

HOPE

H O P E

God's Shelter in the Storms of Life

Stephen Baker

Lulu Enterprises Inc.

Morrisville, NC

HOPE: God's shelter in the storms of life

Published By: Lulu.com

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Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 978-0-557-01907-6

All Scripture quotations are from the Authorized (KJV) Version of the Holy Bible.

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For information:

THE NATIONS FOR CHRIST INC.

2134 DUG GAP ROAD

DALTON, GA 30720

*To Chaplain Richard Steele
who gives hope to so many*

Introduction	
The Purpose of This Book...7	
Chapter 1	
God's Formula For Hope...10	
Chapter 2	
Peace In the Storm...22	
Chapter 3	
“I Still Don't Know My Purpose”...28	
Poem	
“If”...37	
Chapter 4	
“I Remember the Day That the Lord Saved Me”	
A Story of Hope...39	
Chapter 5	
“If God is So Powerful, Why Does He Allow Bad Things to	
Happen?”...46	
Chapter 6	
The Death of Lazarus...52	
Chapter 7	
Lessons Learned in the House of Mourning...63	
Poem	
“Don't Quit”...71	
Chapter 8	
Jesus Christ, The Son of David...74	
APPENDIX	
Hope for Various Situations in Life...85	

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to show you that there is real hope for whatever situation you are facing in life. The old hymn, “A Shelter In The Time Of Storm,” sings about this hope...

*The Lord's our Rock, in Him we hide,
A shelter in the time of storm;
Secure whatever ill betide,
A shelter in the time of storm.*

God has a shelter for you during the storms of life. It is a place of strength and safety when doubt, discouragement, bereavement, and loneliness thunder on the horizon.

*A shade by day, defense by night,
A shelter in the time of storm;
No fears alarm, no foes affright,
A shelter in the time of storm.*

This shelter is the hope that each one of us can have in the Lord Jesus Christ! Whatever situation you are in, Jesus Christ is the answer.

*The raging storms may round us beat,
A shelter in the time of storm;
We'll never leave our safe retreat,
A shelter in the time of storm.*

This book will teach you what the Bible says about experiencing God's hope, peace and purpose for your life. After each chapter, you will find a place to write your own notes and thoughts. At the end, you will come to a supplemental section that deals with some

tough questions that you may have wondered about. As you read, it is our prayer that you are encouraged, and that you find hope through the Lord Jesus Christ!

*Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,
A weary land, a weary land;
Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,
A shelter in the time of storm.*

“...Jesus Christ, which is our hope.”
(1 Timothy 1:1b)

1
God's Formula For Hope

GOD'S FORMULA FOR HOPE

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

(Romans 5:5)

Hope can keep us going through the hardest times and the roughest storms that life can bring our way. Emily Dickinson, the 19th Century American poet wrote:

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—*

*And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me.*

Everyone in the world wants hope, but in order to have real hope, we have to follow God's formula. God tells us, in His Word, how we can have hope that will last through the most challenging storms of life.

Verse one of Romans, chapter five says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ.” Peace goes hand in hand with hope in helping me to live a happy, successful Christian life. If I have peace with God and the hope of Jesus Christ in my heart, I can sail through the stormy seas of life in victory! The word, *justified* in this verse is a very interesting word. Let's suppose that you had just committed a crime and that you were standing before the judge. “Are you guilty of the charges?” the judge asks. “Yes, your Honor. I am guilty” you reply, with your head hung towards the ground. “Well then,” says the judge. “The verdict is, NOT GUILTY – INNOCENT OF ALL CRIMES!” This may seem like an unlikely scenario in a court of law, but it is exactly what happens when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. God declares him to be “not guilty” and innocent of all sin. That is what the Bible means when it says, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”* (Romans 5:1) The word, “justified” means to declare a person to be innocent of sin and righteous.

How good does a person have to be to go to Heaven? Jesus said, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) The Scribes and Pharisees were very religious, and on the outside, they were as clean as a hound's tooth. Jesus taught that outward righteousness and religion are not enough. A man or woman who will enter God's kingdom has to exceed this type of righteousness.

How good does a person have to be? Well, they would have to be good enough to not have any sin, because God promises that He will judge sin. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die...”* (Ezekiel 18:20a) *“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* (James 1:15) *“For the wages of sin is death...”* (Romans 6:23a) The penalty of sin is death—separation from God forever in Hell.

I only know of one sinless, perfect person who has ever lived, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ! So when, by faith, I receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, this is what happens. God takes all of the sin off of my record: every time I have told a lie, stolen something, desired to have something that belonged to someone else, taken God's

name in vain, or broken any of God's commandments; God takes all of my sins away! But He doesn't stop there. God places the righteousness of Jesus Christ on my record, so that in His sight, I am sinless and perfect. Then, when God looks at my record, He has to declare me to be innocent of sin and righteous because He sees, on my record, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

That is how we can experience peace with God. Everybody wants peace, but you can never have true peace with God until you are justified. The only way that you can be justified is by placing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)* If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ to be your Savior, why not do it now? Christ died for your sins on the cross. He was buried, and after three days, He arose from the dead. He is alive and able to forgive your sins and save your soul. If you will trust Him as Savior, you can have peace with God. God will declare you to be righteous and innocent of all sin in His sight!

The Bible goes on to say, *“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:2)* Grace is when I get good things from God that I don't deserve. I do not deserve to go to Heaven, but I am going there! That is God's grace. The Bible teaches that we have access into God's grace by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is like a master key that unlocks God's treasures of grace. It is like an “all access pass.” We stand before God innocent and righteous. We do not deserve this, but it is a reality for every believer in Jesus Christ, *“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* While we stand before God sinless and righteous, we *“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* Even though I am sinless in God's sight in Heaven, I am still far from perfect here on earth. One day, I will not come short of God's glory any more. I will be like Jesus Christ. That is my hope—the glory of God!

Now here is God's formula for hope. It is: Tribulation + Patience + Experience = Hope. Notice what the Bible says. *“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation*

worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:”
(Romans 5:3, 4)

Tribulation

The first part of God's formula for hope is tribulation. In other words, we have to go through trouble to get hope. Now that is not the way I would have planned things; how about you? I don't like suffering. I do not enjoy trouble. But, God says that if you want hope, you have to go through tribulation. The good news is, if you are going through trouble in your life right now, you are a prime candidate for hope! When my mother died in 2002 of Lou Gehrig's disease, that was a time of tribulation for our family. It was also a time of hope, because we could look to God's promises in the Bible that life does not end at death. For the Christian, there is the firm hope of meeting again in Heaven! The road of tribulation takes us to a place of hope, but not before it gives us something else that we need in life. That brings us to the second part of God's formula for hope...

Patience

Patience is something that we all can use. Going through tribulation in life teaches us to patiently wait on God. Strong's Concordance says that the word translated “patience” in this verse means “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy.” I do not enjoy going through trouble. I endure it. Because God is in the equation, I can endure it cheerfully or hopefully, looking to the time when I will be delivered from the situation, or when the trial will be over. The Bible says that Jesus Christ, “...for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2b) Here was Jesus, hanging on the cross, suffering for our sins. He did not enjoy the sufferings that He went through. He endured them for the joy that was to come after. The joy of rising from the dead and of seeing millions of sinners saved—this joy caused Him to endure the cross. We do not have to enjoy tribulations in life. We simply need to know that tribulation causes us to have patience, which we all need, and that it will result in hope.

I didn't get married until I was thirty years old. I wanted to, but I could not find the right girl for me. During the time of waiting for a wife, I surrendered to go to the mission field. My wife also wanted a husband, but could not find the right man. She surrendered to the Lord and moved to Peru, South America for a year and a half to serve as a missionary. The Lord taught us to patiently wait for Him. When the time was right, He brought us together. We are so glad that we waited for one another. Both of us wanted to serve God, and now we are able to serve Him together! The loneliness of being single while others our age were married and having children was also a time of trusting God, waiting on Him and learning patience. You say, "I sure do need patience!" Good, but you cannot have patience without going through tribulation. You learn to patiently wait on God through the trials of life. You say, "Well, I've been in some tribulation and now I'm learning to patiently wait for God to work. I want to experience God's deliverance!" Then you are in the right place, because the next part of God's formula for hope is experience.

Experience

This is my favorite part of God's formula. I have seen it time and again in my own life as a Christian. I go through the trial. I wait on God. God works, and I experience His deliverance! Are you a Christian? Are you going through a trial right now? It will not last forever. Deliverance will come. You will experience God's hope in your life!

One of the Devil's tools is to make us think that there will never be an end to the trial we are going through. That is not true. There will be an end. There is light at the end of the dark tunnel we walk through. Jesus Christ is there. He has walked with us all the way and He is the light of hope when it is all over. Some Christians endure sicknesses that lasts throughout their lives, but they enjoy God's sweet presence and powerful hope here on earth. In eternity, there will be no more sickness or doctors, no more hospitals or pain.

My father's business went through some very bad years financially. He was worried and depressed. One day, he and my mother came to the Bible college and church that I was attending near Knoxville, Tennessee. The late Dr. Al Smith was there that evening singing and telling stories about some of the great hymns of the Christian faith. He told the story of Stillman and Civilla Martin and their hymn, "God Will Take Care of You." As Dr. Smith sang the song,

*Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.
God will take care of you,
Thro' ev'ry day, O'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

Dad realized that God would take care of him. He did not need to be depressed. My mother was a musician; dad was not. I do remember, though, how he learned to play "God Will Take Care of You" on our family piano, and he would practice it over and over again, reminding himself of God's concern for his situation. The Lord did deliver, and when he should have gone out of business, dad recovered and began to do well again!

John the Baptist sat in prison, depressed and doubting who Jesus was. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Son of God, or if they should look for another. *"Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."* (Luke 7:22, 23) Jesus gave the answer when John needed to hear it most, and John experienced God's hope in the midst of his prison cell. Where are you today? God can give you hope. Jesus Christ can deliver

you from your doubts, from your depression, from your loneliness. Jesus Christ is the answer to whatever problem you are going through!

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:” (Romans 5:3, 4) By the way, I can understand glorying in victory or glorying when things go well. But, the Bible says, *“...not only so, but we glory in tribulations also...”* After studying this subject, we understand why a Christian glories in tribulations also. Because, tribulation gives us patience, experience and finally...

Hope

All of us need hope during the storms of life. How do we get the hope that we need? When we go through tribulation, we learn to patiently wait on God. When God's deliverance comes and we experience it, the next time we go through a trial we will have hope based on what God has done for us in the past. To illustrate, the first time I ever went into a prison to preach it was a frightening experience. It is not as frightening now as it was then, because I know basically what to expect. My past experiences prepare me for the future. It is similar to the way a soldier who is well trained for combat is better prepared to face the situation than one who is not. The battle-hardened soldier is even better prepared than the fresh troops who have just entered the theater of combat. Through experience, God prepares us for future trials.

One of the most troubling things about a trial is the fact that we cannot tell for sure what the future holds. We do not know what will happen next. We do, however, learn from past experience that God remains the same. The Lord Jesus Christ is a certainty. *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)* I may not necessarily know what to expect from a situation in life, but I do know, from experience, what to expect from God! He is always there. *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake*

thee.” (Hebrews 13:5) God cares about me. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) No situation of life is too hard for Him to handle. “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27)

So, experiencing God in my life during a time of trial gives me hope for the future. It can also give hope to others. The Bible says, *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4)* When we go through a time of trouble in our lives, God comforts us and gives us hope. The Bible teaches that we can take the comfort that God has given to us, and use it to help others. I remember Pastor Clarence Sexton telling a story about Dr. Curtis Hutson, the late editor of “The Sword of The Lord” newspaper, and former pastor of the largest church in the State of Georgia, who died of cancer.¹ Dr. Hutson said that it never helped when someone told him that they had cancer. It did help, however, when they told him that God had strengthened them during their cancer. Everyone is going through, or has gone through some trial. If God has been a strength and encouragement to you during yours, telling another person what God has done for you helps to spread hope. By the way, it will make you feel good too. Sharing God's comfort in your own life will comfort others, and give you happiness in knowing that you can minister to someone else and be used of God to bring hope to someone who needs it!

The Bible goes on to say in Romans 5:5-9,

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man

¹ Dr. Curtis Hutson pastored the Forest Hills Baptist Church near Atlanta, GA which grew from 40 in attendance to nearly 8,000 during his tenure there as pastor. The “Sword of the Lord” is a bimonthly Christian newspaper that takes its name from Judges 7:20 in the Old Testament. He served as the editor there until his death in 1995 of Cancer. Dr. Hutson died preaching the Word of God, for 24 hours straight, from his bed.

will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The greatest hope that any one of us can have in life is that Jesus Christ demonstrated His love toward us, while we were yet sinners, by dying in our place on the cross. This hope means that I can be sure that God loves me through the trials of life, and I am guaranteed a future of hope when I die. I will be "...saved from wrath through him." (*Romans 5:9b*) I never will experience God's wrath against my sins. Jesus Christ took my place on the cross, and I believe in Him. God promises me salvation from the penalty of sin and everlasting life in Heaven. This is true hope! We can place our faith in Jesus Christ through the trials of life. He will never let us down.

*My faith has found a resting-place,
Not in device or creed;
I trust the Ever-living One;
His wounds for me shall plead.*

*Refrain:
I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

*Enough for me that Jesus saves,
This ends my fear and doubt;
A sinful soul I come to Him,
He'll never cast me out.*

*My heart is leaning on the Word,
The written Word of God,
Salvation by my Savior's name,
Salvation thro' His blood.*

*My great Physician heals the sick,
The lost He came to save;
For me His precious blood He shed,
For me His life He gave*

*I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

-Lidie H. Edmunds