

2 Corinthians 1 (10) – On Him We Have Set Our Hope

Hope is essential to life. Without hope, your joy is smothered, your energy is empty, and you become frozen in fear. You need hope. It is good to have hope. And we all have greater hopes and lesser hopes. And everyone has something that is their ultimate hope. So, what is your ultimate hope? And how does that ultimate hope shape and guide your other hopes?

Continuing on from vs.9, Paul says that the power of *God who raises the dead* is continually at work in a believer's life. Our ultimate hope is in him. And that hope anchors and guides us, past, present, and future.

Hope in the Past – *He delivered us from such a deadly peril*. Paul was delivered from the life-threatening affliction he had faced. He had come to the end of himself and his own strength, and he relied on *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort* alone. He felt like he was going to die, and he knew that the only one who could save him from death was *God who raises the dead*.

Like Paul, you must look back, and remember times where God brought you through afflictions. And remind yourself that God is bringing you through any and every affliction, to his eternal kingdom.

Hope for the Present – *and he will deliver us*. Paul says that whatever he may be going through, the *God who raises the dead* will one way or another deliver him, in life or through death.

Consider the three young men who wouldn't bow down to the golden statue of the Babylonian king. Daniel 3:16-18 – *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

Think of the Apostle Paul at the end of his life. He knew he was about to die, but he still had hope, he knew he was still being delivered, even by death. 2 Timothy 4:18 – *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

And through his experience in 2 Corinthians 1:3-9, Paul learned to face death without fear. As Hebrews 2:14-15 says, Jesus died to destroy the power of death, and he delivered you from being a slave to the fear of death. The same God that delivered Paul is delivering you. You don't have to fear death. And you don't have to fear life.

Now you can say like Paul did in Philippians 1:19-21 – *for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Hope in the Past, Hope for the Present, and Hope for the Future – *he will deliver us again*. Paul’s knows that in the future, *God who raises the dead*, the same God who delivered him in the past, and who is delivering him in the present, will one day deliver him to forever. Galatians 1:4 says that Jesus *gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age*. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says Jesus *delivers us from the wrath to come*.

No matter what may happen, the final word of your earthly life will not be destruction, it will be deliverance. The truth of your eternal destiny must anchor your thinking about the future. Let me apply this right now. No matter what is happening in your world, your whole life is an act of God’s deliverance!

Our Ultimate Hope – *On him we have set our hope*. It is wise to put your hope in *God who raises the dead*. He is worthy of your hope. And he will vindicate that hope, past, present, and future. He may allow you into situations where you are *so utterly burdened beyond your strength*, where you feel like you have *received the sentence of death*. But that is *to make you rely not on yourself but on God who raises the dead*. And in all your affliction, God’s children will know him as *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort*. And *as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too*.

Paul was telling us that what happened to him is going to happen to you. That God *comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*. That’s why you can tell other believers that *our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort*.

The Bible constantly and consistently tells us that our God is a God of deliverance. Your call as a Christian is to not only set your hope on God, but also to proclaim the truth of deliverance, just like the Apostle Paul did. You can say *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again*.

The God of deliverance *has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son* (Colossians 1:13). And he gives us hope for every stage of our lives. And this is not just hope in the past, or hope for the future, but hope for right now!

As time goes by, people are tempted to lose hope. But Christians can actually increase in hope. Even as our life decreases, our hope increases, because it is a spiritual thing. Like Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16...*we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day*.

Paul was a true apostle, teaching the truth about deliverance with his life example. Deliverance is not about avoidance, and not about escape. It is about perspective, relying on God no matter what. God’s triumph transcends our troubles, and transforms our lives. It’s our ultimate hope.

So, keep your hopes up. Even when the hard hand of God’s providence is upon you, the loving hand of God’s presence is also upon you. So keep praying that he would lift the burden, and deliver

you from your situation. And rejoice in who God is, and who you are to him, even as you lament that you are in a difficult circumstance and you hope for something better.

Keeping your hopes up doesn't mean that you look forward to hard times with nothing but happiness. That would just be denying reality. And keeping your hopes up isn't just a positive mental attitude either. It is far more than that. You know that there will be trouble at times. But you know God has a good purpose in this. Even if you don't know what it is. And even if God leaves you in that hard situation. He is still your deliverer, and worth hoping in. He is in complete control, and you need to let that truth anchor your faith, and guide your life.

Life is hard. And it is ok to come to God with your anxieties, your doubts, your fears, your laments, your weakness. It's not only ok, it is good, it is right, and it's what God wants you to do. But when 1 Peter 5:7 says to cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you, he isn't saying that you are supposed to throw them at him in disgust. You are supposed to give them to him in faith.

What is sapping your strength, or bringing you doubt? What are you hoping to be delivered from? God is your deliverer. Have faith. It isn't faith that things will go back to normal, or faith that your situations will get better. It is faith in who God is and who you are to him. He is the Almighty, and you are his child. And he has promised that all things, the good things and even the bad things, all things are working together for your good and his glory, to make you more like Jesus.

Your ultimate hope should anchor and guide all of your other hopes. Believers in Jesus Christ share the same unshakable hope. We have an unshakable God. My hope is unshaken, and my hope for you is unshaken. Because nothing can change God, God's word, God's love, God's plan, God's purpose, and God's promise to us. That's our ultimate hope, in *God who raises the dead*.