

Hopeful or Hopeless?

"we have such a hope"
2 Corinthians 3:12 (NIV)

In his most popular book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankel wrote about being a prisoner in the dreaded Auschwitz death camp. He was a trained psychiatrist and a keen observer of human behaviour. His book has gone through close to a hundred printings and has been translated into several languages.

Frankel made one critical observation during those horrible years of starvation and beatings. He would see seemingly frail and delicate men go on and on without dying from their suffering. In other cases he saw men who were apparently physically healthy simply lie down and die. He was sure that no medical tests would ever prove a cause for the death of these seemingly healthy men. What was the difference?

This question haunted him as he studied the various cases in the death camp. Finally he found the answer to the situation. The missing ingredient in the healthy men who died was the matter of hope. As long as a prisoner had some hope of release and reunion with his loved ones he struggled to survive. But when the person decided that he was going to die in that dreadful place and never see freedom again, he simply let go of life and died.

Hope is the powerful ingredient that causes us to keep on in our journey of life. As long as we believe that there are better days

ahead we can endure the present. But if we think that the present is all there is to life then many people simply perish. We can be too occupied with our present sorrows to lift our eyes to the future.

Having something to look forward to is what keeps so many people going. I recall a very ill mother who had been advised by the doctors she had only a couple of weeks to live. Her daughter was going to be married in a few months time. That woman determined to be at the celebration of her daughter's special day and lived to see the young lady walk down the aisle. A couple of days later she passed away. It was the thought of the wedding that kept her going. Once that was passed she gave up and died.

Paul the Apostle describes people who do not know the Lord as those who were "without hope and without God in this world" (NIV) Eph. 2:12. All people have to live for in this life is what they can accumulate before dying. Their existence is solely made up of acquiring things for themselves and taking pleasure in their things. Death to them is shadowy and to be feared. Over the many years of attending dying people, Christian and non-Christian, I have only once witnessed a non-Christian die without fear. He just seemed indifferent to everything around him.

It was said of Christians during the early years of the church,

when Christians were thrown to the lions, "These Christians die well." I testify to the same as I attend to and minister to believers in Jesus. They are peaceful and serene as they come to the end of this life. The point is that true Christians do not have their hopes based on this life but rather on the next.

Believers see that this life is not our heaven. This life is the shadowland. Whatever we get or are denied in this life is of little consequence because of our hope for the future. In Col. 1:5 it says, "the hope that is stored up for you in heaven." (NIV)

Is this your future? Do you have such an outlook on things? If so you are filled with a hope that will allow you to absorb whatever life brings along to you. If you do not have this hope for the future you are likely to stumble and fall when life gets complicated and seems to crush you under its load.

In the Good News that Jesus came to produce for us there is an offer given to anyone who wishes, to come to Him and find life and life abundant. Why not turn to Him now and believe in His resurrection for His people and acknowledge Him as your Lord today? Then you will be at peace with the sorrows of life knowing what is coming in the future.

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