

Thy Word Is a Lamp Unto My Feet: The Bible for Today ***Revelation of Hope***

Lesson #8 for May 26, 2007

Scriptures: Psalms 34:7; 91:4; Romans 3:26; 5:2-4; 8:24,25; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Colossians 1:14; 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:9; 2:12.

1. Does reading and studying the Bible give you hope? Why? What promises in the Bible are most important to you personally and give you the most hope? Is your hope based on the promises of a future heavenly kingdom? Is your hope based on the fact that God takes care of you? Down through the centuries, people have looked to the word of God for hope. What is it about God's Word that gives people hope?
2. If God were the kind of person that Satan and his associates have made him out to be, "heaven" would be "hell"! If you accept these premises as true, then our only hope is based on the truth about God, his government, and how he runs his government.
3. What does the word "hope" mean to you? Is "hope" the same as "wish"? (Romans 8:24,25)
4. What do you look forward to in heaven? Are you looking forward to living in a nice house? Are you looking forward to being able to pet the lions? Are you looking forward to eating from the tree of life or walking on the sea of glass? Or are you looking forward to fellowship with other Christians and with God? Is your hope of heaven based on ***the things*** that you expect to enjoy when you get there? Or is your hope of heaven based on the wonderful people you hope to fellowship with?
5. "Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us." (Romans 15:4, *GNB*) What is the relationship between hope, patience—which is often associated with suffering or discomfort—and "the comfort of the Scriptures"? (Compare Romans 8:20-25)
6. Are there some portions of Scripture which destroy hope? Romans 1:18-3:20 gives a sordid, sick picture of humanity in general. Romans 3:23 seems to condemn humanity when it says, "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence." (*GNB*) Surely, this does not give us hope! Paul went on in Romans 7: 24 to say, "What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?" After a couple statements like that, would you think that all hope is gone? But Romans 7:25 says, "Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!" And he adds Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus."
7. Do you have hope because Jesus has "done it all" on your behalf? Is your hope based on the fact that Jesus has "paid the price"? Look at some of the verses that people have pointed to, to sustain their faith and hope. Jesus died for us! (Romans 3:26; 1 Peter 3:18) God and his Word through the work of the Holy Spirit have been given to guide us and lead us into truth. (John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16) God even promised a hundred fold in this life and eternal life in the world to come! (Luke 18:29,30; 1 John 5:13)
8. Does it give you more hope to think about what Jesus did for you 2000 years ago on Calvary or to look forward to the new kingdom that God is preparing for you?
9. To many people the greatest hope in the Bible is "justification"! What does "justification" mean to you? To some, it is their "title for heaven." (*Review and Herald*, June 4, 1895; *MYP* 35.2; *FLB* 116.2) To others, it is a legal transaction that provides us a guilt-free standing before God. To others, "justification" is what Jesus died for. How would you define "justification"?
10. Would it be correct to suggest that "justification" is God's attitude toward his erring children? God is forgiveness personified. God always loves us, even when we are misbehaving. There

is never a time when we are not forgiven. Jesus offered forgiveness to the people who were crucifying him even though they had not asked for it! (Luke 23:34) So, if forgiveness is required for justification, then forgiveness and justification are always available.

11. **Justification is the result of God's unchanging love for his children—both the behaving ones and the misbehaving ones. God's attitude does not change toward us! Just as in most cases we, as parents, still love our misbehaving children. God's character of love makes it impossible for him not to forgive. But we with our human limitations can reach the place where we do not accept God's forgiveness.**
12. **What is the relationship between guilt, hope, and justification?** Guilt can be a very destructive emotion. It can drive people to suicide. Why do you think God gave us the emotion of guilt?
13. Some have suggested that God keeps records in heaven and he awaits the time when we ask for forgiveness and if we appear genuine—and he can read our hearts—then he “erases” those sins, casting them into the depths of the sea. **What happens to our sins after they are forgiven?** Read Psalms 103:12; Micah 7:19; Isaiah 38:17; Psalms 51:1,9; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; Jeremiah 31:34; Romans 3:25. There are a variety of suggestions in those verses. How do you put them all together? If, in fact, our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea or thrown behind God's back, why does he say in Jeremiah 31:34 that he will remember them no more? Is that a contradiction of his omniscience? **If our sins are done away with in those ways, how can we face them in the judgment?** (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14)
14. If our sins, after being forgiven, are completely wiped out and **there is no record left of them**, does that mean that all the sins recorded in the Bible—even those of saints—are still unforgiven? **Will all Bibles have to be destroyed at the second coming because they reveal the sins of many saints?** How do you understand Ellen White's words:

That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. (QOD 680)...The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven (BTS December 1, 1907)...The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889; (2ST 345:1:1); *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1132, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7a, p. 252; *Our High Calling* 45; *The Home Missionary* May 1, 1897

15. To some people the promises of God's protection in this life give great hope. Read Psalms 34:7; 91:4,7,14. Many of us could cite examples of times when we ourselves, friends, or members of our families have been protected in what appeared to be miraculous ways. Are at least some of those occurrences just incredibly good luck?
16. To some people the greatest hope of all is that Jesus will defend them before the Father. (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1) Others believe that there is no need for Jesus to plead before the Father! (John 16:25-27) So who is right?
17. If we accept God's forgiveness and recognize that it is always available to us, is that the end of the Christian's struggle? If we have been forgiven and thus are justified, is anything further required for salvation? What about God's promises to help us live a better life?

18. Is it necessary for us to recognize our weaknesses and confess our sins before we can begin our Christian journey? Does God actually help us to overcome our sins? If so, how? If we believe that Jesus is by our side assisted by the Holy Spirit to help us live a better life, is there anything further that we could ask for? Should we be able to claim that we are “dead to sin” and “alive to righteousness in Jesus Christ”? (1 Peter 2:24) What practical steps could we take to begin living the victorious life? **Do we give the Holy Spirit sufficient time in our schedule for him to work out our salvation?**
19. Is it an encouragement to you to read the words of Jesus, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”? (John 16:33) What do you think those words mean? Is Jesus asking us to overcome the world as well? Or has he done it on our behalf?
20. How much confidence do you have that the second coming of Jesus is soon? Since the days of Enoch, people have believed that the second coming would be soon! (Jude 14,15)
21. Read Psalms 37:25. Is it true, and will it always be true, that God’s people live “the good life”? Have any of God’s children ever suffered from a lack of food or water? Have any of them ever been persecuted? What do the words in Matthew 6:25-34 mean to you in your daily struggle to live the “victorious life”? If God has promised to take care of us, why is it that some people who claim to be his children are so poor?
22. The Jews in the days of Jesus believed that if one was godly, God would bless him. And if God blessed him, he would be wealthy. Thus, if you are wealthy, as you walk down the street, everyone would know that you are righteous! Is there anything wrong with that logic? How does it fit with the claim by Jesus that it is more difficult for a rich man to be saved than for a camel to go through the eye of the needle? (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25)
23. There are many scriptures promising God’s continual presence with us. (Psalms 46:1-3; 34:7; 91:4,7; 125:2; Matthew 28:20) Do you ever have times in your life when you feel like God is not present with you? Had God abandoned John the Baptist when he was beheaded? Did God leave Peter and Paul just before they died as martyrs? Just before being beheaded, would Paul have agreed with the words of Jesus in John 10:10 (GNB), “I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.”
24. Almost every human thinks of death as the final enemy. As humans, we have never found a way to get around death. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, especially 56. “Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin gets its power from the Law.” (GNB) What do you think those words mean? What does it mean to say that death gets its power from sin?
25. Having discussed all the aspects of hope, would you continue to live a Christ-like or Christian life if you believed that at the day of your death everything was over for you and that you would never rise again? Is the resurrection the Christian’s ultimate hope?
26. Each year we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In your mind, which is more important? His death? Or his resurrection? Give a reason for your answer.
27. We know that the Bible and the spirit of prophecy suggest that there are very difficult times ahead. Do you have hope as you look forward to the seven last plagues? Are you excited about the prospect of seeing the whole world “coming unglued” around you? Or would you rather just go to sleep and wake up after the seven last plagues are over?

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