

Living in Trusting Hope

Matthew 24:21-22

Our God is a God of hope.

Living in hope is Christ's plan for our lives today. But when we dig into the prophetic portions of God's Word the future looks very bleak and hopeless.

So to balance what is coming--that Jesus so vividly describes, Paul exhorts the New Testament saints to learn to live in the hope that the Old Testament Scriptures can teach.

Paul never avoided explaining the prophetic events that were coming. He even teaches through the same passage we are studying (Matthew 24) in his very first epistles (to the Thessalonians). But he always balances those prophecies of doom with comfort and hope to live by. Turn with me to Romans 15:4, and please stand as we read God's Holy Word to us this Lord's Day.

Romans 15:4, 13 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures **might have hope**. 13 Now may **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that **you may abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray

Might have hope, the God of hope, and you may abound in hope! What a grand way to live!

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament [the "things were written before were written for our learning" in Romans 15:4] is a rich storehouse of words which define hope.

There are four Hebrew words that give us valuable insights into the many ways God can make us live in hope. Let's examine these words and see how words written thousands of years ago leap right into the twenty-first century and our lives.

- **There is waiting or recharging hope.**

Hope that waits until renewal comes.

Just like a charger for your phone, a cradle for your PDA—we plug into God's truth, believe His Word waiting upon the Lord. Then He renews and recharges and refills

us with His strength. Have you plugged into God's Word and been still before Him this week on a regular basis and gotten your strength renewed?

- **There is trusting or enduring hope.**

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Are you unsure where you are today as far as God's plan for your life? Do you ever wonder where God is headed with what He has planned for your future? Do you struggle with His timing and some times feel trapped? Then it is time to let His Word show you what to do while you wait just like Job, Noah, David, and Ezra learned. Have you found the rewards that come as you endure in faith, waiting in hope? This is like getting all packed and sitting on the bench for your flight. You know that when it is time you will go.

- **There is clinging or holding on hope.**

Hope that reaches out and asks for the Hand of God to hold onto.

Hope that clings to the Hand of God as a child holds the hand of their mom in the doctor's office or their dad in the dark woods at night. Clinging hope that says you are All Powerful, you can carry me through. Have you reached up and taken that Hand that stretches down to you from the heart of God this week? Or are you stumbling through life in the dark, filled with anxiety and pain?

- **There is sheltering or running hope.**

Hope that flees from danger into the loving arms of God.

Hope that runs for the storm shelter when the disasters of life approach. Have you settled in your heart that there is no place safer than in the arms of Jesus? And do you know that He who began the work of salvation also completes it? And have you experienced the One who prays for you on the mountain while you are out in the storm tossed boat—and then comes to get in your boat at just the exact moment that is best, to calm the storm?

Now with all that wondrously promised hope, join me again as Jesus describes the most hopeless moment in our planets future; the moment when life is heading toward a complete extinction. This moment is somewhere near the end of the Tribulation. That where Jesus takes us in *Matthew 24:21-22*.

*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. **22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.***

Now turn to the parallel, expanded, and even more chilling version that Christ's disciple John records for us Revelation chapter six.

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." (Revelation 6:8)

The approach of the Pale Rider may be on the horizon according to the special report delivered at the United Nations March 30th of this year.

Two-thirds of world's resources 'used up'¹

The sound of the pale horse's hoofbeats are getting louder. The human race is living beyond its means. A report backed by 1,360 scientists from 95 countries - some of them world leaders in their fields, concludes that the human race has used up two-thirds of the world's resources, most of it in just the last sixty years.

Robert Watson, the British-born chief scientist at the World Bank and a former scientific adviser to the White House, claims that mankind is using up all of our natural resources. He produced a six-point indictment against the human race, and declares that it will lead to the extinction of all life on earth.

1. *LAND OVER-CONSUMPTION: Because of human demand for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel, more land has been claimed for agriculture in the last 60 years than in the 18th and 19th centuries combined. An estimated 24% of the Earth's land surface is now cultivated.*
2. *WATER OVER-CONSUMPTION: Water withdrawals from lakes and rivers has doubled in the last 40 years. Humans now use between 40% and 50% of all available freshwater running off the land.*
3. *OCEAN OVER-CONSUMPTION: Since 1980, about 35% of mangroves have been lost, 20% of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed and another 20% badly degraded.*
4. *FOREST OVER-CONSUMPTION: Deforestation and other changes could increase the risks of malaria and cholera, and open the way for new and so far unknown disease to emerge.*
5. *RIVER OVER-CONSUMPTION: Flow from rivers has been reduced dramatically. For parts of the year, the Yellow River in China, the Nile in Africa and the Colorado in North America dry up before they reach the ocean.*
6. *FISH OVER-CONSUMPTION: At least a quarter of all fish stocks are overharvested. In some areas, the catch is now less than a hundredth of that before industrial fishing. An estimated 90% of the total weight of the ocean's large predators - tuna, swordfish and sharks - has disappeared in recent years.*

The study contains what its authors call "a stark warning" for the entire world. The wetlands, forests, savannahs, estuaries, coastal fisheries and other habitats that recycle

¹ Tim Radford, science editor, The Guardian, Wednesday March 30, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,5158523-103681,00.html>

air, water and nutrients for all living creatures are being irretrievably damaged. In effect, one species is now a hazard to the other 10 million or so on the planet, and to itself.

The study concludes by saying that we have plundered the oceans bounty, we have destroyed the seabed's riches, we are running out of sources for food, we are running out of fresh water, and because of all this misuse of nature we are plunging towards the threat of killer plagues and epidemics.

Most sobering of all is the timing of all of this over consumption. This study concludes all this damage took place -- not gradually over six thousand years of human existence -- but within a single generation! That conclusion reminds me of what Jesus said about the end of days for the planet earth.

"So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that *this generation shall not pass*, till all these things be done." (Mark 13:29-30)

"Consider the facts carefully. If the science is correct, then the irreversible process of planetary doom has begun. Undoubtedly, the science will be disputed by other scientists endlessly, but there is a discernible escalation of distress with each new environmental study... this is exactly how Jesus described the situation as it would exist just before His return; A pervasive and growing sense of impending doom -- "upon the earth distress of nations. . . Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:" is how He described it.

Bible prophecy has, to the extent it can be proved, been accurate 100% of the time so far -- and there is therefore no logical reason to assume that God has suddenly lost His place and the plan -- as outlined -- won't continue to be fulfilled with equal precision. Like science, Bible prophecy also foretells the impending ecological judgment of the planet, saying that it will come upon a single generation, somewhere in time.

Logic demands an explanation, and coincidence won't do. The only other explanation is that it is true. That time is running out. That the Lord is about to return, exactly as the Bible says He will.

It is time to choose Whom you will serve. There isn't time to put it off. There really isn't. It doesn't matter how good you are -- or how bad you are -- the same Jesus that knows the future of nations paid the price of your redemption. He has secured a pardon with your name on it, and eliminated any barrier between you and eternal life with Him, if you will but claim it.

He is willing to accept you the way you are -- all you need do is ask Him to forgive you of your sins and to change you according to His will. Trust Him. "For by grace are ye

*saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" (Ephesians 2:8)
It's just that simple. He is coming!"²*

Living in hope is Christ's plan for your life today. And that is His plan no matter what life may bring today or tomorrow. His hope detaches us from the gloom that can come in life. As you turn with me to Matthew 24, listen to what God offers each of us in Christ this morning. The Scriptures offer us four varieties of hope. Do you have them this morning?

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament is a rich storehouse of words which define hope. There are four Hebrew words that give us valuable insights into the many way God can make us live in hope. Let's examine these words and see how words written thousands of years ago leap right into the twenty-first century and our lives.

Lamentations 3:21-25 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" 25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.

The first Hebrew word that God gives us is describing **WAITING HOPE**—the word is **QAVAH (6960): HOPE THAT RENEWS US WHEN OUR STRENGTH IS EXHAUSTED**. And that is exactly the word that God gives us in Lamentations 3:25

The Lord is good **to those who wait** for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.

To better grasp this word, turn with me to the most well known verse in the Bible using this special word which is Isaiah 40:31.

- **There is waiting or recharging hope.** *Hope that waits until renewal comes.* Just like a charger for your phone, a cradle for your PDA—we plug into God's truth, believe His Word waiting upon the Lord. Then He renews and recharges and refills us with His strength. Have you plugged into God's Word and been still before Him this week on a regular basis and gotten your strength renewed?

Just as a weak thread combined with many other weak threads makes a strong rope—so when we are weak, and yet wait for the truth of God's Word to slowly weave strength into our lives, we are strong in the Lord. My many weaknesses woven together through the fabric of life with His promises, makes me strong. That is the marvelous promise Isaiah offers us. Listen to him illustrate this waiting hope.

Isaiah 40:29-31 He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who **wait** on the Lord shall renew their

² Excerpted from the Omega Letter Daily Intelligence Digest, Volume 42, Issue 31 Special Report: "Behold a Pale Horse" In Defense of the Faith Sunday, April 03, 2005, **Jack Kinsella** - Omega Letter Editor

strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Are you allowing God to weave His Word into your weaknesses so that waiting hope will make you strong? I hope so this week and in the weeks ahead. That is why He even allows all these problems, struggles, trials, and unexpected reversals into our lives. To twist and stretch us into waiting hope!

The second Hebrew word that God gives us is describing **TRUSTING HOPE**--the word is **YACHAL (3176): HOPE THAT PRODUCES IN US THE ENDURANCE TO GO ON.**

This is trusting or enduring hope.

Hope that trusts until understanding comes.

This is waiting when you can't see what is ahead. **Hope that makes you wait for God when you can't see where you are going!**

Are you unsure where you are today as far as God's plan for your life? Do you ever wonder where God is headed with what He has planned for your future? Do you struggle with His timing and some times feel trapped? Then it is time to let His Word show you what to do while you wait just like Job, Noah, David, and Ezra learned. Have you found the rewards that come as you endure in faith, waiting in hope? This is like getting all packed and sitting on the bench for your flight. You know that when it is time you will go.

Sandstorm in Morocco.

In 1979 I was serving on a team in northern Africa delivering Bibles in Moslem countries. I was one of two designated drivers. Only two of us on the team had international drivers licenses. That meant I drove several thousand kilometers in a very short period of time over some of the worst roads in the world that are found in Africa. One night while everyone was asleep in the cargo van loaded with Bibles I was driving all night to our next stop. A sand storm blew up. I saw less and less of the road. Praying, wondering, and finally stopping when I just couldn't tell where to go.

I just sat there and fell asleep at the wheel and waited for morning. The first thing that greeted me as it began to dawn into the new day was the beautiful ocean spread out in front of me. I had gone straight when the road curved in the dark, and was just meters from the water's edge.

It is wise in life to wait when you do not know where you are headed and

So how can we apply this second type of hope that the Lord offers us—to our everyday lives? I think it would be most helpful to turn to the most well known verse in the Bible using this special word. That verse is in Job 13:15.

Job 13:15 Though He slay **me, yet will I trust** Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.

The root idea of this word *yachal* is to wait for something. Old Testament Hebrew scholars say that it means 'an expectant waiting under extreme pressure'. The scholar R. B. Girdlestone says, "*Yachal* occurs several times in the Book of Job and signifies a long patient waiting."³

When you study this word all the way through Job you can get the true picture of trusting hope.

As you look at these words--Job was going through problems in the extreme.

He lost all of his wealth, all of his children, all of his health, and most of his marriage—and all of that came at warp speed, totally unexpectedly. He was agonizing in pain, and writhing in emotional duress. But through it all he trusts God.

Job 13:15 Though He slay **me, yet will I trust** Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.

This is trusting hope. This is hope that produces in us great endurance. Job's trusting hope anchored his soul and spirit through life's most severe storms.

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service **I will wait**, Till my change comes.

This word is even captured by Noah's trusting hope, locked up in an ark that had no way out except when ever God decided to open the door. Remember that God shut them in. Listen to Noah in Genesis 8:12

So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.

For a moment think about trusting hope in Noah's life. If you follow the manner of God's dealing with Noah—the full strength of his faith can be seen.

- God invited Noah into the ark (Genesis 7:1).
- God closed the door Himself. It doesn't seem that there was any other way to get out of the ark other than jumping ship. They were closed in unless they jumped 45 feet. (Genesis 7:16)
- Noah waited with no messages from God for 314 days, that is 45 weeks of silence (Genesis 7:11; 8:13)
- God opened the door when it was His time (Genesis 8:15).

³ Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 104.

The only way to survive inside the ark was by trusting faith. God planned the ark. God invited them in and shut the door. God was with them inside the ark. God sent the storm. And stayed with them inside the ark and all the way through the storm. Then when God knew it was time—God let them out of the ark. But they had two choices—stay with God’s plan or abandon ship.

Now fast forward to your own life. If you are saved, God designed your boat (that is your way that you travel through life). He invites you into His plan, when you respond He shuts you in until the ride is over. He sends severe storms, stays with us through the storm, and calms the storms, and when it is His perfect time—opens the door and lets us out.

We can either stay with the plan or jump ship. The only way to last inside the boat of life is to live in trusting hope. What an example Noah can be to us who are going through storms, trials, adversities, disasters, upheavals, and struggles in life.

Now turn to David in Psalm 31. As no stranger to heart aches, pains, problems, and fears—David explains what anchored his soul was his similar trusting hope⁴.

Psalm 31:24 Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, **All you who hope** in the Lord.

Psalm 33:18, 22 Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear **Him, On those who hope** in His mercy, 22 Let Your mercy, O Lord, **be upon us, Just as we hope** in You.

Psalm 38:15 For in You, O Lord, **I hope**; You will hear, O Lord my God.

Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted **within me? Hope** in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance. 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted **within me? Hope** in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted **within me? Hope** in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 71:14 **But I will hope** continually, And will praise You yet more and more.

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⁴ Yachal is translated often in the LXX by the Greek word elpidzo and elpis. Like in Psalm 119:43, 74, 81, 114, 147.

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