

Daily View

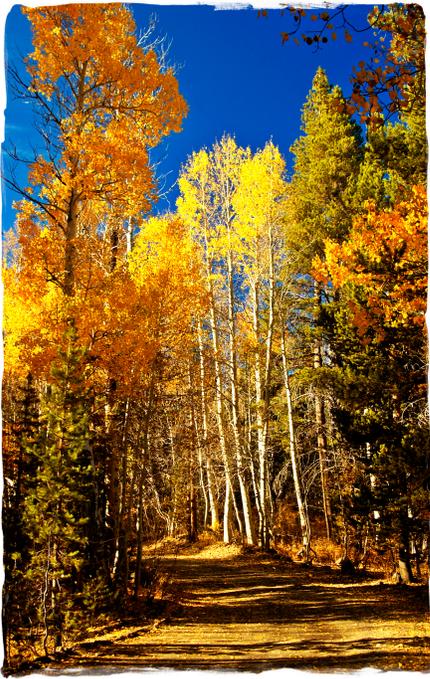
“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

April 4, 2020

Hope

By far, my favorite season is autumn, especially early fall. I love the high 60s, low 70s temp and I love the beginning of football season. One of my favorite announcers, Chris Schenkel, used to begin the coverage of a college football game with a signature opening: *“what a way to spend an autumn afternoon!”* That still makes me happy, just thinking about it. I also love the change of scenery — the colors of fall. I’ve had the privilege, 4-5 times, to travel to New England during the fall. Of course, New England is famous for its fall foliage and it is truly amazing.

“But,” you say, *“it is not yet fall; it is just barely even spring.”* True. In fact, it doesn’t even feel like *spring* yet. So, why am I talking about fall? Because I’m an eternal optimist. I’m thinking forward to when fall comes and this coronavirus crisis will be over and mostly forgotten (except for those most impacted by it).



Hope Valley, California

I have many photos featuring fall colors from New England, but I chose one from near Lake Tahoe, a little place appropriately called “Hope Valley.” The Bible, of course, speaks loudly and clearly about our hope in God in multiple texts in both Old Testament and New. Go to BibleGateway.com and enter “hope” in the search box and read to your heart’s content. You’ll see about 160 references to “hope” in the Bible; over 70 of those are in the New Testament. I’m thinking *Romans 5:1-5* may be the most appropriate text about hope at the moment. Paul says,

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul, literally in the middle of a detailed and sometimes complicated discussion of justification by faith, decides to toss in some specific application (in *Romans*, most of Paul’s takeaways are reserved for chapters 12-16). Here, it’s as if one thought leads to another. He reminds us that we’ve been justified (declared righteous) by our faith, so we have peace with God — not only are we no longer at war with God, but we have the peace of mind and confidence that is a product of faith in God. He goes on to say that our faith is what gives us access to God’s grace. In other words, we believe — *trust* — in God and God lavishes his grace on us (see *Ephesians 1:7-8*). That knowledge of God’s grace causes us to

rejoice in hope, a hope is centered in God who has poured his love into us through the Holy Spirit (v 5). So, no matter what our circumstances, hope is alive and suffering just makes us stronger; it builds endurance and that leads to building of character and people of character (built by faith) never lose their hope.

So here’s the challenge for us: if we are taking God’s word to heart, any suffering produced by the coronavirus health issue should result in improved strength and quality of character. I don’t want to be insensitive, but if the heart of a Christian is a house of cards simply because he or she is stuck in their house, with or without kids, then that person needs to go back and examine their faith in God. Even if a Christian gets sick with the virus, that is obviously more serious, but Paul’s words are just as applicable. Whatever the nature of our suffering, our faith should lead to stronger character. Paul should know; he suffered plenty (see *II Cor. 11:23-28* for a detailed catalog of his hardships).

I’ve been pleased to see the attitude of parents and others who are using this lockdown as an opportunity to do some constructive things for their family, the church and others. It’s inspiring. Let’s focus on our hope, serve God the best we can... and look forward to fall.