



"Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny."
—C.S. Lewis

25-Apr-14

'The LORD Is My Portion'

If anything epitomizes the futility of trusting in [this world](#), it is pictured by the bankruptcy filing by Detroit last year. The city was once America's manufacturing hub, offering its citizens the highest standard of living of any other city in the Union. Wikipedia states, "Beginning in the late 19th and early 20th century, many of the city's Gilded Age mansions and buildings arose. Detroit was referred to as the *Paris of the West* for its architecture and for Washington Boulevard, recently electrified by Thomas Edison."

Thomas J. Sugrue, a professor of history and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, says of the rise of Detroit:

Located in the heart of the Great Lakes region, Detroit had all of the ingredients for industrial growth: it was close to the nation's major centers of coal, iron, and copper mining; it was easily accessible by water and by land; and it was near the nation's leading, well-established production centers.

Sugrue details how, in the early twentieth century, several auto companies opened in Detroit, including the Big Three: Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors. High wages and benefits, in addition to their pursuing the best workers worldwide, helped to make Detroit one of the most racially and ethnically diverse places in America. During the middle part of the last century, its population of 1.8 million people made it the fourth largest city in the U.S. As one man wrote, considering Detroit's steel and automobile industries, "You

just couldn't help but make money."

However, during World War II automobile production almost ceased as the factories were converted to help the war effort. Wikipedia notes:

The B-24 Liberator, the most produced bomber in history, was used to bomb Germany heavily. Prior to the war, on a good day the aviation industry could produce one such plane a day at an aircraft plant. By 1943, Ford's plants managed to produce one B-24 an hour at a peak of 600 (airplanes) per month in 24-hour shifts.

Beginning in the late 1960s and early 70s, however, the decline began. To escape crime and the high costs of working in Detroit, factories and people left the city for the suburbs. Competition from Japan and Germany reduced the sales and profits of the Big Three. Businesses closed, and factories and homes were neglected and abandoned. The declining tax base and generous public-employee benefits combined to hasten the city on its inevitable path to fiscal disaster. Many basic services have been reduced or entirely neglected, and police are overwhelmed as murders, assaults, rapes, and other violent crimes often go unsolved.

Detroit's situation is reminiscent of the scene Jeremiah saw when he beheld the destruction of Jerusalem, except in that case, Jerusalem was destroyed from without by the invading armies of Babylon and not from within. In both cases, however, the root cause of the destruction was sin.

The book of Lamentations details the prophet's grief because of its desolation. Jeremiah is known as "the Weeping Prophet" because all five chapters of Lamentations are a funeral dirge, mourning the bitter death of a once great city. In [Lamentations 3:17-18](#), Jeremiah cries to [God](#), "You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD." The disaster that was Jerusalem overwhelmed him and nearly broke his heart. He felt that his reason for living and anticipation for the future had died.

Then Jeremiah remembered the God whom he knew and loved: "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" ([Lamentations 3:22-24](#)). The word *portion* implies "award" or "inheritance." *Hope* is "a confident, enduring expectation," and in this instance, it is a verb, a positive action.

Jeremiah realized that things could have gone a lot worse, but God had been merciful. He had spared him and others, and it was their duty to wait patiently in hope for God to work out their salvation. The faithful God Himself was what would sustain him and give him hope for good.

Paul writes in [Romans 8:24-25](#): "For we were saved in this hope [the resurrection], but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." [Faith](#) is belief that what God has said will come to pass, but sometimes we have to wait for a long time and exercise a lot of perseverance or endurance. The motivation to do this is hope.

Our Christian hope, our expectation of future good, is the redemption of our bodies in the resurrection and beyond that, a glorious, eternal reign with Him as kings and priests! This hope is a motivator, an impetus to strengthen and encourage us to endure and persevere.

Godly hope is an absolute assurance that what God has said will happen because He is alive. He will ensure the positive outcome of His Word. Yet, hope is not just an expectation of a wonderful outcome. A friend once said, "Godly hope is not just believing what God says and waiting for it to happen; it is also what you are doing while you are waiting for it to happen."

Through our trials, God is building spiritual muscle in us. He is watching out for us as He manages our spiritual exercise regimen. [Romans 8:28](#) asserts that all things will work out for good for those the called, those who love Him. He will make sure that we will receive the proper training to put us in spiritual shape for the position that He has in store for us.

Paul says in [Romans 5:3-4](#), "And not only that, we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." We persevere, we endure, because of hope, an expectation of future good, and this endurance aids in bringing about the realization of what we have hoped for. Our endurance is vital, as [Jesus](#) warns in [Matthew 24:13](#), because only those who endure to the end will be saved.

We can hope because we have a loving and patient God, a God who does not punish us according to our many sins. If we put our hope in this world, the result will always be disappointing, or maybe even disastrous, as the condition of Detroit so clearly shows. This is true because *nothing* physical lasts forever, but God, as our portion, endures forever.

We can take great solace and assurance in God's counsel to His people in [Jeremiah 29:11](#): "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." If we put our hope in the living God, our hope will always be there for us!

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[God's Faithfulness and Hope](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Richard Ritenbaugh, relating a story of a rebellious Siberian Husky he had once owned, compares God's infinite patience with us (compared to our fleeting short-lived patience we have for each other). Like the Husky, the children of Israel severely tested the patience of their master through their compulsive murmuring and faithlessness, but God (having incredible longsuffering and patience) refused to give up on them, giving them continual instruction and tests designed to make them grow spiritually- even to this day. The significant events experienced by the nation of Israel (the Exodus, Red Sea crossing, and wilderness wanderings) serve as reminders to us (the first fruits, Abraham's seed, or the Israel of God) not to reject or disparage God's providence, but to trust in God's ability to lead and protect us, giving us all we need to succeed.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Elements of Motivation \(Part Three\): Hope](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Hope conveys the idea of absolute certainty of future good, and that is exactly what the Bible tells us we have upon our calling and acceptance of God's way. John Ritenbaugh shows that, because the Father and Son are alive and active in their creation, our hope is sure!

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