

The "abundant Christian life" of Paul

A thorn in the flesh, misunderstanding, prison, forsaken by man, rejected ministry, persecution



and yet
**a gracious life,
 persistent joy,
 energetic love,
 persevering faith,
 and a grateful heart.**

Three shocking realities

1.
In coming to Christ, people don't change as much as I expected.
2.
The 1st cent. church was not any better than today's church.
3.
Jesus, and the Apostles found love, joy, power, and peace apart from their circumstances.

If the only attraction to Christian faith were the church

- no one would come.

- no one should come.

Mark 14

"27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' 28 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 But Peter said to Him, "**Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.**" 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me." 31 But Peter kept saying insistently, "**Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!**" And they all were saying the same thing, too."

- ✓ Like Peter, we may have unrealistic expectations of God's plans (8:31-33).
- ✓ Like Peter, we may have unrealistic expectations of our ability to obey God.

Jesus is not as shocked by our failures or naivety as we are.

- ✓ We are in a process that require forbearance, grace, and patience.
- ✓ While our failures are serious, our responses to them will determine our fate - Peter and Judas.
- ✓ The race we are running is not a sprint but a marathon where the goal is to finish well.

“³² And they came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.” ³³ And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And He said to them, “**My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death**; remain here and keep watch.” ³⁵ And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶ And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; **remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.**”

- ✓ Jesus’ humanity and his character are showing.
- ✓ Jesus’ unanswered prayers?

Jesus knew that God’s power and love were subject to God’s plan and will.

- ✓ We seldom see the big picture which means that we are often confused.
- ✓ Our willingness to accept and obey without full understanding is a demand and test of our faith.
- ✓ Few people would look at the life of Jesus or Paul and conclude by the circumstances that they were favored by an all powerful and loving God.

Jesus

“Not my will but Thine be done.”

Our Model

Peter

“Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.”

Our Nature

Paul

“When I am weak then I am strong.”

Our hope

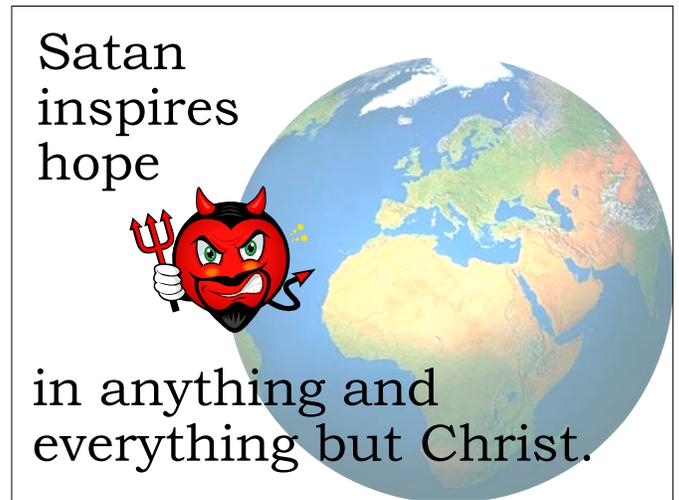
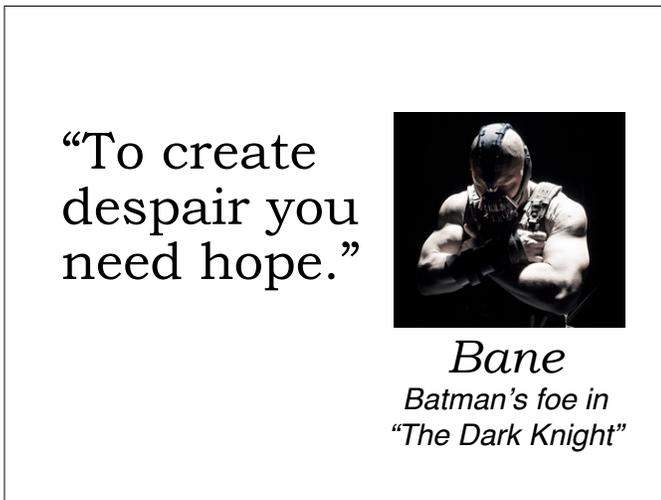
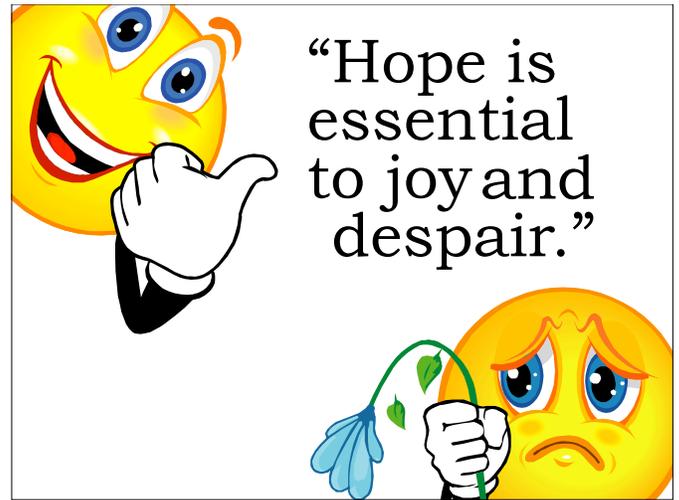
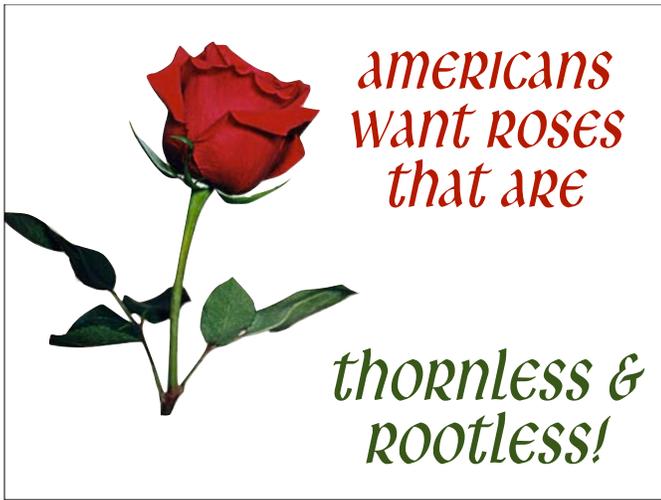


“³⁷ And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, **are you asleep**? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ “Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ And again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again He came and **found them sleeping**, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. ⁴¹ And He came the third time, and said to them, “**Are you still sleeping** and taking your rest?””

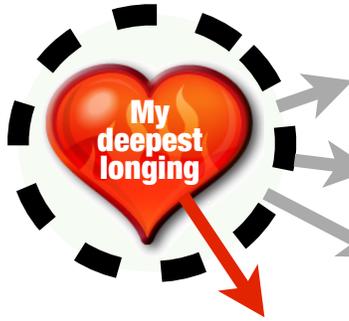
- ✓ When Jesus was emotionally down his disciples were emotionally absent.
- ✓ A relationship with God is a shared heart. It is more than obedience to rules.

“⁴¹ . . . It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Arise, **let us be going**; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

- ✓ Jesus initiated the walk into God’s drama of redemptive suffering.
- ✓ Jesus asks his disciples to go and be with him knowing that they will fall away in disillusionment and despair.



The desire of our heart



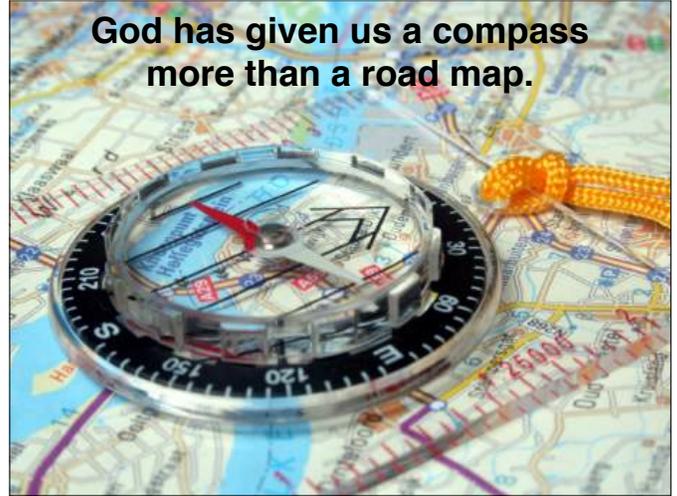
My superficial hope as shaped by the world.

Maintain my self-protective shield.

Faith that a loving God would grant it.

To be free from trying to find life through the props of this world.

God has given us a compass more than a road map.



Galatians 6:2

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

James 1:5

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

God’s plans

My plans

Our character

Our career

Perseverance

Quick fix

Christ centered

World centered

Hidden details

Clear details

Include suffering

Exclude suffering

James 4

“13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Some signs that I am working off of MY OWN PLANS.

- ✓ I have big plans for myself, & others.
- ✓ They aren’t leading to God’s purposes.
- ✓ My plans have a map. (God’s have a compass.)
- ✓ Fear, anxiety, and anger are robbing me of shalom.

✓ I worry and whine a lot.



A “worry - whine” briefing

- ✓ Worry and whining are both tied to hope and expectations.
- ✓ Worry is what we do before our plans are frustrated and whining is what we do after.
- ✓ Worry and whining don't change anything unless they inspire action.



A “worry - whine” exercise

- ✓ Both should inspire the development and / or demonstration of faith.
- **In the case of worry:** be sure you have done what you can and then rest in the faith that you can handle whatever comes with God's Spirit.
- **In the case of whining:** think first about character development and look for a Godly response that demonstrates grace and faith.

Be faithful in your role.

Leave the directing
& producing to God.

Example from Jesus
on being **IN**
but not **OF** the world.

**Disciple's expectations
are based on God's
purposes, plans, and timing
not their own.**

Shocking truths

- ✓ God's label seldom fits on our plans for ourselves or others.
- ✓ God's plans have a compass while ours usually have a detailed map.
- ✓ Misplaced hopes are the worst kind of idolatry - they lead to despair.
- ✓ Jesus is not interested in defending our superficial image.
- ✓ We too often link God's character to His commitment to our plans.

How can I develop realistic expectations?

- ✓ Life is about responses more than having and working our plan.
- ✓ Remember that you see as in a mirror dimly.
- ✓ Learn from experience.
- ✓ Look for God's hand everywhere.
- ✓ Think character development and demonstration first.

