

Praise the Lord Who reigns forever, and put your trust and hope in Him, because God always lives to deliver His covenant children who are in need.

Introduction: Hope is a very misunderstood concept in our culture. Christian hope is about finding the power to keep going without giving up what you know - that God will get you through. That kind of hope is much more difficult to get, but it's worth the search to find it.

I. The Reliability of Christian Hope

A. A hope worth living for (vv. 1-2)

No one can arrive at the mature understanding that praising God is the only hope worth living for unless he has seriously weighed glorifying God against all other supposed hopes. You can either gain this conviction by wisdom acquired from others or the school of personal experience. Here the psalmist exhorts you to put your hope in the Lord—to make praising him your meaning and purpose in life. How does he do this? By first calling us all together to worship, and secondly by calling himself to worship. By corporate and individual exhortation to praise the Lord. To put this succinctly the psalmist knows that liturgy (the ritual, repetitive, and rehearsing act of worship) is spiritually formative—it's good for the soul because God uses it to convince us that he is praiseworthy and therefore worth living for.

B. A hope with staying power (vv. 3-4)

Even when you're in need, if you pray first (which you definitely should), getting help from powerful, influential, honorable people can have a particular negative effect on you. If you're not careful, your trust in God can slowly erode. You're tempted to trust in people first and God second because that way of looking at life seems more practical. But it's not, and the psalmist knows that. It's a little morbid, but his point is that people, even the most helpful ones, ultimately have no staying power. There is no salvation in a son of Adam. Which begs the question: "From where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2).

II. The Promises of Christian Hope

A. The Creator God will faithfully keep watch over us (vv. 5-6)

1. God the Creator is powerful. He made absolutely everything in the universe. Think about the promise we have in this psalm. The one who hopes in the LORD God is blessed. How can that be? Because the object of your trust is in the all-powerful Creator. If your mind has a grasp on that then you've forgotten how big the universe is.

2. God the Creator is trustworthy. Do you see how observing the incalculable power of the Creator should bolster your trust in him? Even though God has so many other things in the universe he could attend to, he promises to keep a constant watch over you and me. That's what verses 5-6 are saying. Remember the story of Jacob, how he cheated his brother Esau out of the firstborn birthright and blessing, and then had to flee the country to escape Esau's wrath? On his way out of town God appeared to Jacob in a dream and said to him, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Genesis 28:15). The rest of Genesis is the story of how God acted to keep that promise—to Jacob and his descendants forever. God kept his promise to

faithfully keep watch over Jacob the man and Israel his people. His watching is not merely a distant gaze, but a vigilant watch so he can spring to action when you need to be saved.

B. The LORD God will act to save us (vv. 7-9)

1. Compassionate champion of justice for the helpless. God is compassionate, just, and merciful toward the weak and defenseless. His pity is all-embracing. He is our champion. He is so good that he guarantees justice for the oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, the blind, those weighed down low, the righteous sufferer, the alien immigrant and refugee, widows, orphans and the fatherless. This is a typical catalog of salvation in OT language. Although there is nothing new to be learned about God here, the psalmist brings it all together so we'll be overwhelmingly convinced that God is so good. The point is to praise the LORD.

2. Unbeatable enforcer of justice on the wicked. The LORD frustrates the way (the general course of life) of the wicked—the ones who oppress, take advantage, not adequately help, or even ignore the needy. Whereas the LORD's kindness is active toward the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, his will is also active to thwart the ways of the wicked, the proud, the powerful, and the abusive. God is not just angry with the wicked. He works against them and destroys their schemes. God's way upends the wicked power structures of society. His kingdom seems upside-down compared to the world's kingdoms, but God's way is really right-side up, restoring proper order and harmony to the world.

III. The Fulfillment of Christian Hope

A. The LORD will reign forever (v. 10a)

Most commentators believe this psalm was written after the Babylonian Exile. At that time God's visible kingdom was obscured because there was neither king nor throne in Jerusalem. God's people lived every day hoping for the Messianic King to finally usher in the kingdom of righteousness. And then one day, our God who lives to faithfully keep watchful eye on us from heaven came down. God proved his love for the poor and needy when he became a helpless baby born to poor parents. Throughout his earthly ministry Jesus reflected the heart of God when he showed compassion for the poor and afflicted (Luke 4:18-21; 7:21-23; cf. Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Isa 61:1). We call it Christ's "humiliation," which the Shorter Catechism (27) says "consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time."

B. The LORD will dwell with all of us forever (v. 10b)

Do you realize the incarnation of Christ means that God is Emmanuel forever? The Bible says when Jesus was born God came to dwell with all of us (John 1:14). When the Son of God took on human flesh, he became the Son of Man, the Son of Adam, who can and does bear the weight of all your hopes. Crucified for the forgiveness of sins, and risen to live forevermore, he is now and always present to save. Unlike in princes or any other son of Adam, in him there is salvation—from your sins, from your enemies, and from the travails of this broken messed-up world. So who is Zion in this last verse? Zion is a poetic name for Jerusalem the capital city of the LORD's earthly reign (Psalms 128:5; 129:5; 137:6). Atop Mount Zion sits the City of God where he dwells with his people from generation to generation (Exodus 15:17; Psalms 29:10; 132:13-15). But Zion the City of God is also a poetic description of God's people, the New Jerusalem—the beloved Bride of Christ (Rev 20:2-4).

Conclusion – As you prepare your heart this season for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, do not forget that the Christian's hope is not yet completely fulfilled. In one vein, we rejoice that Christ has come, when he initiated at his birth the final fulfillment of all God's promises. But in another vein, we look forward in hope to the consummation of all God's promises, on that day when your hopes will be realized, and you will dwell in the presence of the LORD your God forever. God's faithful people should praise him thus right now, in the land of the living, in anticipation and hope of everlasting praise in heaven. That's the note this psalm ends on: Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!