



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Date: December 27, 2016

Subject: Hope

### THE GOD OF HOPE

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

On Saturday," writes a friend of Guidelines, "I was so depressed that I wanted to kill myself. This is not the first time, either. No matter what, I can never stop feeling this way." She then told what triggered this depression. She explained, "There was a misunderstanding this morning between my sister and me and I took it personally."

Another letter tells of a woman who is struggling to cope with a teenager, an alcoholic father, and a husband who abuses drugs and alcohol, and then she said, "My problem is that I have lost my hope." Then she asked, "Do you know what I mean?"

A third letter focused on a common theme. The person who wrote said, "I've been going to church for over eight years, and like the children of Israel I've backslidden to a point where I didn't think I could ever receive grace in God's eyes again. My sins were so great... that I often felt like suicide was the only way. I cried out to God for mercy and my cries fell on deaf ears. I've often wondered how I could sink so low..."

In the New Testament you find three phrases which all describe the nature of God and our relationship to Him. The writer of *Hebrews* refers to God as the "God of peace," a phrase Paul used four times in his letters. Paul also used the phrase "The God of all comfort" when he wrote to the Corinthians. But in his letter to friends in the church at Rome, Paul called God "the God of hope." He said, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Now, hold on to that thought for a moment as you ponder the words of an old Scottish preacher who said that the real profanity of men is not in the "swear words" they sometimes use, though he added, "Such words are certainly wrong and foolish. The most profane word man can use," he said, "is the word *hopeless*. When we say any situation is hopeless," he added, "we are slamming the door in the face of God."

Question: Do you know the God of hope; the one Paul was talking about when he wrote to the church at Rome? Or is the God you know an angry God who determines to beat the daylights out of all of us who mess up our lives, often violating our conscience, and stomping under feet what we know is right, unable to control our passions or the circumstances of life?

Strangely enough, the God that we often picture in our minds is not the God of the Bible. He's the god of our childhood misconceptions, the One whose true image has been distorted by the ideas of the world and—let's face it—the blurring of the image of God as Satan strives to keep you from making contact with Him. Of course, the devil (and there is a very real one) prefers to keep you from remembering that God is the God of all hope, that He is the God of comfort, and the God of peace.

Paul's prayer for the Romans was that the God of hope would fill their hearts with joy and peace through the power of God, the Holy Spirit. That's the secret of hope in a hopeless situation. Where there is God there is hope, and where there is life, there is God. Never forget it.

Resource reading: Romans 14