

## Hope vs. Promise

I heard a sermon from Andy Stanley that revolutionized my thinking. He was a guest speaker at Elevation for a sermon series called Give Me Faith.

He spoke on the life of Paul the Apostle and his numerous persecutions. The amazing thing is that Paul was never without hope. It brings a scripture to mind: "We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." ~ Romans 5:3-5

Paul had some sort of condition or ailment that he asked the Lord to heal three separate times in his life, yet he remained the same as he always was. Through Andy's sermon I was reminded that God never promised Paul He

would heal him; it was Paul's hope and he knew God was able. He was the greatest apostle that ever lived and he never turned away from the Lord no matter what happened to him. It was the love of God poured out in Paul's heart that caused him not to give up. We forget in this world of trials and tribulation it is His love that we crave most!

Yet there are many things we hope for in this life; a husband or a wife, perhaps children, wealth, success or achievement to name a few. Some of the things I've mentioned may seem like a need such as a desperate desire for a child. The truth is that although they are a blessing from the Lord, unless God made you a promise it is only a hope.

Abraham and Sarah were promised a child from God named Isaac. He waited a long, long time to make good on His promise but He came through and did not disappoint them. All of this hope vs. promise caused me to have an epiphany. There are things that I have believed God would do for years but I realized they are a hope and not a promise. God is not obligated to grant our hopes but He will always deliver on a promise.

One of my greatest hopes is to be married. I am nearly 40 years old and am not even dating. I came close over 10 years ago and the pain and disappointment of not seeing that come to pass forever changed me. Despite all that, I truly believe that someone is out there waiting for me. I mean I know it, just like Paul knew the Lord could heal him. Then I finally realized that God never promised me a husband. Though it has been a deep yearning within me it is only a hope. So I knew in that moment what I had to do. I had to let it go, for good.

This reminds me of a line from Spiderman 2: "Sometimes being a hero means we have to be steady and give up the thing we want the most." I've always known my life was not meant to be status quo. There's been this profound understanding that God has something for me that will take me along a very different path. Sacrifice is the test of a true hero.

So think over the things in your life that you have believed God for and ask yourself this question: Is this a promise the Lord has made to me or is this something that I really, really want and hope I get? It's not that God wants to withhold good things like a husband or children from us but everything must go on the altar to God and it is His choice to grant that hope or not. The question is will you still love Him even if he never does?

