

A Verse to Live by

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

August Prayer Focus

Please pray the blessings of Romans 15:13 over our church and church leaders. This is a beautiful prayer for anyone you feel may need it.

Life Application Challenge

This month look up some of God's promises in the Bible. Make a list of your top 10 encouraging verses and meditate on them. Use these to help replace fear with faith and fill your heart with joy and hope.

Recommended Scripture Reading

Romans 8 - This chapter is just full of encouragement and hope.
Romans 15:1-13

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | August 2020 Prayer Newsletter

Hoping When It Seems Hopeless

I don't know about you, but I am sick of talking about the pandemic, masks, vaccines, and who is mad at whom. I am emotionally worn out from all of the negative news. When I am agitated and angry before 7 a.m., there is a problem. Facebook has become that thorn in my side. Social media has to be one of the worst ways to start your day. But I know I am not the only one that makes this mistake from time to time. My new morning motto is "prayer time before Facebook" (or any other social media).

So, this month I want to focus on something refreshing and energizing: hope. We all could use a good dose of this right now. Hope and I have a very personal relationship, but at times it's been rocky. Before the encouraging words, I need to go to a darker place. In 2014, when my oldest son was diagnosed with brain cancer for the second time, I had hope he would beat it. The doctors told me there was nothing they could do, but only prolong his life by months. Still, I had hoped God would heal him. He was only 18 and surely God would spare him. After all, He did so the first time around, but my momma instincts knew Zack's healing would not be here. One sleepless evening in August of 2016 I prayed, begging God to spare Zack and let him stay here with me. He told me it would not be so. I then weeping pleaded, "Ok God, then let him go gently." And that's the day I broke up with hope. Devastated is an understatement... I was demolished. It was a crushing blow to an already crushed spirit. I accepted my son would die and would leave us. No matter how much he wanted to live, it was not going to happen. It wasn't fair; it felt so wrong. It just isn't natural for a parent to outlive their child. On November 10, 2016 at the young age of 20, Eric and I held our son, Zackary Lee Abel, as he took his last breath. The joy I felt holding my newborn baby taking his first breath was equally matched in agony holding my baby as he took his last breath. I felt like part of me died with Zack. A moan from the depths of my soul came out of me....and I literally cried out "Oh God, how could you do this to me? I trusted you..."

Now let me share the amazing part of my son's story... Zack let go of his earthly life with his hope intact. My amazing son lived out "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21) How did my 20 year old, autistic son come to terms with his own dying? Because He trusted God when he heard the words "to die is gain". It really was that simple for Zack, and it really is that simple for us. It is not easy, but it is simple. Childlike faith: Zack mastered it. He was and still is our family's example of vital faith. The Bible verse in 1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." was Zack's life verse. He loved God so much that he had the faith to believe God's promises and that gave him undying, unshakable hope. Where do we get this hope? The same place Zack and many other Christians have. Paul tells us we get our hope from the Word, "For everything that was written

in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) Read God's word, study and internalize it. Read the stories of victory and of God's mercy; this reminds you how God regularly hears the cries of His children and responds. "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles." (Ps. 34:17) The Bible is full of promises that give the struggling believer hope and peace. This life is tough, but God is tougher. "With God all things are possible." (Mtt. 19:26) You may be tired and feel like giving up, you may be sick and broken. But even your weaknesses and problems cannot diminish His blessings and power. "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:10) To the unbeliever this kind of "against all odds" hope and faith may seem impossible; that's because it is -- without the Holy Spirit. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Rom. 15:13) Being filled with that hope comes from having the Holy Spirit in your life, and having the Holy Spirit in your life comes from having a relationship with Christ, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 2:38) . If you do not have a personal relationship with Christ, please reach out to Pastor Randy or someone in our church. Believers, if you are struggling to hold on to your faith and hope, please reach out to someone to pray with you. We are family and need to support and care for each other, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb.10:24-25)

There is nothing, not even death, that can take our future hope from us. Even though my son died at 20 from cancer, he got his happy ending. He is in eternity with his Savior, healed and his hope fulfilled. My hope comes from knowing he is safe in God's hands and I will see my son again. What satan means for evil, God will use for good. Joseph said to his brothers about selling him into slavery, "You meant evil against me, but God used it for good." (Gen. 50:20) There is nothing satan can do to change or derail God's promises to us. All things will work for good for those of us that love the Lord.

We have so many reasons to hope. Never allow satan to convince you your hope is futile. "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isa. 40:31)

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel