

Confronting Despair

Thank you for joining me for “It’s a Good Life.” Today I want to speak to you about something that I believe each one of us has had happen to us in our lives, and that is about despair. I want to share with you something about confronting despair.

First, I think we need to understand what despair is. Many of us have gone through times of despair, but some other people have given definitions. “Despair” defined according to the *American Heritage Dictionary* is to lose all hope, to be overcome by a sense of futility or defeat, complete loss of hope. Synonyms for despair include hopelessness, despondency, and discouragement. Mark Twain described despair as “a time when one's spirit is subdued and sad, one knows not why; when the past seems a storm-swept desolation, life a vanity and a burden, and the future but a way to death.” Of course, that was Mark Twain.

There’s danger of despair, and despair takes its toll on society; despair takes its toll on your physical health; and despair is certainly detrimental to one’s spiritual health. To be in despair is a slap in the face of God. One person has written: “He that despairs degrades God.” Another has written, “When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God.” And there are many others that can be quoted, but to be in despair renders one ineffective in helping others. One person has said, “He that is fallen cannot help him that is down.”

Charles Swindoll said that “Surrendering to despair is man’s favorite pastime. God offers a better plan, but it takes effort to grab it and faith to claim it.”

So let’s look at what the Bible has to say about despair and how to overcome it. I see first of all that faith in Jesus helps us to overcome despair. Jesus provides hope for the hopeless. First, we see this through His teachings. In Matthew 6:30, 7:11, and 10:29-31, Jesus tells us of God’s providential care.

Matthew 6:30 says, *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

Matthew 7:11 says, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

And then we see in Matthew 10:29-31: *²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

We see that Jesus provides hope for the hopeless through His teachings. And Jesus tells us of God’s love for the lost through His teachings. In Luke 15:7, it says, *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

And then those familiar verses found in John 3:16-17 that say: *¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

That means that all people, anyone who would call upon the name of the Lord, could be saved, because Jesus came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost.

We also see that faith in Jesus helps us to overcome despair through His promises. In John 4:13-14, Jesus tells us that through His promises there is abundant life and He offers this. In John 4:13-14, it says, ¹³*Jesus answered and said unto her... Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: ¹⁴But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

And then in John 6:35 it says, *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

This is the way we overcome despair... through Jesus Christ, through His teachings. First we see that it's through His teachings of looking to His providential care of us. We see that Jesus tells us of this in His Word of God's love for the lost, and we see that we have abundant life through Jesus Christ. He offers this to all people.

Faith in Jesus helps us to overcome despair by the promises of the resurrection He offers. In John 11:23-27, we read about a man by the name of Lazarus. In John 11:23-27, it says, ²³*Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. ²⁴Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. ²⁷Believest thou this? ²⁷She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art*

the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Jesus helps us to overcome despair through His promise of the resurrection, and then we see that it's by His promise of His return and the place He is preparing. In John 14:1-3, it says, ¹*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

We can draw hope and courage through the words that Jesus spoke in the Scriptures through His teachings, and we look to this... these last verses I read... knowing that Jesus, when we see Him, has prepared a place for us. We have a place waiting for us in Heaven, those of us who have trusted Him as Savior.

We also see that there is hope of despair, and He helps us through His actions. His death on the cross provides the hope of our forgiveness. His resurrection provides the hope for our own resurrection. Jesus is truly our hope.

In I Timothy 1:1, it says, *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope. It's through faith in Jesus that the Christian has hope in God regarding the resurrection.*

In Acts 24:15, it says, *And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

First Peter 1:3 says, *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.
We have hope in Jesus Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection, and through His resurrection, we know that one day we'll be raised to be with Him forever.

We can also rejoice in the hope regarding the glory to come. In Romans 5:1-2, it says, ¹*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

We can also use the Scriptures as a constant replenisher of hope. You can read Romans 15:4 in connection with that. And we can abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 says, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* It's through the power of God through the power of the Spirit of the Lord that we can overcome despair in our lives.

We also see that there's hope in the salvation as a helmet to protect our minds. In I Thessalonians 5:8, it says, *But let us, who are of the day, be sober... That's being serious about something... putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

And we can look forward to the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13-14 says, ¹³*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

It's been said that life with Christ is an endless hope and, without Him, a hopeless end. For those who are in Christ, they have

every reason to hope. For those outside of Christ, one can understand why there is often despair. For those in Christ, we are charged to hold fast to our hope.

Hebrews 3:6 says, *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing... Notice this... the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. The Bible says, He is faithful who has promised this, in Hebrews 10:23. Through faith in Jesus we can hold fast to our hope and gain the victory over despair.

Have you gained that victory today as a Christian? You need to ask God to lead you and guide you and help you to understand. Listen to what I've just gone through with you. Listen to the Scriptures. Let God speak to your heart. Be the Spirit-filled Christian that God wants you to be. Ask Him and He'll give you comfort in despair.

And if you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, the comfort through despair will come only by trusting Jesus as your Savior. You can pray something like this: "Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for me. I believe You have risen from the dead for me, and I believe that, when I ask You to come into my heart, You will save me because You've said that You would in no wise cast me out if I trust You as Lord and Savior." The Bible says, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* If you'll ask Jesus to save you today, He'll save you and He'll help you to confront despair in your life.

It's been good being with you today, and I pray that you'll tune in the next time when we'll look into the Scriptures once again.

Let me invite you to look at our Website, www.LRWM.org. On the Website, you'll be able to download this program once again and

listen to it. You'll also be able to download a transcript of this program, and you can read it as you listen to the program.

You can also write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. Write to me today, and I'll be glad to pray with you over the needs that you have in your life, and I'll be praying for you if you've never trusted Jesus that you will trust Him today. Ask Him to come into your heart and He'll save you.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.