

Wanting Things to be Different

Hope is the realization that maybe, somehow, things could be different. Apart from God, it is circumstantial, dependent on our emotions, our capacity to think, reason, evaluate, plan, and enact change through whatever control we can exercise over the twists and turns, valleys and desolation, sorrows and disappointments, life can throw at us. *With God*, hope is a realization that depends on God and not on self. And, *with God*, hope has a certainty beyond, above, and *through* our circumstances. *With God*, “things” **can** be different. And “different” happens more quickly, more permanently, *within*, than it does without, or, *on the outside*. But then, hope with God, is not dependent on circumstances. God’s hope knows God’s promises, promises of His presence, His love, His grace, His enablement, His ability to bring beauty from ashes, and His transcendence that longs to turn mourning into joy. Whether we lose health or job, relationships or dreams, innocence or the quietness of thought and emotion, God’s hope says things *can* be different – different from the inside of me to the outside of me, but mostly *on the inside*.

Paul tells the Romans that when life gets tough, perseverance will produce character in us, and that character will produce *hope*. And then I read in James, *when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing*. I am beginning to understand the essence of those verses. When life is tough, it stinks, it unravels nerves, warps thinking, and darkens emotions. That doesn’t sound like “joy” to me, and yet, it is an opportunity for me to journey more deeply, more dependently, *with God*. Within that opportunity, I can choose God and His grace and His tomorrows for me, or I can choose to close Him out. Choosing to stay with God and believe His promises, when nothing in my life makes sense, is *faith*. My faith choices to stay with God and depend on Him will bring me to a place of endurance, of perseverance, of over and over and over again, going to God and saying, “I can’t. You can. I will let You!” And as I persistently reach for all God has for me, my hope grows stronger. I grow in hope and encouragement as I wait for God’s promises to be fulfilled. The God of hope fills me with joy and peace as I trust in Him. I begin to learn something of the riches and provision He has for me. And the completion I come to is the experiential knowledge that *with God*, with His *hope*, I have all I need *in Him*.

Therefore, I can go to Him for refuge, and I can go with confidence. I can hold on to the hope He gives, because it is strong and trustworthy. ***Hope***. Things *can* be different. ***With God***.

– Bev

(Related Bible reading: Romans 5:3,4; James 1:2-4; Romans 15:4; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 1:18; 1Timothy 6:17; Hebrews 6:18,19)