

Dear friend,

Hopefully this will be an encouragement to you. The future need not be feared in any way. God is here now with you and will be there for you in the future. He has not and does never leave you.

Be blessed as you take the time to absorb this.

Pastor Ed.

What Does Your Future Hold?

Ed Horak

Psalm 37:37

*37 Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright;
For the future of that man is peace.*

*38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together;
The future of the wicked shall be cut off.*

The eternal future of the 'righteous' and the 'wicked' is quite different. The 'blameless man' will enjoy a future of peace, but the future of the 'wicked' is one of destruction: he will be cut off. Put another way, not everyone will automatically go to heaven and enjoy endless joy.

God is in everyone's future. The faithful will enjoy His everlasting love, whereas the rebellious will endure the dreadful consequences of their own choices. They will find no one to blame but themselves. The righteous judge of the universe will be vindicated. He will be seen to have made every effort to reach them with His love.

Life on earth cannot and must not be seen as a 'dress rehearsal' for eternity. The choices you make on earth right now determine the quality of your eternal future. Your present and your future are thus connected.

The Blessings of Hope

God is the God of hope (Romans 15:13), and His people are characterized by hope. Bible hope is not empty wishful thinking, but a confident expectation that what God has promised, He will bring to pass. Bible hope has a supernatural element to it. It comes from God, and is the connector between our faith and our future.

Hebrews 11:1

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is planted in the soil of hope, and without hope we have no expectation of a preferred or better future. Because God loves us and we love Him, hope will not disappoint. He has spoken what He wants for you in His Word. 'Feed' your faith by constantly looking into what God has planned for you as His child. You do this by thinking about His promises. His promises have to with the future. One key promise is this: the good work God has begun in you, He will see to completion.

Philippians 1:6

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

On the journey towards that final day of reckoning, we plow and sow with a confident expectation that God rewards those that diligently seek Him (1 Corinthians 9:10 & Hebrews 11:6). When we keep our eyes on Him despite distracting difficulties, we will enjoy our final reward. On the way there, hope serves to anchor the soul (Hebrews 6:29). Hope keeps us steady, so learn to hold onto hope.

You have the power to choose whether to be depressed by circumstances, or hopeful as you look to God. He is your way of escape in the midst of any trial.

Psalms 42:5

*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.*

Your Past is the Best Predictor Of Your Future

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

*9 That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun.
10 Is there anything of which it may be said,
"See, this is new"?
It has already been in ancient times before us.*

If you do not know and properly interpret what has happened in your past, you will have no hope for the future, and this scripture will not be an encouragement for you. Chances are you will repeat old habits and patterns and not change. Sadly, your past will be the best predictor of your future.

However, there is a way out of this kind of human fatalism. Positively, you must know what Christ has already done for you. He said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Through Christ's obedience certain things have been established that cannot be changed: God's forgiveness, righteousness, mercy and grace are already deposited in your 'heavenly account'. God now relates to you on a new covenant basis, and not on how you used to be. Your past has been swallowed up in Christ's suffering, setting you free to step forward into a new future.

These divine 'deposits' Jesus made on our behalf must be known, accessed and enjoyed by faith. If we do not mix faith with the Word it will not profit us the way God intends (Hebrews 4:2). That's how God works. He has not, and will not, change His mind on His plan for you. We are required to line up with what He has already set in motion. When we do, our future is found in God's Word, and His Word thus becomes the best predictor of our future. Selah.

See your past as cleansed by what Christ has done. You are now 'in Him' and what he thinks about you and promises to establish in your life are what defines you. The memories of past failures and the old patterns of thought that determined your actions are now irrelevant to your future.

The future need not be mysterious, or an uncertain and fearful thing. God has revealed His thoughts in His Word and promised us the future as His gift to us.

So...

...What Does Your Future Hold?

The future is both uncertain **and** certain. It is uncertain because of what we *don't* know, and certain because of what we *do* know. The future will come, there's no doubt about that. The big question to resolve however is this: are there some things that you can do to survive and even determine a better future, or do you have to simply wait upon it as it rushes towards you?

This is not about predicting what will happen prophetically in a few years but takes the position that there are things you can do, and choices you can make to ensure that your future will be better than if you simply let the future come at you.

The decisions you make today can and will affect your future. No matter what has happened to this point in your life, there is still hope. To know where you are headed, there is no need to look to anyone else but God and yourself. Together, God and you are a majority, greater than anything you will ever face, and the only limits are those you put on yourself. Of course other people play a part and can either help or hinder your progress, but as a later chapter shows, with God's help you can turn any setback into a stepping stone.

Attitude is a choice, so is commitment to a worthy goal. Courage and passion depend on the character choices you make in the face of difficulty. No one can make these for you. Thankfully,

God has promised to strengthen us in all things. He sent the Holy Spirit to be our strengthener, and He lives in us (John 14:16-17).

The things we face right now are only temporary. They will pass, and when you begin to see difficult circumstances in the light of eternity, your perspective will change. You will be able to overcome the moment and see with new clarity. Life will take on a new and motivating meaning, and you will begin to discover and understand truths that will set you free from what holds you back from a brighter future.

Enjoy the journey, it's your choice.

Live Your Life with an Eternal Perspective

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11

10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

In everyone's heart is an element of eternity. God has put that desire there. Existence only makes sense if there is a better future. Even though this verse partly speaks of the frustrations of life, in Christ you *can* find out what God is already doing, and what your part is in His plan. When you discover God's plan and your part in it, what you busy yourself with will always be 'beautiful in its time'.

There is an increasing sense that eternity seems to be coming at us at an accelerated rate. Today choices have to be made in one lifetime that previous generations did not have to make in ten lifetimes. The information age has compressed the past, present and future so close together that life seems to continually speed up. Growing up, life seemed fairly simple, but now involves so much. Fortunately, there is a place of refuge and stability that we can run to. It is found in the love of Jesus who not only has your past covered but also the present and the future!

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Jesus stepped into time two thousand years ago, but now lives outside of it, so when you see your future in Him, it is always secure. Why? Because He has promised to be your shepherd and give you the necessary guidance through troubling times.

Eternal life and security is found not in easy circumstances but in God's person. The true measure of eternal life is not time, but whether you and I are in right relationship with the author of life, Jesus Christ, God's gift for your future.

John 17:3-4

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

God's plan and purpose for you in this life goes way beyond just 'making it to the end'. He wants you to enjoy a full life filled with righteousness, peace and joy as you worship Him. He also wants you to fulfill your calling to reach a world that desperately needs Jesus' saving love.

We are sandwiched between God's mercy manifested in Jesus' first coming, and His judgment to come at Jesus second coming. This window of time has been given to us to live life to the full, secure in God's love in a world full of turmoil and uncertainty. We are to live now as 'citizens of heaven' (Philippians 3:20), with all its privileges and responsibilities. Heaven and earth can meet as we face the future with confidence and faith in God's helping hand. We are not alone and a preferred future is ours for the taking.

How to Be Certain In Uncertain Times

Matthew 24:1-8, 14

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows..."

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

In this account, Jesus first highlights the **impermanence** of what we see naturally in Vs 1-2. The disciples saw the huge structures of the temple as permanent. Jesus spoke prophetically about the near destruction of the buildings in AD 70. What seemed permanent would suddenly fall. In our century for example, many have looked at the world economic meltdown that began to manifest in 2008 in this light. Things that seemed so secure turned out to be quite fragile. With all this uncertainty, we live personally, nationally and historically on the precarious edge of eternity.

Jesus then gave **pointers** (signs) to alert His disciples, and us, to future danger in Vs 3. As a caring father will not leave his children in the dark about situations to come, so does the savior of the world and friend of sinners, warn those who would listen of impending dangers.

He continues to give the gift of His **perspective** on time and events in Vs 4-8. He points out the proper response to deception, troubling wars and unsettling natural calamities. He speaks stability into unstable times teaching us that when you put your life in the hands of certainty Himself, then the world's uncertainties will not shake you. His wisdom is about where you put your trust.

He then concludes this important passage with a **prophecy** of the most definitive sign of all in Vs 14. The gospel of the kingdom will first be preached around the world and then and then only will the end come. Only when you come into alignment with this grand purpose will you experience supernatural peace and certainty in an uncertain world.

In short, the only way to be certain in uncertain times is to put your trust in Jesus alone. All else is changing around us all the time and cannot be trusted. People used to accept that when you buy a house and hold onto it for a long time, it will build equity. Unfortunately in many places, that is no longer true in real terms. This world and its systems have never been and never will be a trusted source of security.

God encourages us to look to the Lord who is the author (originator) of our faith. When we keep our eyes on the eternal we are not easily 'moved' by negative circumstances in the here and now. As we will see later in the book, faith is not some 'pie in the sky' dynamic, but a vital ingredient in accessing God's promised future.

What Does the Eternal Future Hold For The Righteous?

The meek or righteous are those that have put their trust in Christ alone. They will inherit the earth and dwell in peace. Right now there will be difficult times, but because we have a blessed hope as we wait upon the Lord, we can endure to the end.

Matthew 5:5

*5 Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.*

Psalms 37:9-11, 37-38

9 For evildoers shall be cut

On the other hand, be encouraged by the history of others. (Don't focus on yourself so much). You can gain useful insights from what others have gone through in the past. The examples from Bible history can provide inspiration and hope for you to press on through to victory. If they overcame in very difficult circumstances, so can you. If God helped them, He will help you too. History is not some dusty discipline, but provides vital information and inspiration for you to receive and reach for your better future.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

The Bible warns us not to ignore the facts of man's fallen nature and the evil tendencies of the flesh. If you naively press forward into your future, you might be caught unawares of potential hazards ahead of your quest to walk in God's best. To be 'sober minded' (Titus 2:6) is not stupid, but smart. God knows there are pitfalls, and wants to impart His wisdom to us, so that we can avoid them. His best is to learn from The Word and not from bad experiences!

To get out of past ruts, God requires us to be open to an injection of His life based on His promises which connect our present with our preferred future. His promises are the language of His covenant relationship, and He injects or imparts His ability to change through them (2 Peter 1:4).

For example, God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. Because this promise is true, we can with bold confidence say about our future that God will help us and we have nothing to

fear. Our approach to the future will change, and our agreement with God will determine how we handle tomorrow's challenges.

Hebrews 13:5-6

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say:

"The LORD is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?"

The mindset we adopt today will have a profound impact on tomorrow. 'Repentance' or a changed way of thinking, results in a changed lifestyle, and in turn a changed future. In short, your future depends on the changes you make to your thinking and habits today. As a Christian you are transformed as your mind is renewed to God's Word.

Change thus begins from within. Freedom from restrictive external circumstances may appear to be liberating, like a physical prisoner set free from a jail. However internally he may still be bound by negative thoughts and habits as he goes about his business in the 'freedom' of the outside world. These negative thoughts and habits most often get many prisoners into further trouble with the law, and they land up in prison once again.

True freedom is found in the inner recesses of your heart. The Apostle Paul was still free even though he unfairly wound up in prison (Philippians 3:13). He was reaching forward into his future while he was still in prison! He was not waiting to be let out before making the necessary internal adjustments. He took hold of negative thoughts and found His freedom in Christ alone, not his circumstances.

Do not live your life imprisoned by small and limited thinking. Do not say things like, 'When I am rich I will be generous'. Do what you can right now and start the flow of giving and receiving. Realize that in Christ you are already wealthy, and do not be fearful of losing what you have. God has promised to supply all your needs, today and in the future. The righteous will never be forsaken. That's God's promise. Believe it (Psalm 37:25).

Cooperate with God and let the inner character changes and the freedom they bring, provide the platform for change in your circumstances.

The Future is God's Gift to You

Jeremiah 29:10-13

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity;

The future need not be mysterious, or an uncertain and fearful thing. God has revealed His thoughts in His Word, and promised us a future as His gift to us. It is a good future containing peace, and it brings hope to the present. He knows who you are, what your current situation is, and what it will take to move into your better future.

Yet, the future does not just happen. It is dependent upon us engaging with God by calling upon Him, seeking and searching with all our hearts. It involves throwing yourself into it with all that you have at your disposal. In this way you make your way prosperous together with God.

Joshua 1:8

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

'For then you will'.

In God there is **predictability** about your future. As you put your hand in His, He will always steer you into His provision, protection and purposes. There is nothing uncertain about that! His gift is to 'to **give** you a future...'

Relationship has a lot to do with responses. God makes a move, we respond. If we don't, then the offer falls to the ground. Yet if we do respond in faith, we receive all that God has promised.

In the context of the above passage, the prophet Daniel sees his *present* circumstances in the light of the *future* that Jeremiah had prophesied earlier (Jeremiah 29:1-14). Israel would spend seventy years in Babylonian captivity. Daniel along with many others had been taken into captivity and was now looking into the prophetic scrolls (the Word of His day). He realizes that God's perspective of the future is staring Him in the face. This understanding about the future condition of his people under King Darius comes to him 'by the books'. He responds to the prophecy by seeking the Lord in prayer, fasting and confession. Later on in the account, he receives revelation or God's picture for his people of the future.

Daniel 9:2-4, 23-24

2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. 4 And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, ...

...23 At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

*24 "Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.*

The interpretation and application here is that God shows us the future before it happens. Our responsibility is to look, listen and see what He reveals, then take appropriate action to position ourselves to receive and walk into that future by faith.

When God shows us things to come they edify, exhort and comfort us. This is the nature of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3). This foresight inspires us to act, and make us move towards the fulfillment of what has been spoken. Prophecy is never intended to immobilize the believer into a false fatalism.

God's way is to declare up front what He is about to do. He wants us to respond by stretching for the future as we play our part.

Let Go of the Former Things

Just like a stranded flood victim trapped in a raging river has to let go of the branch to take the hand of the helicopter rescue team member, so we must let go of the past in order to take hold of God's promises.

Isaiah 43:18-19

18 "Do not remember the former things,

Nor consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing,

Now it shall spring forth;

Shall you not know it?

I will even make a road in the wilderness

And rivers in the desert.

God specializes in making the impossible possible, if we let go and let Him take control. He expects us to engage with Him so that he can show us things to come.

Jeremiah 33:3

3'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

God knows more than we do, and expects you to call upon Him to discover those things about our present and future that we do not know. God's plans for you are always bigger and better than your own, and He has promised to reveal them to you...if you call upon Him.

He wants to see your heart's desire and will not force you against your will into doing His. Stepping into your future is a cooperative effort where the choices you make are made in partnership with God. He imparts His ability to you at the new birth when you give your heart to Jesus, and then expects you to take the necessary steps to 'work out' your salvation. Your life must be lived from the inside out. The Word teaches that this process involves intense effort or 'trembling'. There have been times when I have worked hard in the yard or garden and got to a stage when my muscles are literally trembling from the effort.

Some Christians expect to recline on the couch and watch God 'lay it on them' without any effort on their side. They have not learnt to cooperate with God and...

Philippians 2:12

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...

Holiness and the Future

How you live your life has a bearing on the length and quality of life that you will live on this earth. Put another way, you can determine your future by holy living.

Proverbs 3:1-2

*My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
2 For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.*

It is clear that God rewards the obedient with the blessing of prolonged life.

Proverbs 10:27-28

*27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.
28 The hope of the righteous will be gladness,
But the expectation of the wicked will perish.*

We are encouraged to live holy lives, not only for our own benefit: longevity, but also to play our part in fulfilling God's plan on earth so that He can send Jesus back to complete His plan. To live a holy life means to live in such a way that your hopes and dreams are 'set apart' for God's purposes. When you align your future in obedience to God's plans, then He is committed to watch over and protect you. Psalm 91 shows that when we set our love on God, or live a holy life for His glory, then we can expect to enjoy long life and be satisfied with it. In this way our future in God is secure.

Psalm 91:14-16

*14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.
16 With long life I will satisfy him,
And show him My salvation."*

The following passage of scripture is also quite profound. Read it carefully. God has orchestrated His covenant in such a way where He expects us to 'hasten' the Lord's coming through 'holy conduct and godliness'. Pause there. God presents us with a huge challenge! We actually have a part in fulfilling the future. God is sovereign, yet He has chosen us to participate in His plan. How we live our lives counts in His grand plan for man.

2 Peter 3:10-14

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

I pray that you take this challenge to heart and ask God to help you play your part with all diligence, and be found by Him at His return to be 'without spot and blameless'.

God Rewards Generosity

Dorcas was a godly woman who was 'full of good works and charitable deeds' (Acts 9:36). Unfortunately she got sick and died. Things certainly went wrong for her even though she was godly. Even though her future on earth looked over, God was not finished with her yet, and the apostle Peter was called to her death bed, miraculously raising her from the dead. Notably it was her previous life of generosity that opened the door to a dramatic turnaround. Her past impacted her future!

When taken together with the story of Cornelius' prayers and generosity (alms giving) that immediately follows in Acts 10:1-48, there is no coincidence as we see God intervening in the lives of these generous saints to dramatically alter their futures.

Not only was Cornelius future dramatically changed, but his family's future was gloriously changed too. They were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit on the same day. His alms giving, mentioned no less than three times (Vs 2,4,31), came up as a 'memorial' before God, who dramatically rewarded this man's godliness.

Your past and present generosity will open up the door to your future.

The Future Begins Now

It is said that young people live in the future, and old people in the past, but wise people live in the present. It is 'high time' to awaken to God's planned future for our lives.

Romans 13:11-14

11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Thankfully, God is not politically correct: He tells the truth like it is, always. It is high time to awaken to our destinies, because the clock is ticking, and we are that much closer to the Lord's return. Your spiritual temperature, or how you live for God today, will determine where you will be tomorrow.