

Embracing Hope in Anxious Times

Stuart McAllister

C.S. Lewis Chicago

October 13, 2022

Romans 4:18 – 5:5

As one modern writer wrote about life: *“Perfection is not the goal, (of life) growth is.”*

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

~ Corrie Ten Boom

“All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

“He that takes truth for his guide, and duty for his end, may safely trust to God’s providence to lead him aright.” ~ Blaise Pascal

- Our perspective and this moment.
- Our desire for normal.
- A vital reminder. ***John 16:33***

“Idealism is fostered by hope. Realism is fostered by experience. Skepticism is fostered by uncertainty, and cynicism is fostered by disappointment. And so, it comes full circle, for at the root of all disappointments lie the trampled remains of hope.”

~ Wilbur Caldwell

I. The Example of Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-19)

I love John Stott’s insight. *“Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.”*

In the journey of life, we learn not only that we are justified by faith but the Just shall live by faith. (**Romans 1:17**)

A. The Obedience of Faith Hebrews 11:8

Bonhoeffer: *“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”* He said elsewhere, *“When all is said and done, the life of the faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available weapon against the flesh.”*

(The Cost of Discipleship)

B. The Living out of Faith Hebrews 11:9-10

- The desire for security must be faced. (where we seek it).
- The longing for significance and satisfaction must be reckoned with.
- The battle with sensuality is constant.

“Hope is a source of life, for she is the one who constantly breaks habits. She is the germ of spiritual birth. She is the spring of and giving forth of grace. For she is the one who constantly strips away that deadly surface of habit.” ~ Charles Péguy

C. Faith Shaped in the Furnace Hebrews 11:17-19

“Nothing is a surprise to God; nothing is a setback to His plans; nothing can thwart His purposes; and nothing is beyond His control. His sovereignty is absolute. Everything that happens is uniquely ordained by God. Sovereignty is a weighty thing to ascribe to the nature and character of God. Yet if He were not sovereign, He would not be God. The Bible is clear that God is in control of everything that happens.” ~ Joni Eareckson Tada

“Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you cannot understand at the time.” ~ Oswald Chambers

II. Lessons from Abraham's Struggles

“Such is our situation at the turn of the Century. The 20th Century, born in the worship of the future, is now ending with shame for the past and contempt for the future. Having been too often betrayed by our expectations, we look upon a promise as a virtual betrayal. If hope can be compared to a well in a garden, it is as if we felt that the well had been poisoned.”

~ Chantal Delsol

A. The Word or the World 1 John 2:15-17

- What is your first instinct in the morning? Check your phone? Scroll through messages? Turn on the news? Our perspective, mood and orientation are mostly set by what we choose to focus on.

“It is no exaggeration to say that without scripture a Christian life is impossible.”

~ John Stott

“God must speak to us before we have any liberty to speak to Him. He must disclose who He is before we can offer Him what is acceptable worship. The worship of God is always a response to the Word of God. Scripture wonderfully directs and enriches our worship.”

~ John Stott

- Practically this means intention, attention and devotion which requires time and space.

To “guard your heart with all diligence” **Proverbs 4:23** and to be “being transformed by the renewing of your mind” **Romans 12:2**.

B. Immanent verses the Transcendent

“When (Thomas) Hobbes’ doctrine of modern natural rights and (John) Locke’s redefinition of the sole aim of government as economic were coupled, the result was a government that pursues no other aim than promoting a strong economy, which means in turn that citizens must have equally strong (seemingly endless) desires for material gratification. The fundamentally amoral nature of desire allows for almost infinite expansion of gratification. As should be obvious, the spiraling of such a desire senses a very Epicurean goal, turning our souls to the complete service of the pleasures and comforts of our bodies.”

~ Benjamin Wiker, Moral Darwinism

- This makes comfort and convenience the prime focus for most.
- Education, entertainment, and stimulus are our most urgent concerns, not obedience, worship, or formation.
- Emotional gratification becomes the purpose of life. God, His word, His will, His ways, fades into a distant echo or a vague memory of an earlier time.

C. Time (Chronos) versus the Eternal (Kairos)

“In the age of technology there is constant access to vast amounts of information. The basket overflows; people get overwhelmed; the eye of the storm is not so much what goes on in the world, it is the confusion of how to think, feel, digest and react to what goes on.” ~ Criss Jami

“A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”
~ Herbert A. Simon

“Information overload is a symptom of our desires to NOT focus on what’s important. It is a choice.” ~ Brian Solis

Two passages to fix our focus on.

- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**
- **Colossians 3:1-3**

III. The Abrahamic Way

Thornton Wilder. *“Hope is a projection of the imagination; so is despair. Despair all too readily embraces the ills it foresees; hope is an energy and arouses the mind to explore every possibility to combat them....In response to hope the imagination is aroused to picture every possible issue, to try every door, to fit together even the most heterogenous pieces of the puzzle. After the solution has been found it is difficult to recall the steps taken – so many of them are just below the level of consciousness.”*

A. Cultivating Hope *Romans 4:20-21*

- By intention: which means making choices on what you read, focus on or, listen to.
 - By attention: “Making the most of the time” *Ephesians 5*
You must take control of your time and invest it wisely.
 - By devotion: Love is not a feeling, it is an act of the will.
Matthew 22:36-40
-
-
-
-
-

B. Face the Hardships of Life as part of Life *Romans 5:1-5*

As Ken Boa often says, “*Suffering is not an elective.*”

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

~ Helen Keller

(John 14:1-3).

C. Waiting, Watching, Trusting *Romans 8:24-25*

Listen to German Theologian Jürgen Moltmann.

“That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope. This hope keeps man un-reconciled until the great day of the fulfillment of the promises of God....This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a ‘continuing city’....Thus it will constantly crave the ‘passion for the possible’, inventiveness and elasticity in self-transformation, in breaking the old and coming to terms with the new.”

“Faith, whenever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who

hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the good of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present.”

Romans 8:26-30.

Let's stand on the promises.
