Looking Inward, Looking Upward, Looking Outward

By

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**Looking Inward**

WOW!!! I am 71 years old and have been a Christian for nearly 44 years, but I have never encountered anything like what we are experiencing today. Many may think that we are somehow now living in that period of time Scripture calls the Tribulation. I think not, but could God be giving us a sneak peek into what might be the not too distant future?

What is in your heart today? Is it fear, anxiety, or dread or a combination of all of these emotions plus others? Certainly we all have at least some of these troubling us. Now is a good time to look inward in faith and ask along with the psalmist:

Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.¹

Notice that the psalmist did not stop with an inward question. He followed with a declaration of upward look. That upward look was directed to God and to hope in Him, to praise for Him, and to an appeal for the help of His presence. Psalms 42 and 43 each contain the Scripture listed above, and both help us to understand our need for God’s blessings.

**Looking Upward**

All people have hope in one thing or another or even in multiple things. Hope is a form of faith that focuses on the future. Hope looks to the future. Therefore, the future looks different to different people. Hope forms a positive vision of one’s future.

The opposite of hope is despair. Despair is a profound feeling that there is no hope. Therefore, despair is a present feeling that the future has nothing to offer in the way of positive outcomes. Despair forms a negative vision for one’s future. This is indeed a sad place for any person to mentally dwell and physically live.

As Christians we do not have to live in despair. We have the greatest hope possible. The Bible has much to say about Christian hope, and our hope is “both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19) unlike the unsure and unstable hopes of the world. All of the hopes in the Bible have but one great focal point: Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,²

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Let us not be overwhelmed with despair. Let us look to the Lord Jesus. Let us find our hope in Him and not in the trite slogans circulating in our world today.

**Looking Outward**

Paul, in Ephesians 2:12, referred to non-Christians as those “having no hope and without Christ in the world.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 he referred to non-Christians as those “who have no hope.” There is absolutely no sadder commentary on a person’s life than this. Imagine a tombstone that reads, “This person died having no hope!”

It is difficult to look inward and upward and to ignore looking outward. It encourages my heart to see how people are creatively finding ways to fight the COVID-19 virus and to establish safe havens of community. It is past time that we as Christians find new and creative ways to fight the devil and to invite sinners into the spiritual safe haven of Christ’s community—His Church.

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.3

Look inward in faith. Look upward in hope. Look outward in love.

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