

HOPE IN THESE TIMES OF DESPERATION

Text: ...We boast in our **hope** of sharing the glory of God...we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces **hope**, and **hope** does not disappoint us (Romans 5:2-5, abridged).

Reading: **Romans 5: 1-8**

Hymn: **O God of Bethel, by whose hand thy people still are fed – StF 475**

When hope is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for something to happen, that hope is without certainty of fulfilment. In most cases this hope ends in disappointment.

In the Bible, however, hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised. We trust in God not only because of his promise but also because of his faithfulness. Biblical hope is thus an indication of certainty. It is a strong and confident expectation. Instead of wishing for something to happen, believers know that their hope is solid, because it is grounded in a God who cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18).

The Bible assures us of hope of life even from a dead situation: **‘For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant’** (Job 14:7-9). Though Job sees hopelessness in human life as far as death and evil are concerned, beyond that he sees hope of new life as exhibited by a tree that even when it is cut, can sprout again when there is rain. In Romans 5, Paul explains how we benefit from the justification that Christ brought to us through his death and resurrection. To Paul, this justification gives us peace with God and hope in God’s promises.

COVID-19 might have brought hopelessness, helplessness, and desperation to the world. Economies struggling, health systems are overwhelmed, there is absolute insecurity and uncertainty. It is indeed a human tragedy. Our lives as families and individuals, even as a church, might have gone back and there is no end in sight of getting back to normal. Yet it is in these times of despair that we can learn from Job and Paul that the God who invites us to hope in him does not disappoint and that when the hand of God is lifted and COVID-19 is defeated, we will have the capacity and the opportunity to bounce back and do things differently. He will give us divine speed and an overtaking anointing to recover all that we have lost. God has promised and he will never fail. Keep hope alive.