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DAILY DEVOTIONAL

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# THE HOPE OF GLORY

JOHN BRADSHAW

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January 1

## The Hope of Glory

*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

—Colossians 1:27

**W**e are embroiled in a great controversy, a battle in which the darkest forces in the universe have arrayed themselves in rebellion against the God of heaven. Fallen angels direct their malice toward those who, in the beginning, were created in the image of God. Satan targets his wrath toward human beings weakened by the debilitating effects of six thousand years of sin.

And yet God presents to the human family a pathway to full communion with the God of heaven. He exhorts us to “put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Colossians 3:10), to “be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15) and to “keep the commandments of God” (Revelation 14:12). Even better, the Bible tells us *how* we can be all that God wants us to be.

In Colossians 1, Paul discusses “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints,” and goes on to state that the heart of this mystery—the heart of the gospel—is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (verses 26, 27).

Not a single person asked to be caught in this battle of epic proportions, a battle so intense it is necessary that angels surround and shield us from the unseen enemy (Psalm 34:7). Yet, in His goodness, God has made every provision for us to successfully navigate the troubled waters of this world. God is acquainted with the difficulties we face and with the weakened state in which we find ourselves. Recognizing that, after six thousand years of sin, we are no match for the enemy, He reveals the secret to being remade in the image of God: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Sinners who have failed are promised restoration and re-creation through “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

God does not leave us to stumble alone through the darkness of this world. He is more than with us, more than near us. The great promise of the Bible is that Christ will dwell *in* you. And *that* is our “hope of glory.”

## Outnumbered!

*Then the LORD said to Gideon, “By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.”*

—Judges 7:7

**T**he story of Gideon is one of the great stories in the Bible. God called Gideon to lead the armies of Israel against the Midianites, but with an army of thirty-two thousand, Gideon was seriously outnumbered. The Bible says Israel’s enemies were “as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude” (Judges 7:12). But despite the odds of victory being overwhelmingly against Gideon, God reduced the size of Gideon’s fighting force to just three hundred men! Three hundred against a massive army, and yet Gideon was victorious.

So why did God reduce the size of Gideon’s fighting force so drastically? Triumph with thirty-two thousand soldiers would have been impressive. Victory with the ten thousand soldiers who remained after the first wave of defections would also have been truly remarkable. In either case, Gideon’s army would have been dramatically outnumbered. But with just three hundred warriors against an enemy army as large as Gideon was facing, there could be only one explanation for victory: God was with His people.

Often, God allows His people to get into a seemingly impossible situation before providing deliverance. And when He does, we may know without a doubt that it was God who saved us, rescued us, healed us, or strengthened us. David’s numbering of Israel was the opposite of this. By numbering his people, David and Israel would have been tempted to claim credit for the victory. God wants us to know that our salvation, our prosperity, and our well-being are the result of His power, His might, and His goodness.

When your situation looks as impossible as that which faced Gideon, you can know that even if you’re hopelessly outnumbered, you are in the majority if God is on your side. God can bring victory where no human could ever hope to do so.

## Russian Roulette

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God  
is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

—Romans 6:23

He had locked himself out of his fourteenth-floor apartment. Desperate to get inside, he went upstairs and asked his neighbor if she would let him onto her balcony. From there, he attempted to climb down to his own balcony. He was drunk after a night out with friends, which may explain why it didn't occur to him that what he was about to attempt wasn't a good idea. (I don't need to say "Don't try this at home," do I?) Unsurprisingly, he fell—thirteen stories, which is a very long way to fall—onto the roof of a neighboring building. Incredibly, he survived! He was badly injured—but not as badly injured as you might expect. He cheated death in a big way.

But don't most people do that very thing every day? "The wages of sin is death," and yet, people play with sin like it's a cute kitten when in fact, it's much more like a venomous snake. Sin is deadly. It introduced death into the world, led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, caused the Flood that inundated the planet in the days of Noah, and has caused untold woe and misery. Sin ultimately cost the life of Jesus.

But in today's world, sin is often considered nothing more than "fun," "edgy," maybe a little naughty, but certainly nothing to take too seriously. Consider the array of celebrities who have found themselves enmeshed in moral scandals only for society to collectively ask, "What's the big deal?" Incidents that once would have caused people to hang their heads in shame are now often the doorway to fame and fortune.

This familiarity with sin causes people to consider sin less dangerous than it really is. Being careless with sin is like playing Russian roulette or like climbing from one apartment to another 150 feet above the ground. It's better to play it safe and stay as far from sin as possible. Don't risk the painful, often deadly, fall that sin inevitably brings.

## In the Heat of the Moment

*“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”*

—Psalm 91:15

**A**ccording to the Bible, sin begins with temptation. And temptation is a fact of life. Wishing for temptation to go away altogether is like wishing for the weather to disappear. One way or another, it’s always going to be present.

What is key in your experience isn’t so much whether or not you are tempted but what you do when temptation comes. If you are tempted to yell at your spouse or take something that isn’t yours or say something that isn’t true, there are moments in that temptation process when you can do something that will get you out of that situation successfully. To say that “there was nothing I could do” or that “it just happened before I realized what was going on” is to misrepresent the reality of temptation.

God promises that when we call on Him, He will answer. Not only that, but He also says, “I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him” (Psalm 91:15). When temptation comes, God will deliver you from its grasp if you call upon Him to do so. The problem is never that God is unwilling to help but that a person is unwilling in the heat of temptation to ask for or to accept the deliverance God provides.

When the temptation arises to say something cutting, God will intervene if you pray and ask Him for strength. A person who doesn’t call on God is left to rely on his or her own human strength—or lack thereof. No one is a match for the power of temptation, but no temptation that could ever be imagined is a match for the power of God!

God promises to deliver His children out of temptation, and His promise is sure. When you have the presence of mind to respond to God’s prompting, to call on Him in the heat of the moment, you can be sure God will provide His grace and power. If you learn to lean on Him when temptation comes and continue to do it, you will soon discover that turning to God becomes habitual. And when it does, victory over sin also becomes habitual.

January 5

## The Call to Surrender

*“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?  
I know that you do believe.”*

—Acts 26:27

**Y**ou might have wondered why some people believe in God and others don't. Why some people maintain a faith experience and others choose not to. Two people may have the same spiritual advantages and opportunities—even the same upbringing—and the outcomes may be very different. While multiple factors may be at play, very often, the bottom line is that while people might have knowledge, they don't always choose to act on what they know.

Paul asked King Agrippa, “Do you believe the prophets?” Then he answered his own question. “I know that you do believe” (Acts 26:27). According to the apostle Paul, Agrippa believed! Agrippa knew that what he was hearing was true. He was aware that standing before him was a true witness for God and that the message Paul bore rang with truth. But King Agrippa wouldn't act. He wouldn't *surrender*. We can speculate as to what his issues were, but the salient point is that knowing the difference between right and wrong, between truth and error, and apparently understanding something of the gravity of the subject of eternity, Agrippa still chose not to yield.

While it's easy to criticize Agrippa's foolishness (for that's what it was), Agrippa's situation was not much different from ours today. We may be separated by culture and by millennia, but the question we all must resolve is the question of the heart. To whom will I surrender? Was it fame Agrippa coveted? Power? Admiration? Whatever it was, God was calling him to something higher, something more valuable, something *eternal*. Yet Agrippa, who believed, chose to chart his own course. As a result, Agrippa could not be saved.

If surrender was such an easy matter, we would all be 100 percent surrendered to God, and sin would have no place in our lives. But surrender is a test, a trial, a battle for supremacy in the life of every believer. When God calls, the best thing any person can do is yield. Surrender. Let God have His way, and you'll go in the right way.

## Redemption

*“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding  
and delivering into prisons both men and women.”*

—Acts 22:4

It is common to hear stories of people who have committed truly awful crimes. News reports regularly share ghastly details of criminal acts, often causing people to respond with condemnation. There is frequently a temptation to think people who do these things are beyond redemption, that there’s no help for them.

In Acts 22:4, Paul confesses that he was once a heartless persecutor of God’s people. In another place, he calls himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (verse 13). Paul was a scoundrel, responsible for the deaths of many of God’s people. And yet, Paul went on to be a prolific Bible writer and one of the most significant figures in Christian history. No doubt, we will see him in heaven.

It is estimated that one former warlord in the west African country of Liberia was responsible for the death of twenty thousand Liberians during that country’s civil war in the 1990s. He admitted to having committed unimaginable crimes. Investigations into his activities reveal that his claims are apparently true. Yet today, the man is a Christian pastor. He has personally apologized to dozens of people whose families he terrorized. He says, “I believe that God wishes to use me as a sign. No matter how far a person goes, he has the potential to change.”

God is in the business of redemption and can turn around even the most hardened life. Even those considered to be hopeless cases are never beyond hope.

While you might not have done anything to rival the actions of a brutal warlord, every person has earned the wages of sin, which is death. How encouraging to know that God is in the business of restoration! He has shown us again and again that there is no project too hard for Him.

## Calm Under Provocation

*[Christ], when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*

—1 Peter 2:23

If you upset a snake, its response is to strike or to prepare to strike. A venomous snake coiled up just a few feet away from you can be a sobering sight. Angry dogs react to provocation by barking or biting, harried cats will scratch or hiss, obstreperous horses might kick, and people are much the same. It's sadly human for people to lash out—to react with hostility when they feel they've been poorly treated.

First Peter 2:23 is a challenge to sinful human nature. Speaking of Jesus, it says, “When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Jesus, the Maker of humanity, the Savior of the world, was more than rejected. Wicked men plotted to end His life. His motives were misrepresented. The authorities “watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor” (Luke 20:20). If anyone had reason to lash out, it was Jesus. But under intense provocation, He didn't react negatively. He remained calm, kind, and gracious.

It has always struck me as remarkable that after having been abandoned by His friends, betrayed by a disciple, and convicted by a kangaroo court; after having been beaten and spit upon and hearing crowds howl for His blood; after not having eaten for almost a day, and after staying up all night long, Jesus *still* didn't react in anger!

Can you be like that? The truth is, no. And yes! In your own strength, you cannot hope to get this right, but with Jesus living His life in you, you can react like Jesus did when He was provoked.

What a witness to the world it would be if God's people were gracious under fire and calm under pressure—if we learned to return blessing for cursing and love for malice. Jesus wishes for His character to be on display in the life of every believer. And if we allow that to happen, it will.