

Without Hope

There are many things without which we can survive in this life—but hope is not one of them. God has gone to great lengths to give us something to inspire hope.

“At that time you were without Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

“I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . .” (Heb. 6:19).



In Victor Frankl’s autobiographical account of his experiences in a German concentration camp, he offered an insight into why some prisoners survived while others didn’t. “The prisoner who had lost faith in the future—his future—was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay. . . . He simply gave up” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, p. 95). It was *hope*, or a lack of hope, that usually spelled the difference between survival and death for these prisoners.

Humans must have a reason to live, some compelling motive to push through all the hardships and turmoil of life, to find the strength to keep on going. The expectation of some future reward or positive turn of events is essential to our survival.

Yet many people today stumble through life without hope. They are stuck in nihilistic lifestyles, chasing mindless pleasures that provide no benefit to themselves or others. Or worse, they are strung out on booze and drugs. They are not concentration camp inmates, but the outcome is not much different. They often end up in psych wards or morgues, victims of self-inflicted destruction.

Why is hope missing in the lives of so many?

In some cases, it’s because they do not believe in God. They may not be committed atheists, but God is a distant abstraction to them. He plays no role whatsoever in their lives. They have no idea where they came from, why they are here, or where they are going. They stay busy in the daily toils of life to avoid the implications of their miserable emptiness, but as death draws closer, the absence of hope looms over them like a darkening cloud.

Others believe in God but have a distorted concept of who or what He is. They may view God as an impersonal force that can do little more than throw us back in the reincarnation hopper if we don’t measure up to some vague standard. Or they might see God as a set of scales that blindly metes out rewards or punishments based on how our good and bad deeds are weighed. It’s a lonely, sink-or-swim outlook on life—and most of us have a hard time seeing how we can swim our way out of this mess.

Others believe in a personal God of love and mercy but struggle to understand how He could ever love them with all their flaws, failures, and weaknesses. God is so distant, so beyond their ability to reach. Surely, He could never love them.

The gospel message is designed to educate people about the historical evidence for a real hope that God has made available to all humanity. In the epic story of Jesus, we see a demonstration of our value, of our capacity for improvement, and of the exciting expectation of a new life that awaits us beyond this life. Even in the face of death, this confidence of a glorious future gives us courage to stand tall and face anything that life throws at us. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

God knows that life without hope is not just dismal, it’s fatal, and He has gone to great lengths to fill that void. If hope is missing in your life, open your eyes to the gift He has placed before you, “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.”

— David King