



Beginning of Hope

**Ephesians 6:11a NIV
Put on the full armor of God...**

What Lasts?

The Bible tells you to “**Put on the full armor of God...**” The idea that you need armor, that you need God armor may not hit home with you. You might be on a great mountain peak of happiness, overlooking all the troubles others face and feel almost invincible to hardship. The command of the Bible to put on the total armor of God is a warning to you though that there are probably going to be rough times ahead, maybe even frightening and painful moments. Hardships and struggles you haven’t anticipated may be coming and that armor of God might be just what you will need in the future and if the truth be told, right now.

One of the odder personalities described in the Bible was the ancient warrior Samson. He was given a special calling by God to be strong and mighty, a conqueror and protector for Israel. Power from God was to flow in him like water from a spicket, wash over him like waves of the ocean. There was nothing common about Samson...He was a supernaturally endowed fighter for God’s people. Yet, he quit on his relationship with God, despite it being the Lord who gave him everything he had. In Judges 13-17, the four chapters of that book of the Bible given over to describe Samson’s early beginnings, exploits and failures, only twice is there any mention of him praying or looking to God for help. All that power and success went to his head and it seems he stopped thinking about the Lord, no longer considered Him when he went about his daily business. However, once when he was thirsty after a great victory he asked God for help and later, at the end of his life when having been blinded and chained by the Philistines, Samson begged God to enable him to exact deadly vengeance upon his captors.

A strange characteristic of most is that they must face grave and uncommon misery before they come to the great hope found in Christ. It is as if the human personality falls away from Him in times of ease and relaxation. Some really detest interrupting their schedules to make room for God and it is sometimes painful to watch the impact it has on them and who they are. I’m not sure why it is, but our little dog hates to enter the bathtub. She fights with my wife and children when they try to get her in there for a bath. I am the only one in the family who can make her enter the tub and it takes great effort even then. Once inside the bathtub, our dog loves getting a bath. She enjoys the warm water, the rub down she receives as the soap is worked into her fur and even getting toweled down and dried seems to make her happy.

So, why does our dog work so hard to avoid baths? Why do so many people do their best to ignore God? One of the most beautiful words in the English language is hope. In Greek it is elpis. In Hebrew it is mikveh. In Russian it is Nadezhda. In Hindi it is aasha. In Korean it is gidae. We use the word hope to speak of getting past the daily ups and downs of life. We hope our child will fall asleep soon. We hope to get a date with that attractive person. We hope our strawberry plants will produce tasty fruit. Hope though,

is bigger than all these common place concerns. Hope is an eternal word...not bound by time. Hope is bigger and loftier than this life. It is one of the most noble and lovely parts of our existence. Hope is the stuff of God, of angels and heaven. Hope has higher aspirations than just trying to get a good plumber to fix your pipes. Hope fills the universe; it rises beyond the sky. Hope is the end of sorrow, of disease, of unemployment and broken homes.

The armor of God is hope. It is the promise of dreams coming to life, of joy filling your heart and peace that assures you that all is well. When you put on the armor of God, you wrap yourself in hope. Without hope, why protect yourself, why defend those you love, why work to develop a vaccine. Without hope you don't try, you don't move forward, you don't fight against evil. Hope is you and Christ rising above your circumstances and "going for it". It is the foundation of perfection and never-ending love. Hope is what takes you through the crisis, the trial, the loss. Hope is God wrapped around you and guarding your heart.

Hope for the disciples at one time was the delusion that Jesus would not really die when He said He would. It was the dream that he would never be rejected, never suffer, never be arrested or give up His life. They had hope that Jesus would always have crowds following him, respecting Him, that they would be successful and join the Lord in a thriving ministry. Hope wasn't any of that though. Hope was a resurrection. It was Christ dying on the Cross to take the sins of the world from them and putting them to death in His own body. Hope was rising from the dead, not avoiding it. Hope is that resurrection life of Christ all through you, covering you, guarding you, protecting you. Hope is the armor God gives you...that He is your help and the strength of your life and nothing that comes against you can take you apart.

It may be rough for you. Difficult people and tough times may be oppressing you. Now, however is when hope comes. Jesus Christ is your Savior, the one who gives you life and He will take you through this. There is a funny story in the Bible of David and his enthusiastic plan to fight the giant Goliath. No one in all the Israeli army was willing to go up against the nine foot warrior...only David. The king of Israel, who was a large man himself, offered David his armor. **Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.** (1 Samuel 17:38-39 NIV) However, the armor was too big and didn't fit and so David decided to just fight the giant wearing his normal clothes and his hope that God would protect him. Hope, without it being Jesus Christ, will never quite fit. It doesn't last long enough. It isn't strong enough and it doesn't match what you need to protect you. Hope is Christ taking you out to eternal life, bringing you to peace that passes all normal understanding, it is joy that carries you through the storms you face and will cover you as you go along the path you have. Hope never gets outdated. It is always needed wherever you are, whatever you face. Hope is Jesus, a brilliant deliverer who guards your life.