



KEEP HOPE
WORKING
FOR YOU

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KEEP HOPE WORKING FOR YOU

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Psalm 42:11

ONE of the greatest thoughts your mind can ever deal with is the thought of hope - for hope tells you that there is no such thing as destruction or ultimate failure, as defeat. What a word!

Sometimes I think that city dwellers ought to have more contact with the country, with the beauty and wonder of nature, for God tries to tell human beings things through nature. Perhaps it is hard for you to get through amid sidewalks and buildings.

A good many years ago Mrs. Peale and I purchased a farm in Dutchess County, New York, and I am very grateful for it. We make a practice of going there on Friday and Saturday for sermon preparation. I can do a better job in the country than I can in the city, for life is free from interruption and is surrounded by simplicities.

One early spring day this year while walking around

a bit between times I saw nature at work. The snow drifts had only just left Dutchess County. But even before they were completely gone the tulips were coming up, as if they didn't understand that they shouldn't push themselves up in the midst of snow. That day they just covered the place. They hadn't blossomed yet, but they were up. And there were crocuses around the edges of tree trunks, coming up out of the dry grass. And the hillsides had a kind of a dark pink all over them, which meant there were multitudes of buds that were just coming forth.

On this farm we have an old apple tree. The tree man tells me it is over ninety years old. He, naturally, would like to cut it down, saying there is nothing more we can do for it. Tree men seem prone to cut trees down. Of course, I respect their profession highly, but if you take care of a tree, prune it and feed it and love it, it will do well. So I have never let them take this apple tree down, and they think I'm very foolish. At one time I am sure this tree had a diameter of about two feet, but now it might even have been three feet. It was a big old apple tree and it must have had a wide spread. Now there is only about a tenth of the trunk left - just a shell on one side and only a few branches reaching out from that. But I like this old tree. This year, after having more years and with practically all of it gone, what was it doing? Shouting that it was finished? Not on your life! It was putting out buds. I stood there and talked to it and said, "You foolish old tree, don't you know you should be dead?"

And it was as though it looked at me and answered "Whoseys it dead? Why, my good friend, don't you see, I'm putting out buds and there is an impulse of life, a surge of power, within me and I'm trying to live out my life. I'm a positive thinker, just living by hope."

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RECENTLY I talked with a man who, unlike that St. Paul again mentions hope in 1st Thessalonians. JLI apple tree, is not ninety years old, but I'd say Paul had a lot of trouble in his life, but hope around forty- although he's one of the oldest forty-year-olds I ever met in all my life. Seeing him on the street, I never died in him. He says we must put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet hope. In the ancient days one thing you had to protect in battle was your heart, the vital center. So you wore a breastplate, and over or over the, that provided a thickness of maybe an inch or three-quarters of an inch of metal. Every warrior also wore a helmet because he like wise had to protect his head. If they got to his head, that was the end of him. Similarly it is the end of you if life with its onslaughts takes the heart out of you and its onslaughts takes the heart out of you. Then you're dead so far as really living is concerned. So you should put on a helmet of hope. Then you can say to life: "Bring on all your troubles, bring on all your opposition, bring on all your problems and difficulties. I have hope. I will not yield, I will not give up. I will accomplish." Take the breastplate of love and faith and for a helmet hope!

He looked at me suspiciously and asked, "What are you congratulating me about?" Why are thou cast down, O my soul?" says the 42nd Psalm. "hope thou in God: I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and in God."

"Because you said you're down to hope," I told him, "You've got all that mess of negativism cleared away, and all that old rotted stuff is cleared away, and there you know the old saying that where there is life, there is hope. I suggest you turn it around: where there is hope, there is life. You're never defeated, you're never beaten down, as long as you have hope."

And of course he would, because hope is a marvelous thought in mind. Keep it in mind always as difficulties and sorrow and sickness and trouble come upon you. Keep in mind always that, like the spring tide, hope always comes back.

Here is what the Bible says about it in 1st Corinthians: "And now abide faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love)." Then what is the second greatest? It is hope and/or faith. The three greatest words in the English language - and one of them is hope.

tiful - just a plain old thing. But he had it framed and 'When you die, will you leave me that picture?' And apparently held it in high esteem, for it occupied the most prominent place in his office. He saw me looking at it and asked, "How do you like that picture?"

"Well, it's interesting," I replied. It was a picture of a big, sluggish old scow, about three times the size of an ordinary rowboat, with high sides. From the oar locks two oars were resting listlessly and dejectedly on the sand. The battered boat was dark in color and there was nothing to brighten up the picture. The tide was out and the old scow was high on the beach. At one side of the picture was a glimpse of the water. The value is nothing more hopeless-looking, more inert, than a beached boat. You can't pull it - it's too heavy and too big. It is just there on the sand with the water way out for you. But down at the bottom of the picture was this slogan: "The tide always comes back." And when the tide comes back that inert thing comes alive. It dances on the mighty shoulders of the sea. The tide always comes back!

I asked my friend, "What in the world do you have that picture up there for?"

"Well," he said, "years ago I started out in life as a salesman and was having a very hard time. Everything seemed to be going against me and I had a lot of personal troubles. One morning when calling on a prospective customer I saw that picture in his anteroom. And I sat there thinking about that statement: 'The tide always comes back.' Then I said to myself with new enthusiasm, 'I'm only in my twenties and I know the tide is going to come back for me.' So when my customer received me I sold him a bill of goods. The next day I asked him about the picture. He said he had bought it years before from a man with whom he was doing business. It was a time when he himself was very discouraged. And he had helped him."

I read about a man 87 years of age who was killed by a truck hitting him. He'd been a very active man until the day he died. At the hospital where he was taken they later performed an autopsy. And the surgeon said to the widow, "Madam, your husband must have been a very remarkable man, for I have examined his organs and he had enough wrong with him so that he should have died thirty years ago. It's amazing. I can't understand how a man with all that was wrong with him on the inside lived as long as he did. How do you explain it?"

"Well," she said, "I can only tell you this: My husband always had an optimistic point of view. He never went to bed any night of his life that he didn't say, 'I'm going to feel better tomorrow.' And," she added, "he was always saying, 'I have hopes.'"

Isn't that wonderful? "I have hopes!" things

are bad - but I have hopes. Yes, things are dark - but I have hopes. If you want to live to 87 that is a good way to do it. Say to yourself, "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." When you hope it helps you to be healthy. And it helps you to endure all manner of difficulty all manner of crises. Just plain hope. No wonder St. Paul rated it so highly.

An analysis was made of the experience of some two thousand American soldiers in World War II who were taken prisoner by the Nazis and put in one of those diabolical concentration camps, where they were systematically brainwashed and beaten and starved and treated with indignity. The analysis showed that many of those Americans died; others became physical wrecks; others became mental wrecks. But there was a small group of men who emerged from that incarceration as hard and tough as nails, unhurt mentally, unhurt spiritually, unhurt physically. The investigators found that these men had decided that they wouldn't let the terrible circumstances destroy them. They kept their spirits up telling one another about how wonderful life was going to be when they got back to the United States. They described the girls they were going to marry. They discussed the number of children they were going to have and their plans for the futures of their children. They even organized seminars to discuss business ideas. Some of them made business plans which actually developed into successful enterprises after the war. In other words, they practiced hope. They inoculated themselves with hope. And they didn't die or become incurable invalids. They were saved by hope. Hope is one of the great blessings offered to us by Jesus Christ. Put on the helmet of hope and change your thought processes.

"Well," you object, "you don't know my trouble." Oh, yes, I do. I haven't been so little time in the

ministry that I don't know what real trouble is. I know that this world is filled with deep, dark, grievous trouble. Some people are having an awfully hard time of it and they need help. Some need monetary help; some need government help. But they also need another kind of help. They need to get hope inside them. When you have hope, then no matter what happens you can, as the song says, "overcome."

OUR 1!1-agazine *Guideposts* is appearing to thriller stones. They have published one that is a real thriller. A man who lived in Bradenton with his wife and three children went to the super market one early evening to get some bread for dinner. It was already dark. He pulled up alongside the super market and decided there was no need to bother locking his car, as he would be getting back to it very quickly. So he got the bread, came back, leaped into the driver's seat and was reaching for the starter when he felt something pressed into his ribs. A voice said, "Dale, make a sound. Just drive out of here. Dale wants to go some where."

He looked around, thinking it was a prank. He found himself looking into the face of a young man with wild eyes, long matted hair and a three or four day's growth of beard, who pushed the gun harder into his ribs and growled, "Dale has to meet a man in Tampa. Get going!"

The Bradenton man's blood froze and he started to drive toward Tampa, which the article says was forty miles away. And as he drove along Dale said, "I know, Dale doesn't like you. I guess Dale will have to kill you. Keep driving." Now that was a pleasant situation, wasn't it?

When they got to Tampa, Dale said to drive to a certain intersection, adding, "Dale has to meet a man

in a white car. I guess I will you now but I'm going to kill you before he nig is ver." Went they go to the intersection, there was no white car. Dale ordered "Drive out on the road to Lakeland in a file while they came an orange grove. Dale said, "Drive into the road. Dale is going to kill you now."

And the Braden man who had this experience relates that he almost froze with fear. But mind wasn't frozen, for he kept praying. He is hoped in God. The madman commanded "Get out of the car."

Then, brandishing the gun as they stood in the orange grove he said, "First, Dale, do you hear you beg for your life."

The other man prayed, "Lord help me to say the words" - and obeyed.

After a while the madman laughed. He said, "You know, you beg good. Guess I know you now. Get in the car."

They drove back to Tampa and as they were at the intersection suddenly there was another car following right behind, so close you couldn't see its light. Dale said "You stop here! Dale is going to get you!" The other car, but still has this gun. If you try any funny business Dale is going to fill you full of lead. Drive slow. We're going to follow you."

Well several miles further on the other car veered off, turning back toward Tampa. The Braden man felt such relief sweep through him that it made him shake all over. He could hardly hold the car on the road. Recovering his composure, he found a phone booth and called his wife. It was 2:30 the morning. His wife hysterical. But before long was home with his family. He said in a word of experience, "Faith and hope keep you? are you?" You can handle any circumstances in life with faith, hope and love. The greatest is love, but hope and faith

are close seconds. Keep working for you.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank for leading the Lord Jesus Christ come to bring faith to this world and love and this precious called hope. Help us never to be overcome nor overcome nor be overcome, but always to know that through Thy Son we can have the power to overcome. Help us to keep faith, to keep hope, to keep love working for us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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"Guest Speaker"

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