christmas dinner, I had the urging to tell my eldest son about my experience in Berlin and our prayers for his son that he would hear God clearly when He called. After sharing that experience with his wife, she came downstairs and told me about a conversation she had with her son in September – possibly on the same week-end that I was so impressed to pray. My grandson asked her questions about believing in Christ, she answered, and he prayed his own simple prayer asking Christ to come into his heart. Since then, she said, she has noticed a difference in him - a stronger realization of wrong and right and his participation in things that might be hurtful to others. Through our conversation and our tears, we both realized that God had answered my prayer and my hope for my grandson and given us both confirmation that his prayer, with the understanding that he has as a six year old, was real. My grandson is now my brother in Christ. My husband and I could not have had a more glorious Christmas present.

1 Corinthians 13:13 states that “*now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*” Indeed, we know that love is the greatest. Only love could have led Christ to the cross. Only love can lead us to serve others on His behalf. Only love can cause us to pray for others. But there is also an intertwining in these three as the biblical descriptions sometimes include something of the other. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God! . . . And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure* (1 John 3:1, 3).

God deserves our love. He sent Jesus who gave His all for us when He lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death and rose as He promised. God tells us the best way to please Him is to have faith. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him* (Hebrews 11:6). The writer of Hebrews defines faith this way: *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1).

My hope is in Christ Himself. I pray that yours is as well.

*. . . Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27b NKJV)

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