

**Finding Hope In Hard Times**  
**“Hope For What Seems Hopeless”**  
(Part 6)

**Intro:** There just seems to be no shortage of hopeless situations around the world. (Statistics) On top of this bad news, we have our own circumstances that are often overwhelming. It’s just easy to feel hopeless. How do we find hope for what seems hopeless? Today I want to try to answer this tough question. Let me give you 4 biblical truths for hopeless situations.

**I. Hopeless Situations Are Allowed By God**

- The Bible is filled with stories of hopeless situations. That’s what’s so great about it. You can find one you can identify with!
- Noah / Moses / Gideon / David / The pages of scripture are filled with stories of tragedy / crisis / people struggling with hope - Even the writers of the NT told their followers that hard times are reality.

*Acts 14:22 “They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.” (NLT)* Experiencing many hardships is part of the journey to our final destination. They are allowed by God. What’s the benefit of these times?

A. Hopeless situations allow us to see God more clearly

*Ps. 18:6 “But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.” (NLT)* Sometimes desperation opens our eyes so that we pursue and see God.

1. Story of Elisha and his servant II Kings 6:8-23 “More are with us than are with them.”
2. Sometimes we just have to get to the end of our rope in order for God to open our eyes. When things are all going well, it’s easy to lose sight of God. But when everything is dark, all the distractions of life are removed, and we see God very clearly.
3. Often it is in our hopeless condition where we experience God the most!

B. Hopeless situations strengthen our faith and clarify our convictions

*I Peter 1:6-7 “So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” (NLT)*

1. It is in the hopeless situations of life where our faith is truly tested. Will we cling to what God has said; will we continue to follow despite every circumstance in my life telling me otherwise?
2. When there is no tangible evidence of God’s goodness / His loving care / His provision / When you can’t see any blessing for your obedience / when all you feel is

hopelessness.

3. When these times happen, we must remember that we are on God's anvil. (slide of anvil) The anvil is not there to break you. It is there to mold you / shape you / make you stronger / make you a more useful tool in the masters hand.
4. When a tool emerges from the fires of the anvil, your faith and convictions are refined. Your purpose is clearer. Life makes more sense. The strength of my faith and the clarity of my convictions came from the fires of God's anvil.
5. Hope results from clinging to God despite the hopelessness of our situation. Job leaves us an amazing example. (Briefly explain)

*Job. 13:15* "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him..." (NIV) Now that is faith and conviction!

- Hopeless situations are allowed by God.

## II. Hopeless Situations Remind Us Of Our Ultimate Hope

*Col. 1:5* Talks about our ultimate hope "...because of the hope laid up for you in heaven..." (NASB)

A. Hopeless situations get our focus off of this life

*I John 2:15-17* "Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, ...For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. **And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.**" (NLT)

1. Hopeless situations have a way of stripping life down to its essentials...what's really important. We become much more keenly aware of the "fading away" of this world's non-essentials.
2. It's too easy to put our hope in the things of this life. We tend to fall in love with this life. (Career / money / possessions / positions / pleasure / achievements ) When we lose all that the world offers, we are confronted with the hopelessness of it all.
3. How many people have lost hope because of the economy? As if life is all about money / careers / and possessions. God said these things fade / temporary!
- **Illustrate:** Have you heard about several men who have killed their entire families and the shot themselves? Talk about extreme hopelessness! Their only hope was completely fixed on the things in this life. When it was gone, they had no reason to live.
4. Hopeless situations can show us that we have our hope in the wrong places. If it is in things that we can't control / things that were meant to fade / things that are not guaranteed, we are set up for disappointment.
5. Sometimes the hopelessness we feel can be a way of God moving us to where we need to be. Where's that?

B. Hopeless situations get our focus on eternity

*Rom. 8:24-25 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (NIV)* He is referring to our ultimate hope of heaven that we are all waiting for.

1. This world is fading away, but the one we're going to is eternal. Last week we discussed our hope in heaven. Therefore, I'm not going to spend much time here. But if we're going to move out of hopelessness into hope, it has to be fixed in the right place.
  2. So, let's review some hopeful truths about heaven...(It's real / relationships / rewards / renewal / residence)
  3. One of the best ways to protect yourself from the despair of hopelessness is to not fall in love with this world. This world; this life is a pit stop compared to eternity. Unless we maintain an eternal perspective regarding this life we will feel hopeless.
  4. Too many Christians act as if this life is all there is. Remember eternity! Remember that we are citizens of heaven...citizens of another kingdom. We are NOT in the land of the living going to the land of dying. We are in the land of the dying traveling to the land of the living! That's hope!
- Hopeless situations remind us of our ultimate hope!

### **III. Hopeless Situations Can Still Accomplish Good**

*Rom. 8:28 "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." (NLT)* God can use everything to accomplish His good purposes.

A. God is always looking for opportunities in hopeless situations

- John 9 – story of a man born blind

*John 9:2-3 "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "Why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins? It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." (NLT)*

1. Jesus was always looking for opportunities to work in hopeless situations. This man's hopeless condition of blindness was an opportunity for the power of God to be displayed.
2. Hopeless situations create opportunities for the power of God. They create opportunities for Rom. 8:28 to become reality. When God comes through in an apparent impossible situation, everyone sees it. No one misses God! It's Obvious.
3. As I read scripture, God does have a flare for the dramatic. He does like to set the stage and then come through in the last minute. Sometimes, He purposely waits until all hope is gone! (Sometimes this just drives me crazy! – emotional rollercoaster)

**Illustrate:** This is what God did when He gave us our house. We needed a buyer for our existing home – God waited until the last day. (share) He wanted us to know beyond all doubt He was orchestrating events on our behalf.

4. God still looks to work in hopeless situations. What hopeless situation are you

experiencing where only God can make a difference? If you are facing one of these, know also that our response during these times is also important.

**B. Our response in hopeless situations determines the outcome**

1. In John 9, the man still had to be obedient. He had to go to a certain pool and wash off the mud. He could have refused. Thought it was stupid / Got mad
  2. Rom 8:28 is one of the most misunderstood passages. It is a conditional promise not an unconditional promise. All things do not work together for good for everybody. This is only true for those who love God and walk in obedience to His purposes for their lives.
  3. Our response is crucial. (Trust / obedience / humility) We need to understand and trust that God is always doing more than we can see or comprehend. Our response is to continue loving God in the darkness of these times. To continue trusting in His good purposes despite what we can see. To believe that even though the situation is not good, God is good and His plans for me are still good.
  4. This type of a response is not easy, and truthfully, is more of a process for most people than an immediate response. Sometimes we have to grieve / cry / and feel the pain of our wounds that result from losing hope.
  5. But in these times, can we come back to God in our brokenness, give Him our despair, and trust that He will eventually take even the darkness and do something good on our behalf with it. This response unleashes the power of God into our lives and into our situations.
- I believe God is longing to do good things in our hopeless situations.

**IV. Some Hopeless Situations In This Life God Does Not Change**

- God, why doesn't the disease go away? Why does my spouse not believe? Why does my career seem to be over? Why am I losing my house? Why can't I get pregnant? Why can't I get married? Can I still trust God if my hopeless situation doesn't change? You're not the only one who has struggled with this.

*Jer. 15:18 "Why then does my suffering continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook, like a spring that has gone dry."(NLT)* Ever felt like this? The prophet Jeremiah did. "God, can I trust you?" He was called to minister in a terrible time in Israel's history – explain – called the weeping prophet. Lousy assignment

- How do I deal with hopeless situations that don't change? 2 truths to remember.

A. When God doesn't change the situation, He increases His presence and power

Paul's thorn in the flesh : Sometimes God says "No".

*II Cor. 12:7-9 "Even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away.*

*Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.” (NLT)*  
*Ps. 34:18 “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” (NLT)*

1. When God says NO to your situation, He always says YES to you. He will always provide you with increased power and strength to endure the difficulty and an increased sense of His presence to give you peace.
2. It’s just a fact of life that God is not going to remove all the hopeless circumstances from our lives. This is not an indicator that God doesn’t love us. It’s just an indicator that we live in very fallen disappointing world. All the more reason why we need Him! (Remember, Jesus promised hardships)
3. Sometimes God allows brokenness to continue so we can experience His closeness / intimacy. Sometimes He allows us to experience extreme weakness so we can experience His supernatural strength.
4. Unfortunately, we tend to not experience these resources from God unless we are left with no other options. Maybe this is how you feel today? You have no other place to go except either towards God or away from Him. God may not change your hopeless situation today, but He is ready to move in your life. He may be saying no to your circumstances, but He is saying yes to you!

B. When God doesn’t change the situation, He will change you

- God will never waste the hopeless situations / pain we go through in this life.

*Phil. 1:6 “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” (NLT)*

1. Despite what is going on in your life, God is at work within you. There is a work He started and He is committed to seeing it completed. We must remember that God is always more concerned with our character development than He is with our circumstances. More concerned with character rather than comfort.
2. If changing our circumstances will hinder our character development, He will not be in a hurry to change them. Hope will result as we cooperate with God’s work in us regardless of the hopeless circumstances we face.
3. How do we cooperate with God when everything seems so dark? I believe in these times it comes down to 4 words: humility – surrender – acceptance - obedience
  - **Humility** acknowledges God is in charge of life not us
  - **Surrender** is our response to God knowing that He is in charge. We choose to surrender our lives to him in the circumstances. “My life is Yours” -
  - **Acceptance** is our response to agree to walk with God through whatever situation we are in. We accept the circumstances...didn’t say we like them.
  - **Obedience** is the result of the first three. We continue to walk in obedience to His word regardless of the circumstances
4. These are the responses that result in God transforming our lives. In fact, the longer

I walk with God the more I see these responses as foundation to our entire relationship with Christ. They unleash all His resources! They unleash everything that He promises us!

- When we experience His presence / His power / and our lives being transformed even in the hopeless circumstances of life, we can be people of hope. He will pour His hope into us.
- So how do we have hope when everything seems hopeless? Hopeless situations are allowed by God / Remind us of our ultimate hope / Can still accomplish good / even though the circumstances may not change, God will increase His resources in your life and transform you into the person He longs for you to be.
- I want to leave you with a prayer by the Apostle Paul. I want to encourage you to pray this for yourself and all those people you know who struggle with hope.

*Rom. 15:13 "I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." (NLT)* May this confident hope be yours in abundance as you trust in Him.