

New Hope

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[0 : 00] Maybe you've heard one of these stories in the past that might reflect your own life. stories about people who made bad decisions in the present because they had misjudged the future.

! Stories like the late actor Gary Cooper, who turned down the role of Rhett Butler in the movie *Gone with the Wind* because he thought, to quote, it would be a flop as a movie. For those of you not familiar with *Gone with the Wind*, adjusted with inflation, it is the highest grossing movie of all time by over a billion dollars in terms of its gross. All Decker Record Company refused to sign a recording contract with the Beatles because they thought that guitar music was going out of fashion. And of course, those who know the Beatles, it's the, again, the most successful band of all time with somewhere between 600 million and 1 billion album sales. Warner from Warner Brothers fame, who rejected the idea of adding sound to silent movies because, in his opinion, who the hell wants to hear actors talk?

Bad decisions in the moment are the cause of a miscalculation of the future and what the future holds.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. For instance, if you knew that somewhere in the back box of Chatswood right now, there was a small little internet company, let's call it Amazon, was working out of its garage.

[1 : 43] And if you knew, for instance, that it would be in 20 years' time, as big as Amazon is now, what have you done 20 years ago, invested \$1,000 into that company 20 years ago, knowing what the future would be for that company now? Or electric cars, I mean, who would have thought 30 years ago?

Hindsight's a wonderful thing. It's hard to know what the future actually holds, and yet, every single person operates day by day, makes the decisions they make on what they perceive the future to be. That is, humanity, people, us, we are hope-driven. We cannot live without hope. What we think the future is determines the decisions we make now and how we live right now.

In his 2017 best-selling book, *Homo Deus, A Brief History of Tomorrow*, Yuval Noah Harari argues that in ancient times, human beings turned to God or to the gods or to the divine in some shape or form only in order for their hope, only because they didn't have control of their world.

They were very conscious that they weren't in control of their world and they weren't in control of their future. And he concludes in the book that with the progress of science and reason and technology, we no longer need, humanity no longer needs the divine, it no longer needs God.

[3 : 20] Humanity, and this is the conclusion of the book, humanity is its own hope. People can solve all the world's problems. Within ourselves, all that we need in order to produce a bright and prosperous and flourishing future.

And therefore, the title of the book, which in its Latin, *Homo Deus*, which is in English, human God. And so Harari's thinking there is not some new idea that he's come up with, you know, just recently. It has its origins in what is known as the Age of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment Age was an intellectual and a philosophical movement that sort of began in the late 17th century in Europe and basically to the early 19th century.

It particularly valued reason and scientific fact while questioning every other source of authority and especially any form of religious authority.

And as a movement, it started to dwindle around the early stage of the 19th century because it was hard to argue for the supremacy of humanity over all things and the progress of human history in everything on the back of two world wars, the Spanish flu pandemic, the Great Depression, and the beginning of the nuclear arms race.

[4 : 59] That is, it's hard to argue for the progress of history when you've got that in history. But at the end of the Cold War in 1989, the idea started to come back into popularity again.

And some declared, in fact, that at the end of 1989, that the Age of Anxiety was now over and the future of the world was once again in progress and it will be, we will achieve all that the Enlightenment sought to achieve.

In fact, in the age of when that happened, the end of the Cold War, more than half of people in the Western world were convinced that the future for their children and the children that followed them was going to be much brighter than their own.

More than half of people were totally convinced each generation will just get better and better and better. In fact, even in our own history in this country, a former Prime Minister, by 1990, no Australian children will be living in poverty.

That's the Age of Enlightenment. And yet, according to a recent Australian National University research survey thing, Australians are now increasingly pessimistic about the future and life satisfaction has dropped to its lowest levels since COVID-19 lockdowns.

[6 : 58] Lowest levels. Most Australians now think that the lives of children in 50 years is going to be worse off than the current generation.

Only one in five Australians think that their life has, in fact, improved measurably in the last year. You see, as a sense of uncertainty about the future rises, and if you're an investor on the stock market, that uncertainty was certainly there this week.

As that uncertainty about the future rises, hope decreases, and so does life satisfaction.

And we are hope-driven people. We need hope to live and to live well. And so the thing for the next three weeks, as we have Easter in the middle of it, is hope.

Christian hope is not one of those uncertain, wishful thinking about the future kind of hopes.

[8 : 11] The word that the Bible uses for hope is a word that in its original language means profound certainty. Profound certainty.

And this hope of the Christian life centres on the explosive events of one weekend just 2,000 years ago in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The hope, Christian hope, which has permeated virtually every culture in the last 2,000 years all centres on one weekend.

And so I'd invite you to give me one weekend next weekend and to find out about this profound certainty. We're going to touch on it a bit today. That's where we're heading in the next three weekends to exploring this hope and how we live in light of it.

So if you've got the St Paul's app, I've got four points today as we briefly get introduced into that hope. First one, new hope. The foundation of the Christian hope is the mercy of God in giving us new birth, new life.

[9 : 26] So 1 Peter 1.3 that Anne just read out, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy. He's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

And this inheritance is kept in heaven for you. All Christians, that is everyone who puts their hope in Jesus Christ are described here as being given a new birth.

That is all are born again. Not just a certain type of Christian is born again. Everyone who is a Christian is born again.

We are not told much here about what the new birth is that the Christian has received. We know from other parts of the Bible that the new birth is a new life.

It's an entire new life. It's an entire new existence. It's a new vitality in life. When a person is born again, they experience new life.

[10 : 41] That is, spiritual life comes into you and God puts his very life in us. The life that Jesus now lives is in us.

Now this new birth comes to us in different ways. There's no type of experience that everyone must have. And even though it comes to us in different ways, and it might even be subtle for some, it is nevertheless astounding, this new birth.

The original New Testament word for it is palagenesia, which means regeneration. The book of Titus tells us that when we are born again, we experience regeneration.

Titus uses that word palagenesia. In Matthew 19, verse 28, Jesus says this, Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, which he's talking about the

end of all things, Jesus is referring to the end of all things, when all things are made new, the goal of all of his work in history.

He says God's power will come down into this world and he will renew it, he will make it right. Everything that is wrong, everything that is stained, everything that is evil, everything that's deformed, broken in this world, death and evil and suffering will be gone.

[12:15] All tears, all sadness, all anxiety will be wiped away. Despite all the superpowers of this world and the wealth and the technology of this world, none of that is enough to bring about this kind of total renewal change.

That is what is required to bring about this kind of change, that kind of power. And Jesus describes there that this time of renewal in Matthew 19 as the palagenesia.

And so the Apostle Paul has the audacity to use the same word to describe the new birth of the Christian.

An entire renewal of an individual. The tremendous power that renews all things that will bring an end to all suffering and evil and make every wrong right, that tremendous power comes into the life of the Christian now through faith in Jesus Christ.

And that means on the very surface level, very quickly, it means that every single Christian puts up with stuff in their life that they don't need to.

[13:42] The potential for change in your life right now is absolutely astounding. Just go back to our vision series and the rhythms of grace.

The power to put those into effect is yours already in Christ. So when we are born, newborn, new birth, new hope, we also are given this hope that we have is a living hope.

It's a hope that's alive. When we are born, like in a natural birth, we are all identified genetically as we share the genetic makeup of our biological parents.

We also inherit an ethnic makeup, if you like, depending on where we're born, also likely to have some kind of a national identity as well. And certainly for the early years of our lives, we also share the socioeconomic identity of our parents.

That is, our birth identifies us in some measure. When a person becomes a Christian, they receive the new birth, it becomes their greatest identity marker.

[15:14] It doesn't change who we are in all our ethnic, national, genetic, socioeconomic markers, but it does change our lives in such a way that we are fundamentally different people.

The reason the new birth changes us so much is because it changes our hope.

It's a new hope. It's a living hope, a certain hope, a very different hope. You see, if you change a person's hope, you change their lives.

Back to verse 3 again. Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

No hacker can come into your super account and remove it. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.

[16:33] The direction of every person's life is set by what they hope in the most. So if you can offer a person a life-giving, imperishable hope, then their life is changed forever.

Now, all of us have certain desires, hopes, expectations. There are desires like meaning and significance and security and purpose, and then you work out how you're going to fulfill those particular desires that you have.

And whatever we believe in to fulfill those desires is what it is that we set our hearts on. Which is another way of saying it's what we put our hope in.

Our hearts, for instance, might set on a career, on money, on accomplishment, on status, on love, on romance, on beauty, on family, on political or social causes, or a whole range of things.

Everyone chooses something to believe in that will fulfill their hopes. We are unavoidably hope-based creatures.

[18:02] Proverbs 13, 12 in the Old Testament tells us that hope deferred makes the heart sick. That is, it destroys our inner self.

We experience our present in radically different ways depending on our future hope. We've got a lot of grass around here at church.

So imagine I gave two of you a pair of scissors, a blunt pair of scissors, and said to you that your task was to cut the grass at St Paul's.

And your experience of that task would be entirely different if I pulled one of you aside and said at the end of the job and it's all finished I'm going to give you \$20.

And the other one I pulled you aside and I said to you at the end of the job I'm going to give you \$200,000. Both are going to have a very different experience of cutting the grass at that moment.

[19 : 18] hope makes all the difference to the experience. We are hope driven and the new birth changes our hopes because it is a living hope.

It is alive in us. So how do we raise hope? How do we if you like wrench our hearts away from the fragile hopes that fade and that perish and that spoil and put it into a hope that will never perish fade or disappoint.

Now the main way and this is what makes the Christian hope so unique. The main way that 1 Peter talks about growing in our new life our new hope is through suffering.

Look verse 6 in all this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief of all kinds of trials.

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes! even though refined by fire may result in praise glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

[20 : 42] So the first words of verse 6 say that the Christian rejoices in their hope it's a present tense the word is a present tense we rejoice!

in our hope what makes it so remarkable is that the words suffer grief actually mean being in agony it actually means being in lots of pain and it doesn't say you used to rejoice but now you're in agony and you're in pain nor does it say that because you've got lots to rejoice about you're not actually really in pain just get over your difficulty both the feeling of agony and the rejoicing both of them are present tense both are present tense they are concurrent activities when we do both of these things at the same time it's like putting gold into a furnace it refines us it grows us as the suffering drives us towards our real living hope rather than anchoring ourselves to a hope that fades and perishes that is very rarely a view of suffering in our day and age it's what makes the

Christian idea of hope so unique in a day in culture that suggests our personal happiness is of the highest importance anything that's hard anything that's difficult or unpleasant is considered bad wrong or evil to quote the great philosopher Homer Simpson son if something's too hard to do it clearly can't be worth doing that's the day of that's the day which we exist and we also exist in a day and age where we cannot possibly imagine therefore why God would in fact allow suffering and hardship why would he allow it then it's one of the big reasons that people reject the Christian faith why would God allow it well imagine a forestry worker or if you're in

Canada a lumberjack they've marked a bunch of trees in the forest to cut down to send off for milling and as they start their chainsaw and about to cut they look up and they notice that at the top of the tree there's this bird that's just starting to build a nest and so they think being the environmentalist that they are they whack on the tree to scare the bird away make lots of noise and eventually the bird moves from that tree and goes to another tree but that tree also has a little pink ribbon around it and it's going to be felled and so the forestry worker goes over to that tree and whacks on the tree and whacks on the tree and makes all the noise and the bird just moves through the next tree and it does it again and again the forestry worker is following it through the forest and the bird!

right moves over to a rocky cliff and starts building its nest there and the forestry worker goes back to its work and starts cutting the forest down I'd like to think that the older we get we realise that every tree every hope that we build our lives on will ultimately come down in one way or another it's almost impossible to believe it when you're young every generation thinks that they'll be able to pin their hopes onto something and it'll be fully realised you see our hearts are not designed to be completely fulfilled by anything or everything in this life we simply don't realise the greatness of our souls and the depths of our desires and our hopes and so the best thing God can do for us is bang again and again and again on the trees of our lives in order to move us to assure a foundation into a greater hope one that will never perish spoil or fade an imperishable hope and the worst thing that can happen to us is for us to be left to our own devices to build our nests on the trees that we choose only for those trees to come crashing down in the end

[25 : 54] Christian hope does not fade in the face of difficulty like every other hope you see one of the reasons for the absolutely remarkable rise of the Christianity in the early centuries was that the Christian hope offered resources for hope in the face of a empire wide Roman empire wide

pandemic as well as persecution of Christians in that time you see Christians orientated their life towards a larger story a cosmic story the story of eternity and they saw the story of their lives for the first time with all its hardships and its love as just a small part of a much bigger story that they were in fact part of and a story that would end incredibly well for them you see and from those very early days

Christians view even the hardest circumstances as part of a history guided by God at every turn towards not merely some kind of afterlife but towards the resurrection of our souls and bodies into a new remade heavens and earth that's the Christian hope and it's logical and it's plausible and it's reasonable as we will unpack in the next couple of in fact next weekend mainly so how do we get it how do we get that hope how can Peter so confidently suggest such a thing when we ourselves are constantly failing we fail ourselves we fail each other and we fail God how can we be so confident that he's in fact going to be on our side especially how can you be totally confident of that when if this

God does exist he does allow hardship to come into our lives how can we know that he's on our side and therefore going to guarantee that hope verse 10 concerning this salvation the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time the circumstances of which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the suffering of the Messiah and the glories that would follow it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you when they spoke of the things that have now been told to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven even angels long to look into these things so what is the gospel that the if you hear last week the good news of Jesus Christ what is it the prophets revealed and the apostles preached it is that

Jesus Christ the son of God himself suffered that's what was preached he suffered the son of God the creator of all things came into his world as part of his story rescuing he became as the rescuer and the ruler of humanity in weakness not in triumph he came into that Roman empire he died on a Roman cross for the sin and the failure of humanity our failure for putting all of our hopes into everything else but him and so he died the death that we should die we the weak and the perishing have a glorious and imperishable hope because Jesus Christ the glorious and eternal one perished in shame for us and conquered shame and death by raising again from death the glorious hope on offer to all is not based on our performance it's not based on the strength of our will or how good of a life or our moral performance it's based on the performance of the imperishable one our imperishable hope is attached to the imperishable one the crucifixion of Jesus alone saves us and his resurrection guarantees that it is effective and confirms that Jesus is God and that all of his promises are true the

Christians future glory is assured because God the son emptied himself of his glory that's Easter in the next couple of weeks the new birth gives us a new hope that is not just imperishable it's not just a wishful thinking that I hope it gets well out there and if you can just get your minds around God and understand him it'll be good for you it is a living hope did you see that there it's a living hope it's a hope that changes our lives now you see the death and resurrection of Jesus doesn't just give us hope for the future it's a hope that actually transports from the future into our lives right now Philippians 3:10 tells us that to be a Christian is to know now the power of the resurrection the palogenesis the renewal of the resurrection now

[32:19] Paul says this in Ephesians 1:13 you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth the gospel of your salvation and when you believed you were marked in him with a seal the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession!

In the gospel of Jesus Christ we have now the presence of the future not fully but certainly substantially that's what the deposit is guaranteeing our inheritance You see the Holy Spirit God himself comes Jesus didn't just ascend to heaven and leave us he comes to us with the finished work of Jesus he comes into our hearts as a down payment guaranteeing our future and gives us a taste of it right now in such a way that we start living for it right now if our main hope is in the good news of Jesus Christ that hope is like a mountain that cannot be shaken despite how weary and wondering we might be in the present 1951

Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions not content just with that challenge she then decided the next year to swim from Catalina Island to mainland California about 34 kilometres something like that after swimming this 1951 after

swimming this is the one who swam the English Channel both directions she had swum only for 15 hours that's all I mean I'm sorry I'm not saying only for 15 hours like I can do that but compared to the English Channel she only swam for 15 hours she only swam about 30 kilometres at this point right swam for 15 hours she was pulled out of the water exhausted she had given up why she was only 800 metres from the shoreline and she gave up why because the fog had set in and she couldn't see the shoreline she didn't know how far she went all she saw was the current pain the current suffering the current weariness the current difficulty and she gave up we are hope driven people and

Isaiah 40 verse 31 says that those who hope in the Lord are not anxiously holding on but always renewing and their strength and even soaring despite the difficulties renewing and soaring for those who have been here through the rhythms of grace series those seven things stop the fog coming in those seven rhythms are what keep putting the gospel in front of you those seven things keep your hope always in view the Christian hope the new and living hope of the gospel leads to a life despite immediate and temporary issues a life of running and not growing weary of walking and not being faint