

Hope in the LORD

Introduction

One of the striking things about the book of Psalms (and the Bible as a whole) is the frequency with which it combines two things that we instinctively separate. In this case I am thinking in particular of *trouble* or *adversity* on the one hand and of *hope* on the other.

By nature we seek to avoid adversity and when it comes we find that it easily shakes our faith in the Lord's goodness and power and thus undermines our sense of hope. "How can this be happening to me" we ask. "Surely if the Lord loves me He would not allow this to happen", we think and in doing so, we play into the hands of the evil one whose strongest weapon is to get us to doubt that God is good and that He can be trusted. But the Bible has a very different view! Writing to believers in Rome, Paul describes Christians as able to "rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4). This same link between the experience of adversity and the reality of joyful hope is found in Psalm 33, our text for this particular study.

The Psalm begins with an invitation and ends with a prayer. The invitation, made to the righteous *i.e.* believers, is to rejoice in the LORD and to praise Him in music and with song (vs 1-3). The prayer follows a confident statement of faith (vs20-21) and calls upon the LORD to let His 'unfailing love' rest upon those whose 'hope' is in Him (vs22). In this final prayer, hope is virtually synonymous with trust or faith. In the body of the Psalm we are given the reason why such trust and hope in the LORD is indeed the right response to Him. In particular we are reminded that the LORD is the powerful creator of the world and the Lord over all nations, indeed over the course of history itself. And here we are brought face to face with the adversity in the midst of which the people of God were called to trust in Him and enabled to live with future hope.

Looked at from a human point of view the wicked prosper and the godless nations seem to do exactly as they please – the plans of nations and the purposes of peoples – which are mentioned in verse 10. In context these plans and purposes are clearly against God and to the detriment of His people. But in the midst of such upheavals, then and now, the Psalmist reminds God's people that "the plans of the LORD stand firm forever" and that because of His faithfulness, power and goodness, those who trust in the LORD can indeed have hope

Read Psalm 33:1-22

Investigate

1. What does the Psalmist encourage God's people to do? (vss1-3)
2. What word does he use to motivate the LORD's people to praise Him? What does this word mean? (vs1)
3. Why is it 'fitting' for the upright (i.e. the righteous) to praise the LORD? (vss4-5)
4. How can believers know that the word of the LORD is indeed "right and true"? (vss6-9)
5. What are the consequences of the fact that the LORD is indeed the creator of the world? (vss 10-15)

6. What should the LORD's people do since He is the Creator of all and Lord over all? (vss16-19)

7. What in particular should believers base their hope upon according to this Psalm? (see vs5, vs18)

8. What should characterise believers as we live in the midst of a fallen and often hostile? (vs20-22)

Think



1. As our studies in the book of Revelation have reminded us, the Lord Jesus Christ is the creator of the world and the Lord over history. How are we to put our hope in the LORD of Psalm 33 today?

2. In what way has the LORD shown His unfailing love in Jesus Christ?

