

544 *Is There Any Hope for Me?*  
*Phil Sanders*  
*God's Answers to Life's Questions*

Hope is to the soul what breath is to the body. You simply can't live without hope. Many years ago, while knocking doors seeking people to study the Bible with me, I met a woman who believed that God would not hear any of her prayers. "They don't go above the ceiling," she said. "God just doesn't care about me and isn't interested in me. Do you think there is any hope for me?" I told her there was hope for her then, and I'm saying to you there is hope for you. You can find God and go to heaven! That is the greatest news you or I will ever hear. There is hope!

G. K. Chesterton said, "There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow." We all live in hope. Life here on this earth may be good, but it is never perfect. We all wish for something better, something purer, something kinder, something stronger, and something more lasting. Man is desperate for many reasons. We live in an imperfect world and know that one day we will die. We live in an imperfect world filled with sin, disease, ignorance, poverty, and prejudice. How we all long for peace and love and security! We hope life will be better than what we now know.

Job asked the question, "If a man dies, will he live *again*?" (Job 14:14). Is there anything beyond this life? Is heaven real? Is there any hope that life beyond this life will be any better than what we have already known? The answer is yes, a thousand times yes! God's plan for us all is to bless us richly. Jesus died on the cross so that you could go to heaven! He lived His life on this earth so that you might know how to live the very best kind of life, free from the destructive things that arise from sin. Everything about Jesus Christ breathes hope and life and good and love. The joy of Christianity is found in the hope it brings.

The problem in many people's minds is not whether God is willing to be gracious to them but whether they can live the life of a Christian. More than a few times in my life, I have run across people who believed they could never live the Christian life. They believed that they had done so many wrong things that there was no hope of change. Indeed some churches teach the falsehood that God arbitrarily selects those He wants to save and rejects all others. They teach that no one can change his eternal destiny; only God can do that. If that is the case, why did Jesus come to this earth preaching repentance? Why did He preach to all?

Jesus Himself said in John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." This passage has a "whoever" in it. Whoever believes can have eternal life. Jesus came to save not to judge. The reason Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all people is because God wants all people to be saved. And they can be saved if they are willing to come to him and obey the gospel! There is hope for every person, everyone!

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 2:9, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." Jesus died for every single individual, every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl. The idea that he died for some but not for others denies what the Scriptures say and mocks what Jesus did. The apostle John in his first letter, chapter two, verses one and two, agrees with the Hebrew writer. He states in very clear terms that Jesus died for every person in the world.

John said, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*." The word "propitiation" refers to Jesus as our "atoning sacrifice." His death on the cross atoned for our sins. God punished Jesus for your sins. He took the punishment that was due to you and me for the evil things we have done. Pardon is not something we had to force from an unwilling God. God in his grace and love gives us freedom from sin through Jesus' blood.

Jesus' death came at a very high price for the Father and for Jesus himself. One can only imagine the pain in the heart of the Father to watch his Son Jesus die cruelly upon the cross. The Father observed every evil thing done to His Son. He was there when Jesus was beaten and mocked. He heard the slander and the way they laughed at innocent Jesus. He heard the crowds shout "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" He was there when Jesus was scourged. He saw the wagging heads and the nails pierce his hands and feet. He watched as they suspended Jesus between heaven and earth on the cross. He watched as they gambled over his clothes.

God heard Jesus' cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" The Father turned away from His Son and put the punishment upon this perfect sacrifice. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus died so that you could become righteous. He was innocent, and we are sinners. But God put your sins and mine on that righteous One, so that we might leave our guilt and become righteous. I can only say that such love is far beyond what any of us deserve. God has given us a great gift—the most precious gift—His Son.

The gift Jesus gave was a very personal one. He gave his brow to a crown of thorns, his back to the scarring whip, his hands and feet to the nails, and his side to a spear. He gave up his life at the young age of 33, so that you could live forever. Jesus was nailed to a cross to die. He would not be taken down alive. His last words were, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46). God would never have sacrificed His Son Jesus if there were no hope for you. He sacrificed his Son Jesus to give the greatest hope you could imagine, a hope for life, for righteousness, for forgiveness, and for heaven itself with eternal life.

At this point someone says, "Phil, you don't understand. I have been a very wicked person. I have done terrible things and do not deserve to go to heaven." Sin is a terrible thing, and none of us deserves to go to heaven for our own goodness. But I would say to you, no matter what you have done, no matter how you have lived, and no matter how you feel about yourself, that God loves you and sent His Son to die for your sins too. There is hope for every soul that will believe in the Lord Jesus and come to Him penitently and obediently. The blood of Jesus is greater than all our sin. You can go to heaven, whoever you are.

Paul writes to the church at Corinth a message we all need to hear. This was a young church, when he wrote them. Many of them came from a very sinful past. He wrote them, however, with hope. The sins they committed were terrible, but the grace of God gave them hope. He said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you"

If this passage had stopped here, there would be little hope to tell you about. But the passage does not stop here. Even though some of these people had committed terrible sins, there is hope for them. At this point it says, "but," which means there is more truth to be told. "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." God washed them, sanctified them (made them holy), and justified them (declared them righteous or judged them as innocent). He did this in the name of Jesus Christ, because of the power of the blood of Jesus to change lives and destinies.

If the Father could embrace the penitent prodigal son, if the God of heaven could hear wicked King Manasseh's prayer, if God could forgive penitent David's murder and adultery, if God could save the chief of sinners Saul of Tarsus, God can forgive and save you. You are not worse than they were. Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Make no mistake, the Father and Jesus knew how sinful this world was and is. They are not naïve. While God hates sin, God loves you. While God hates evil, God loves the people He created enough to send Jesus to die for those sins.

Paul said in Romans 5:6-8, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Father and the Lord Jesus wanted to demonstrate their love to us. Forgiveness is not just talk to them. They acted in love to forgive those who are helpless, ungodly and sinners. They wanted you to know their hearts. They love you even when you have not loved them. Jesus paid a price for his enemies.

That ought to wake us up. God wants to help all of us go to heaven. He has paid the price for our sins by crucifying His Son. He has given us the Bible to tell us the story. Jesus has built His church and given its members the responsibility of telling the gospel story again and again to every person. But God will not twist our arms, making us respond to Him. He will open the door but not force us to go through. We must decide to respond to His love by loving Him, by trusting in Him, by repenting of our sins, and by taking up our crosses to follow Jesus each day. God has made His commitment to you. Will you make a commitment to Him?

Put the Lord first in your life. If you want hope of heaven, don't keep the Lord at arm's length. Many people get ashamed of themselves and rather than draw near to God in penitence and obedience act like Adam and Eve and hide themselves from God. Then they wonder why God seems so far away. God has taken the first step in offering His Son on your behalf. He is holding out His hand for you to take it and come to Him in obedience to the gospel. Don't turn the Lord away. He is your hope. He is your salvation. He is your life. That's why getting close to Him is so very, very important.

Getting close to God begins with faith. You can never please God and not believe in Him. Trust Him enough to be willing to do

everything He asks of you in the word. Trust Him enough to let go of your sins—give them up completely and begin living life as Christ would have you live. You can't hang on to the world and please the Lord. The message of Jesus to a lost and dying world is trust in Him and repent of your sins. But you cannot access the blood of Christ that cleanses you until you are united with Him in baptism. Ananias told Saul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16).

And that's the same message I give to you. If you wish newness of life, be baptized into Christ. Paul said in Romans 6:3-4, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." If you want the newness of life, trust the Lord, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Jesus invites us to come to Him and promises us an easy yoke and a light burden. Christianity is not an impossible faith. One can live the Christian life, and in fact many people do it everyday! You can go to heaven. You can be the Christian you want to be. You can live victoriously, faithfully, lovingly, and positively serving God and loving every minute of it!

Don't let Satan discourage you by thinking, "I can't live the Christian life." Satan is not interested in your going to heaven. He wants you depressed and defeated before you begin your Christian life. Of course, you can live it! Don't let the world tell you it's impossible. Of course, it's possible! You can be God's child with God's help. You can go to God's heaven for an eternity! You can find all the joy of living close to God, find all the hope of heaven, find all the love of God in Christ Jesus, if you will draw near to Him and obey Him as His child. That's what you were created to be: a child of God who loves God! Don't sell yourself short. You can go to heaven!

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