

## **THE HOPE WE SHARE**

By John F. Hall

Years ago, I wrote an article about our hope. There were things in the article that are as true today as they were the day I wrote it. In 2015, James Innell Packer wrote, “Where there's hope, there's life. Hope springs eternal in the human breast as declared by Alexander Pope in his usual pompous way, but that is not all the story. For the first half of people's life, spontaneous hope does indeed spur them forward. Children hope to do this and that when they grown up; teens hope to go places and do things when they have some money; newlyweds hope for a good income, a good place to live, and good—quality children; established couples hope for a day when their children are off their hands and they are free to cruise, tour, and see the world. Today, indeed, people live longer than they once did. The common experience is that extended and extreme age brings only bleak boredom and a diminished sense of a good life...” James is correct that as we age our physical abilities are reduced and our memories fade. Age, as you read on, does not diminish a person's value or worth in the hearts and minds of people that they love.

You may wonder about James Packer. He is a 94 year old Canadian theologian and a Christian writer. He wrote, “Get right with God as early in life as you can; remember the creator in your days of youth. Don't leave it to some time in the future when you're not likely to be able to handle well.” In 2002, when James Packer was 76 years old, he was suspended from the Anglican Church in Canada. His violation was that he disagreed with blessing same-sex unions. He felt the church's decision falsifies the gospel of Christ, abandons the authority of Scripture, jeopardizes the salvation of fellow human beings, and betrays the church in its God- appointed role as the bastion and bulwark of divine truth. What I like about James Packer is that he did not fall victim to secular demands that he do something contrary to his religious beliefs. He wrote, “You must acknowledge the sovereignty of God and leave the wisdom to Him.”

Unlike my favorite poet and writer, Jesse Stuart, that created 4,000 fictional characters in his books, I only write about real people. I knew an elderly lady named Mary Loretta



Garza. She recently passed away at the age of 82. Her granddaughters called her “Granny.” One of her granddaughters, Lexie Crisp, wrote, “Granny was always there for me and Skyler. She always put other people's needs before her own and was the best Grandma I could ever have.” Another granddaughter, Skyler Crisp wrote, “She always brought Lexie and me chocolate in case there wasn't any more at our house. She was always by Lexie and my side. She would always bring movies with talking animals when she would babysit us. She always thought of us and our cousin Izzy. She was always sweet with us.” Those words, “Always there for me and Skyler,” speaks volumes for Granny's character and her dedication to her grandchildren. More importantly, she was very significant in the emotional and spiritual well being of her grandchildren. She left them memories to last a lifetime.

I used two pictures in this story, one of Mary Garza and one with Mary and her granddaughters, Lexie and Skyler. People that we have cherished, loved and lost remain alive in our hearts and minds as long as we remember and talk about them. There is no expiration date on the love they gave or the love we gave them. They gave us those cherished and precious memories that no one can take away. I became a surrogate grandfather to Skyler and Lexie Crisp when they were young children and students with three of my other grandchildren, Andrea, Heather and John-John at Heritage Christian Academy in Hopkinsville. We all shared some fond memories at that school.

I usually include in my stories, some music lyrics that enhance what I write. In 2006, county music singer Alan Jackson wrote a song titled, "Precious Memories." These are some of his lyrics, "Precious Memories, unseen angels sent from somewhere to my soul. How they linger, ever near me and the sacred past unfolds. Precious memories how they linger, how they ever flood my soul. In the stillness of the midnight precious sacred scenes unfold. Precious father, loving mother, fly across the lonely years. And old home scenes of my childhood in fond memory appears. I remember Mother praying Father too, on bended knee. The sun is sinking, shadows falling but their prayers still follow me..." Alan Jackson's lyrics about "the lonely years," will be something that all of us will face as we grow old and lose so many of our loved ones. That is one reason why grandparents should stay connected, as long as they can, with their grandchildren. They need to show up and be there for them, to signify that they care and love them.

Last Sunday, I was holding the church door open for Dr. Robert Bastin and his two young grandson's to enter. Having fun, I pointed to Dr. Bastin and asked one of the grandsons, "Do you know that man?" The little boy got a big smile on his face and said, "Yes! He's my grandpa." Then the little boy ran into the church. But it was the smile on Dr. Bastin's face that told the real story when he heard what his grandson said. Prayerful memories magnify our hope to one day be with Christ. Our hope should never be cast aside. Jesus Himself, and His love for each of us, is the reason for our hope.

The word hope is defined as a desire for some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. As Christians we believe, as we pray, in the resurrection of the body. We have confidence in this future event. Our hope does not rest on the accumulation of material things that we must abandon when our brief journey on this earth ends. Our hope rests in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the First Letter of John the Apostle, Chapter 3, verses 1—3, he wrote, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall have not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope based on Him makes himself pure, as He is pure."

In the First Letter of Peter the Apostle, Chapter 1, verses 3—5, he writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy gave us a

new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you. Who by the power of God are safe guarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.” It is easy to be skeptical in this world that values power and possession over our faith and hope in Jesus Christ. In Romans, Chapter 8, verses 24-25, are the words, “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.” If our hope is in Jesus Christ, our faith is well founded.

The Apostle Thomas had his doubts about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. Just as some today have no hope of resurrection after death. Jesus said to Thomas, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. One cannot be a doubting Thomas and maintain a hope of the promises of Christ.

Sometimes our hope in Christ is buffeted by adversity. Take courage from the words of the Apostle John as he writes, “I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God. And we have confidence in Him, that if we ask anything to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked for is ours (1John 5, 13-15). Our will is not the same as Christ's will. We can only hope that what we seek and pray for is the will of Christ.

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