You are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psalm 25:5
Moody Bible Institute Founder’s Week 2015

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Music provided by Tim Stafford, Moody Bible Institute Music department ensembles, Sara Groves, and Rend Collective.
For professional baseball player Josh Hamilton, life was a rollercoaster ride from success to hopelessness. His MLB career and personal relationships were being destroyed by alcohol and drug addiction. He entered rehab six times before Jesus changed his life. “I’m proof that hope is never lost,” said Josh in an interview with ESPN. “I have a mission now. My mission is to be the ray of hope . . . the guy who lets people know it’s never completely hopeless.” When interacting with fans after a game, Josh uses the opportunity to talk about Jesus.

In the Bible, the word hope is not merely a wish to get our lives under control. Hope is defined as the trust we place in God. The object of our hope is important. We place our hope in God and rely on His promises to us.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for hope is yachal. It conveys the idea of waiting, being patient, enduring. Again and again, God’s people needed to wait and trust in the Lord to act on their behalf. The Israelites relied on God to deliver them from enemies and assure victory in battle. The Psalms contain many expressions of hope in which God’s people ask Him to remember His promise to be present and faithful. In Psalm 40:1, David expresses this kind of steadfast hope: “I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry.”

In the New Testament the Greek word for hope, elpis, is often associated with looking toward Christ’s return and the security we have in knowing that Jesus’ sacrifice has secured our eternal future. We place our hope in Christ and look forward, with assurance and joy, to what the apostle Paul describes as the “hope laid up for you in heaven” (Col. 1:5).

This kind of hope will change our lives. Our lives are no longer marked by weariness, doubt, fear, and self-destruction. Even when we go through difficult circumstances, we can be assured of the hope we place and find in Christ alone. Scripture tells us this type of hope results in joy (Rom. 12:12) and boldness (2 Cor. 3:12).

The more we cling to Jesus, the more our lives will be characterized by hope. When we live each day in the hope of Christ’s return, it impacts our words, our actions, even our state of mind. In Christ, we find a hope that pulls people out of addiction and despair. This hope can repair relationships. God, our hope and our redeemer, never changes. As the writer of Hebrews so well expresses, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul” (6:19).
Few statements in the Gospels are as chilling as Jesus’ cry from the cross recorded in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” These words seem to be a cry of despair. But upon closer examination, the context reveals that they are actually an expression of hope. The fourth of seven utterances from the cross, this is actually a quotation of Psalm 22:1. By identifying Himself with the suffering of the one described there, Jesus also implicitly identified with the affirmation of Psalm 22:24: “For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.” The psalm is a cry of anguish, but it is also a confession of faith that expresses the psalmist’s expectation of deliverance (Ps. 22:25). When Jesus made these words His own, He pointed to the hope of resurrection.

This theme of hope is also reflected in several of the other sayings that surround Christ’s quotation of Psalm 22:1. Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him, a request that not only revealed His pity but also acknowledged that God Himself was at work in some mysterious way in their actions (Luke 23:34; cf. Acts 4:27–28). Jesus’ promise to the repentant thief that he would join Him in paradise that very day is proof that Jesus was confident of life after death (Luke 23:43). What is more, it is evidence of Jesus’ power to grant eternal life and confer a kingdom.

This song of faith rises to a crescendo with the last two statements. One is a shout of victory: “It is finished” (John 19:30). Some commentators point out that accountants used this same term to mean “paid in full.” Perhaps it also alludes to Genesis 2:2, linking Christ’s suffering with the work of God in creation and pointing to His role as “the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Jesus’ last words from the cross were an expression of trust by which He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:46).

Now that Christ has completed His work, His prayer has become our prayer. We can commend our lives into the hands of the Father because we have the example of Jesus, and we know that God was faithful to deliver Him through the resurrection. We can have hope as we breathe our last because Jesus was faithful to His last breath.

For Further Study

To learn more about Christ’s sayings from the cross, read The Seven Last Words from the Cross by Fleming Rutledge (Eerdmans).
It seems that only recently we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Today in the Word. Now we are already looking forward to our next milestone. In two years we’ll mark our 30th anniversary—an achievement for any print publication, especially in the age of the Internet.

Today in the Word started in 1988 under president Joseph Stowell, with the February issue, called “Learning from Bible Characters.” From that premiere issue until now, many outward features of our devotional changed: layout, design, cover, fonts, and people who work on it. But one foundational premise remained the same: dedication to the study of the Word of God in a community of Moody’s friends. Our mission statement hasn’t changed much from the beginning: “Today in the Word provides its readers with solid biblical content and study, models Moody Bible Institute’s mission and goals, and offers tangible value—all intended to minister to Moody’s partners and to invest in a reciprocal relationship with them.”

Over the years, Today in the Word offered its readers hundreds of topical, character, and book studies from the Bible, covering every book in the Word of God several times. We’ve also created the Best of Today in the Word volumes for our 20th and 25th anniversaries, as well as the 4-volume set Through the Bible with Today in the Word. We hope you enjoyed our mini-devotions for Christmas and Easter, He is Born and He Is Risen, and the latest—The Newborn King.

I have the privilege to be a part of the Today in the Word team. This team is not only the people on the masthead. We consider you, our reader, a key member of this team. One of Today in the Word’s goals from the beginning was to create “a reciprocal relationship” with our readers. And today, this relationship, coupled with our readers’ prayer and financial support, remains vital for our devotional. It was our readers’ support that made each and every issue possible. Thank you!

At the beginning of every year we make the New Year resolutions, which tend to fizzle out by the middle of February. Dear readers, together we can make the best resolution this year and keep it: to study the timeless—and timely—Word of God every day and live it. We hope Today in the Word will help you make this resolution possible, and maybe even easy. Happy New Year!
Hope in God: The Source of Our Strength

Themes of hope have inspired artists and poets for generations, including the marvelous nineteenth-century American poet Emily Dickinson:

“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.”

This month in Today in the Word, we’ll make our journey looking at hope as the source of our strength. We’ll take the only sure way to find hope—faith in God—through the pages of the Word of God. We’ll look at the pitfalls of false hope, we’ll marvel at the faith of the psalmist, we’ll rejoice in the ultimate hope of eternal life, and we’ll also study the fruits of renewed hope in our lives. Throughout our study, we’ll see that Christ, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” is the hope of the nations.

We pray, as you study the Bible with Today in the Word, you’ll be encouraged by our hope in the eternal God “as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Heb. 6:19). We pray that the lamp of His Word will burn brightly in your life. Thank you for your love for the truth of the Bible and for supporting the ministry of Today in the Word!
Happy New Year! How are you celebrating today? Some are feeling tired from parties that went into the wee hours; other people gathered for Watch Night services to pray past midnight. Some are taking stock of their lives and making resolutions for the year ahead; others are reflecting on the year that has just passed and savoring special memories.

The beginning of a new year often encourages people to think about life, and that can be a good thing if we direct our focus toward what God says in His Word about our lives. This month we will study the theme of hope, and we will examine the location and results of godly hope. We’ll begin this month, however, with seeing what Scripture says about false hope.

Our reading today is filled with warnings against the false hopes of the wicked. It can be tempting to try to cut corners to get ahead—to cheat “just a little” on our income tax forms or to spread “just a little” rumor in order to get ahead at the office. Verse 1 reminds us that the Lord despises all of our attempts to use “dishonest scales.” Hope in our own ingenuity or advantage is ultimately false hope.

The original Hebrew language of verse 7 is difficult to translate into English. The NIV translates this as “Hopes placed in mortals die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing.” The ESV translates this verse, “When the wicked dies, his hope will perish, and the expectation of wealth perishes too.” Both of these translations point to an important reminder: False hope ends at death. Hope that is placed in powerful people or wealth or prestige cannot survive, and it cannot save. As we continue our study, we’ll see how greatly this contrasts with our hope placed in God!

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**Read: Proverbs 11**

**Thursday, January 1**

**The False Hope of the Wicked**

Hopes placed in mortals die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing.

Proverbs 11:7

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**Apply the Word**

The beginning of the new year is a wonderful time to examine where your hope is placed. Are you trusting in a political party to make life better? Or hoping that the stock market will meet your needs? Pray that the Lord will use our study this month to shape and direct your hopes toward Him and to show you how godly hope transforms our lives for eternity.

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**Pray with Us**

We’d like to start the year by praying for Moody trustees—both individually (their names are on page 5 of this issue) and as a team. Pray for wisdom in the decisions they make about the future of Moody ministries.
Do Not Trust in Riches

During 2000 to 2001, the U.S. economy endured what has been called the dot-com bubble. Many technology companies, most of which had never made a profit, began offering the public a chance to buy shares of their stock, and the value of the companies skyrocketed in the short term. A few founders became fabulously wealthy. But then the bubble burst, the share prices plummeted, and many of the companies went bankrupt—along with their investors. One financial journalist wondered, “Did the kids [the dotcom entrepreneurs] dupe the establishment by drawing them into fake companies, or did the establishment dupe the kids by introducing them to Mammon and charging a commission on it?”

Riches can be fleeting, which means that trusting in riches is foolish. No financial advisor in the world can offer eternal security. Psalm 62 reminds us that status and wealth can lead us into a false sense of complacency, but they are a poor measure for our lives. In the sight of God, what does it mean to “lowborn” or “highborn” (v. 9)? He is not impressed by our social standing or tax bracket.

The antidote to the false hope in riches can be found throughout the rest of this psalm. Unlike the stock market, God is our rock and salvation (vv. 2, 6). Unlike our retirement savings, God provides rest and comfort for our deepest needs (vv. 1, 5, 8). Unlike all the gold and jewels of the world, God can never be taken away from us.

Verses 11 and 12 provide the key to shaping our hope by telling us two essential things about God: He has all power, and He has unfailing love. Our God is capable of being a refuge for us, and He also cares for us. He is the only Person to put our hope and trust.

Apply the Word

Jesus answered whether to put our hope in God or in money: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 6:20). How can you store up treasures in heaven this year? To remind you where to put your trust, write down Matthew 6:19–24 on a notecard.

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, requests your prayer support for our students on all three Moody campuses: in Chicago, IL; Spokane, WA; and Plymouth, MI. Pray for a good start of the spring semester.
Florida pastor Charles Lawrence Kennedy had a wonderful message: God had led him to an investment opportunity that would turn $1,000 into $1,000,000 in just 90 days. He wanted to invite others to join him in the investment. Just think of all the money they could give to charity with their earnings! It turned out that this was just a Ponzi scheme, and most of the money went to Kennedy’s own pockets. In October 2013 Kennedy pled guilty to wire fraud; prosecutors estimate his fraudulent profits at $5 million.

Our reading for today is an extended discourse of God’s anger directed toward false prophets. Notice the variety of ways that these religious leaders have deceived God’s people. Their own lives are characterized by adultery and sinfulness (vv. 11, 14); they pollute the teaching of God with the false worship of Baal (v. 13). They proclaim a message of complacency toward sin instead of a right relationship with God (v. 17); they claim that their own opinions are really messages from God (vv. 31–32).

God takes seriously the deception of these false prophets. Repeatedly throughout this chapter He reminds them of the judgment they will face for their arrogance and sin. At the end of the discourse God declares, “I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence” (v. 39).

But in the middle of this angry denunciation of the false prophets, God also makes the promise of One in whom we can trust completely. The King was coming who “will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land” (v. 5). When we are surrounded by false prophets who make false promises and live immoral lives, we can remember that we can trust King Jesus. He is always true and always faithful.

Apply the Word

It can be disheartening to hear stories of corrupt preachers and false teachers. Sadly, they are nothing new. But we can rejoice that we know the One who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). When we place our hope in Jesus, we have access to the truth about God and we have eternal life with Him. Praise Jesus today for His perfect righteousness in which we can trust!

Pray with Us

During the next three days, we invite you to pray for the faculty and staff of MBI–Spokane. Today, please include in your prayers the Spokane administration: Jack Lewis, Wendy Liddell, Daniel Churchwell, Nathanael Schey, and Jaclyn Parrott.
Good teachers know that a variety of techniques are required to help students learn. Repetition is important—flash cards and drills help to cement information in the memory. Presenting information in creative ways is also important—hearing the facts presented in a different way helps students make connections in new ways or gain new perspectives.

We are concluding four days of examining what Scripture says about the wrong places to put our hope, and at this point you’ve probably noticed that several themes have been repeated. From Old Testament to the New, God’s Word urges us to resist the temptation to trust in wealth. It reminds us to beware of false teachers who emphasize personal financial gain instead of discipleship. Our reading today includes all of those themes.

Notice how the apostle Paul contrasts the false hope of money with the true hope of God. First, he clarifies what it means to “gain” (vv. 5–6). False teachers say that the Christian life will lead to material profits; in reality, spiritual gain is found in a life of godliness and contentment. Second, the pursuit of money leads people into all kinds of temptations and away from the faith, but the pursuit of righteousness leads to eternal life (vv. 9–12).

Being rich is not in and of itself sinful. But Scripture recognizes that with wealth comes the temptation to trust in financial resources rather than God. The passage concludes with the exhortation “to be rich in good deeds, generous, and willing to share” (v. 18). When our hope is placed in God, we are able to focus on laying up eternal treasure. This is “the life that is truly life” (v. 19).

Apply the Word

No matter what our financial status, we can be rich in the things that matter. Review verses 17 through 19 and ask the Lord to show you opportunities to demonstrate your trust in Him through your generosity. This can include financial giving, but also sharing your time, a listening ear, or wise advice with others. Celebrate the opportunity to live a life that is truly life!
Apply the Word

Do your actions demonstrate your hope in God? If you are waiting on God, your hope might be expressed by praying (perhaps praying the words of this psalm if you don’t have your own words), by joining with other believers to praise God for His love, or by reading Scripture to learn more about who God is and how He cares for His people.

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers Jennifer Mills, Michael Orr, Christopher Rappazini, Floyd Schneider, and Gerald Vreeland—the dedicated Moody faculty in Spokane who provide both academic and spiritual training for their students.

Hope in God’s Deliverance

In contemporary English usage, the word hope often means something like wishful thinking. It connotes anticipation and longing and dreaming; a child might say, “I hope I get a pony for my birthday!” We might offer well-wishes for someone’s health: “I hope you feel better!” Hope is the word we often use to mean that we want a particular thing to happen in the future.

Our English usage of hope is not as robust as the scriptural meaning of hope. Hope in the Bible does include an element of looking forward in anticipation, but it doesn’t stop there. Hope means looking forward to what God will do with such confidence and certainty that it changes our actions and perspective right now.

For the next four days we’ll explore four psalms of hope. These examples will help us see the biblical dimensions of hope expressed in the midst of real-life challenges. Many of us can relate to the circumstances of the psalmist in Psalm 25. He is “lonely and afflicted” (v. 16). He is mindful of his own sinfulness (vv. 11, 18). And he feels threatened by numerous enemies (vv. 2, 19).

Though he can identify both internal and external challenges, the psalmist still has hope in God. He expresses this hope in several ways: first, he is crying out to the Lord for deliverance and mercy (vv. 16, 20). Crying out to God in our distress is an act of hope, because it acknowledges His power and salvation even when we are hurting. Second, the psalmist is learning more about God’s instruction for life (vv. 4, 10). He wants to know God more, and this gives him even greater reason to trust God. He is willing to wait for God’s deliverance because He knows that “all the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful” (v. 10).

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame.
Psalm 25:3
Throughout the history of Israel, God provided them with examples to remind them not to put their trust in military power. When they left Egypt during the Exodus, pursued by the Egyptian forces, God parted the Red Sea to save them (see Exodus 14). When Gideon attacked the Midianite troops, he succeeded with only 300 men that God had winnowed from his original army of 32,000 (see Judges 7).

Our psalm today is a jubilant hymn of praise to God, because He alone is worthy of our hope and trust. He is the Creator (vv. 6–9). The entire world owes its existence to His word that brought it into being. No global military power or multinational corporation can claim that!

In fact, the Lord sees the hearts and deeds of everyone, from the mightiest ruler to the lowest peasant (v. 15). The tyrant might think that his power comes from his political skill or military intimidation; the tycoon might think that his wealth comes from his own shrewd investments and financial risk-taking. They don’t see that God has allowed them whatever success they enjoy for a brief time, for His own purposes and reasons.

The only true hope is to be found in acknowledging the Lord as the sovereign Creator whose love never fails (v. 18). No matter what happens to us, we have the confidence in His ultimate deliverance from the clutches of death, a hint in this psalm of the truth of the resurrection life that awaits all those who hope in God.

This kind of hope allows us to rejoice even while we are waiting to see God act. It allows our hearts to be filled with joy because we trust in His holy, faithful, loving character. We have hope because He never fails.

May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.
Psalm 33:22

Apply the Word

Do we like to take the credit for our own success? Or do we acknowledge that God has directed our steps and given Him glory and praise for His work in our lives? Today is a good day to thank Him for your blessings—a long marriage, health, a stable job, good friends—whatever they may be. Praise Him for His unfailing love in your life.

Pray with Us

The Moody Publishers teams under the leadership of Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications, work hard to bring our readers quality Christian books, in print and online. Would you uphold in prayer this ministry today?
Hope During Difficult Days

According to David Alloway, a desert survival instructor, too many adventurers follow outdated advice about rationing water, with tragic results. People have died of thirst in deserts including the Australian Outback, Utah, and the Sahara—and they still had water in their canteens. Alloway says, “If you are thirsty, drink. Don’t risk a befuddled mind and die of thirst with water in your canteen.”

Our psalm today describes the experience of thirst in a spiritual desert. The psalmist describes his anguish and suffering and isolation; he thirsts for the presence of God (v. 2). In our reading yesterday, we saw how rejoicing is an expression of hope. Psalm 42 reminds us that lament is also an expression of hope.

The psalmist is suffering in every way: socially, he is lonely and abandoned (v. 4); physically, he is in pain (v. 10); emotionally, he is distressed (v. 3), and spiritually, he is “downcast” (vv. 5–6). Yet in this situation, when he is depleted in every way, notice his decision. He runs to the source of spiritual water and renewal. He doesn’t “ration” God—he repeatedly cries out to the Savior.

Hope is not reserved for those times when all is going well in our lives. Hope is not only expressed through thanksgiving and praise. Hope is also expressed when we turn toward God and not away from Him during our difficult days. Notice how the psalmist makes this a habit. In verse 5 and in verse 11 he repeats both his turmoil and his trust in God.

The key is found in verse 6: “My soul is downcast within me, therefore I will remember you” (emphasis added). The times when everything was going wrong were the exact times to run to God. This is a profound expression of hope.

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:5

Apply the Word

This psalm, with its metaphor of thirst, anticipates the One who is the Living Water. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14–15). Jesus offers this living water to all who ask!

Pray with Us

Again, we lift up in prayer Moody Publishers on our Chicago campus. Its Production team, Ryan Lloyd and Randy Westerlund, strive to reach more readers with Moody Publishers’ books. Ask the Lord for new spiritual blessings for them in the new year.
Many churches have special worship times called “praise and testimony.” Sometimes testimonies are included as part of a regular Sunday morning service, but other times a special service would be held, perhaps on Sunday evening, to focus on singing hymns and hearing the testimonies of people in the congregation. These might include public expressions of thanks to God, or the story of how someone came to faith in Jesus, or examples of how God had worked in a particular situation.

Our psalm today is an example of how a testimony can be an expression of hope in God. At the beginning of this passage, the psalmist expresses his plea for the Lord to protect him. He stresses the notion of safety, using the word “refuge” three times in the first seven verses. He has hope that God is willing and able to provide a secure fortress of salvation. This is not a theoretical concern. The psalmist has enemies who are conspiring against him (vv. 10–13). The psalm contains clues that the psalmist might be older, perhaps nearing the end of his life (vv. 9, 18). Though he might be more vulnerable physically, he remains robust in his hope in God. He has praised the Lord since his youth, and he’s not about to stop now (vv. 6, 17)!

Verse 14 provides the hinge or pivot point in this psalm. This declaration of hope inspires the testimony of God’s faithfulness that follows in the rest of the passage. The psalmist has seen God’s “righteous deeds” and “saving acts” and “marvelous deeds” and “mighty acts” (vv. 15–17). Throughout his life, the psalmist has seen God work in wonderful ways. Hope in God’s deliverance is based on a testimony of God’s faithfulness.

As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.
Psalm 71:14

Your church might not have a special testimony service, but you can still have your own testimony time with God (and maybe invite loved ones). Think about your current struggles and then think about how you have seen God work in your life in the past. You could also sing or listen to Martin Luther’s famous hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” inspired in part by our psalm today.

As new students arrive today on the Chicago campus for orientation, we ask that you pray for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts throughout the semester and to give them guidance and encouragement.
Hope in God’s Love and Forgiveness

One axiom followed by mountain climbers is “trust your equipment.” Especially when rappelling, a climber must put her confidence in an anchor point, ropes, and knots, with the anchor being the most important. As one climbing guide said, “Since rappelling puts your well-being entirely at the mercy of the technical system that you have established, if any point of the system fails you are likely going to be injured (or worse).”

For the next week we’re going to study the location of our hope. What is our anchor point? On what are we depending? Whom can we trust with our lives?

Our psalm today contains some of the most beautiful promises in Scripture. First, as we’ve seen already this month, we can go to the Lord even when we are at our lowest moments, and He hears our cry (vv. 1–2). Second, God knows all about our sins—and He still offers us forgiveness and the opportunity to be in relationship with Him (vv. 3–4). Our Savior is not a spiritual tyrant or bully, keeping us subservient by dragging up our past failures. He releases us from shame so that we can praise and serve Him.

God is both all-powerful and all-loving (v. 7). If He had power without love, we might tremble before His judgment and condemnation. If He had love without power, we might worry that He could not deliver on His promises to save. But His love never fails and His power never weakens, making Him the only anchor we can trust with our lives. He is able to redeem all our sin and suffering into something beautiful that brings Him glory. This is the secure location of our hope, and we can wait with confidence for Him to deliver us.

Apply the Word

Sometimes we neglect the practice of confession, but it is a wonderful reminder of the location of our hope. Confess your sins to God and thank Him for His forgiveness and freedom. He has the power to forgive and the willingness to forgive because He loves us. Confession allows us to hope, to serve, and to praise Him.

Pray with Us

Today, please join us in prayer for Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship. His team establishes lasting relationships with Moody donors and he will appreciate your prayer for good teamwork and communication.

Read: Psalm 130

Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

Psalm 130:7
Sunni extremists sometimes called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) made headlines in 2014 when they began torturing and beheading religious minorities, including Christians. They destroyed churches and dispersed Christian communities in Iraq that had worshiped for centuries. Where is the hope for the Christians in Iraq? Ara Badalian, pastor of Baghdad Baptist Church, says small signs of hope can be found—his congregation continues to share the gospel and build bridges with moderate Muslims. “We are afraid of the end of the Christian faith in Iraq . . . but we have hope.”

As long as they are still there, God has work for them to do as His witnesses in a devastated region.

Pastor Badalian can relate to the story of the prophet Jeremiah. Called to be a witness for God at a time when no one wanted to hear the news about repentance and a restored relationship with God, the prophet found himself tortured and ostracized (see Jeremiah 38). He had to live through the destruction of his country and see God’s people carried into exile. The invasion, siege, and destruction chronicled in Jeremiah 52 inspired the prophet to write the book of Lamentations, an extended lament over the fate of Jerusalem and its people.

Our passage for today comes right in the middle of the book, in the midst of an outcry of sorrow and horror. In that context, how can Jeremiah declare that “the Lord is good” (v. 25)? It’s because Jeremiah also knew where to put his hope: God’s faithfulness to keep His promises. Hope provides perspective—the situation is dire, but they are not completely consumed (v. 22). God still has compassion. He still has a witness, a remnant, left in His beloved city. And ultimately He would deliver His people from captivity (v. 31).

Apply the Word

Take time today to pray for Christians facing persecution across the world, especially in Iraq and Syria. Pray that their hope in God’s faithfulness will remain strong. Pray that God will bless their witness for Him with their neighbors and communities. Pray that their experience of suffering and faith will inspire the rest of us to trust more in the unfailing love of God.

Pray with Us

We value the connection with our donors and their support. Please uphold in prayer the ministry to Moody’s friends by Stewardship’s Planned Giving: Eric Beckman, Crystal Davis-Landrum, Stephen Kott, Kim Pickett, and Genesis Watkins.
One biblical scholar describes hope this way: “From a biblical perspective, hope may be best imaged as a line suspended between past experience of God’s reliability and a future that is still open, a line stretched taut between the reliability and the freedom of Israel’s God.” The greatest demonstration of God’s reliability is Jesus: the Son of God who willingly became fully man, who suffered an unjust death by crucifixion, and who was vindicated by God in the resurrection. What a wonderful example for our own hope!

Our reading today is from the introduction of Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica. Throughout these verses Paul unpacks the multiplying nature of hope in Jesus. The Thessalonians had been persecuted since they had accepted Jesus (v. 6). But despite their suffering, they were enduring “inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). When the Thessalonians looked at Jesus, they saw that He had suffered and been resurrected, and with Him as their model they too could continue to hope.

The hope of the Thessalonians was inspired by the example of Jesus, and then their own lives and hope became encouraging examples for others (v. 7). This is the power of hope in Jesus: not only does it strengthen our own endurance in the spiritual life, it also provides a witness of God’s power for others to see.

Finally, notice the specific hope in Jesus that produced faithful obedience. The Thessalonians had embraced faith in the living God, and the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of His return and ultimate deliverance to live with Him kept them motivated to love and serve the Lord. Jesus endured suffering—and so did they. Jesus had been resurrected to eternal life—and so would they. What a basis for hope!

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for our hope—not just the theology we believe but also the hope that inspires our daily lives and sustains us in difficult days. Without the resurrection of Jesus, we Christians should be pitied (see 1 Cor. 15:19). But because our hope is in Jesus’ victory over death, we know that our work for God is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).
God promised Abraham a land and many descendants—but decades passed and it didn’t look like either promise was going to come true. But just when Abraham was resigned to naming his servant as his heir, the Lord showed Abraham the stars in the sky and said, “So shall your offspring be” (Gen. 15:5). The New Testament says, “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him” (Rom. 4:18).

As we’ve seen throughout this month, hope is not a passive wish. Hope actively makes choices based on our trust in the promises of God. Abraham’s hope—even against all hope—blossomed into the birth of a nation chosen and blessed by God. Through Abraham, Jesus was born, the promised blessing that would come to all nations. In fact, our passage today declares that Jesus Himself is the location of hope for all people.

The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus with their question about healing on the Sabbath. Jesus not only upended their pious categories, His also extended healing mercy to the man with the withered hand (vv. 9–13).

Notice that Jesus’ acts of healing are cited as examples of how He was the fulfillment of the Servant described in Isaiah (see Isa. 42:1–4). He would not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick—Jesus knew how much people around Him were suffering and He responded in love and miraculous power (vv. 15, 20).

Jesus was the blessing to the nations promised to Abraham; He is the hope of the nations prophesied by Isaiah; and one day He will be worshiped by all the nations (Phil. 2:10–11). We can have hope because of His justice and tender mercy.

Apply the Word

When wars are raging, and children are dying from disease epidemics, and people pursue material possessions and pleasure, it can be challenging to remember that Jesus is still the hope of the nations. One way we can act on our hope is by praying for countries around the world. Operation World provides specific prayer tips for each nation at their website.

Pray with Us

On this first day of the spring semester, we’d like to pray for our undergraduate faculty from the Sports Ministry department: Dana Daly, Daniel Dunn, Christopher McHugh, and Jean Penfound. May God’s love and peace be with them throughout the year!
Hope Overflows from the Holy Spirit

In 1971, Durham, N.C., hosted a ten-day committee meeting about school desegregation. Two members of the committee had already expressed their hatred for one another: C. P. Ellis, a Grand Cyclops in the Ku Klux Klan, and Ann Atwater, a civil-rights activist. But halfway through their sessions, Ellis and Atwater began to talk about the suffering of poor children in Durham and realized they both cared more about educating children than they did about hating each other. On the last night, Ellis publicly stood and tore up his Klan membership card. He and Atwater remained friends for the next thirty years until his death in 2005; Atwater spoke at his funeral.

The apostle Paul confronted the prejudice and distrust that has plagued humanity, even people who are believers in Christ. In the specific context of our passage today, Paul energetically reminds the church in Rome that the gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles. He exhorts them to be “in one mind and one voice” in order to glorify God (v. 6).

Accepting the one who is different—the person we have marginalized or even hated—reveals the powerful work of Jesus in our hearts (v. 7). Paul expands on themes that we saw in our reading yesterday, and he articulates how Christ is the fulfillment of the promises to the Jews and prophecies about the Gentiles. Because He has offered salvation to all people, we should offer acceptance to all people. If Christ died for them, how can we then shun them?

Paul concludes by rooting this in our trust in God. The Spirit works in our hearts to “overflow”—to go above and beyond what we would be naturally inclined toward. This hope allows us to trust in God and obey Him by welcoming others into our community.

You may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 5:13

Apply the Word

In an interview, Ann Atwater reflected on her friendship with Ellis: “If I look back at it through my Bible, through God’s work, God had a plan for both of us.” Hope from the Holy Spirit allows us to take extraordinary action to welcome others. You can start by making a list of people or groups that you oppose and resolving to pray specifically for them on a regular basis.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, invites you to pray for the Operations employees on our Chicago campus. Employees, students, and guests appreciate the good care they take of the infrastructure of Moody’s property.
God’s Word Provides Hope

In the play Shadowlands, the character of C. S. Lewis remarks, “We read to know we’re not alone.” Literature fans can relate to this sentiment—and hopefully so do all Christians. Whatever other kinds of reading we might enjoy, our study of Scripture should constantly remind us that we are not alone. Even if all other friends forsake us, God is still there.

This is just one reason that our hope is strengthened through the Word of God. Psalm 119 is often described as a formal poem (an acrostic) that meditates on the glories and wonders of God’s Word. Our passage today gives us several examples of ways that Scripture provides us with hope.

First, it reveals God’s promise of love and salvation, and this strengthens us during times of testing (vv. 41–42). Second, God’s Word tells us how we can obey and glorify God, which gives us the freedom to have confidence in God instead of groveling before powerful people (vv. 43–48).

Third, Scripture affirms that God does care about our suffering, and His promise of deliverance gives us hope when we are struggling (vv. 49–50). Fourth, God’s Word reminds us that God sees the actions of the wicked and He will be their Judge. Even when we are oppressed, we have hope that the Lord sees and will make all things right (vv. 51–53).

Finally, the Word of God is a constant companion for us, offering us the opportunity to hear from the Lord whether it is morning or night, whether we are alone or in a crowd, whether the circumstances are wonderful or woeful (vv. 54–56). What a treasure we have been given in the Bible!

My comfort in suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.
Psalm 119:50

Apply the Word

Think through your own list of reasons you are thankful and hopeful because of Scripture. You might even follow the example of the psalmist and compose an acrostic poem as a praise offering to the Lord. If you keep a spiritual journal, record some of your thoughts; it will encourage you the next time you need a reminder of the hope found in God’s Word.

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the Facilities Maintenance department whose service, though behind the scenes, is still evident every day. Today, may God bless John Addison, Thomas Addison, Edgardo Bartolome, Carl Bjerga, and Troy Bilow.
Shouldn’t Bathsheba share a part of the blame in David’s moral failure in 2 Samuel 11 since she was bathing outside, attracting David’s attention? Would you please clarify this issue for me?

No, Bathsheba shares no blame in this matter; she was the victim of the king’s sexual abuse. David was Israel’s greatest king. The Bible says David was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). David is one of my personal heroes. Sadly, 2 Samuel 11 is the story of David’s tremendous moral failure. David knew that Bathsheba was a married woman; he knew that she was married to a man who was part of his inner circle, one of his most valiant warriors (2 Sam. 11:3). But the narrator says David took Bathsheba (v. 4). He took her as if she were just an object to be used. David, therefore, committed more than adultery—he abused his power.

Did God forgive David for what he did to Bathsheba and her husband?

Yes, after Nathan confronted David on the Lord’s behalf, David confessed his sin. Then God forgave David (2 Sam. 12:13), but the consequences of his sin followed him for the rest of his life. In fact, the rest of 2 Samuel up to the end of chapter 20 deals with the consequences of David’s sin in his life and family.

In John 2:4 Jesus responds to his mother’s indirect request, “Woman, why do you involve me? My hour is not yet come.” I am troubled by our Lord’s response to His mother. It seems rude. Is it?

Through 21st-century Western cultural eyes and ears, our Lord’s response to His mother does seem abrupt, rude, and enigmatic. I could live to be 900 billion years old, and I would never respond to my mother’s request with words like that! But in the ancient world’s cultural context, the word woman was a term of respect and endearment. Our Lord’s response is respectful.

But there is a mild rebuke here. When Jesus says to Mary, “My time has not yet come,” the Lord is referring to the time of His death on the cross, His resurrection from among the dead, and His ascension to heaven. As He moved toward this destiny for which He came into the world, He was on God the Father’s calendar. He had to follow God the Father’s timing, plan, and purpose.

What did Ruth mean when she said to Boaz, “Spread the corner of your garment over me, Continued on next page
since you are a guardian redeemer for our family” (Ruth 3:9)?

“Spread the corner of your garment over me” is a biblical way of saying “marry me.” Ruth recognized that Boaz was not merely an eligible bachelor, but a kinsman redeemer, a close relative with family responsibilities and obligations of redemption that flowed out of this relationship. Ruth appealed to Boaz as a kinsman redeemer, thinking not only of herself but also of her mother-in-law. Ruth says to Boaz essentially: “Marry me, redeem me, and spread your covering of protection over me. Fulfill your caring obligations to me.” Ruth proposes to Boaz! Now I must quickly say to every single woman reading this answer: this should not be interpreted as a biblical formula for the way to get a husband! It might not work to take that brother you’ve been looking at out to dinner and ask him to marry you. Ruth’s initiative was blessed by God, and she recognized the particular circumstances that she was in and acted accordingly.

The Lord instructs us to “be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (Luke 12:15). What exactly is greed?

Greed is not merely the desire to possess more than one has; greed is the desire to possess more than one ought to have, especially what belongs to someone else. Greed is a form of idolatry because greed gives objects and things a place that only God should have in our hearts. Greed says that it’s not enough just to have our needs met! Greed is a fundamental discontentment with what we have.

Greedy people think that every solution is more of this and more of that. The “get more attitude” comes in many forms, some of them respectable. It expresses itself in many ways: investing funds that the Lord gave us in get-rich-quick schemes, impulse buying, gambling, hoarding, etc. Hence the imperative, “be on your guard against all kinds of greed.” The force of the verb means “to guard oneself against, to take action to ward off the foe” of greed. The verbal expression “be on guard” is in the present tense. Being on guard against greed should be a habitual attitude of our hearts.

Why does Jesus command us to be on guard against greed?

Jesus commands us to be on guard against greed because “life does not consist of an abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15). The essence of life is not determined by what we own. Our Lord’s rationale for refusing greed is a profound theological and philosophical statement that goes against the grain of our 21st-century materialistic culture and mindset.
God’s Plans for Our Future

A group of graduate students discussed how their parents felt about their academic plans. “My parents said they would support me for two years, but then I better get a job,” said one. “Mine think a graduate degree in history is a waste of time, but they just want me to be happy,” said another. A third student spoke up: “Happy? I don’t think my parents ever considered my happiness. They want me to be a successful physicist, so here I am.”

Parents have hopes and dreams for their children, but they can’t control all the events in the world and can’t see the future. Our heavenly Father, however, is both sovereign and loving. He does have plans for our future, and He can also bring that future into existence. What a wonderful foundation for our hope.

This is our third encounter this month with the prophet Jeremiah. The golden strands of hope that thread throughout his story of weeping and doom should remind us that our hope in God can remain constant through any circumstance. In fact, our hope might shine brightest against the backdrop of the darkest times.

In our passage today, Jeremiah is writing to the exiles who are already in Babylon. False prophets told them to resist the Babylonians—they would be going home any day now! God reassured them that He was still watching over His people, but they should settle down and build lives in Babylon. Their exile would end and He would bring them back to Jerusalem—but not for another seventy years (v. 10).

Then God reminds them of His wonderful promise to give them a future and hope. He wanted them to love Him with all their hearts (v. 13). And He would bring this glorious promise into reality.

Apply the Word

Are you worried about the future? Are you frustrated by your present circumstances? Do you think everything depends on your own plans? This passage reminds us that our hope lies in God’s plans for our future. Commit your worry and frustration and control to Him and ask Him to guide you. This is an example of trusting Him with all your heart and life.

Pray with Us

Facilities Maintenance staff work hard to make our Chicago campus a welcoming environment for everyone who comes here. Vincent Camera, Justin Fisk, Paul Heggeland, and Matthew Morris thank you for prayers for safety and efficiency in the workplace.
In Idaho, it’s illegal for a man to give his fiancée a box of candy weighing more than fifty pounds. In Oklahoma, it’s illegal to have a donkey sleeping in your bathtub after 7 p.m. And in Quitman, Georgia, it’s illegal for chickens to cross the road.

Of course, many of these outdated laws still on the books are disregarded. Such a trial would be ridiculous! In our passage today, the apostle Paul claims that the reason that he has been put on trial is just as ludicrous: he is on trial for hope.

In order to understand Paul’s claim, some background context is helpful. Paul had arrived in Jerusalem and undergone the purification rituals required to enter the temple. But a group of Jews from Asia spotted him and incited a crowd with the (false!) charge that Paul had brought Gentiles into the temple. A Roman military commander saved Paul from their attempted assassination and took him to the barracks. The Roman commander then brought Paul before the chief priests and Sanhedrin to try to get to the bottom of the conflict (see Acts 21–22).

Paul’s defense didn’t get off to a good start—after only one sentence the chief priest accused him of lying and had him struck on the mouth (vv. 1–2). The religious leaders were primarily angry about Paul’s ministry with Gentiles, but notice that Paul didn’t address that charge directly. Instead, he went to the heart of the issue: he was on trial for the hope of the resurrection of the dead (v. 6). The Pharisees believed in the resurrection and were willing to hear more, but the Sadducees did not and the ensuing argument grew violent (vv. 6–10). The Lord confirmed Paul’s message, however. He had been faithful in Jerusalem, and He would be faithful in Rome.

For the next week we are going to study how our hope is based on the resurrection of Jesus. This truth changed Paul’s entire life—but not everyone understood or welcomed it. People around us may find our hope confusing or even threatening. Pray today for courage to stand before the people who question your witness for Jesus, and remember that the Lord is standing near you.

As we come to God, we acknowledge Moody’s dependence on His provision in everything. Your prayers are important for Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, as you uphold his role and responsibilities in managing Moody’s finances.
The Rev. Huang Yizi was arrested August 2, 2014, in the city of Wenzhou in eastern China. He had criticized the official government demolition campaign targeting churches and other houses of worship, but he was charged with organizing a crowd and “gathering to assault a State organ.” The Chinese government uses these trumped-up charges to tamp down protests. Pastor Huang faces a decade of imprisonment if convicted.

Those in power often use trumped-up charges to try to maintain order, as the apostle Paul could attest. Following his testimony before the Sanhedrin that we read yesterday, he was sent to the city of Caesarea and held for over two years while successive governors tried to figure out what to do with him (see Acts 25:25−27). Our reading today is Paul’s testimony before Herod Agrippa.

Festus, the current governor, had already told Agrippa that the dispute between Paul and the Sanhedrin was “about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive” (Acts 25:19). Paul confirmed that this was the heart of the argument, and throughout his testimony he repeatedly links the resurrection of Jesus with hope.

Paul asserted that his hope rested on God’s promises to the Jews, and that the resurrection of Jesus is the culmination of those promises (vv. 6−7). The Sanhedrin claimed that the idea of Jesus’ resurrection contradicted Jewish beliefs, but Paul noted that in fact this was consistent with “what the prophets and Moses said would happen” (v. 22). The promised Messiah would suffer, rise from the dead, and bring the message of forgiveness and reconciliation to both Jews and Gentiles (v. 23). The promises to Abraham and David had been kept. God’s Word was true. The resurrection was proof, and so Paul could have hope.

**Apply the Word**

In Acts 22–26, Paul presents his testimony three different times. His statements include appeals to Scripture as well as his own experience of transformation by Jesus. How has your hope been strengthened from God’s promises in His Word as well as the ways you’ve seen Him work in your life? These are powerful witnesses to the hope we have in Jesus.

**Pray with Us**

Please support in prayer our Financial Aid Office—Eugenia Jones, Alan Mincy, and Heather Shalley—as they work hard to provide quality service that meets the needs of Moody students in Chicago.
A British missionary recounted a story from a Syrian Christian woman who had received a terrible phone call. The phone number was her fiancé, but when she answered it wasn’t his voice. Instead, a man said, “I just killed your fiancé. He said he was a Christian. But I prepared to kill him—and Jesus didn’t save him.” Through heartbroken tears the woman said “You’re wrong. Jesus had already saved him. You think you’ve killed him, but you can’t kill eternal life.”

We’ve already seen the biblical connection between hope and the resurrection of Jesus, and Scripture draws out some of the implications for our hope. In our reading today, Paul’s letter to Titus, we see how the hope of eternal life forms a central part of the Christian identity. Paul’s greetings echo his testimony before Agrippa that we saw yesterday: the hope of eternal life is possible because of God’s promises and His character (v. 2). God’s intention was always for us to have eternal life in relationship with Him, and He has made that possible through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. We have a firm foundation for this hope!

Notice the work of the three Persons of the Trinity in securing our hope. First, God the Father is good and loving, and He saved us because of His amazing mercy (vv. 4–5). Second, God the Son became our Savior from sin, giving us the gift of justification and right relationship with God (vv. 6–7). Third, the Holy Spirit is “poured out on us generously” to renew us (vv. 5–6). We are “heirs having the hope of eternal life”—not because we are so wise or enlightened or pious or well-behaved, but because God in the fullness of Trinity has made it so. God has already done the work of justification, continues to do the work of renewal, and we have the hope that He will also fulfill the work of bringing us into eternal life.

Apply the Word

Our hope of eternal life in the future is secure because of what God has already done for us in the past. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have worked and are working for you! Spend time today in thanks and praise to the Lord for His love, mercy, kindness, salvation, deliverance, renewal, grace—and the hope of eternal life.

Pray with Us

Please mention in your prayers senior vice president of Media, Greg Thornton. Pray that, as we start this year, the Lord would guide his service of leading Moody Radio and Moody Publishers, an important area of Moody’s ministry.
Living Hope

On July 22, 2013, the world’s attention was captivated by an announcement from Buckingham Palace: “Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge was safely delivered of a son at 4:24 p.m. today. Her Royal Highness and her child are both doing well.” Prince George became third in line to succeed his great-grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II; he was born into the hope of becoming the monarch of the sixteen Commonwealth realms.

Scripture reminds us that we have been given a new birth into a living hope. Peter places this truth as bookends at the beginning and end of our passage today. As we have seen in our other readings this month, our hope is made possible through the resurrection of Jesus (v. 3). This hope is accompanied by imperishable inheritance (v. 4). Both this hope and our promised inheritance help to sustain us through trials and difficult days, because we have the confidence that God’s Word is true (vv. 5–9).

The life of Prince George will be shaped around his future inheritance as king, and in the same way our lives should be shaped around our living hope and promised inheritance as the children of God. Hope is not a passive feeling but rather an active motivation to live holy lives that glorify God. We are called to obedience to the Lord and called to love one another (v. 22). Hope motivates us to study Scripture and empowers us to change our desires to please God.

Peter concludes this section by repeating the source of this living hope. All of this is possible only through Jesus. Our relationship with God is only possible through His death and resurrection (v. 21). He has secured our inheritance and given us a hope that is alive and active.

Apply the Word

We can’t choose to be born into a royal family. But thankfully God has chosen us to be born again into His family! If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and the only way to be in relationship with God, make today the day that you receive new life and living hope! Welcome Him into your life.

Pray with Us

Today, join us in prayer for the Engineering Services staff, Rodney Simon and Mark Williams. Thank God for their contribution to the quality of Moody Radio programs and ask for God’s joy as they serve our listeners.
The prophet Ezekiel was taken to the valley of dry bones—a place of death. He was instructed to prophesy to these dried-up bones with no life in them, and as he did, sinew and muscle and skin and finally breath came to the bones, bringing them back from death to life. The people had cried out, “Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone.” But God replied, “I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them” (Ezek. 37:11–12).

The connection between hope and resurrection is not limited to the resurrection of Jesus. God has also promised to raise us up from the dead! The testimony of Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, is that death will not have the final victory over God’s people.

This does not mean that Scripture ignores or trivializes death. Far from it—death is the enemy, the curse, the weapon that separates bodies from spirits and loved ones from one another. Our sorrow and pain and loss at the death of a loved one is real.

But our grief is not the end of the story, for we also have hope (v. 13). Because Jesus was resurrected, we have the assurance that we will be resurrected, too (v. 14). Our loved ones who precede us in death will one day be clothed with new bodies and reunited with us, and we will all be “with the Lord forever” (v. 17).

Just as God promised to give new life to the dry bones in Ezekiel’s prophecy, so too will He restore new life for our dead bodies, restoring His creation so that we can dwell in His presence. This hope allows us to offer encouragement in the face of death, for we know that death is not the final word (v. 18).

You do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.
1 Thessalonians 4:13

You do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.
1 Thessalonians 4:13

Apply the Word

In his hymn “If Death My Friend and Me Divide,” Charles Wesley wrote, “I feel a strong immortal hope, / Which bears my mournful spirit up / Beneath its mountain load; / Redeemed from death, and grief, and pain, / I soon shall find my friend again / Within the arms of God.” If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, be encouraged that we have hope in God’s resurrection promise.

Pray with Us

George Economos in Moody Radio’s Marketing and Development welcomes your prayers today. We appreciate everything he is doing to increase the effectiveness of Moody Radio for the glory of God.
Blessed Hope of Jesus’ Return

For centuries, a Jewish marriage ceremony consisted of multiple stages that could last several years. The betrothal was the first step, in which a groom agreed to pay a dowry to the bride’s father. The groom then typically had a year (and in some cases up to seven years) to complete the payment. During this betrothal period the couple were considered legally married, but they were not permitted to live together until the dowry had been paid in full. When the groom had fulfilled his obligation, he could come to claim his bride from her father’s house to finalize the marriage ceremony. Brides were expected to be ready and waiting for the groom to appear at any time.

Our reading from Paul’s letter to Titus reminds us that as Christians we are waiting “for the blessed hope,” which is the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). He has promised to return (see John 14:3), and we know His promises are true.

As we’ve seen throughout Scripture, our hope may be patient, but it is not passive. The concept of “waiting” in this text does not mean sitting around with our hands folded, wishing that Jesus would return. Instead, this hope motivates us to “live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:12). Our hope in Jesus’ return is demonstrated by our eagerness to live in a way that reflects His character.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins expands on this notion of expectant hope. The five foolish bridesmaids were unprepared and passive. The five wise bridesmaids had to wait just as long, and they had the same information as their foolish friends. The difference was that they were prepared to wait expectantly; their actions demonstrated their readiness and hope.

**Apply the Word**

How has your “blessed hope” in the return of Jesus made a difference in your life? He could come at any time—which should affect the choices that we make in our lives each day. Ask the Lord to help you be expectant and prepared like the wise bridesmaids, with “eagerness to do good” that brings glory to His name (Titus 2:14).

**Pray with Us**

Today, let’s be in prayer for the faculty, staff, and students of Moody Theological Seminary headed by Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean. Pray that those beginning their degree program this semester would grow in biblical knowledge.
Renewed Strength

Rick Hoyt was 15 years old when he told his father, Dick, that he wanted to participate in a 5-mile run to support an injured student-athlete. But Rick has cerebral palsy and is confined to a wheelchair—so Dick agreed to push his son so that he could race. They finished next to last. That night, Rick told his father, “Dad, when I’m running, it feels like I’m not handicapped.” Dick committed to race again with his son and Team Hoyt was born. Over the past 37 years they have completed over 1,000 races—including marathons and triathlons—together.

For the rest of our study this month, we’re going to examine what Scripture says about the results of hope. We have already seen that hope in God will shape the way we live, but the Bible also describes significant benefits and blessings that flow from hope in the Lord.

Our passage today opens with God’s declaration that He is beyond compare—He alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (vv. 25–26). As the old saints in the church used to say, “God is God all by Himself!” This is not a mere theological point. God is specifically addressing the charge that He had forgotten His people (v. 27). On the contrary, God is the One who delivers and saves!

The beautiful poetry of these verses has inspired people for generations. God, the omnipotent Creator who never grows weary or uninterested, is willing to give power and strength to us when we are faint and on the verge of collapse (vv. 28–29). Our hope in Him results in renewed strength to go on despite our circumstances. God offers us abundant resources so that we can run the race laid out before us (see Heb. 12:1).

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
Isaiah 40:31

Apply the Word

What race has God laid out for you? It might not be an actual marathon, but perhaps it is the challenge of loving a difficult family member, or being faithful in an unrewarding job, or dealing with a chronic health condition. Whatever the race, God has promised that your hope in Him will yield endurance and strength to continue!

Pray with Us

Paul Currie and Joe Forrider in Donor Communications oversee Moody’s print and online communications with our donors. Would you pray for the Lord’s encouragement and grace for them and their part-time assistants in their day-to-day responsibilities?

Read: Isaiah 40:25–31

Thursday, January 22

Renewed Strength

Paul Currie and Joe Forrider in Donor Communications oversee Moody’s print and online communications with our donors. Would you pray for the Lord’s encouragement and grace for them and their part-time assistants in their day-to-day responsibilities?
Deliverance from Judgment

The nation was horrified by a vicious attack on a female jogger in New York City’s Central Park in 1989. Five boys, the oldest only 16 years old, were apprehended, charged, and convicted. But in 2002, another man who was in prison for a series of murders and brutal rapes confessed that he was in fact the attacker. No physical evidence was found connecting the boys to the crime, and they were exonerated.

Last year a judge approved a settlement that compensated the young men nearly $1 million for each year they were unjustly incarcerated.

Job felt like he was suffering unjustly, and he was not very happy about it. This passage is part of his response to his friend Zophar, who argued that Job’s circumstances clearly indicated that he was being punished, and if he were being punished then obviously he had done something wrong (see Job 11).

Job knew that Zophar was wrong—but he didn’t actually know why he was experiencing such devastating suffering. The reader knows about the exchange between God and Satan in Job 1, but Job didn’t.

Rather than continue to argue the case for his righteousness before his unhelpful friends, Job wanted to bring his case before God (v. 3). Notice that Job connects his hope in God with his deliverance, and the connecting thread is God’s character. He knew that God is just. He knew that God is holy and cannot allow impurity into His presence. Therefore, if he was able to argue his case before God, the fact of being allowed into God’s presence was vindication that Job was righteous and his suffering was not a punishment. Because God is just, He will vindicate Job (v. 16). This gave Job the confidence to proclaim, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (v. 15).

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.

Job 13:15

Apply the Word

Christians around the world suffer from injustice. Many will never be vindicated in this life. This is why the message of Job is so important: Hope in God’s character does bring deliverance—in God’s time and in His way (see Job 19:25–27). Pray for persecuted Christians in Iran, North Korea, and Sudan, that their hope in God will remain strong.

Pray with Us

Natoshia Portis serves as Catering and Special Events coordinator on Moody’s Chicago campus. Please include her ministry of hospitality in your prayer time today. May it be a blessing to Moody’s employees and visitors.
Boasting in God

The Perth Mint in Australia describes the process used to refine gold from ore into gold bars for the market. The mines produce an alloy that is around 80 percent gold and 15 percent silver called dore. These dore bars are then subjected to the Miller process, in which chlorine gas is bubbled through the molten bars. The chlorine reacts with the silver to form a slag on top that can be removed. This process can produce gold that is 99.5 percent pure. If greater purity is desired, the gold then goes through an electrolytic refining process using hydrochloric acid and electric current to produce gold that is 99.99 percent pure.

Our passage today provides an overview of the spiritual refining process in our lives. Since our focus is on hope, notice first that our hope that is rooted in the glory of God is our only cause for boasting (v. 2). Verse 11 repeats this theme: we bring nothing to table worth bragging over. Only God’s work in us through Jesus is worth boasting or celebrating.

Second, hope is the product of the spiritual refining process. Suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance produces character. And character produces hope (vv. 3–4). This hope rejoices in the love of God, a love so amazing that God initiated the saving work of sending Jesus to die for us when we were hopeless, powerless sinners (vv. 5–9)!

Even the smallest grasp of understanding of this kind of love helps us to have hope in the good plan of God when we are suffering. If He sent Jesus to die for us, then surely He will not abandon us. Just as Jesus “was raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25), so too does God use our suffering to purify us and strengthen our hope.

Apply the Word

The praise song “Awesome God” by Rich Mullins has been a favorite of Christians around the world. It’s good to boast in God! Think about ways that God has been awesome in your life. How has He refined you and strengthened your hope? Praise Him today, perhaps through a song or a prayer or a journal entry, for His overwhelming love.

Pray with Us

Our Legal department under the leadership of vice president and general counsel, Janet Stiven, is an integral part of the Moody family. We’d like to express gratitude to God for their integrity, professionalism, and Christian character.

Read: Romans 5:1–11
Faith, Hope, and Love

After 1 Corinthians 13 was read during a wedding ceremony, one elderly man muttered to his wife, “Love’s all right, but if they really want to stay married they better have hope. If I didn’t keep hoping that your cooking would improve, I might not be sitting here today!”

This famous text is often read at weddings, and of course the emphasis throughout this chapter is on love. It falls in the middle of Paul’s exhortation to the church in Corinth about the use (and their abuse) of spiritual gifts and worship in chapters 11, 12, and 14. In the first three verses, Paul reminds them that all the showy demonstrations of gifts are worthless without love.

Spiritual gifts are not bad—far from it! But they are given for our time here on earth while we are still waiting to be fully present with God. When we “know fully,” we will no longer need to exercise spiritual gifts to edify one another (v. 12). Faith, hope, and love are far more valuable than spiritual gifts, for they exist both now and in the future when we dwell in the presence of God.

This is not the only time that faith, hope, and love are linked in Scripture. We’ve seen this in our reading from 1 Thessalonians 1 (see Jan. 11). And Colossians 1:4–5 states, “We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven.” In one of the most memorable phrases of Scripture, this text asserts that love “always hopes” (v. 7). Love has a confident belief in the unseen reality, and love actively waits for the fullness of salvation promised by God.

Apply the Word

Have you ever wished you had a different spiritual gift? Have you thought that perhaps your gift didn’t matter as much as someone who was a pastor or missionary? The good news is that every one of us can have the gifts of faith, hope, and love. This is a wonderful yardstick for our spiritual growth: are our lives characterized by more hope and love now?

Pray with Us

Food Service employees provide nutritious meals to our Chicago campus students every day in Student Dining Room. Would you put on your prayer list the service of Rachel Campbell, Karen Davis, Gregory Dickson, Nathan Garrett, Vinh Hoang, and Hoa Lam?
Tupperware Home Parties were a substantial part of social and economic life for millions of American women for decades. Brownie Wise, vice president of marketing for Tupperware from 1951 to 1958, became the first woman on the cover of *Business Week* magazine in recognition of her skill at developing the social networking system of house parties to sell Tupperware products. Wise realized that an enthusiastic hostess was more effective than a store display in encouraging more women to buy Tupperware.

When you are excited about a product, it’s easier to tell someone else about it! And as Paul argues in our reading today, the more we know about God’s work for us, the more excited and confident we are. This knowledge informs our hope, which leads to greater boldness in our spiritual life.

This chapter is part of Paul’s extended discussion of his credentials and relationship with the church in Corinth. Notice that relationship is at the heart of our confidence: the Holy Spirit had written on the hearts of the Corinthians, transforming them into “letters” that revealed their identity in Christ. This wasn’t something that they could take credit for—it was initiated and executed by God (vv. 3–6). But because they were transformed through Christ, not their own efforts, they could have the confidence of Christ to be in relationship with God.

Next, Paul reminds us that our hope lies in the glory of being made right with God (vv. 9–12). Because of what Jesus did with His “ministry that brings righteousness” and the work of the Spirit to transform our hearts, we can have boldness and confidence with God! When we grasp that hope from being able to be in a relationship with God, our desire and enthusiasm to share it with others will overflow.

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**Apply the Word**

Society says you have to look a certain way, know the right people, make so much money, and achieve a kind of success. None of that compares to the confidence of knowing we are in a relationship with God, through the work of Jesus and the ministry of the Spirit. Celebrate that hope today by telling someone else about your relationship with the Lord.

**Pray with Us**

As we continue in prayer for the Food Service employees, please add Joseph Lee, Carlos Perez, Martin Rios, Jonathan True, Jeffery Williams, and Rebecca Williamson to your list. Pray for God’s guidance in creating menus and improving procedures.
Being in relationship brings with it certain privileges. For instance, being a mother means you get to be called “Mommy” and enjoy sticky kisses from your little one. Being a citizen of the United States means you get to vote and enjoy freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly.

Our relationship with God also brings certain privileges, as our passage today explains. The particular dimension of the relationship in this text is our status as heirs. We receive the inheritance that He promised, an inheritance of eternal rest with Him (see Hebrews 4). This promise is guaranteed by God Himself, God who cannot lie and who will not abandon His people.

Our status as heirs and the promise of eternal rest give us hope. This hope then produces two results in our lives: first, we are “greatly encouraged” (v. 18). The context of the book of Hebrews makes clear that the original readers were suffering. But encouragement comes from this hope in the coming rest, which is peace from oppression and joyful presence with God.

Second, this hope results in our secure confidence (v. 19). Like a ship securely moored by an anchor during a storm, we can experience the battering of life while still remaining anchored with confidence in our relationship with God. He has promised that rest will be coming. And so we can hold on through trials now because a glorious future awaits us.

The author uses a final image to remind us of our relationship with God: we are allowed in “the inner sanctuary behind the curtain” (v. 19), an allusion to the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and temple where God was enthroned. Only the high priest could enter once a year. But now, through Jesus, we can run directly to God with assurance that He cares for us (v. 20).

This passage inspired many hymns, including, “We have an anchor that keeps the soul / Steadfast and sure though the billows roll / Fastened to the Rock which cannot move / Grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.” “When darkness veils His lovely face, / I rest on His unchanging grace. / In every high and stormy gale, / My anchor holds within the veil.”

It’s our privilege to pray for Moody Distance Learning, headed by vice president and dean, Dr. James Spencer. We praise God for online courses and new degrees at MDL that give the opportunity for students anywhere to receive a Moody education.
A team of researchers published “Talking yourself out of exhaustion: the effects of self-talk on endurance performance” in the May 2014 issue of the journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise. They found that athletes who repeated positive messages when they felt tired were able to participate in an endurance activity 18 percent longer than athletes who did not. “Exhaustion is caused by the conscious decision to terminate endurance exercise, as opposed to muscle fatigue,” the researchers concluded.

A similar principle is true in our spiritual lives. When we are tired, when life is hard, when we wonder if following Jesus is really worth it, we need encouragement to persevere. We have access to resources that are even better than “self talk,” as our passage today explains.

This text picks up the thread that we saw yesterday in Hebrews 6. We are in a relationship with God through Jesus that gives us access to His presence (v. 19). But while we are waiting for our eternal rest, the challenges of being a Christian threaten to derail us. The original audience for this letter had been insulted, persecuted, imprisoned, and lost property (vv. 32–34). They were considering whether it was worth it to hold on to faith.

The author mentions several results of our hope that help encourage us. First, we remember that God is faithful (vv. 23, 36). Second, we meet with other believers to remember that we are not alone in this journey (vv. 24–25). Third, we know the dire consequences of rejecting the Lord (vv. 26–31). Fourth, we have the examples of God’s help for us and other faithful believers in the past (v. 32). And finally, we remember our identity as the children and heirs of God, and we persevere in living out our faith and following Jesus (v. 39).

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.
Hebrews 10:23

**Apply the Word**

Sharing our Christian life with other believers is a vital way to encourage us to faithfully continue in obedience to God. Attending church to worship and hear God’s Word preached strengthens our hope; meeting with others in Sunday school, small groups, or Bible studies allows us to share our struggles with others and help to “carry each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2).

**Pray with Us**

Please join us in praying for Darcey Christianson, Kelli Thompson, Ray Hashley, Tom Winn, and Linda Yeager at Moody Radio Indiana broadcasting from Anderson, IN. Thank God for leading these talented and committed people to Moody Radio.

Read: Hebrews 10:19–39

Wednesday, January 28

**Perseverance**
Adoption to Sonship

Mark and Tracy were unable to have children, and they explored adoption. At first, Mark insisted that they only consider adopting a girl. “I just don’t know if I could give my family name to a boy when he’s another man’s son,” he explained. But then the social worker asked if they would consider adopting a boy born to a heroin-addicted mother—and Mark knew this was the child God had for them. They named their son William Jonathan after both of their fathers. “We gave him family names because he is our son—our family,” Mark said.

In the ancient world, the status of being a son had great legal and material benefits. Every Roman reader would know that Julius Caesar had adopted Octavian, who became known as Caesar Augustus and the inaugural emperor of Rome. Paul says that our adoption as sons is even better—it conveys benefits and status upon us far greater than even being a Roman emperor.

In this text our adoption is connected to our wait for the “redemption of our bodies” (v. 23). God cares about His creation, including our bodies, and He will transform them to be able to dwell with Him. Though we are already called the children of God (v. 14; 1 John 3:1), the fullness of our adoption will be completed after the return of Jesus when we finally live with God for eternity. Jesus is the “firstborn among many brothers and sisters,” and because of His resurrected life we can have hope for our own future with God (v. 29).

In the mean time, we wait patiently (v. 25) for the Lord’s timing. And we do not wait and hope alone—we have the Holy Spirit interceding for us and giving us strength (vv. 26–27).

We wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship.
Romans 8:23

Apply the Word

One way that the Holy Spirit encourages us is by bringing Scripture to our minds when we need it. If you haven’t already memorized Romans 8:31–39, consider devoting time to learning this passage. Millions of believers have held on to the hope of salvation through the witness of these wonderful verses. We have hope because nothing can separate us from God!

Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow please set aside some time to remember in prayer the staff of Moody Radio Southeast broadcasting the good news of Jesus Christ from Chattanooga, TN. Today, our prayer goes to God for Paul Martin, Jason McKay, and Kate Rhea.
When an athlete at the ancient Greek Panhellenic Games was victorious, he might be celebrated with an *epinikion*, or victory ode. A poet would compose lyrics to be sung by a chorus, and they would perform this song and dance to greet the champion’s return to his hometown. Some of these victory odes would also be performed every year on the anniversary of the athletic triumph.

Our key verse for the day is one of the great victory odes in Scripture. It is the culmination of this great chapter in which Paul painstakingly makes the argument for resurrection and concludes with this shout of triumph over the power of death. In our final two days this month, we’re going to examine how our hope comes from knowing the end of the story.

We’ve already explored the connection between resurrection and our hope, which this chapter also recounts in great detail. To sum up Paul’s argument, the resurrection of Jesus means that we can look forward to also being resurrected. The church in Corinth had been tempted by some Gnostic heresies that denied the value of the body, and they seemed to think that when believers die their souls go to be with God and their bodies are left to molder forever. Not true, Scripture declares. We, like Jesus, will have our bodies resurrected and transformed—changed—to be free from death and sin forever (vv. 51–56).

After this great doctrinal exposition and this exultant victory shout, we might expect Paul to say, “Therefore, since you have such a great hope, sit back and relax and think about all the good times ahead.” But Paul doesn’t say that. Instead, our hope in the victory over death transforms the way that we live now, not just our future. We can be confident that our work for God matters (v. 58).

**Apply the Word**

Our call to live in a way that pleases God is not simply about being good people or about making the world a better place or even just filling our days on earth with good deeds. Our life on earth matters because our life will continue into eternity. Our hope for the future shapes the way that we live today.

**Pray with Us**

As we keep in prayer Moody Radio Southeast, please include Brent Manion, David Morais, and Juanell Rice in your prayer list. Thank the Lord for the truth of the Bible broadcast by this station that makes a difference in thousands of lives.

*Read: 1 Corinthians 15*

**Victory over Death**

Friday, January 30

*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*

1 Corinthians 15:55
Two psychologists at UC San Diego have published research showing that people who read “spoilers”—information about what will happen in a story—actually end up enjoying a story more than people who don’t know what is going to happen.

As Christians, we already know the end of the story, and this helps inform and sustain our hope. Our passage today is like a sneak preview of the glories that await us, and reading these verses should inspire us to continue our spiritual journey with great joy.

The scene is almost too exquisite to absorb. No more curse! The river of the water of life flowing down the middle of the city! The healing of the nations! No more night! Worshiping and reigning with God! (vv. 1–5). All that we’ve been promised—deliverance from sin, resurrection, God’s faithfulness, full adoption as the children of God—all of this will come to pass.

While we are waiting in hopeful anticipation for this glorious day, we are to continue with lives that bring glory to God (vv. 10–15). God has not revealed the end of the story so that we will put up our feet and disregard this life now. On the contrary, God wants us to wait and hope actively; we are “to continue to be holy” (v. 11).

Finally, we are reminded that our hope is rooted in a personal relationship with God Himself and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His words are trustworthy and true. He is the “Beginning and the End” (v. 13). Jesus is coming soon, and the new heavens and new earth will be our eternal dwelling with God (see 2 Peter 3:13). This is reason for hope, and we say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (v. 20).

None of us know what will happen tomorrow or next week. But we know the One who holds the future, and we do know what the end of our story will be. Thank the Lord for showing us this glimpse of eternity to encourage us in our spiritual journey. How does this shape how you live today? It should fill us with praise and hope that spills over into every decision and interaction.

As we come to the end of our study this month, let’s thank the Lord for His love and His hope that never fail. And as we start the new year, we encourage you to continue praying with us in 2015!
Today in the Word

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**Java with Juli**

Pour yourself a cup of coffee and enjoy *Java with Juli*, a new conversational podcast by host Dr. Juli Slattery. Juli interviews guests in the cozy setting of a coffee shop and shares a woman’s perspective on the challenges of being a Christian woman in today’s world.

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Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. —Psalm 128:1

Need help bringing your life under God’s agenda?

It seems that everyone has an agenda. People have plans, programs, things they want to accomplish, and the way they want to accomplish them. God has an agenda too; something He wants to accomplish His way. It’s called the Kingdom Agenda.

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