

40
DAYS
— *of* —
HOPE

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

40

D A Y S

— *of* —

H O P E

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40 Days of Hope

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INTRODUCTION

PROBABLY FEW DAYS go by without you using the word *hope*.

“I hope we’re on time.”

“I hope it doesn’t rain.”

“I hope it’s not cancer.”

“I hope she’ll understand.”

“I hope he’ll be OK.”

“I hope he isn’t angry.”

“I hope God hears this.”

“I hope he loves me.”

From the smallest of things to the grandest of concerns, our lives are shaped, directed, motivated, and frustrated by hope. Everyone hopes. Everyone hooks their hope to something or someone. Everyone hopes their hope will come through for them. No one ever purposely hopes in what is hopeless. Everyone longs for hope that is sure. Everyone gets up in the morning motivated by hope of some kind or paralyzed by hopelessness of some kind. For all of us, hoping is so natural and frequent that we lose sight of how significant it is in shaping what we do, how we do it, and how we feel in the process. Yet even though it’s natural and we do it all the time, hope is painfully elusive for many of us.

It's important to understand what hope is. Hope always has three elements:

- Desire
- Object
- Expectation

Hope is always fueled by some form of *desire*. It may be the desire to be loved, to be cared for, to be protected, to be understood, to be provided for, to be accepted, to experience comfort or pleasure, to have control, to be forgiven—the list could go on and on. Also, hope always has an *object*. I look to someone or something to satisfy my desire. Lastly, hope carries an *expectation* of when, how, and where the person or thing in which I have placed my hope will deliver what I have hoped for. Almost every day, you entrust your smallest and largest longings into the hands of something or someone with the hope that your longing will be satisfied. To be human is to hope.

The language and drama of hope is splashed all over the pages of Scripture. The Bible is a narrative of hope shattered and hope restored, and in telling its hope story, the Bible speaks to each of the three elements of hope. Scripture has much to say about our longings, that is, the desires that animate us and shape our lives. It tells us what to love and what to hate, what to desire and what to forsake, and what is good for us and what will harm us. Much of the drama of hope in our lives is not that we don't get what we hope for, but that we spend so much of our time hoping for the wrong things.

The Bible has much to say about the object of our hope. It reminds us that when it comes to hope, there are only two places to look. You can look to created things to satisfy the longings of your heart or you can look to the Creator. It really is true that when it comes to fundamental human hope, each of us looks horizontally or vertically. The Bible warns us that if our hope disappoints us, it's because our hope rests on the wrong object. There is only one place to look for hope that is secure, no matter what. Consider these verses:

You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. (Ps. 119:114)

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. (Ps. 130:7)

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Ps. 147:11)

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jer. 29:11)

“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him” (Lam. 3:24)

Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Rom. 15:13)

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. (Eph. 1:18)

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. (Titus 1:2)

Notice what each of these verses does. Each confronts us with the radical, life-reshaping truth that ultimately, true, lasting, and secure hope is a person—the Lord Almighty. Hope—the kind that transforms your life, gives rest to your heart, and ignites new ways of living—is attached to him. Scripture repeatedly invites us, commands us, and implores us to hope in the Lord, and it gives us reason after reason to do so.

Finally, Scripture speaks to our expectations. It promises us that when we hope in the Lord, we will not be disappointed. No, God won't submit to our time expectations, and he won't always deliver what we hope for in the way we expect, but God is powerful, caring, and faithful. He will give us everything he has promised us, and he will generously provide what is best

INTRODUCTION

for us. So we wait with patient expectation, knowing that our hope is firm when we hope in the Lord.

It's wonderful to have hope that doesn't rise or fall with changing circumstances. It's a sweet thing to have hope that doesn't die when trouble comes. It's good to be free from placing our hope in things that have no power whatsoever to deliver what we long for. And it's wise to spend time examining what we hope for, reorienting our hope and meditating on the one who alone is a worthy object of our hope.

May this devotional renew your hope, and in renewing your hope, renew your courage, perseverance, and joy.

DAY 1

Hope is not a thing, not a location, not a situation, not an experience. Hope is a person, and his name is Jesus.

IF YOU PAY ATTENTION AND listen carefully to what you and the people around you are saying, you will realize that we are hope obsessed. Day after day, the things we do are fueled by hope. Little third-grader Sally says to her mom as she gets ready for school, “I sure hope the girls at school like me.” Mom thinks to herself that day, “I hope our marriage gets better.” Teenager Tim says to his buddy, “I got a new job after school; I hope it’s decent.” Dad worries in the hope that he won’t be one of the guys who’s caught in the downsizing that his corporation is doing. From hoping that a certain meal will be good to hoping that we will have the moral strength to do the things we should do, our lives are fueled and directed by hope.

What we’re all searching for is hope that won’t disappoint us, that won’t leave us hopeless in the end. And we all want to convince ourselves that what we have placed our hope in will deliver. What are you asking of something when you place your hope in it? You’re asking it to give you peace of heart. You’re asking it to give your life meaning. You’re asking it to give you purpose and direction. You’re asking it to give you a reason to continue. You’re asking it to help you get through difficulty and disappointment. You’re asking it to free you from envy or anxiety. You’re asking it to give you joy in the morning and rest at night. Now, that’s a lot to ask of anything. That fact

confronts you with this reality—if your hope disappoints you, it’s because it’s the wrong hope.

Romans 5:1–5 talks about a hope that won’t disappoint you even in times of suffering. Maybe you’re thinking, “Where can I find that hope?” Sturdy hope that does not vanish with the constant changes in situations, locations, and relationships that make up all of our lives—hope that simply will never, ever disappoint us—can be found in only one place. It is not to be found in a certain thing. It is, in fact, a person, Jesus. Whether you have realized it or not, he is what your hoping heart has been searching for, because what you’ve really been searching for is life, real heart-changing, heart-satisfying life—life to the fullest, life abundant. People can love and respect you, but they can’t give you life. Situations can make your life easier, but they can’t give you life. Locations can bring some changes to your life, but they can’t give you life. Achievements can be temporarily satisfying, but they can’t give you life. True lasting hope is never found horizontally. It’s only ever found vertically, at the feet of the Messiah, the one who *is* hope. Place your hopeful heart in his hands today.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Colossians 1:15–29

DAY 2

Every human being places his hope in something, and every human being asks that hope to deliver something. Where have you placed your hope?

WE'VE ALL BEEN HARDWIRED for hope. We all project our lives out into the future to imagine things as we would like them to be. We all carry around with us personal hopes and dreams. We all surrender our hearts to some kind of expectation. We all silently wish that things could be different than they are. We all hope *in* something and we all hope *for* something. So much of how we look at life and how we live our lives is connected to the things in which we place the fundamental hopes of our lives.

Hope always has three elements—an assessment, an object, and an expectation. First, hope looks around and assesses that something or someone could be better than it is; that that something or someone is somehow broken. If things were as perfect as they could be, you wouldn't need to hope. Second, hope always has an object. It is the thing that you bank your hope on. You ask the object of your hope to fix what is broken or to deliver what is desired or needed. Third, hope has an expectation. This is what you ask the object of your hope to give you, what you hope the object of your hope will deliver.

Now, there are really only two places to look for foundational life hope, that is, basic meaning and purpose, motivation to continue, a sense of well-being, and that knowledge that you've hooked yourself to what life is really all about. You can search

for hope horizontally in the situations, experiences, physical possessions, locations, and relationships of everyday life. There are two problems with looking horizontally. First, all of these things suffer from some degree of brokenness. They are part of the problem, and because they are, they are unable to deliver what you're seeking. Also, these things were never made to be the source of your hope, but to be fingers that point you to where your hope can be found.

Paul says it all in Romans 5:5 when he tells us that hope in God will never put us to shame. It will never embarrass us by failing to deliver. In those words, Paul tells us where hope can be found. It is found only vertically. Only when God is your hope is your hope sure and secure. Only he is able to give you the life that your heart seeks. Only he is able to give your soul the rest that it needs. Only he can deliver the internal peace that is the hunger of every human being. It's only when grace has hooked you to him that you are connected to what life is really all about. In his brief words, Paul confronts us with this thought—if your hope disappoints you, it's because it's the wrong hope! Today, what carries your hope?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Job 1

DAY 3

Hope for the believer is not a dream of what could be, but a confident expectation of a guaranteed result that shapes his life.

WE CONSTANTLY SPEAK IN hope language:

- “I hope my company does well.”
- “I hope he isn’t mad at me.”
- “I hope God really does answer prayer.”
- “I sure hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow.”
- “I hope this sickness isn’t something serious.”

If you are a human being, you hope. You attach your security, your sense of peace and rest to something every day. The question is not whether you hope, but what holds your hope. Take a moment to think about hope with me:

You hope in something. You could argue that the life of a human being is propelled by hope. From the little momentary hope of the young child for food or a toy to the profound hope of the young adult for meaning and purpose, we all hope. We all place our hope in someone or something, and we ask that person or that thing to deliver something to us. What are you placing your hope in right now?

Hope is a lifestyle. Your hope shapes the way you live. Your hope causes you to make the decisions that you make. A lack of hope causes you to feel stuck and de-motivated. Confident hope makes you decisive and courageous. Wobbly hope makes

you timid and indecisive. Hope is not just something you do with your brain. You always live your hope in some way.

Most of our hopes disappoint us. We all do it. We place our hope in things in this fallen world that simply can't deliver. Your spouse can't make you happy. Your job won't make you content. Your possessions can't satisfy your heart. Your physical health won't give you inner peace. Your friends can't give you meaning and purpose. When our hopes disappoint us, it is a sign that we've put our hopes in the wrong things.

There are only two places to look for hope. The theology of hope is quite simple. There are only two places to put your hope. You rest the hope of your life in the hands of the Creator or you look to the creation for hope.

Hope in God is sure hope. When you hope in the Lord, you not only hope in the one who created and controls the universe, but also in one who is glorious in grace and abounding in love. Now, that's hope that is well placed and will never disappoint.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalm 40

DAY 4

Hope is more than wishing things will work out. It is resting in the God who holds all things in his wise and powerful hands.

AS I NOTED EARLIER, we use the word *hope* in a variety of ways. Sometimes it connotes a wish about something over which we have no control at all. We say, “I sure hope the train comes soon,” or, “I hope it doesn’t rain on the day of the picnic.” These are wishes for things, but we wouldn’t bank on them. The word *hope* also depicts what we think should happen. We say, “I hope he will choose to be honest this time,” or, “I hope the judge brings down a guilty verdict.” Here hope reveals an internal sense of morality or justice. We also use *hope* in a motivational sense. We say, “I did this in the hope that it would pay off in the end,” or, “I got married in the hope that he would treat me in marriage the way he treated me in courtship.” All of this is to say that because the word *hope* is used in a variety of ways, it is important for us to understand how this word is used in Scripture or in its gospel sense.

Biblical hope is foundationally more than a faint wish for something. Biblical hope is deeper than moral expectation, although it includes that. Biblical hope is more than a motivation for a choice or action, although it is that as well. So what is biblical hope? It is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result that changes the way you live. Let’s pull this definition apart.

First, biblical hope is confident. It is confident because it is not based on your wisdom, faithfulness, or power, but on the awesome power, love, faithfulness, grace, patience, and wisdom of God. Because God is who he is and will never, ever change, hope in him is hope well placed and secure.

Hope is also an expectation of a guaranteed result. It is being sure that God will do all that he has planned and promised to do. You see, his promises are only as good as the extent of his rule, but since he rules everything everywhere, I know that resting in the promises of his grace will never leave me empty and embarrassed. I may not understand what is happening and I may not know what is coming around the corner, but I know that God does and that he controls it all. So even when I am confused, I can have hope, because my hope does not rest on my understanding, but on God's goodness and his rule.

Finally, true hope changes the way you live. When you have hope that is guaranteed, you live with confidence and courage that you would otherwise not have. That confidence and courage cause you to make choices of faith that would seem foolish to someone who does not have your hope. If you're God's child, you never have to live hopelessly, because hope has invaded your life by grace, and his name is Jesus!

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalm 20

DAY 5

Never forget that what God required, you couldn't do. Christ did it for you. His grace is your hope.

IN SOME WAY, IT IS true of us all. We want to swindle ourselves into thinking that we are righteous enough to be accepted in the eyes of God. Maybe for you it is:

- “Look at how much I give to charity.”
- “Look at how hospitable I am.”
- “Look at the level of my theological knowledge.”
- “Look at how often I share the gospel with others.”
- “Look at what a good marriage I have.”
- “Look how successful my business is.”
- “Look at how I’ve resisted pornography or adultery.”
- “Look at the fact that I homeschool my children.”
- “Look at how I never curse or swear.”
- “Look at how many short-term mission trips I’ve been on.”
- “Look at how consistent my personal devotions are.”
- “Look at my willingness to lead a small group.”

You and I tend to want to point to anything we can to prove that we are not lawbreakers, but law keepers. Yet the whole argument of the Bible is that if we were able to keep the law with perfection and consistency, Jesus would not have had to come. The sad reality is that alone, none of us is righteous. None of us measures up. None of us has any power whatsoever

to keep the law so consistently as to achieve acceptance by a completely holy God. So it was essential that Jesus would come and live in a way that none of us could ever live, to die the death that we all deserve to die, and to rise, defeating sin and death. Hope is never to be found in your performance, no matter what actions you are able to point to. Sin is your infection, and without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is also your demise. It is inescapable and morally debilitating, and it will lead to your death.

So abandon hope in your own righteousness. Abandon the delusion that somehow you can measure up. Run to the place where hope can be found and throw yourself again today on the grace of Jesus. He did what you could never do so that you would be welcomed into the arms of a righteous God and be fully accepted even though, in reality, you are anything but righteous. How can God accept you and not compromise his own righteousness? He can do this because Christ's righteousness has been credited to your moral account. Now, that's amazing grace!

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Hebrews 2:10–18



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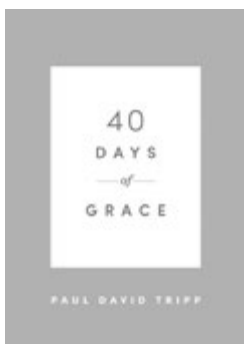
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