

LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE

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If we look at the news ... it is very depressing.

In the last few days: Terrorist attacks on Paris, Beirut, Mali, Russian aircraft ... killing all passengers. Today ... Paris and Brussels are both locked-down because of the threat of further terrorist activity.

There is an endless report of mindless killings ... hatred and violence in the world.

Then, if we are Christians we can see society around us ... the breakdown of marriages, homosexuals, decent values disappearing ... it does look like a very dark world that we live in.

If there is no God ... there wouldn't be any hope for mankind.

It seems like an endless onslaught of bad news after bad news after bad news. However ... the world has "been there before".

Genesis 6:5-7 (NKJV)

5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Evil, evil and more evil)

6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

7 So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

Thankfully, there was one man that stood out ... and so ... the world continued. This world will be like it was in the days of Noah.

So even God, Himself grieved at world conditions. It's no surprise if we also grieve from time to time.

Ezekiel 8:17 - 9:11 (NKJV)

17 **And He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. (complete disrespect to God)**

18 Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

Chapter 9

1 **Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand."**

2 **And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side.** They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side;

4 **and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."**

(Ezekiel 9:4 (Voice) Go through this city, yes Jerusalem, and put a mark on the forehead of all those who are grieved by the shocking things going on in the city.)

5 To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity.

6 Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the temple.

7 Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" And they went out and killed in the city.

(judgement is falling on those who have thumbed their nose at God)

8 So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left alone; and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, "Ah, Lord God! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?"

9 Then He said to me, "**The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity;** for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!'

10 And as for Me also, **My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head."**

11 **Just then, the man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn at his side, reported back and said, "I have done as You commanded me."**

So God appears to approve of those who grieve and lament over the sufferings and evil around them.

We should be uplifted by the sure future that we have. That confident assurance that everything works out alright in the end. We need to ensure that we never lose sight of our glorious future.

Today ... we will be reminded that there is a bright future ... especially during these difficult days. We have to be reminded of where we are ultimately going.

Revelation 21:2-4 (NKJV)

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (This is ultimately where we will be ... one day everything will be put right. In the end ... the very end ... it will all come good)

2 Peter 3:11-13 (NKJV)

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, (desiring earnestly, urging on ... by doing our part ...living Holy and Godly) because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

(we do have a promise of a new heaven and a new earth ... no evil, no harm, no corruption, no poverty, no politicians, no sickness, no disease ... RIGHTEOUSNESS DWELLS!!)

Titus 2:11-13 (NKJV)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,
13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, (as we live right ... we are looking for something ... our blessed hope ... a confident expectation ... some time off in the future ... and I'm looking forward to it)

Titus 2:13 (AMP)

13 Awaiting and looking for the [fulfillment, the realisation of our] blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One),

Romans 8:16-18 (NKJV)

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (We are joint heirs with Christ. What He has inherited, we will share with Him ... all things!! We have a great future.)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18-23 (NKJV)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the sonship, the redemption of our body. (Don't let today's circumstances get you down. Think of the future).

Romans 8:18-21 (Philips)

In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God's purpose it has been so limited—yet it has been given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God!

Romans 8:18-21 (Message)

18 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times.

19 The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next.

20 Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in

21 until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead.

Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NKJV)

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (God, Himself is guarding it)

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this (knowledge) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (Nowadays ... we are marginalised because of our beliefs)

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

Hebrews 2:5-10 (NKJV)

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying:

“What is man that You are mindful of him,

Or the son of man that You take care of him?

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels;

You have crowned him with glory and honor,

And set him over the works of Your hands.

8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things (Moffatt: universe) put under him. (under our jurisdiction)

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the

captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (one day ... we will be co-heirs with Jesus)

Today's issues shouldn't blind us to our glorious future.

Hebrews 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

Hebrews 11:8-16 (NKJV)

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker (architect) is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 **For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.**

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 **But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.** (they are looking for a heavenly city whose builder is The Almighty God)

Hebrews 11:24-26 (NKJV)

24 **By faith Moses**, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

25 **choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,**

26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; **for he looked to the reward.**

There are some who didn't see the future rewards. They looked at the here and now. That is something that we need to be careful about ... don't let circumstances interfere with our destiny with God

Genesis 25:29-34 (NKJV)

29 Now **Jacob** cooked a stew; and **Esau** came in from the field, and he was weary.

30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

31 But **Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."**

32 And **Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"**(Think of your future. Think what this means to you. Think. Think. Think.)

33 Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day."

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. **Thus Esau despised his birthright.** (He let today's problems deny him of is future)

Ecclesiastes 2:17-23 (NKJV)

17 **Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity (futile ... being a human being is a waste) and grasping for the wind.** (he had suicidal thoughts)

18 Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.

20 **Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.** (he despairs of life)

21 For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

22 For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?

23 **For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.**

Solomon totally took his mind off God. He didn't look to the reward. He just focused on the here and now. We are always at risk if we let our future vision grow dim. We have to keep our eyes where it matters.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 (NKJV)

8 **We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**

9 **persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—**

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,
that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake,
that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man
is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working
for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the
things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are
temporary, (subject to change) but the things which are not seen
are eternal.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NKJV)

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the
time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have
kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day,
and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Titus 2:11-13 (NKJV)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all
men,

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should
live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our
great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,

The bad news is not going to stop. All that we live with today is temporary. But ... irrespective of our personal lives and circumstances ... we can always remain positive.