

Hope: An Anchor to the Soul

by Stan Cox

David, as the anointed King of Israel, had many enemies. Among them was Saul, who remained enthroned as King. Saul was jealous of David, and sought his life. However, scripture reveals that God providentially protected David. In 2 Samuel 22, David acknowledged that help:

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence” (2-3).

God rewards those who put their trust in Him. Paul affirmed this for the Christian in Ephesians 1:11-12:

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

In contrast, God has little patience for the man who does not trust Him. It is an insult to doubt God. Both His character and resourcefulness should remove any doubt regarding His ability and willingness to help those who trust in Him. And yet, some waver in their faith:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8).

These principles are established clearly by God’s interaction with Israel as they rejected His plans for them to inhabit Canaan. When the twelve spies were sent in to the land, ten of the twelve reported back to Moses, *“We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we”* (Numbers 13:31). Only Joshua and Caleb dissented from that opinion. They spoke to the people, and said, *“If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them”* (Numbers 14:8-10).

Unfortunately, the prevailing opinion was that of the ten, and the people refused to enter the land. This lack of trust in God’s protection led to their banishment into captivity. Of that entire generation, only Joshua and Caleb were granted entrance into the land of Promise. In Joshua 14, Caleb received his reward from the Lord. *“And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel”* (13-14). The lesson is two fold: 1) God has promised reward to those who trust him, but punishment to the unfaithful; 2) God always keeps His promises.

Before we cast too much aspersion upon the Israelites, we need to quantify the extent of our own trust in God. As were they, we occasionally are beset with daunting obstacles in our lives. In one sense, we can relate to Paul’s description in 2 Corinthians 4, *“We are hard-pressed on every*

side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body” (8-10). While the pressure, perplexity, persecution and punches are common to all, not all respond with the resiliency, resolution, and resourcefulness that comes from faith and trust in Jesus. “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (11).

Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to know from whence God’s help will come. This is why you must look through the eyes of faith! Peter referred to the fact that various trials test your faith “*by fire*” (cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7). By them, your faith is seen to either be counterfeit or genuine. If genuine, it is “*found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (7), and ultimately you receive “*the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls*” (9).

That’s right! Our trust in God, (in the midst of the unfaithfulness of the world in general), brings us His promised blessings. At the end of his life, Paul wrote of the reward promised him by God, “*the crown of righteousness*” (2 Timothy 4:8). He noted that the promise was not only to him, but “*also to all who have loved his appearing.*”

God does not promise us escape from the trials and tribulations of life. Even the most righteous among us will suffer despite (and in some cases because of) our faith. What he does promise is that He will settle accounts in eternity. And, we can trust that He will keep that promise!

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19).

A Strong Delusion

by Kyle Campbell

In 1877, Percival Lowell heard that an Italian astronomer had seen straight lines crisscrossing the surface of the planet Mars. Lowell spent the rest of his years squinting into the eyepiece of his giant telescope in Arizona, mapping the channels and canals he saw. He was convinced the canals were proof of intelligent life on Mars, possibly an older but wiser race than humanity. About the turn of the century, Lowell’s theories had gained wide acceptance.

Now, of course, the situation is different. Space probes have orbited Mars and landed on its surface. The entire planet has been mapped, and no one has seen a channel or canal of any kind. How could Lowell have “seen” so much that was not there? There are two possibilities: he wanted to see canals so badly that he deceived himself into thinking they existed, or we know now that he suffered from a rare eye disease that made him see the blood vessels in his own eyes. The Martian “canals” he saw were nothing more than the bulging veins of his eyeballs. Today, the malady is known as “Lowell’s Syndrome.”

The apostle Paul wrote, “... they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). These facts about Mr. Lowell well illustrate how a “strong delusion” can

similarly come to those who do not love the truth. This delusion is as real as a hand in front of their face, but it is false. Has this happened to you?