

KEEPING HOPE ALIVE —

On April 25, 2006, a small earthquake triggered a rockfall at the Beaconsfield gold mine in northern Tasmania. Two men, Brant Webb and Todd Russell, were trapped in a steel cage, not knowing whether they would make it out alive.

It was so cramped that they were unable to sit or stand. The only food that they had was a carefully-rationed muesli bar and the groundwater they collected in their helmets. They were surrounded by darkness.

It was five days before rescuers would learn the men were still alive. But although they now had access to food, water and messages from their families, it would still be another nine days before the men could be rescued from the damp, dark hole that Webb thought might be his final resting place.

However, Webb never allowed this thought to remain for long. Instead, he chose to cling to hope – hope that he would survive and see his wife and children again. In 2010, he gave the

same advice via a telephone interview to the 33 miners trapped in a Chilean mine – “They’ve got to keep their heads together and hope alive.”

Australia celebrated the good news when the two men were finally freed.

CHOOSING HOPE —

Most of us probably haven’t experienced being physically trapped in an underground mine, but in some way, we’ve all experienced our own moments of desperation and darkness where it feels like there’s no escape.

2020 may be over, but the effects of COVID-19 continue to linger. People have lost their jobs or are unable to return to work. Families have been separated from loved ones, small businesses are struggling to make ends meet, and the impact on our mental health and well-being has been significant. The freedoms we used to take for granted have gradually been stripped away. None of us know if normal life will ever return as we knew it – or whether this life is the new normal. Feelings of anxiety, fear and discouragement are at the forefront of our minds – where and how

will this all end? The ancient Roman statesman Pliny the Elder said that hope is the pillar that holds up the world. Although our current situation looks dark, there is light at the end of the tunnel, as long as hope is alive.

In difficult times, negative thoughts can take control of our minds and hearts causing fear and anxiety. During these times, where do we turn?

THE SOURCE OF HOPE —

During the pandemic, many people started searching the Bible to help them understand their troubles and find hope. Written during a 1500-year-span by more than 40 authors, the Bible is filled with stories from history, ancient wisdom to improve health and happiness, and prophecies about the future. Most importantly, it contains uplifting messages that give us encouragement when we are struggling.

“We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God.”
– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

If anyone knew what it was like to experience trials, it was the New Testament apostle Paul. History tells us that Paul often faced isolation and trials. He was unjustly accused, stoned and imprisoned. It would have been easy for Paul to sink into depression, given his circumstances. And there were times when he definitely experienced moments of despair where he wondered if he would make it through (2 Corinthians 1:8).

Yet despite his personal predicaments, Paul chose to cling to hope. He was able to remain peaceful, content and even joyful throughout the trials. During his time in prison, he wrote encouraging letters to his friends. He comforted his fellow prisoners and he even said that he delighted in his own weaknesses and difficulties (2 Corinthians 12:10). “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,” he stated. (Philippians 4:12-13).

How could Paul choose hope in the midst of his troubles? According to the Bible, hope is more than just an idle wish. In the Bible, hope is a strong, confident expectation in God’s promises, with the absolute certainty that what you hope for will be accomplished. (Hebrews 11:1)

"Suffering is unbearable if you aren't certain that God is for you and with you."

Tim Keller

Paul wrote to Christian believers in Rome that they could have hope because of the patience and comfort of the Bible (Romans 15:4). He then went on to tell them, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

Paul was able to stay positive through difficult circumstances because he believed in a God of hope, who had the power to fill him with joy and peace. He also encouraged us to patiently wait for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Crises of any type are challenging and create inner emotions that are sometimes hard to understand. During our current health crisis, Paul reminds us to be patient and wait for God to fulfill His promises. God says, "Behold, I will do a new thing...I will make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Jesus likewise told his disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33). This is good news.

AN OFFER OF HOPE —

So, do not lose hope.

Reach out to a friend, call out to God, or feel free to connect with us. We will do our best to help you through whatever challenges you may be facing.

If you are seeking answers to understand these times, you are not alone, we are here to help. People are trying to understand why a good God allows bad things to happen or how can I live my best life when it feels like everything has been snatched away?

And what's next - can the Bible help me understand the future?



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