

Pennsylvania Bible Teaching Fellowship
Spring Newsletter



This quarterly newsletter is written to enhearten, encourage and inspire so that the Word of God may continue to grow and increase both in quantity and quality in the hearts of God's beloved.

*...receive with meekness the implanted Word,
which is able to save [deliver] your souls.*

James 1:21b WT



**SPRING
2020**



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

By Shawn Weir

The book of Lamentations is well named. It contains a series of bleak poems written in an acrostic structure mourning the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of God's people into exile. There is good evidence that the book was penned by Jeremiah and though the exact authorship is a little uncertain, the content is very certain. Lamentations is filled with extreme expressions of loss, grief, and shame. No relief could be found from the trying circumstances. The nation had entirely collapsed. There was no more Judean government, economy, society, or temple. What was left were only the smoldering ruins of Jerusalem and days ahead of servitude and subjugation under the Babylonian Empire.

Yet, in the almost exact middle of this scroll of lament sits a diamond of hope:

This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"
Lamentations 3:21 – 24 NKJV



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

In beautiful defiance to the dire situation the prophet decided to recall something greater. This recollection didn't plunge the heart down into further sorrows. No, it lifted the soul with anticipation of greater things to come. God had not abandoned or forgotten His people. His mercies and compassions for them had not ended. His faithfulness is great. Amid unthinkable calamity, he could still pen: "Therefore I have hope."

Ever since the disobedience of Adam, this world has not been ideal. God knows this. God knows man. God knows what the hearts of men need. Even in those tragic hours after the first sin of the first man in the garden, God gave something to cling to despite present circumstances: hope. (**Genesis 3:15**)

The writer of Lamentations knew that the coming years for Israel would be long and difficult. They would be filled with more suffering and losses, but God would still be their God. He did not forsake His people and He did not leave His people without hope. They had the assurance that a Savior was coming. Abraham saw his coming day and rejoiced. A greater prophet than Moses would be born and be a faithful servant in all of God's house. He would be a high priest from a greater line than Aaron. One day a good shepherd would lead God's flock like David did and he would also be a King through his line. Despite all the present hardships (and many more that would come), God's people could remember this promised Messiah and therefore have hope.



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

God's faithfulness is great. Just as was foretold, Jesus Christ came to fulfill every prophecy. He accomplished every requirement for the salvation of men, and he paid for it all with the sacrifice of his own life. His dead body was laid in a tomb, but on the third day, God raised him from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord secures an eternal victory for God's people, but the necessity of hope is greater than being aware of "how the story ends." We are in vital need of it to endure right here and right now.

Our Lord was very honest with his disciples in his final hours. There would be great trials for those who follow after him in this world, but he also gave an assurance of hope.

John 16:33 ESV I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Jesus Christ has overcome the world.

This hope is our answer to the challenges of present sufferings. Even in the midst of the wind and the waves, the Christian always has that light on the horizon. Like the writer of Lamentations, we also can be assured, whatever I am going through right now, I won't be going through it forever. In the world we have tribulation, but we can take heart. Our current state will not be our eternal state. Why can I be sure? Jesus Christ has overcome the world. This assurance then helps us to have the right perspective on present hardships and struggles.



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

Roman 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

There are two truths built into this verse that we must grasp. Firstly, that there are sufferings of this present time. Becoming a Christian does not mean that all of life's problems will instantly go away or that a life of true believing will stave off all suffering. Some matters may indeed become more difficult. This is where that second truth comes in. We have the promise that the world that we long for, will be so infinitely better than all the sufferings of this present time. God (Who is very good at providing comparisons) assures us it is unworthy of comparison. The soul of the writer of Lamentations said, "The LORD is my portion." We hope *in* God and we hope *for* God, because it is in His presence that we will find fulness of joy and at His right hand, pleasures forevermore. (**Psalm 16:11**)

I believe this is crucial to hold onto these days. At the time of this writing, our world is in the midst of a difficult time. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused strain and trial on our families, communities, and nations in a way that many of us have never seen before in our lifetime. The impacts of this crisis have already been substantial, and the full effects of it all are yet to be seen. In this time of uncertainty my heart takes courage with the same certainty that held the center of Lamentations.

God has given us hope.



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

The writer of Lamentations was in the midst of difficult times with no indicators that anything was going to get better in the near future. As we've seen, part of trusting in our hope is the acknowledgment that we *need* hope because some things are just wrong in the present and they may not immediately go away. Hope assumes tribulation now, pressures now, and things that cause sorrow now. Sometimes they last a long time. Sometimes they last a lifetime. Sometimes there are losses. This is why we need hope to endure. It is the assurance that eternity will look far different from the present. What a blessed thought that there's nothing that you're dealing with now that will follow you into eternity. How we can boast in the hope of the glory of God even if in the middle of great tribulation! To know in our heart of hearts that all the blood that has been shed, all the tears that have been shed, all the pain, all the death, all the injustice, and all of the distress in this day... will be no more in that day.

Roman 5:1 - 5a KJV

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The word for "rejoice" here in the KJV may better be translated as boast, exult, or glory. There's something to do in the face of difficulties:

Boast in your hope!



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

There's no pain, no grief, no sickness, no affliction, nor pressure that won't be perfectly resolved by the shout of the archangel and the trumpet sounding. In the blink of an eye, we will be changed and from that time forward we will be with our Lord forever. **(1st Corinthians 15:52; 1st Thessalonians 4:17)** Therefore, come what may, we boast in the face of our afflictions in the hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory(boast) in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience [endurance];

4 And patience [endurance], experience [proven integrity]; and experience [proven integrity], hope:

5a And hope maketh not ashamed...

Present tribulations can also be appreciated in light of what they can work to build within us. There's a reason why we can "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations", the trying of our faith produces profitable things within. **(James 1:2-3)** Without facing a conflict, a soldier can never become battle-hardened. There is a training that comes by drills in camp, but the true testing is out on the field. So also, for the Christian heart, steadfastness in trials builds constancy in our faith.

So, when the pressures come (and we are promised they will), take a stand on God's unfailing Word. Persevere by truth when everything around you is falling apart. As you do, endurance and integrity are building within.



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

Proving God's Word in these temporary matters builds a greater trust for eternal matters. In the day to day, you're tasting, seeing, and proving for yourself the same cry of praise found in Lamentations in your trials: "Great is Thy faithfulness!" The previously unbearable heat of the present circumstances suddenly seems quite cool in light of eternity. As you recall these unchanging truths your heart can also say, "therefore, I have hope."

Hope gives us a broader perspective and understanding than we would have if only focused on the here and now. It helps us to widen our focus from the moment to moment of our lives and see in light of eternal days. It spurs us to zoom out of our individual and personal groanings and realize that all of creation is groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. (**Romans 8:19**)

The hope also helps us to reframe trials, pains, and sufferings as opportunities to prove the genuine quality of our faith. The epistle of **1st Peter** handles how the Christian can handle suffering well, but it starts by setting proper framework for viewing all trials in this life with the hope of one day seeing the appearing of Jesus Christ.

1st Peter 1:3 – 8

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7a That the trial of your faith...

Please note, this trial comes by the heaviness and assorted temptations of life and the outcome is the proving of your faith.

7b ...being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Is that worth it to you? It is worth more than all the perishing gold of this world! Gold ore is refined and purified by fire. The flame burns off the dross and worthless things. Again, we are promised that heat will come to us in this life. However, how precious this all becomes with the promise that your faith right here and right now, despite the heaviness and many temptations of present circumstances, is something that will be worthy of praise, honor, and glory when your Lord appears? Then, the next verse is so magnificent, though we don't have the full payoff yet, two things can fill our hearts by hope now:

love and joy



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory

We don't see him now, but we sure love him now and we will see him when he appears. I promise you – you won't miss that day! But on this day, as we believe, as we hope, we rejoice with joy beyond our ability to express, filled with the glories of God. Through this lens is the proper way to view present sufferings and hardships.

The raging storms of our times should cause us to lay hold on the solid rock of Christ and realize just how firm a foundation it is.

A great help to me during these strange days when so much has changed on Earth is to remember that nothing in heaven has changed. God is still on the throne. The angels are still praising Him day and night for His holiness as they always have. Why we are here, and why we are *still* here has not changed.

We are heavenly people now, and our seating is up there together with Christ. (**1st Corinthians 15:48, Ephesians 2:6**) We don't want to waste this life. With our affections set on things above we stay mindful of our true purpose and cause for the limited time, we are on this Earth. This life is not a dress rehearsal.



THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE

All good works built upon on the foundation of Christ are worthy of everlasting praise, honor, and glory. God has seen to it in Christ that nothing of true value will be lost in eternity. So, what significance do I place on temporary things that will burn away? This life is short, eternity is long, and only what's done for Christ will last.

The very concept of eternity is something that our present minds struggle to grasp. We currently live in a world of finite time. The clock is always ticking. The second hand is always moving. The sand in the hourglass keeps falling. The sun sets, the moments pass us by, another day ends. Yet, eternity has no end... Perhaps the wonder of this was best expressed by John Newton:

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.*

May our hearts during these trying days recall what was found in the center of the mourning in Lamentations. No matter what our present circumstances may be or what may be yet to come with the uncertain days that lie ahead, these can be the truths we recall to our minds. Then whatever our situation, our hearts may also say,

“Therefore I have hope...”



ZOOM FELLOWSHIP SCHEDULE

<u>Day</u>	<u>Fellowship</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>Meeting ID</u>
Monday	<u>Daily Encouragement</u>	7:30PM	583-079-193
Tuesday	<u>Study Night</u>	7:30PM	180-268-392
Wednesday	<u>Daily Encouragement</u>	7:30PM	583-079-193
Thursday	<u>Daily Encouragement</u>	7:30PM	583-079-193
Friday	<u>Friday Night Fellowship</u>	7:30PM	281-804-030
Sunday	<u>Sunday Morning Fellowship</u>	10:30 AM	109-514-326

Pennsylvania Bible Teaching Fellowship
701 Alison Avenue
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Phone: 267-261-2259
Fax: 717-766-2695
Email: pabible@pabibletf.org
www.pabibletf.org