

MAGNOLIA MINDS: The Best (and Only!) Alternative to Despair

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I would have despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of God in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13 NASB).

The loss of hope is a frightening thing. However, losing hope in an unworthy cause can be a good step in the right direction.

A generation ago, a missionary statesman noted that his biggest surprise on returning home was the loss of hope. He particularly noticed this, he said, in Europe where years earlier everyone seemed convinced that reason and technology would bring in the millennium. When that did not happen, hopelessness set in. Hopelessness is a terminal disease, said the missionary.

I was kneeling in the grass beside my parents' burial place, softly weeping and telling the Lord, "This has to be true; You must keep Your word." If I thought I had seen my loved ones for the last time, my grief would have been inconsolable.

Immediately, a verse of Scripture came to mind, a gift I am convinced from the Lord Himself. Not knowing where it was located, I had to look it up later: *I would have despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* That is the NASB translation. The KJV says, *I had fainted unless I believed...*

Believe or despair. Those are the only two choices, but believe what? Consider this from that line in Psalm 27:

– **I believe I will see God.** I love the way Job put it – *I know*

that my Redeemer liveth and at the last He will take His stand upon the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God! (Job 19:25-26).

I shall see God. Wow. *Every eye shall see Him*, we are assured in Revelation 1:7. Count on it, friend, but that's not all...

– **I believe I will see the goodness of God.** What exactly is meant by “the goodness of God?” Moses helps us with this. When he asked the Lord, “Show me Thy glory,” the Lord said to Moses, “I will show you my goodness.” That day, God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock and “passed by in front of him, proclaiming, *The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth... (Exodus 34:6-7).*

The goodness of God is His loving and compassionate nature. As the God of love, our Lord delights in forgiving sins, blessing people, and rewarding the faithful. It's His nature. (See 2 Chronicles 16:9 for an amazing statement of this.)

What an incomparable gift this insight into the character of God was to Israel – and is to us today. This world is filled to the brim with injustices, cruelties, and terror, but there is coming a day when we shall see the goodness of God sitting on the throne. I can't wait.

– **I believe I will see the goodness of God in the land of the living.** Now, the commentary may tell you that “the land of the living” referred to the land of Israel. Well, it might have been the land of Israel to the psalmist but not to us. To the redeemed of Christ, this earth is the land of the dying. The land of the living is Heaven itself.

“Just over the hilltop,” as the old Gospel song put it, all injustice will cease, all tears are wiped away, and the righteous are rewarded for their faithfulness. In that land where we never grow old (another song!), we shall see the Lord, we will behold His goodness, and we will forever dwell

in the land that is fairer than day. David called it “the Father’s house” (Psalm 23:6).

I keep thinking about another Psalm that gives an incredible promise – *But as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness. I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake. (Psalm 17:15)*

– **Each of us must make a choice to believe or to despair.** Our Lord watched as the thousands whom He had recently fed with the loaves and fishes drifted away, unable to process much of what He was teaching.

To the disciples He said, “Well, how about you? Will you go away also?” Simon Peter, usually gifted with the ability to say the wrong thing, this time got it right. *Lord, Peter said, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:68).*

Where indeed shall we go if we forsake Jesus? We do not believe in the Lord Jesus because we find it easy or that He is the best choice of hundreds. We believe in Jesus for one overriding reason: There is no alternative that makes sense.

It is now and always has been believe or despair. I suspect some of us will pray the prayer of the stressed-out father who had interceded with the Lord for his child. When Jesus said, “All things

are possible to him who believes,” the man said, “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief” (Mark 9:23).

Jesus heard and answered that prayer. It’s His nature. He loves to answer prayer and bless people!

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