

## Reasons for hope in the world today

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- We live in a sinful world
  - That's not me being overly judgmental, that is just me making an observation
- The sad thing is many people don't realize their sad condition or they simply don't care
- Think of Sodom and Gomorrah
  - When Abraham and Lot separated in Genesis 13, Abraham (Abram) gave Lot his choice – left or right – the land to the east within the Jordan Valley toward Zoar or Canaan
  - Genesis 13: 10 – *“And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.”*
  - Skipping down to vs 13 – *“Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.”*
  - But God still let the land flourish at this time – the land was so good that Lot decided to settle there when he could have settled in Canaan
  - Such is the case for many people in the world today – though they be against God, God still seems to allow them to flourish
  - We all have friends that are in the world (unfortunately – we should try to convert of course) that materialistically and morale wise, may be doing better than us
  - But if they remain down that road, it will lead to destruction (Matthew 7:13)
  - There's no indication the people of Sodom had any idea of the impending destruction
  - In fact, Lot's sons-in-law thought he was jesting when he warned them of it
  - But eventually, it happened – God rained sulfur and fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24)
  - And what once was good land was smoking like a furnace (Genesis 19:28)
- 1 John 2:15-17 – *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”*
- Romans 12:2 – *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*
- We as Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world
- If we're doing our jobs correctly as a Christian, the world will think it strange that we do not join them in the flood of dissipation that they are in (1 Peter 4:4)
- Christians should be walking the straight and narrow, not the wide and easy (Matthew 7:12-14)
  - The straight and narrow is certainly more challenging to walk because we see so many people of the world walking the wide and easy
  - But if you're ever tempted to follow the ways of the world, remember that the wide and easy leads to destruction – it may seem popular here on earth, but those who walk this road will regret it when they leave this world

- The straight and narrow is not popular but it leads to life – though it may get difficult at times, you will not regret staying on this path when your time in this world is up
- The truth is that Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33)
  - And we can too if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21)
- As a result, we have hope in Christ (Romans 8:12-25)
  - Hope that we can overcome the world just as He did
  - Hope that we can have eternal life with Him (Colossians 1:4-5, 1 Peter 1:3)
- According to my Bible dictionary, hope is defined as “*confident expectancy*”
  - Abraham hoped for the promises that God made to him (Romans 4:18)
    - He did not ignore the words of God hoping that he would magically receive the promises without obedience
    - No, he trusted that God would provide as He promised and was obedient to God as a result
    - So much so that he left his home for a trip in which he didn’t even know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8)
- Not only can we have hope, but we can be thankful (Colossians 3:15)
  - Thankful that Christ bore our burden of sin, so that we don’t have to (Isaiah 53:4-5)
- Let’s discuss some reasons why we can have hope while in the world today and therefore, we can be thankful
- Reason 1: God loves you (Romans 8:35-39)
  - There is nothing that is going to separate us from God’s love
    - The devil tried persecuting the church of Smyrna in an attempt to take souls from God (Revelation 2:8-11)
    - But even the persecution that they withstood could not separate the ones who were faithful from the love of God (Revelation 2:10)
    - Those who were faithful – perhaps some of them to the point of death – they received a crown of life and are reaping the rewards for enduring through whatever hardships they were put through
    - I assure you that the faithful do not regret their decision to be faithful
    - I assure you the perpetrators regret their actions now
  - The only thing that could separate us is if we choose to walk away as the prodigal did in Luke 15
    - And if you choose to walk away, you have nothing but despair to look forward to just as the prodigal did in Luke 15
    - But know that if you have walked away from God, He is waiting for you to come back as the father was in Luke 15
    - Do not think that you can’t come back
    - The only reason that the world is still in existence is because God is waiting on as many people as possible to come to a knowledge of the truth and repent of their ways (2 Peter 3:9)
    - God is patient with us, but He will not wait forever (2 Peter 3:10)

- The truth is that God loved us so much that He sent His only Son Jesus to die in our stead (John 3:16)
- Notice also that His love is unconditional (Psalm 109:26)
  - Even when we fail, God’s love remains for us
  - And that is a reason for hope and for us to be thankful while in this world today
- Reason 2: Jesus died for you (**Romans 5:6-11**)
  - We need a savior (Romans 3:23)
  - And Christ is our savior (Romans 3:24)
  - 1 Peter 2:24 – *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”*
  - Hebrews 7:23-28 – *“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.”*
    - Christ died once – for all sin
    - Including yours and mine
    - And this is another excellent reason as to why we can hope and be thankful while in today’s world
- Reason 3: God is faithful (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)
  - The world often times lets us down, but God never will
  - The prodigal in Luke 15 found this out the hard way (Luke 15:11-32)
    - When he ventured into the far country, he found himself feeding pigs (vs 15)
    - He became in need (vs 14), so much so that he longed for a portion of the pigs food (vs 16)
    - But the world did not help him (vs 16) – gave him nothing
    - It wasn’t until this prodigal came to himself (he realized why the pigs were there, but couldn’t figure out why he was there) and realized that he needed to go back to his father, and the execution of that plan, that he received the help that he needed (vs 17-24)
    - And his father was not only waiting for him, but was looking for him to come back (vs 20)
  - God is faithful even when we are not
  - God’s love for us does not stop when we become rebellious
  - The promises that God has made to us can be taken to the bank
    - When He said that the faithful will receive a crown of life, He meant it (Revelation 2:10)



- God even went so far as to give an entire history of the Greek empire as it pertained to the Jewish people (at the time this was a prophecy, but is a history now)
  - He tells of Alexander the Great (Daniel 8:5-8)
  - How his kingdom was split 4 ways after his untimely death (Daniel 8:8, 11:3-4)
  - He prophesied of all the issues that the Jews would have with Antiochus Epiphanes (Daniel 8:9-12, 11:31-32)
  - Discusses events in detail of the struggles between the Seleucid Greeks (Northern kingdom in Daniel 11) and the Ptolemaic Greeks (Southern kingdom in Daniel 11)
  - Judea was right in the middle of all this and they were greatly impacted
  - Read Daniel 11 and compare that with the history of the Greek empire and you will be absolutely amazed
  - There are some people who say that this is so accurate that there is no way Daniel could have written it before the Greeks fell from power – but we know he did, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- All of this, and there are people who think God was nowhere to be found during the intertestamental period – this thinking could not be further from the truth
- How do I know?
  - Because Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 does not stop with the Greeks – God mentions yet another kingdom to rise to power (Rome – which they did) and then yet another kingdom
  - This kingdom would arise during the reign of Rome and it will never be destroyed
  - Daniel 2:44 – *“In the time of those kings (Rome), the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”*
  - You see, the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans have come and gone – but the 5<sup>th</sup> kingdom mentioned in Daniel 2 – this kingdom is still going strong – you and I are a part of this today – the church that Christ established
  - Matthew 16:18 – *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*
- God was very much in control during the intertestamental period as He still is today

- God is in control of government (Romans 13:1)
  - I'll be honest – I wonder why God lets some of the administrations be in power that are in power
  - But who was in power during the time that Paul wrote Romans 13 through inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Nero
  - There may not be a man more twisted or evil in the history of the world than Nero was (perhaps you can argue Caligula as well for this, or others that you may be able to think of)
    - But the point is that for any historian that you ask “Who is the most evil person in the history of the world?” – Nero would be near the top of everyone’s list
  - Nevertheless, God allowed Him to be in power and reign over the most powerful nation in the world at that time (Rome). Why?
    - Romans 9:20 – “*But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?,,,*”
    - I don’t know, but I know God’s in control
- God even controls the weather (Mark 4:39-41)
  - Remember, Jesus’ disciples became scared while in the middle of a storm
  - They wake Jesus up and He says “Peace be still” and the sea became completely calm
  - His disciples were terrified that even the wind and the waves obey Jesus
- God is in control of everything
- And this is another reason as to why we can have hope and be thankful while in the world today
- Reason 5: there is no true tragedy that can happen to a Christian (**Hebrews 13:6**)
  - What can man really do to us? Even if they persecute us, we have something better than this world waiting for us
  - Paul warns Timothy of a man named Alexander the metalworker in 2 Timothy 4:14-15
    - Exactly what he did to Paul, we do not know, but we know he did Paul a great deal of harm (2 Timothy 4:14)
    - So much so that he felt the need to warn Timothy of him (vs 15)
  - But whatever was done to Paul in this instance, it did not stop him from writing the following
    - 2 Timothy 4:7-8 – “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*”
  - Luke 12:4-5 – “*I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.*”
  - We don’t face physical persecution today, and I hope we never do
  - But if that day comes, I pray that you and I will be able to withstand it

- Because man can do nothing to us eternally
  - As for Alexander the metalworker – God repaid him for his actions against Paul and whoever else he may have persecuted (2 Timothy 4:15)
- We need to realize that God is the one who can punish eternally – and that is truly something to fear if you are not ready to meet God
- However, if you are ready to meet God – we can have hope and be thankful for the fact that man can do nothing to us eternally
- Reason 6: God has given us His grace (**Acts 20:32**)
  - 3 times Paul pleaded with God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:8)
  - God’s response: *“My grace is sufficient for you...”*
  - And it is sufficient for us too
  - And this is something else that provides hope while we are in the world today and we can be thankful for that
- Reason 7: there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**)
  - If you’re in Christ Jesus, you can have hope and be thankful while in the world, because you know that whatever may be in your future – eternal condemnation is not a part of that
  - But this promise is only to those who are in Christ Jesus
  - How does one get in Christ Jesus?
    - Galatians 3:27 – *“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*
  - So you think, well let me get baptized
  - Before you do so, you must take a few other steps according to the Bible
  - You see, if you get baptized and don’t know why or you were baptized for the wrong reason, you just got wet (1 Peter 3:21)
  - The plan of salvation is as follows
    - Hear the word (Romans 10:14) and that word is this: that we are all doomed if we try to make it to heaven on our own. We need a savior and Jesus is that savior. He lived a perfect life, died, and arose so that we may have a chance at eternal life if we are obedient and faithful
    - Believe what you’ve just heard (John 3:16)
    - Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9)
    - Repent of our former sins (Luke 13:3)
    - Be baptized into Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38)
    - We must live faithfully after baptism (Revelation 2:10)
      - It is possible to leave God after you’ve been baptized
      - But in this we are told the following
        - 2 Peter 2:20 – *“If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.”*