

Renew ...Hope when you are in Babylon

In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar ascended to the throne as king of Babylon. That same year, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and the time of the Gentiles began, and the rightful heir to the throne of David was left empty. It will remain empty until the Messiah returns and sets up His millennial kingdom.

As with most conquests in the Old Testament, when God's people were attacked, it was a contest against the gods of other peoples and the God of Israel.

How can you have hope when you are in Babylon?

When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, articles from the house of God were carried to Shinar to the house of his god and placed into the treasury of his god. Many of the children of Israel, king's descendants, nobles and young men were taken captive to Babylon. Among those taken were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To try to take away their identity with their God and homeland, they were given the names, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

How can you have hope when you are in Babylon?

Babylon was filled with the worship of Bel, Marduk and statues of other gods. Those held captive in Babylon were not only exposed to those pagan gods, they were forced to bow down and take names that honored Marduk or Bel.

In Babylon, God gave Daniel understanding, visions and dreams.

Those visions and dreams were filled with hope for the prize that was before them. Daniel was given hope that a day was coming when Messiah will reign in power and His people will live in joy and peace.

You should know that the temporary trials and tests of this life will end with victory for the people of God.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 NKJV Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NKJV Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Hope for the prize is why we are in it.

We are living in the days and hours when the Lord God almighty is going to come and reward His saints. The reason we discipline our body is for the prize. No one wants to be disqualified. We are striving to win in the end.

Philippians 3:7-8 NKJV But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Philippians 3:9 NKJV and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Philippians 3:10-11 NKJV that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:12 NKJV Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Philippians 3:13-14 NKJV Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Can we have hope for the prize when we are in Babylon?

As a child of God, our hope is not just in this present world and the things we have and hold here. We should not discount any of the blessings we have received in Christ in this present time. He gives us joy, peace and contentment. He gives life, light, and purpose. We could not survive in this present world without Christ in our life.

In this world, we are faced with an arduous battle.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and a multitude of captives in Babylon faced a real struggle as captives in a strange land. It does not take long now to find several things that challenge your faith and trust in God. Sometimes things are hard and we become weary in doing good. We are incessantly pushing and pressing toward the mark for the prize. There are times the mark and the prize seem illusive.

During the journey, renewal in Christ gives clarity to the prize.

Renewal clears our perspective.

The scripture gives clarity about the hope we have in this present world.

- Acts 23:6, and Acts 26:6-7, we have hope in the resurrection of the dead.
- Galatians 5:5, we who live by the Spirit hope to receive the righteousness God has promised.
- Colossians 1:23, we continue in steadfast faith that the hope of the gospel will be fulfilled.
- Romans 5:2, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11, the helmet of hope of salvation is the gathering together of the living and dead unto Christ.
- Ephesians 1:18, we have the hope of God's calling and the inheritance in the saints.
- Ephesians 4:4, the hope of your calling is that you have been included in the body of Christ.
- Titus 1:2, we have the hope of eternal life which God promised before time began.
- Acts 28:20, Israel's hope is the coming of Messiah.

There are three views of the prize that is before us.

- The prize which is in Christ right now
- The prize which is Christ
- The prize of the high calling of God

We need to renew the hope for the prize that is in Christ right now.

Philippians 3:10 NKJV “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...”

We cannot separate the blessing that is in Christ from winning Christ.

When we win Christ, we win every blessing that is in Him. Everyone who has been set free from the bondage of sin knows the joy of obtaining Christ. When Jesus sets us free, we have reason to rejoice.

Life in Christ is a joyful prize.

- In Christ, addiction is broken and chains of bondage fall off.
- In Christ, the oppressed mind finds peace and hope.
- In Christ, guilt, shame, and shackles of sins are gone.
- In Christ, your life is changed.
- It is a prize to win Christ in your life.

The prize is Christ.

When Paul wrote these words, Christ had stopped him on the

Damascus Road. After he had been filled with the Holy Spirit, something like scales fell from his eyes, and he received sight immediately. When he wrote these words, he was ministering by the power of the Holy Spirit with many signs and wonders. He was still in hot pursuit of the blessings of God which are in Christ.

Philippians 3:12 he said, “I admit that I have not acquired the absolute fullness that I am pursuing, but I run with passion into His abundance so that I may reach the purpose that Jesus Christ has called me to fulfill and wants me to discover.”

Colossians 2:9-19 NKJV For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power... which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward.

I want to win the fullness of blessings and favor that are prepared for me in Christ. There are blessings in Christ we have possessed, but we are still pressing for more. God has prepared rich blessings for you in Christ. There are unsearchable riches of the glory of Christ in you. They are the riches of His grace in kindness toward you. The Prize of Christ is full of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Keep pressing on for more.

1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”

God has prepared things in Christ that are beyond your experiences.

We have hope for the prize of the high calling of God that is in Christ.

Philippians 3:14 NLT I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

While Daniel was in Babylon, God gave him visions and dreams of what God has prepared for us.

We keep pressing on to win the prize and the high calling and riches and glory of Christ. Christ in you gives assurance of sharing His glory. God wants you to know the joys, blessing and glory that is in heaven. That is why He encourages you to look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13)

1 John 3:1 NKJV Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed,

we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Keep pressing on in hope because there is a prize. This life is not the sum total of what God has prepared for us. There is a reward in heaven, a better life and a future glory awaiting. Listen to this upward calling of God in Christ.

The scripture says the trumpet of God shall sound... and Jesus Christ Himself will call us up. The LORD Himself shall shout and the dead in Christ shall arise and we shall all be changed. Keep on pressing on, we have hope for the prize that is waiting us in Christ.