



Title:
What is the Gospel?

Author:
Greg Gilbert

Publisher:
Crossway (9Marks)

First Published: 2010

Pages: 128
(8 Chapters)

Available from Augustine Bookroom. (R 68.00 excluding postage, price subject to change.)

urges us to keep the cross of Christ as the very centre point of our faith and lives, encouraging us not substitute it, swap it, or reduce it to something less than what it truly is.

“Faith in Christ carries in itself a renunciation of that rival power that King Jesus conquered – sin. And where that renunciation of sin is not present, neither is genuine faith in the One who defeated it.” Pg 80

In each of the chapters, the author seeks to introduce important, key doctrines of the Christian faith, such as: God’s plan of redemption, the incarnation, the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ, justification and several others. Gary Gilbert seeks to explain these profound and deep doctrines in a manner that is easy for us to understand, appreciate and even articulate to others.

“Jesus’ incarnation was much more than just a kind visit from the Creator. It was the launching of God’s full and final counteroffensive against all the sin, death, and destruction that had entered the world when Adam fell.” Pg 89

One of my habits when buying a book is to look at the back cover and read the recommendations, to hear what men, greater than myself, think of this particular book. On the back cover of “What is the Gospel”; and the first four pages, praise is heaped on this book:

“How I wish I could place this book in the hands of every pastor and church member.” C.J. Mahaney

“This little book on the gospel is one of the clearest and most important books I’ve read in recent years.” Mark Dever

“It is not an overstatement to say that this may be the most important book you’ll read about the Christian faith.” Rick Holland

Having read these comments, my expectations for this book were high, and having read it, they were not disappointed, I wholeheartedly concur with all the above comments.

“Scripture makes it clear that the cross must remain at the centre of the gospel. We cannot move it to the side, and we cannot replace it with any other truth as the heart, center and fountainhead of the good news. To do so is to present the world with something that is not saving, and that is therefore not good news at all.” Pg 110

This book is ideal for a Bible study group to study, as well as one-on-one discipleship, of course it goes without saying that even if you read it on your own, the benefit is tremendous. The chapters are short, the language is clear, the style of writing makes for easy reading, and each chapter is thought provoking. Buy it, read it, and let it fuel your appetite to know, understand and appreciate more and more the great and glorious gospel of Jesus and the salvation we have in it.

– Reviewed by Gordon Bull

“The biblical gospel...is like fuel in the furnace of worship. The more you understand about it, believe it, and rely on it, the more you adore God both for who he is and for what he has done for us in Christ. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” Paul cried (Rom. 11:33), and it was because his heart was full of the gospel.” Pg 21

Do you desire to be able to understand the gospel better? Do you desire to be able to know how can share the gospel in a clear and concise manner? If so, then this book is for you!

“What is the Gospel?”, is a book that seeks to explain the gospel in a clear, concise and easy to understand manner. It is by no means a full, complete, exhaustive explanation, as that would be just about impossible!

I believe, however, that the intention of the book is to whet the appetite of its readers, so that they will delve deeper and deeper into the gospel. Therefore this book seeks to introduce, and briefly explain the fundamental truths of the gospel.

“nobody wants a God who declines to deal with evil. They just want a God who declines to deal with their evil. Scripture tells us, however, that because he is perfectly just and righteous, God will deal decisively with all evil.” Pg 44-45

Gary Gilbert skillfully unfolds these various truths, starting with God as the righteous creator and king, moving to our sinfulness and desperate need of salvation. He takes us on to the cross of Christ and our need to respond in repentance and faith, whilst helping us to understand what true repentance and faith is.

“A righteous and holy God can justify the ungodly because in Jesus’ death, mercy and justice were perfectly reconciled. The curse was righteously executed, and we are mercifully saved.” Pg 69

The last few, deal with the Kingdom of God, teaching us what the Kingdom of God is, its purpose, and how those who are part of it should live their lives. As we live in the Kingdom of God, the author



SOLA 5

an association of God-centred evangelicals in southern Africa

Chronicles

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

**Edward Mote 1797-1874 &
William Bradbury 1816-1868**

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOLA 5 STEERING COMMITTEE: Christo Beetge
E-mail: christo.beetge@sola5.org | Tel: +27 (0)11 867 1193 (office) | Mobile: +27 (0)82 070 1988

SOLA 5 COORDINATOR: Hein Strauss
E-mail: hein.strauss@sola5.org | Tel: +27 (0)12 542 7541 (home) | Mobile: +27 (0)83 630 0303

www.sola5.org

Editorial

In our Next Issue of the Chronicles...

- Articles on how we should live in response to the crucifixion of Christ
- Update from Sovereign Grace Theological Seminary
- Church News
- The Christian Bookshelf

(The editor wishes to apologise for not publishing, as advertised, the interview with Dr. John Piper. Due to Dr. Piper's time restraints, he was unable to take part in the interview. Thank you for your understanding.)



By the time you receive this issue of the Sola 5 Chronicles, Easter would have come and gone. Easter, for many of us, is a time of year that we look forward to, for we are reminded of the truly great salvation we have in Christ. Our minds are drawn back to what it is that Christ has done for us, becoming sin for us, so that we might now be clothed with His righteousness. Our joy is increased, as we remember His glorious and victorious resurrection, the display of His triumph and power over sin, which we as believers now share in. Easter is also a time to remind us of the great hope that every single believer in Christ has.

The trouble with hope, or at least the word hope, is that it has become so common; we hear it numerous times in the course of a day, in reference to a variety of situations, and with multiple meanings. The world has reduced hope to mere wishful thinking, aspiring after something which is ultimately out of our reach, to desire for something that we know inwardly will never actually come to pass. As Christians we have fallen prey to this reduction of hope, and have applied that understanding of hope to the way in which hope is spoken of in the Bible. In doing so we rob ourselves of the joy and confidence that is promised to those who in faith believe in Christ. Our hope of eternity in heaven no longer becomes a confident

reality, but is reduced to a place we would really like to go to, but are not quite certain if we will get there. The Biblical promise of hope in the midst of suffering, is reduced to sentimental statements such as, "Just hang in there, things will get better!"

As Christians we need to learn to stop looking to the world to define what hope is, or is not, but to rather go back to the Scriptures and learn again what true real hope is, hope as God defines, understand and gives it. Therefore, the purpose of this issue is to initiate that process, with two excellent articles on the subject of hope. It is my desire that once you have read these articles you will be inspired to study the subject of hope in the Bible to greater depth, and that through this study of hope, your hope would be increased.

May God in His grace, as we reflect back on Christ's death and resurrection, as we are reminded of the great hope we have in Him, in the midst of every situation and circumstance, cause our hearts to rise within us in praise, adoration and humble worship, singing: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift." (2 Cor 9:15)

Gordon Bull
– Editor

Germiston Baptist Report



We invite you to join us in giving glory to God for His love, faithfulness and grace toward us as a church during the past year. While, like every church, we have many challenges, difficulties, disappointments and setbacks, by God's grace, Germiston continues to be, as one of our members recently described it, an oasis in a derelict landscape.

As one travels through Germiston to get to the church, you cannot help but notice the urban decay, the signs of poverty and of a society losing self respect. However, that all just helps one to more appreciate all the more, what a precious gift the Lord has given to us of a loving, caring, united and happy local church; a church comprising a rich diversity of races, cultures, economic classes, and ages. We are asked from time to time whether we have ever considered relocating to better surroundings. The answer is that it would be impossible for us to do so, humanly speaking. Our current property is virtually unmarketable, so if the Lord wanted us to move, He would show us, by making the impossible happen. More importantly, as one member observed, who then would minister into this very needy area in which the Lord by His providence has placed us?

The Lord has continued to add to our numbers over the past year. We have been pleased to add four new members thus far with a further three applications being processed at the present time. In addition, we are expecting two or three more applications shortly. What has been particularly encouraging has been the addition of families, for which we are very grateful. The Lord has also blessed our community, with the birth of five babies in the period of just over a year.

It has been encouraging to see folk growing in grace and love for the Lord, particularly some who are being exposed to the doctrines of grace for the first time.

The pulpit ministry over the past year has been devoted to an expository/evangelistic series from the gospel of John in the mornings and an exposition of a selection of Psalms in the evenings. We recently began a systematic expository series working through Proverbs in the evening services.

As the church has grown, so has the need to get everybody "on to the same page" as it were in terms of the basics of the Christian faith. To that end, most of our folk are busy working through the discipleship program pro-

duced by Brackenhurst. This is being done in our various Bible study groups. The intention is to use it in the future as a membership initiation series.

Our Ladies Bible Study has been a blessing to the ladies over the past 11 years as well as being used by the Lord in bringing new families into the church as wives and mothers have initially joined our ladies for Bible study.

Our Ministry into the old age home has been a real blessing as the Lord has added to the ministry team. The ministry has a two pronged approach. We hold a service where the word is preached and we also do visitation. Our church pianist has joined the team, which has made all the difference to the service.

Our Hospital ministries continue albeit with smaller teams at present due to various circumstances. The "Cradle Care" ministry in which various ladies are either knitting baby clothes or providing wool and other items is a real blessing to the needy mothers in the maternity ward at the Hospital.

The Bible Sales ministry has now sold in excess of 7300 Bibles and 1400 Catechisms in both English and Zulu.

Our Book table is averaging a turnover of c. R1000-00 per month which is a good indication that our people are reading.

We give praise to the Lord that financially our income for the first nine months of this year has been according to budget. We continue to covert your prayers in this area as by and large we are not a wealthy congregation and it is only by grace that we are able to make ends meet.

All of this sounds very positive but we do covert your prayers not only in giving thanks to God with us but also in praying for a greater level of commitment on a broader basis. While some of our people are extremely committed and very faithful, others do give us cause for discouragement. In the final analysis, prayer is the only effective tool for dealing with what is essentially a problem of people's hearts.

Indeed everything that has happened and is happening at Germiston is in no way attributable to us, to our wise ways, words or abilities. It is and has all been simply a demonstration of the grace of God and the work of His Spirit. To God be all the glory ALONE!
– Peter Sammons

The Development of African Christian University



What Is ACU?

African Christian University (ACU) is a Christ-centred institution of higher education in Zambia, emphasizing the arts, humanities, sciences and agriculture integrated with a full technical labour program, all inspired from a Biblical worldview. ACU purposes to fully integrate the Gospel into presuppositional, tertiary education for equipping redeemed ambassadors for Christ in all professions across Africa.

The focus of ACU is found in its motto: "Growing in grace and knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18). The motto of ACU is founded on the goal of maturing students in knowledge across the breadth of academic disciplines, the breadth of history and the breadth of cultures affording a true "world" view. This

maturing in knowledge requires discerning truth from error. Discernment requires principles upon which truth can be defined and thereby error clarified. Only by God's grace in granting a reconciled relationship with Him through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, nurtured in the Scriptures, is His truth comprehended. Faith in His Son allots Holy Spirit enabled discernment to clearly separate the false, unprincipled teachings from truth. But knowledge of truth without application in love only develops arrogance. ACU students apply their growing knowledge through works in serving and demonstrating consideration of others, furnishing a holistic, Biblical worldview. This whole-life nurturing in knowledge and works prepares graduates for continuous growth established on the only basis for truth, God's grace and knowledge through His Son Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scrip-

ture and His creation.

Operating under a group of Reformed Baptist Churches in Zambia, ACU is committed to glorifying God, our sovereign Creator, displaying His grace through love in serving the church and larger community by equipping students to whole-heartedly serve God through developing the spiritual, physical and intellectual gifts that He has given them. We affirm that all knowledge, to the highest levels, begins with a true understanding of God in relation to mankind, and that knowledge is based on one's recreation through Jesus Christ from serving oneself in pride to serving God in humility, resulting in loving your fellow man in word and deed. Fruitful knowledge requires discerning truth from error, freeing one to push the highest boundaries of investigating and discovering the knowledge of God

Editorial team for this issue:

Editor: Gordon Bull
Subs: Peter Sammons
Hein Strauss
(+27 83 630 0303)

Lay-out artist: Esté Visser
(+27 83 231 6912)
Distribution: Bernard Kuyper
(+27 11 679 5617)

The Development of African Christian University

>> continued from page 03

raised will be used to embark on the initiation phase of construction at the proposed campus site, and for expenses related to the advancement of the project as we move forward. This first step will then enable application for additional grants that will allow the construction project to be fully engaged.

If you desire to disciple students in serving Christ through the practice of a craft, trade, technical vocation,

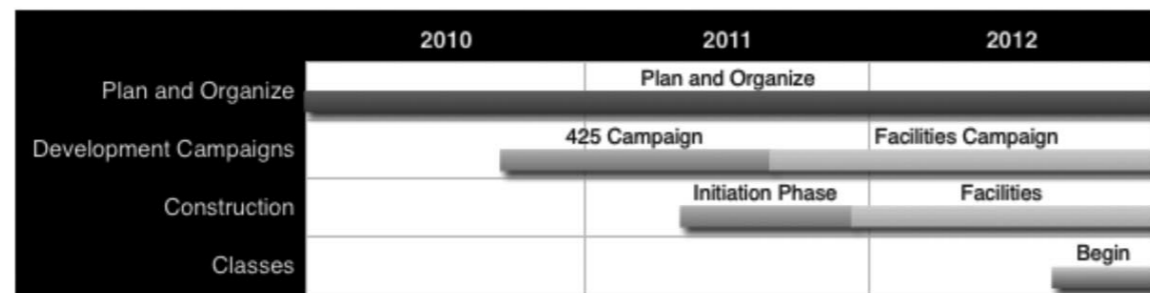
or in starting a business that would help in student training and in ACU's sustainability, won't you consider assisting ACU? If you are qualified to teach at the tertiary level in any area of the humanities, the arts, sciences or agriculture, won't you seek God to see if He might desire to use you to mentor students in Bible-founded discernment in your discipline of expertise. Let's work together to see God glorified across the African continent as Christ's ambassadors

penetrate every realm of corruption and stronghold that this world's principalities fortify, for the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Visit www.acu-zambia.com for more information on ACU or www.acu-zambia.com/contact to find out about assisting God's work with ACU.

– **Ken Turnbull, Ph.D., Rev. Executive Director**
ACU Lusaka, Zambia

Timeline



Milestone Table

Date	Milestone
2008 December	ACU unites in vision with an association of Reformed Baptist Churches of Zambia (RBCZ) for Christ-centered, tertiary education
2009 May	ACU-Zambia Board of Directors formed
2009 October	ACU-USA Board of Directors formed
2009 November	Johan Pretorius completes the concept drawing of the ACU campus
2010 February	501(c)3 charity status granted in USA to ACU-USA
2010 March	ACU incorporated in Zambia as Company Limited by Guarantee
2010 March	Lusaka Baptist Church agrees to lease ACU land North of Lusaka
2010 September	425 Campaign launched in USA
2010 November	Pastor Conrad Mbewe initiates ACU promotion in USA Midwest tour
2011 February	Pastor Conrad Mbewe initiates ACU promotion in Zambian church tour
2011 March	Ken Turnbull and family move back to Africa to initiate ACU development

Antipas Pretoria

>> continued from page 03

Malawi, were with us. Hendri & Wimpie Marais gave us feedback on Mia Marais's work in Germany. Denis and Rietie Woest, who worked in the Langkloof also attended this weekend, and we were encouraged by the progress of the gospel amongst the local people. Tobie Meyer and Johan Verster, two young pastors from Ligpunt, challenged us to be missional in Pretoria.

We also thank the Lord for the opportunity that Jacobus has to lecture at the Lynnwoodrif Bible College. During this year, he will also be involved in the ABK seminary in Kempton Park, doing a Bible overview.

During the past year, several members passed away, however, we can testify to the fact that God was glorified in their deaths!

We are thankful that the Lord also added about 15 new members in the last few months.

One of our members was recently brutally attacked and shot in his house. He survived with no bitterness, and is now filled with more zeal to bring the gospel to people in prison! What a witness to the changing power of the gospel!

Please continue to pray for Antipas to be a faithfully witness (Acts 2:13) in Pretoria. Pray also for Nico and Soniah van der Walt, who have moved to Mosselbay, pray especially for the full recovery of Nico.

– **Jacobus de Koning**

The Development of African Christian University

>> continued from page 02

and His creation. Fruitful deeds require disciplined labour integrated with intelligent application of resources to address fundamental needs and challenges of neighbour, community and nation.

How ACU Approaches Tertiary Education
ACU has a four-stage approach to proclaim the Gospel, disciple students and produce ambassadors for Christ to work and serve in Africa to the Father's glory.

(1) In a preparatory year, entering students, both church and unchurch, interact with the full narrative of God's plan for man's redemption in Christ from all of Scripture. The Gospel message is reinforced through preparatory work in reading, writing and arithmetic to assure student preparation for the rigors of tertiary-level coursework. Discipleship begins through a student labour program where existing worldviews are routinely confronted through practical application of God's Word to daily living in relationships, hardships and successes, thoroughly exposing students to a Biblical worldview.

(2) Through courses taught in a mentor-cohort setting, maturing in the understanding and handling of the Word of righteousness is nurtured through Bible study and theological preparation. In light of Hebrews 5:12-14, Biblical discernment is constantly practiced through the study and critique of classical through contemporary literature across all disciplines and cultures to sharpen the student's discernment of good and evil. This is practiced while applying a constant academic rigor to develop skills in the classical trivium of grammar, logic and rhetoric.

(3) A student labour program incorporating all aspects of industrial arts, trades, crafts, businesses, technology and agriculture not only develops a self-sufficient, financially viable institute while training students in multiple life-skills, but more importantly, is the vehicle through which discipleship and mentoring can most effectively occur. It is here that renewal of the mind and moral transformation to Biblical standards is practiced. The academic mentors and student labour disciplers demonstrate, living out faith, in practical application to one's whole life through God-glorifying academic rigor and intelligent labour.

(4) All aspects of education focus on benevolent application to address existing challenges in Africa. From service programs to student-team thesis projects, every student

applies their talents and learning to group projects that facilitate the demonstration of Christ's love in concern for the needs of others - eternal, firstly, and temporal, correspondingly. Such projects afford opportunity for an honour's degree awarded to student-team benevolence projects considered worthy to actually be seeded through incorporation of necessary outside support structures allowing students to initiate new approaches to meeting existing challenges in the African context.

The entire purpose of ACU is to secure the Gospel as the foundation of every aspect of student learning and development. It is by this avenue that ACU and the Reformed Baptist Church of Zambia seek recreation in Christ of African lives to God's glory.

Progress with ACU

ACU is transitioning from the initial planning and vision phase, has embarked on its first capital campaign, and is now moving into the development phase. ACU will proceed as God enables according to a rough timeline (see at end of article on page 10).



After nearly two years of prayer, planning and preparation, God opened doors in December, 2008 to bring together Conrad Mbewe and Ronald Kalifungwa, Pastors of Kabwata Baptist Church and Lusaka Baptist Church in Zambia, with Dr. Kenneth Turnbull, a tenured Professor of Organic Chemistry from the University of Arkansas (USA) (photo above) and church planting missionary in Mozambique. This first meeting was to discuss the possibility of ACU. Since that initial vision-sharing meeting, God has directed His purpose and several important milestones for ACU are listed in a table (see at end of the article on page 10).

The Call to Faith

This project has been clearly demonstrated to be God's work from the first seeds of its vision. For Dr. Turnbull, the immensity of the vision resulted in his seeking to pass it off for others to carry forward for many months before God gave the gift of faith to stand not on his own abilities, but on God's

divine power and grace. Between the first meeting to discuss ACU in Dec, 2008 and the formation of the ACU-Zambia Board of Directors in May, 2009, God allotted His precious gift of faith. The Turnbull's were at the door of death with their 12 year old son, Ian, to cerebral malaria in Mozambique in Jan, 2009. After an emergency medivac flight to South Africa and a night of intense prayer, even accepting the coming loss of their son, a prayer request electronically circled the globe. The following morning God responded to the prayers offered in Christ's name, He brought life back to Ian's comatose body, eventually leading to his complete healing who doctors assured would at best have the promise of life as severely mentally disabled. This experience of God's divine intervention of grace made clear that while ACU seems impossible in the human frame, God's pleasure is in superseding our natural limits. He is a God who can bring life to the dead. What is building a university to the life-giving God of grace and compassion?

The Call to Assist ACU

It is now time for those of the Sola 5 to respond to the call for God-glorifying, Christ-centred, presuppositional, tertiary education that exalts the pre-eminence of Christ in every truth taught. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform lives through rebirth in Christ and to sanctify them to God's glory in all aspects of serving Christ in this life. ACU seeks an environment to facilitate this work of God, that His kingdom will come and His will be done. We seek the body of Christ to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Won't you partner with us in prayer, in giving and/or in serving? If you are already faithfully giving to your local church, seek God in prayer about supporting ACU out of the abundance that He has provided you. The Reformed Baptist Churches of Zambia initiated the goal of establishing an indigenous, Christ-centred university. We believe that God is calling the extended church to assist in the development phase to work alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. The goal of the 425 campaign is to have 400 partners donate \$25 per month (400 @ \$25/mo = 425 campaign) toward the initial development of ACU in Zambia. In the USA, we presently have over 75 individuals contributing to the 425 campaign. The money

continued on page 10 >>

The Heart of True Hope: Romans 5: 1-5



When that great Christian and scientist, Sir Michael Faraday, was dying, some journalists questioned him as to his speculations for a life after death. "Speculations!" said he, "I know nothing about speculations. I'm resting on certainties. 'I know that my redeemer liveth,' and because He lives, I shall live also." – Gospel Trumpet¹

The subject of hope is a pressing subject for Christians to grasp. Of all people living in a fallen and sinful world, Christians should know and understand what true hope is.

Our hope is not based on experience, health, financial stability or any worldly condition. As Jesus Himself explained, the hope that is found in the world can be likened to building your house on a foundation of sand. When the wind and the waves and storms of life rain down, it collapses. The hope found in this world in the final analysis is nothing more than hopeful speculation, much like a spider spinning its spider web over an unused fireplace. It is just a question of time before all security will be utterly shattered.

As Christians, can we begin to truly quantify the value of having an eternal and untouchable hope? A hope that, as the hymn writer puts it, 'is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.'ⁱⁱ This entire world will perish, but if we have our foundation on Christ the solid rock, 'all other ground is sinking sand.' The Christian's hope is based firmly on unchangeable and eternal realities.

Our treasure, to put it in the words of Jesus, is kept in heaven for us where no moth, rust or thief can destroy. As a child of God, our treasure, is kept in heaven for us by the very power of God. The apostle Paul gives the Roman believers three glorious reasons for the hope a Christian can know in Romans 5:1-5:

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and 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.

He begins with the word 'therefore', a word which connects what he is about to say with what he has already said to them. Therefore being justified – not by works (4:1-8), not by religious rites (4:9-12), not by law obedience (4:13-25), but by faith - we have peace. The first three never give peace to the soul, but faith alone does. This brings us to the first basis, or reason, for real hope:

1. A right-standing with God

In these five verses of chapter five, Paul makes a series of doctrinal statements, or definitive statements of fact. Paul talks about the justified sinner's right-standing before God as being the foundation and basis of real hope. For the Christian, having trusted in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour, the Bible tells us that at that moment we were justified, we were declared righteous; we now have peace with God.

Because of that great eternal reality, God's wrath no longer threatens us (1:18). We are legally accepted by God in Christ. This has nothing to do with our feelings, but it has everything to do with a change in our relationship to God. All the verbs that follow are in the indicative mood, which translate as factual, descriptive statements rather than encouragements to do something.

There is a distinct difference between *having peace with God* and *having the peace of God in our heart*. The first has to do with justification; the second has to do with sanctification. The first is the result of a legal standing before God while the second has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

Because of this glorious eternal reality, Paul makes this definite statement: "Therefore since we have peace with God..." When our Lord Jesus suffered and died on our behalf, he made peace with God possible through the blood of the cross (Col 1:20). In Hebrews we are told that this God is the "God of peace who brought back from the dead the Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant..." (Heb 13: 20)

The word *peace* here speaks literally 'to bind together that which has been separated'. Through the atoning blood of Jesus, He binds us together with God. Those who, by

reason of their standing, in the first Adam had been separated from God; alienated by their sin, now through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are bound again to God in their new standing in the last Adam.

Paul says true Christian hope is grounded in the justifying work of Christ who gives us peace with God. The word 'with' that Paul uses here literally means 'facing'. A justified sinner has peace "facing" God. When an unsaved sinner dies, what terror he faces when he stands before the living God! In contrast, the Christian has peace facing God.

The justified sinner stands in the presence of God as surely now as he will in eternity in the presence of a thrice holy God. He or she is guiltless and uncondemned, righteous with Christ's righteousness which has been received by faith, thereby accepted by God. Charles Wesley wrote these words with the reality of this hope in his heart:

*Depth of mercy!
Can there be, Mercy still reserved me?
Can my God His wrath forebear, me the chief
of sinners spare?
I have long withstood His Grace, long provoked
Him to His face
Would not hearken to His calls, Grieved Him
by a thousand falls
There for me my Saviour stands; shows His
wounds and spreads His hands
God is love, I know, I feel;
Jesus lives, and loves me still*

Not only is the Christian's true hope based on the fundamentally glorious eternal reality of a right standing with God by faith in the finished work of Christ, but a second basis for true hope is:

2. The Joyous Reality of the Glory of God

The Westminster shorter Catechism sates: The Chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." We cannot glorify God, nor will we ever enjoy Him forever, without the grace of God. Since we have been accepted by God because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and we have peace with Him, we can now face this glorious Holy God. We have access into this grace in which we stand.

Waust's word study describes grace as "a haven or harbour, and the word is used of the landing-stages or approach of a ship to the harbour. It is so used in secular documents.ⁱⁱⁱ The souls of Christless men and women are being swept away by the strong deluge of



Doug van Meter at the Reformed Baptist Church in Harare.

Baby Sarah Kanyama

meet on the first Saturday every month. The DVD series "The Christian and Suffering" was chosen. God in His sovereignty had arranged the choice of this particular series knowing what we would need by way of encouragement this year, as many of us have faced real challenges and difficulties. We thank the Lord for sustaining us and keeping our perspective focused on Him and His truth, even in the face of severe financial pressure, joblessness, business pressures, illness, the list is endless.

A number of babies were born to families in the Church this year! It is always a joy when the Lord blesses us with children and we welcomed Christopher Watt, Emily Vasquez and Sarah Kanyama into the Church family.

We were sad to say goodbye to some families this year. Stuart and Samantha Watt have moved to Hillcrest and while we miss them, we are pleased that they have found a spiritual home at Hillcrest Baptist Church and have settled into their new home and community. The Vasquez Family will be moving to Amanzimtoti in November and will be sorely missed. We will continue to pray for them!

The mid-week Bible study and prayer meeting that was started last year has been a source of great encouragement and help to those who attended. This meeting is

oversen by Pastor Patrick Paine and has been the source of healthy debate and inter-action. The Letters of Peter have been the focus of study.

Some of the members enrolled for Bible School this year. The classes were held on a Sunday afternoon and while some of us found it challenging to keep up, it has proved to be time well spent. Studying God's Word is so exciting and it is a thrilling to see how all of the Scripture points to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Sunday remains the highlight of the week. We look forward to gathering for worship with our spiritual family and relish hearing what the Lord has to say to us from His Word.

It is truly wonderful to be part of a Church where there is concern, love, support and unity. It is a privilege to witness the miracle that God is working in individual lives and to see changes that come as a result of obedience to His Word. We are grateful to the Lord for His continued working in our lives and we trust Him for the future plans that He has for us as we minister to one another and reach out with the Good News to those who are lost.

– Diane Watt

Antipas Pretoria



We are very thankful to the Lord for a wonderful spirit of love and unity at Antipas. For most of the year, we focused on the topic of change through the gospel with regard to sinful behavior and negative emotions. This topic was then further explored and discussed in our various small groups. In the evening services, we did a Biblical Theological overview of the Bible, during which we were reminded of the

importance of the one true Story of the world and finding our place in it.

The Lord laid the burden on many of our hearts to become more mission orientated. To this end, we recently had a weekend with the focus especially on the church as being sent into the world to be an agent of the Kingdom, like Jesus was sent into the world (John 20:21). During this event Neville and Betsie Nel, our missionaries to

continued on page 10 >>

Free Grace Baptist Church



It seems such an age since I wrote an "update" for our Church and I realize how much happened last year. Who would have believed what 2010 would bring!

The year started with a bang, everybody's favourite event, the Family Camp! The site chosen by the Camp Committee was Stoneyridge in the Magaliesberg. Many of us had fond memories of this camp-site, and what a surprise awaited those of us who had not visited it since our youth. The "old" had been revamped and modernized and a wonderful weekend was had by all. Pastor Tim Cantrell was the speaker and we were challenged by God's Word anew. Camp weekend has always been a time of forging closer bonds, encouraging good fellowship and stimulating good discussion among members.

In March, Deborah, our pastor's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery. What a shock! We knew there was going to be a long, tough and challenging road ahead with more major surgery after chemotherapy. During the following months of chemo, nausea, tiredness and sometimes anxiety, we as a congregation have witnessed God at work in many people's lives in different ways as well as affecting us corporately. We stand in awe of the way the Lord has enabled our pastoral family to handle this trial in such an exemplary manner. The Lord has used this trial for our good and has given us the privilege to serve practically in many ways. Good works abound in times of difficulty! The ladies of the church were always willing to help with meals and many offers were made to help in any other way that they could. Many of the ladies felt the need to get together and pray and so a Thursday morning prayer meeting was started.

We have borne witness to many miracles that the Lord has brought about through His people, not least of these was the provision of the funds needed for the major surgery which took place in October. The morning Jeff and Deb were due to meet the medical team to discuss the surgery, the people of Audubon Drive Bible Church in Mississippi offered to pay the portion of expenses not covered by the medical aid. Not a moment too early, not a moment too late! What confidence we can have in our Father who hears our prayers and meets all our needs. The best news of all was when we heard the results of all the tests after the surgery, Deborah is cancer free! Hallelujah!

There was cause for more celebration this year. 2010 marked the 10th Anniversary of the Gage family's ministry at Free Grace. Invitations were sent out and on the 10th of April we gathered at a venue just outside Heidelberg for a wonderful evening of good food, fun, fellowship and praise to the Lord for His blessing over the years. Many testified through joyful tears as to how the Lord had used Pastor Jeff's teaching of God's Word to change their lives forever. We realized afresh just how privileged we are to have the Gage family in South Africa, never mind here in Boksburg!



2010 marked the 10th Anniversary of the Gage family's ministry at Free Grace. From left: Caleb, Rebecca, Deborah, Jeff, Joseph and Rachel Gage.

Our ties with the Reformed Baptist Church in Harare are as strong as ever. Jeff and Doug van Meter visited the Church at the beginning of last year and Errol Wagner accompanied Jeff on a second trip, mid-year. We are happy to share our pastor with our brothers and sisters across the border as we know that the training that they receive is of great benefit to them as they lead and teach the people.

The annual Sola 5 conference was hosted by the Zimbabwe Church this year and those of us who could not attend the conference were kept up to date with events via Pastor Conrad on Facebook. As we read of power failures and cold water showers, we realized how much we take for granted and how much we complain. We continue to support the ministry there by our prayers, financially and in practical ways as needs arise. We have been praying for Theo Soko who still needs further surgery. We will continue to do so and trust that the Lord will restore him to full health and strength soon. It has been a joy to be part of this Church's ministry even though it has not been in the flesh. It is God's will that we be involved in as many ways as we are able. The Zimbabweans have endured many dark days and much hardship, but have remained faithful to Him. We are grateful to the Lord for the part we have played in keeping them encouraged.

The youth work in the Church has been blessed by the Lord and two new meetings have been added to the week's activities, one for primary school children and one for the young adults! Both meetings are focusing on fellowship, evangelism and discipling.

Some of the youth attended the Power camp in August and came home truly encouraged and blessed.

Many of the members have been involved in various ministries during the week such as hospital visitation, visiting the bereaved, ill and aged. Discipling one on one has also been taking place and this has been a most exciting development.

The Men's and Women's fellowships have continued to

wickedness over the edge of the abyss into eternal damnation, but souls in Christ have a safe harbour, an eternal refuge prepared for them in and through Christ. The French have an interesting word which speaks of being ushered into the presence of a king; the word is 'entrée'. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus does for those who believe in Him. He cleanses them in His own precious blood, clothes them with His righteousness and brings them into the full favour of God the Father. This is 'entrée', a genuine, eternal and unshakable hope.

But for how long? Well, let the word 'access' help us here in verse 2. The word is in the perfect tense. We could translate it like this, 'through whom we have been placed and that permanently in the Lord we stand.' What is the result of such profound eternal realities? We keep on enjoying peace with God and keep exulting in the glory of God. Our hope is not as the world understands hope, i.e. 'we hope so'. We hope because we know so through the witness of God's eternal Word. This leads us to a third powerful basis for the Christian's true hope:

3. The overflowing love of God evident in our trials (3-5)

As though having peace with God which allows us entrance into the glory of God were not enough (and these are abundantly more gloriously hopeful and joyful an eternal blessing and reward than any of us deserve), Paul adds to this: "and more than that we rejoice in our suffering." Before our salvation in Christ we were living for ourselves. Now that we have been set free from the bondage of sin, we have discovered that we were created for the glory of God, and all the terrible trials we face in this fallen world here and now are in fact making us more fit to truly enter into that glory with God.

When we see that clearly with new eyes, we can truly boast, or glory in the midst of these trials. Trials could mean afflictions or tribulations; it literally means a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction or distress. Trials are those things which sinful man is confronted with throughout his life whilst living in a broken and dying world. When our eyes and our heart are set on the

hope of God's glory, the natural outflow of our hearts will be to exult or boast not in ourselves, but boast in God who, in His unsearchable and unchangeable love, is working all things together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose (Rom 8: 28).

To boast or exult in God here does not merely mean to boast in the midst of our trials, but to boast in God because we are going through trials which are the very means that He uses to perfect us. We are told in James 1:2 "to count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." How can he say that? How can trials and tribulations become the ground for glorying, boasting, or exulting? Let me say that this requires supernatural grace supplied by the Holy Spirit.

We can understand Paul's point like this; he didn't exult or boast because of trials themselves, but because of their beneficial effect on the Christian life. James bears witness to the same truth in Jas 1:3-4: "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

The first two aspects of hope that Paul has given to us in verses 1-2 are all about what God has done for us, but now Paul shows us how God gives us true hope by what He does in us. He works hope in us by refining us, by freeing us from the calcifying effects of our flesh. God is working in us that which is pleasing in His sight through the trials he allows us to endure, which testifies to His hope within us.

Trials and tribulations are God's handmaidens that work patience, endurance, and steadfastness in us. In light of the hope of the glory of God, God's grace produces character in the child of God, who through trials and suffering, is learning increasingly to lift his or her eyes away from self to God.

The thought behind 'patience' or steadfastness here, is to remain under trials and tribulations in a God-honouring way, so as to learn the lessons they are sent to teach, rather than to try and get out from under

them in an attempt to be relieved of their pressure. This is as David learned in Psalm 51:6, 'having God teach me truth in the inward man.'

The evidence that God is at work within us through our trials, i.e. that these trials are stripping and burning away the dross thus causing the Gospel treasure to shine through, is the abiding reality of the love of God filling our hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Like the piercing light of the morning sun driving back the darkness, the love of God through the Holy Spirit floods the Christian's trial-filled life more and more as He proves to us that we are His children and that we are precious to Him. To close with, the words of John Newton aptly sum up the hope found in Romans 5: 1- 5

I seem to groan under darkness, coldness, and confusion, as much as ever. And I believe I must go out of the world with the same language upon my lips which I used when I first ventured to a throne of grace, - Have mercy upon me, O Lord, a poor worthless sinner.

My feelings are faint; my services feeble & defiled; my defects, mistakes, and omissions innumerable; my imaginations are wild as the clouds in a storm; yea too often foul as a common sewer. What can I set against this mournful confession? Only this, - That Christ hath died and risen again... Upon his person, worth, and promise, rests all my hope; but this is a foundation able to bear the greatest weight.^{iv}

*Oh, wondrous love! To bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners, such as I,
Might plead the gracious Name^v*

John writes in 1 John: 1Jn 3:1-3 "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

- Mark Powell

ⁱ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979

ⁱⁱ Edward Mote: *My Hope is build on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness; Grace Hymnals-776; Grace Publication Trust, Grosvenor Ave, London, UK*

ⁱⁱⁱ Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. Ro 5:2

^{iv} *The Works of John Newton (1820; repr, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), vol.6, p.286*

^v *Ibid., vol. 3*

Hope in: Psalms 42 / 43



'Hope' is a word with which we are familiar and one we often use. The dictionary defines it as a positive attitude or disposition towards the future and can include wishes, dreams or even fantasies, whether well grounded or not. Basically it is an expression of desire, or a wish, but it usually has an uncertain sound about it and is mixed with a measure of doubt. So we say, 'I hope I will make it'; 'I hope it will rain'; 'I hope they will get married'; 'I hope to get that promotion'; 'I hope we will be able to go on that holiday'; and of course, we know that many people in South Africa, who fill in those lotto cards, are doing so in the 'hope' of winning the big prize.

So the way in which the word 'hope' is used in casual conversation is really an expression of uncertainty and often it is no more than wishful thinking. This is proved by the fact that when we are certain about something, we do not use the word hope at all, we say, 'I know that I am going to get that job'; or 'I know the sun will rise tomorrow', we don't say, 'I hope the sun will rise tomorrow'.

Now the word hope is an important word in the Bible, in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the word translated 'hope' in the English versions, is the translation of 3 different Hebrew words, and in the New Testament, it is the translation of one Greek word. However, what is significant is that the word 'hope' in the Bible is in most cases an expression of absolute certainty. Biblical hope is not a wish or a dream but a confident expectation because hope is placed in God, is grounded on his faithfulness and his certain promises.

In the Old Testament it is specifically in the Psalms that we can learn some important lessons that will help us to understand the Biblical meaning of hope. We will look specifically at some of these lessons that we can learn from Psalms 42 and 43, which for our purposes are considered to originally have been one Psalm.

Psalm 42 and 43 begin the second book or division of the Psalms. The Psalms divide into five divisions, which some scholars believe corresponds with the five books of the Pentateuch. The first book of Psalms

is foundational and shows the emptiness of ungodliness as contrasted with the fruitfulness of a godly life. Book two of the Psalms, which includes Psalms 42 and 43, corresponds with the book of Exodus. Therefore it deals with redemption and centres on God's help and his rescue of his people in trouble and it is in the context of trouble and hardship believers are encouraged to look to God for deliverance, which brings us to the theme of hope.

Lessons we can learn concerning Biblical Hope in Psalms 42 and 43.

1. Biblical Hope takes seriously the reality of hardship, suffering, pain, grief, disappointment and depression in this life.

Many of the Psalms were written in the context of suffering, grief and disappointment. It is obvious that the author of these two Psalms was disturbed. For whatever reason, whether it was David when he had to escape from Absalom his son who was attempting to usurp his throne, or an Israelite in exile in Babylon, the author was prevented from joining others in temple worship in Jerusalem. As a result he felt cut off from the presence of God. We know that at that time in redemptive history God chose to reveal himself in the temple; it was there that His people could enjoy His fellowship. It was God's fellowship that the psalmist longed for with an intensity that was analogous to a deer going about in a desperate search for water in a dry and barren land. He knew that God was the only source of life for his soul. But he felt cut off from God. His circumstances caused him to repeatedly cry out "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?" [42 verse 5].

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones believes that these circumstances plunged the psalmist into a state of spiritual depression. This may be so because what the psalmist describes is very similar to the experience of those who have suffered from depression. He tells us he was so distraught that he could not eat; all he could do was to weep. Furthermore his condition was exacerbated by the taunts of men who kept on asking him, 'Where is your God?' 'Why does he not answer your prayers?' All of this contrasted with better days when he was free to go to the temple and enjoyed the presence of God. Those memories only served to mock him. As a result he felt overwhelmed by these circumstances. He even felt physically weak;

he was sad and downcast.

What the author of these psalms experienced is clearly evidenced in many of the other psalms and also in the lives of God's people in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is not unusual for the people of God to experience suffering, hardship, grief, pain, sickness, disappointment and even failure; in fact, it is what we should expect. Paul could confidently write, that as believers we can rejoice in our suffering, and that as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ we share in his suffering but he considered "...that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" [Romans 8 verse 18]. James could encourage believers to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" [James 1 verse 2]. Peter could also similarly speak of believers rejoicing even though we may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. This means that Biblical hope is not incompatible with suffering. Biblical hope does not protect us from the problems of life, we are broken people living in a broken world, which leads us to consider the second point.

2. Biblical Hope gives no guarantees that our difficult circumstances will cease, improve or change.

How does the author of this Psalm deal with the problem he has described? He not only reflects upon his suffering, he talks to himself. He asks himself questions; "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?" [Psalm 42 verse 5]. He not only asks himself why he is downcast, but he also answers his own question. He must not give in to his mood, he must trust or hope in God. He must take himself in hand as it were. Although he is downcast, he still hopes for better days based on his past experience of God. If he experienced God's presence in the past, he will again experience God's presence; God does not change, even though his circumstances have changed. That gives him hope.

He also talks to God, he prays. His condition is still the same, but he lays his problem before God. He has more faith than he feels. It is faith that turns to God even when the soul feels cut off from God. We, however, observe that the psalmist vacillates; feeling strong one moment and then feeling overwhelmed again. He finds it hard to keep his mind from the problem. It keeps intruding

and he finds himself back in his previous state, consumed by his problem. But he continues to pray to God to vindicate him. He affirms his trust in God. He prays for deliverance. He anticipates the joy of again experiencing the presence of God and his delight in praising God.

So the author of these Psalms continues to hope. Do things improve? Does his situation change? No, for when we reach the final verse in Psalm 43, we see that he again asks himself the same question he has asked twice before, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God" [Psalm 43:5]. Implicit in Biblical hope is the truth that things may not change. Hope is not the promise that our present suffering will cease, that our wishes will be granted, that we will be healed, that our pain will be alleviated, that our dreams will be fulfilled, that our failures turned to success or our depression will be lifted. That is the point Paul makes when he states, "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" [Romans 8 verses 24-25]. At the present time creation is subjected to frustration, in bondage to decay, to the point that creation itself groans and we ourselves groan as we wait in hope [Romans 8 verse 18-23].

This is a dominant way in the way in which the word 'hope' is used in the Bible. Those who hope do not have their hope set on present deliverance. That is why hope in the Bible, although a confident trust, is prepared to wait. Those who trust and hope are prepared to wait because it is in waiting that the believer learns to trust God and his or her hope increases. Our faith is not in deliverance; our faith is in the faithfulness of God, in his covenant promises. The believer knows too that suffering has a purpose, it is not meaningless, that is why Paul can say that as believers we can, "...rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" [Romans 5 verses 3-5].

That means that our suffering instead of weakening our hope, in fact, it is the ground in which our hope grows; it strengthens our hope. Douglas Moo in his commentary on Romans describes hope in this way: Hope, like a muscle, will not be strong if it

goes unused. It is in suffering that we must exercise with deliberation and fortitude our hope, and the constant re-affirmation of hope in the midst of apparently hopeless circumstances will bring ever deeper conviction of the reality and certainty of for which we hope [II Corinthians 4:18-19]. That is why, as Edward Welch asserts, "Hope is the constant companion of perseverance".

3. Biblical Hope looks past the present suffering and hardship and waits with confidence for a glorious future in the presence of God.

Notice how the author of these two Psalms expresses his hope, "Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." Three times he expresses his confidence in God. Yet, as we have seen, when the author wrote this Psalm he was still cut off from the presence of God, his situation was unchanged, and yet, he was confident in God's deliverance, "I will yet...". He looks forward to future deliverance. Of course, it is quite true that even in the midst of his suffering he actually did know the Lord's presence. But whether his prayer was answered and he was able to "...go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight, [43 verse 4] we do not know. One thing we do know, the author of these Psalms knew with confidence that he would have the desires of his heart fulfilled, whether in this life or in eternity.

This is the very essence of the believer's hope, complete deliverance is certain. And that is why believers have always taken a long view. This has enabled them to look past the present suffering and hardship, waiting for a glorious future, something far better than we can ever imagine. Laurence Richards commenting on the different words used for 'hope' in the Bible, points out that, "each looks ahead eagerly with confident expectation and calls for patience, reminding us that the fulfilment of hope lies in the future". Hope focuses our attention on the grand climax of our faith when all uncertainties and difficulties of this life give way to the glory of being with God and sharing in his glory. It was this hope that enabled the believers in the Old Testament to persevere in spite of suffering and to consider themselves strangers and aliens in this world. This was the very essence of their faith in God. What is faith? "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" [He-

brews 11 verse 1].

Of course the Psalmist and the believers in the Old Testament did not yet know that God would do something that would guarantee our hope; he would send his Son as the ground, the guarantor of our hope. His death and resurrection stand as the great event upon which our hope is founded and that guarantees our hope. That is why Paul could confidently write "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" [Romans 5 verses 3-8]. In fact, as Paul explains in his letter to the Colossians that Christ 'in us' is our hope for the distant future but also our strength for now [Colossians 1 verse 27].

With such a hope we "... do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" [II Corinthians 4 verses 16f]. That is the long view.

*Turn your eyes
upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful
face
And the things of the
earth
will strangely dim
In the light of his glory
and grace.*

This is the only realistic view of our lives, a view that is based on a biblical understanding of hope.

George Herbert sums it up well: "*He that lives in hope dances without music*"
- Dr. Errol Wagner