

- Lesson 8 Part A: Review of Lessons 1-7 (what keeps us from living with hope)
- Lesson 8 Part B: Living for Jesus & preparing for persecution

Lesson 8 Part A

Let's review what we've learned so far in our Study. Then we will study how to live a life for Jesus our Hope, and how to prepare ourselves for persecution (Part B).

We began our study by determining the Source of our hope; then we studied the attitudes of fear, worry, despair and depression, sorrow, anger, and bitterness. Hanging onto any one of these attitudes will cripple your growth as a Christian and interfere with living for Jesus, who is our Hope. The saints who have gone before us are our examples for our learning: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Lesson One: In this lesson we learned that the Bible is full of hope! The KJV Bible mentions "hope" 130 times. We can trust in the hope that God gives us because it is impossible for God to lie: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). In Jeremiah 17:7 we learn that a man is blessed who places his hope in God: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is."

Job and Paul are the examples we studied of men who had placed their hope in the LORD. Job placed his hope in the LORD for his eternal life: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:25-26).

Paul also placed his hope in the LORD for his eternal life: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better:"

(Philippians 1:21-23). When everyone deserted Paul, Jesus was there keeping him strong: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2Timothy 4:16-17).

Our hope is in Jesus Christ. Paul said in 1Timothy 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope". As a member of the Body of Christ each day we do the following: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Lesson Two: In this lesson we learned that there are two types of fear found in the Bible. The first fear benefits us and the second type of fear harms us. The fear that benefits us is the fear of the LORD. The second type of fear, which harms us, is when we do not trust God in our circumstances and we try to solve our problems in our own strength. We considered the second type of fear in Lesson Two.

We saw how Israel allowed fear to keep them from putting their trust in God in their circumstances. When the LORD was ready to take Israel into the land of Canaan, they sent out 12 spies who spied out the land of Canaan and reported back to the people. Ten of the spies focused on the strong people who were living in the land and their walled cities. They said the giants there made them

feel like grasshoppers. Only two of these spies trusted the LORD to enter into the land. Fear of the strong people who lived there and their walled cities caused them to forget how mighty their God truly was. They did not trust God in this circumstance out of fear. The two spies, Joshua and Caleb who trusted in God, told the people: "Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Number 14:9).

David and Paul were our examples of men who didn't let fear overcome them. David said in Psalms 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid". David was Israel's king. As a soldier David had led Israel's army and won many battles for the LORD. Our apostle Paul knew what to do to keep fear from overcoming him. Following his instruction about prayer, Paul asks prayer for himself so he would be bold to speak the gospel: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak bold, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:19-20). Furthermore, Paul tells us not to be afraid: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2Timothy 1:7). Paul also wrote in Romans 8:31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

In Lesson Three: The attitude of worry is what we considered in this lesson. The words "fear" and "worry" are often used interchangeably. In a way, it is fear which leads to worry. Worry can hinder us from living with hope. However, God gave us the ability to fear those situations that will truly cause us harm. But being focused upon those things that **could happen** is a distraction of the devil. This is worry, and it keeps us from putting our focus upon God and trusting in his will.

Martha was our example of someone who worried too much. Jesus gently let her know that he understood she was trying to be responsible yet she worried too much. She needed to follow Mary's example: "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:39-42). Jesus was with them and spending time with him should take priority over the meal preparations. Perhaps Martha should have made a simpler meal so that when Jesus arrived she too could sit at his feet like Mary, which was the "good part".

We are so tempted to worry about life and its never-ending dilemmas that we need to remind ourselves what Paul tells us in 1Timothy 6: 7-8: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content". When we are troubled and find ourselves in a state of worry Paul tells us: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4: 5-7). We take our problems to the Lord and he will give us his peace!

In Lesson Four: The prophet Elijah was our example for this lesson on despair and depression. Studying him gives us hope that while we may feel despair and depression at times, it is not a place for us to stay.

Just as Elijah who often lamented: "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men", we feel alone (2Kings 18:22). Elijah had a pattern of being depressed because three times in 1Kings 18 & 19 (18:22; 19:10, 14) he moaned that he was the only prophet of the LORD remaining. Yet God was still able to use Elijah to defeat the prophets of Baal in a mighty display of His power at Mount Carmel. Baal's prophets were unable to call fire down from heaven to consume their sacrifice (which had no water), yet when Elijah called fire down from heaven to consume his sacrifice, which was drenched with water, the fire completely consumed his sacrifice and all the water. "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, the LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" (1Kings 18:39).

Yet even after this great defeat over the prophets of Baal, Elijah was intimidated by Jezebel. She was angry because Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal's, so she threatened to kill Elijah. Elijah quickly forgot God's mighty display of power and he lost hope. Elijah became despaired and depressed by Jezebel's threat to kill him: "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1Kings 19:4).

The LORD comforted Elijah who later learned that the LORD still had seven thousand prophets in Israel that did not worship Baal (1Kings 19:7). Elijah was wrong! He was not the only prophet of the LORD. When we are in despair or depressed it is good to remember that our God is always at work not only in our life, but in the lives of others as well. We know that God works all things for our good: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). We also know that while our problem may feel unique to us, it isn't. Our problem isn't unusual and has happened to someone else before: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1Corinthians 10:13).

Nothing is ever hopeless with God. When we are tempted to think there is no hope remember Elijah. We do not know what the LORD is doing in our situation and in the lives of others.

Lesson Five: We studied what it is like to live with sorrow. We sorrow because we have lost someone or something that is good. We can become overwhelmed by our loss. It may be a loss of a loved one, the loss of a job and finances, the loss of health, or the growing uncertainty in life. This past year has been, and continues to be, a time of growing uncertainty in our lives. We are troubled by how our nation is changing. The COVID virus has brought a loss of health and life to many while it has turned our society upside down. These things have created a sense of sorrow in our lives. In this lesson we looked at the lives of Hannah, David, and Jeremiah to learn from the way they handled the sorrow in their lives.

We first looked at Hannah, a godly woman who longed to have children, yet she was barren. She had went to the temple of the LORD along with her husband to worship and offer a sacrifice. After a meal she went off to a post of the temple and wept as she prayed about her lack of a child. Eli the priest saw her and thought she might be drunk. But she said to Eli the priest: "And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD" (1Samuel 1:15). Hannah gives us an example of what to do when you are in great sorrow: you take it to the LORD in prayer. Hannah's prayer was answered. She had a son and after he was weaned she gave him to Eli the priest for the LORD's service. Each year she came to see him and brought with her a coat for her son Samuel who became a prophet of the LORD.

Hannah was blessed with three sons and two daughters. In Samuel 2:1-10 we read Hannah's prayer when she had taken her son Samuel to the priest. Her prayer shows us how Hannah understood the grace and the power of God. She understood that God is in control of everything: "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God" (1Samuel 2:2).

Next we studied David who was a man after God's heart: "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, a MAN AFTER MINE OWN HEART, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). When the child born to David and Bathsheba became ill David went to the LORD: "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth" (2Samuel 12:16). He wept over the child and would not eat. David took his sorrow to the LORD. When the child died his servants were afraid to tell him for fear of how he would react. They were surprised at his response to their concern: "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2Samuel 12:22-23). David's example shows us how he believed all things are possible with God, yet David accepted God's decision to let the child die. He accepted God's will. It's important to note that David understood his child went to heaven and David knew that he too would go to heaven as well.

Jeremiah is called the "weeping prophet" because he sorrowed and wept over Judah. God had called Jeremiah to prophesize to take news to nations and kingdoms that they would not want to hear! He would see many things that would cause him sorrow "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). Because of the kind of news Jeremiah was prophesying he was often severely mistreated: "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD" (Jeremiah 20:2).

We learn the reason why Jeremiah was sorrowful: "For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword" (Jeremiah 20:4). It appears that Jeremiah grew weary of all the sorrow he both saw and prophesized: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay...But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jeremiah 20:9, 11). Jeremiah was unable to keep still, he had to prophesize the word the LORD gave him. He also depended upon the LORD for his strength and comfort in his sorrow. Tradition holds that Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations and in it he weeps and mourns over the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet in spite of what he witnessed his faith and hope in the LORD was steadfast: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). These words can ease our sorrow and give us hope today.

Lesson Six: In this lesson we learned there are two types of anger: righteous indignation and sinful anger. God gave us the ability to be angry for a purpose.

Righteous indignation is anger about those things that also anger God; some of which are adultery, idolatry, hatred, witchcraft, murder, to name a few. A more complete list is found in [Galatians 5:19-21](#). When we have righteous indignation we are motivated to take action to solve the problem. David, Jesus, and Moses are our examples of righteous indignation. David, when the prophet Nathan told him about the rich man who took the beloved ewe lamb from the poor man. Jesus, when he saw the money changers in the Temple, and also when he saw how the hardness of the Pharisees' heart. Moses, after receiving the tables of testimony, he came down from the mount only to find the people of Israel worshipping a golden calf.

Sinful anger is motivated by our pride. We often find it hard to see that pride is at the root but it is. [Proverbs 16:18](#) supports this: "Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall". [Proverbs 16:32](#) counsels us against "flying off the handle" or "having a short fuse" in our anger: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city".

When someone is angry at us it is wise to stop and pray asking God for his wisdom and the ability to understand. Maybe they have a good reason but they may not be saying it well. If they're unwilling to talk, it's best to let it rest and rely on God to work it out while you pray about it. This will keep you from saying something you wished you hadn't later on. God will lead you when it's a better time. Our words are important and can do harm: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" ([Proverbs 15:1](#)). Paul also tells us in [Ephesians 4:2](#) how to deal with anger directed at us: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love".

Cain, Moses, and Jonah were our examples of sinful anger. Cain resented Able because God did not accept his sacrifice yet he accepted Able's sacrifice. Moses disobeyed God's specific instructions when he brought forth water out of the rock in a way that did not honor God. Jonah was angry because God did not destroy Israel's enemy Nineveh.

Lesson Seven: Bitterness is defined as holding a grudge, or feeling hatred toward someone you believe has done something against you. If you find yourself continuing to resent them for what they have done or you feel ill will toward that person you most likely are bitter. You refuse to forgive them and you hang onto your anger toward that person. You have no desire for reconciliation.

Yet God commands us to forgive one another: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" ([Colossians 3:13](#)). We grieve the Holy Spirit when we refuse to forgive: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" ([Ephesians 4:30-32](#)).

Joseph is our example to follow as someone who did not become bitter and was able to forgive the injustice his brothers had done to him. He came to understand that God had used the evil they had done to him for the good of many. Because Joseph saw God's hand in what had happened to him he was able to forgive and not become bitter: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" ([Genesis 50:20](#)).

The following quiz will reinforce what you have just studied and will encourage you as you see what you have learned. The answers to every question and all the scripture verses are found in the Review of Lessons 1-7 (pages 1-5) which we just covered.

Questions:

1. Why can we trust in the hope God gives us?
 - a. Scripture verse:

2. Who is the source of our hope?
 - a. Scripture verse:

3. Name two men that did not let fear overcome them:
 - a. Scripture verse:

4. What advice did Jesus give Martha?
 - a. Scripture verse:

5. What does Paul tell us to do with our worries?
 - a. Scripture verse:

6. We studied the lives of Hannah, David, and Jeremiah in our Lesson on living with sorrow. Which one did you like the most? Why?
 - a. Scripture verse:

7. What is the difference between anger that is "righteous indignation" and sinful anger?
 - a. Scripture verse of those things which anger God:

8. How do we handle anger motivated by our pride?
 - a. Scripture verses:

9. Who does Ephesians 4:32 say we grieve when we hang onto bitterness and anger?

10. What did Joseph understand about the evil his brothers had done to him?
 - a. Scripture verse:

As a Christian we need to prepare ourselves for suffering. We have been greatly blessed in our nation because our culture has been influenced by the Christian faith. Christianity was honored and respected. That has changed. Until recently persecution against Christians was unheard of in the USA. However, intolerance for Christianity has been growing. Our influence is greatly diminished. Yet in the growing darkness a Christian who stands for Christ will be a light to anyone looking for truth!

Question #12: Take a moment and reflect upon all the changes you have seen in America from when you were a child until today. Describe the changes that disturb you the most.

Question #13: Read Romans 1:18-32; 2Timothy 3:1-7, 13; 2Timothy 4:3: In what ways do these verses describe what we are seeing in our world today?

Question #14: Remember what we learned about sorrow? We sorrow when we've lost something good. As we see the godly things disappear in our nation and in our world, it's important that we allow ourselves to grieve over this loss. Then we must accept it. Then we can move on for Christ. Why don't you take some time to pray about this now?

- a. Read 1Timothy 2:1-4. No matter what happens in our nation what do we continue doing?

Question #15: Read: Phil 1:29; 1Thessalonians 2:14; 2Corinthians 11:23-28; 2Timothy 3:12; John 15:18.
What truth about suffering do these verses teach us?

a. Read Romans 12:17-19; 2Corinthians 12:10; Colossians 1:11; 1Peter 2:19-24: How do we behave when we are suffering for the faith?

b. Read Daniel 1:8: What example does Daniel give us as we prepare to suffer for Jesus?

Question #16: Read 1Peter 4:19; Hebrews 12:2: Whom do we trust throughout our suffering?

a. Read Matthew 14:22-31: Why did Peter sink in the water?

b. What happens to you when you take your attention off Jesus?

Question #17: Read Ephesians 5:15-16: What two pieces of advice does Paul give you to follow?

a. While it is wise to be aware of your surroundings and world events, do you think it is wise to be consumed with the latest world events? Why or why not?

Question #18: Read 2Timothy 4:7: How does Paul describe his life?

- a. Read 2Timothy 2: 3-4: What does a good soldier of Jesus Christ do?

Question #19: Read Ephesians 6: 10-18. Again, Paul uses the illustration of being a soldier as he describes our defense and offense weapons by using the different parts of a Roman soldier's battle armor. Read this passage slowly and prayerfully. List the items that we need in order to engage in spiritual warfare below.

Question #20: Read Romans 8:18; 2Corinthians 4:16-18: What is the glorious truth about our suffering?

Paul teaches us that the Body of Christ will be taken out of the world before prophecy begins to unfold. The rapture could happen at any time! So, while we may experience persecution, we will not experience the wrath of God which will happen during the prophesied seven year tribulation period.

Question #21: Read 1Thessalonians 4:15-18; 1Thessalonians 5:9; Titus 2:13. How will this truth enable you to live a life of hope and a life standing firm for Jesus?

Thank you for studying with me about our biblical hope and standing firm for Jesus, our Lord and Savior. It is my prayer that each of us would live a life of hope and have victory over those attitudes of fear, worry, despair and depression, sorrow, anger, and bitterness. Remember, it's a process (Phil 1:6). We can only do this as we walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). Our strength comes from the Lord!
Grace and Peace, Debbie Eads