

# Intimations of Hope



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Prov. 17:28, Job 13:1–15, James 2:20–22, 1 Cor. 15:11–20, 1 Pet. 1:18–20, Gen. 22:8.*

**Memory Text:** “‘He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him’” (*Job 13:16, NKJV*).

**M**an is the only animal,” wrote British essayist William Hazlitt, “that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be.”

Things certainly aren’t what they ought to be. However, for a Christian who lives with the promise of the Second Coming, there is hope—a great hope of what things will become (*2 Pet. 3:13*). They will become something so wonderful that we, with sin-darkened minds (*1 Cor. 13:12*), can barely imagine it now. This is a hope that the secular mind, in all its narrowness and parochialism, has lost long ago.

This week, as we continue to explore the question of suffering in the book of Job, we will find that, even amid the unfair tragedy that befell him, which made no sense and was not justified, Job could still utter words of hope.

What was that hope, and what does it tell us that we can hope in, as well?

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 26.

## Forgers of Lies

**“Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent” (Prov. 17:28, RSV).**

Whatever one wants to say about the man Job, one can’t say that he was going to sit there amid his sorrow and quietly listen to what his friends were throwing at him. On the contrary, much of the book of Job consists of Job’s fighting back against what he knows is a mixture of truth and error. As we saw, these men were not showing much tact and sympathy; they were claiming to speak for God in justifying what had happened to Job; and basically they said he was getting what he deserved or that he deserved even worse! Any one of these lines of thought would have been bad enough; but all three (and others) were too much, and Job answered them back.

**Read Job 13:1–14. What approach is Job taking here as he responds to what is being said to him?**

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We saw in chapter 2 that when these men first came and saw Job, they said nothing to him for seven days. Considering what eventually did start coming out of their mouths, this might have been the best approach. That’s certainly what Job thought.

Notice also: Job says that not only are these men talking lies, they are talking lies about God. (That’s interesting in light of what happens toward the end of the book itself. [See Job 42:7.]) Surely it would be better not to speak than to say things that are wrong. (Who among us hasn’t experienced how true that is?) But it seems that to say things that are wrong about God is much worse. The irony, of course, was that these men actually thought they were defending God and His character against Job’s bitter complaints about what happened. Though Job remained at a loss to understand why all these things came upon him, he knew enough to recognize that what these men were saying made them “forgers of lies” (Job 13:4).

**When was the last time you said things that were wrong and that shouldn’t have been said? How can you learn from that experience so that you do not make the same kind of mistake again?**

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## Though He Slay Me

When we started this quarter, we went right to the end of the book, and we saw how well things eventually turned out for Job. We saw that, even amid his terrible suffering, Job really had something to hope for. In fact, living when we do and knowing the end of the whole book, i.e., the Bible, we can see that Job had a whole lot more to hope in than he could possibly have imagined at the time.

But when his children died, his property was taken, and his health was ruined, Job didn't have the advantage of knowing how things would turn out. What he knew, instead, was that life had suddenly turned nasty.

At the same time, even amid his bitter laments about wishing he hadn't been born or wishing that he had gone from the womb to the grave, Job still expressed hope, and this hope was in God—the same God who he thought was dealing so unfairly with him now.

**Read** Job 13:15. What hope is presented here in this verse? What is Job saying?

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"Even if He will kill me, I will trust Him." What a powerful affirmation of faith! With all that had happened to him, Job knew that very possibly the final thing, the only thing that hadn't happened to him, death, could come—and God could cause it too. Yet, even if this happened, Job would die trusting in the Lord anyway.

"The riches of the grace of Christ must be kept before the mind. Treasure up the lessons that his love provides. Let your faith be like Job's, that you may declare, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Lay hold on the promises of your Heavenly Father, and remember his former dealings with you and with his servants; for 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' "—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 20, 1910.

From a purely human perspective, Job had no reason to hope for anything. But the fact was, Job wasn't looking from a purely human perspective. If he had done so, what hope could he possibly have? Instead, when he makes this amazing affirmation of faith and hope, he does it in the context of God and of trusting in Him.

**A logical question could be: How did Job retain his faith in God amid all that had happened to him? Read Job 1:1 and James 2:20–22. How do they help answer this question, and what should the answer tell us about the importance of faithfulness and obedience in our Christian life? (See lesson 13.)**

## Intimations of Hope

“ ‘He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him’ ” (*Job 13:16, NKJV*). This verse follows right after the one we read yesterday. How does it affirm even more the idea that, despite everything, Job had hope, and that his hope was in God?

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What an interesting line to follow what came before. Even if Job were to die, *even if God killed him*, Job still trusted in his God for salvation. Though on one level it’s a strange contrast, on another it makes perfect sense. After all, what is salvation other than liberation from death? And what is death, at least for the saved, other than a quick moment of rest, an instant of sleep, followed by the resurrection to eternal life? Is not this hope of the resurrection to eternal life the great hope of all of God’s people through the millennia? This was Job’s hope, as well.

**Read** 1 Corinthians 15:11–20. What is the hope presented to us there? Without this hope, why would we have no hope at all?

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Also, after this strong affirmation in salvation, Job says that the “*hanef* will not come before Him.” The root means “profane” or “godless,” a word with very negative connotations in Hebrew. Job knew that his salvation was to be found only in God, only in a life surrendered in faithful obedience to Him. That’s why the evil and godless man, the *hanef*, didn’t have that hope. Most likely Job was expressing what he understood as his “assurance of salvation.” Though Job faithfully offered animal sacrifices for sin, we don’t know how much he understood of their significance. Before the Cross, most faithful followers of the Lord, such as Job, surely didn’t have as full an understanding of salvation as we can have living after the Cross. Nevertheless, Job still knew enough to know that his hope of salvation was to be found only in the Lord and that those sacrifices were an expression of how this salvation was to be found.

## Hope Before the World Began

Who among us, having gone through what Job did, could utter such a powerful affirmation of hope? His words are an eternal testimony to the reality of his life of faith and obedience.

Job had hope because he served a God of hope. Even amid all the sordid stories of human sinfulness, from the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden (*Genesis 3*) to the fall of Babylon at the end of time (*Rev. 14:8*), the Bible is a book brimming with hope, brimming with a vision of something beyond what this world itself offers.

“The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210. And who is the Savior other than the great Source of our hope?

**How do these texts affirm the wonderful hope expressed in the Ellen G. White statement found in today’s study? *Eph. 1:4; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 1 Pet. 1:18–20.***

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These texts teach the amazing truth that, in His foreknowledge, God knew even before the Creation of the world that humanity would fall into sin. The Greek in 2 Timothy 1:9 says that we have been called by a grace given to us in Christ Jesus “before eternal time.” This is a grace given us, “not according to our works” (how could it have been “our works” if we didn’t even exist then?) but through Jesus. Even before we existed, God put a plan in place that offered humanity the hope of eternal life. The hope didn’t arise after we needed it; instead, it was already there, ready for us when we did need it.

As Christians, we have so much to hope for and to hope in. We exist in a universe created by a God who loves us (*John 3:16*), a God who redeemed us (*Titus 2:14*), a God who hears our prayers (*Matt. 6:6*), a God who intercedes for us (*Heb. 7:25*), a God who promises never to forsake us (*Heb. 13:5*), a God who promises to raise our bodies from death (*Isa. 26:19*), and to give us eternal life with Him (*John 14:2, 3*).

**“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (*Rom. 8:31*). How can you make this hope your own even amid whatever struggles you are facing now?**

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## Images of Hope

**Read** the following texts. What hope does each of them reveal?

*Gen. 3:15* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Gen. 22:8* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Lev. 17:11* \_\_\_\_\_

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*John 1:29* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Gal. 2:16* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Phil. 1:6* \_\_\_\_\_

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*1 Cor. 10:13* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Dan. 7:22* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Dan. 12:1, 2* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Matt. 24:27* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Dan. 2:44* \_\_\_\_\_

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Follow the progression of thought presented in these texts. Together, what do they tell us about the hope that we as Christians can have in Jesus?

**Further Thought:** From cover to cover, the Bible is filled with wonderful words of hope. “‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’” (*John 16:33, NKJV*). “‘I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (*Gal. 3:13, NKJV*). “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (*Ps. 103:12, NKJV*). “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom. 8:38, 39, NKJV*). “‘The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth’” (*Gen. 9:16, NKJV*). “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (*1 John 3:1, NKJV*). “Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (*Ps. 100:3, NKJV*). These texts are just a small portion of what is revealed to us in the Word about what our God is like and what He offers us. What reasons would we have for hope at all, were it not from what is revealed to us in the Bible?

### Discussion Questions:

- ①** What other Bible texts speak to us of hope? Which ones are especially important to you, and why?
- ②** Of all the specific doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which ones do you find especially hopeful?
- ③** Amid the personal trials and sometimes tragedies and hardships of life, how can we learn to rejoice in the hope that is presented to us in the Bible? Why is it so easy to get discouraged by events, even with so much hope presented to us? What can we do, on a practical level, to keep this hope ever before us and *to rejoice* in it?
- ④** “Talk hope and faith and thanksgiving to God. Be cheerful, hopeful in Christ. Educate yourself to praise Him. This is a great remedy for diseases of the soul and of the body.”—Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 492. Why is praise so important in helping us to stay hopeful in the Lord?

## The Devil's Lies: Part 2

Rui began reading the Bible on his own. In this way, he discovered references to the Sabbath day.

Rui knew that the Sabbath was Saturday, for the words are the same in Portuguese. But he didn't know of a church that worshiped on Saturday. Then a few weeks later, Rui heard a radio program during which the speaker offered free Bible studies. He enrolled and began studying the lessons.

Almost immediately, Rui began finding answers to the questions that had troubled him for so many years. But before he made a decision about what he was learning, Rui's study was interrupted when he met a young woman. Rui put aside the Bible studies and spent his time with his beloved. Eventually the couple married. At last, he felt fulfillment in his life.

But whenever the couple attended church, Rui felt the old conflicts arising in his heart. He no longer believed that Sunday was the biblical day of worship, and he now understood that the dead are asleep, not alive in some other place. These religious tensions spilled out into his family life, causing unrest and arguments. Rui feared that if he followed his convictions, his marriage might be over.

Rui learned that his wife's cousin was a Seventh-day Adventist and that the Bible studies he had taken were sponsored by Adventists. Suddenly, the questions he had asked all his life had answers. Everything fell into place. But still he faced a dilemma: What would his wife say if she knew of his interest in this church?

Rui began watching an Adventist television network while his wife wasn't home. When she went to visit her parents for several weeks, Rui attended the Adventist church. He found a spiritual home and was convinced that this was where God wanted him to be.

Rui struggled to tell his wife, and when he finally told her, she didn't take his religious fervor seriously. She had seen him struggle spiritually since they had met. But Rui knew that he had found what he was looking for. He studied further and then asked to be baptized. "I'm at peace," he says. "The devil's lies no longer plague me, for I have found the truth."

## *The Lesson in Brief*

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► **Key Texts:** Job 13:15, 16; 14:7; James 2:20–22

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Examine the rationale for Job's hope as provided in the historical fact of Christ's resurrection.

**Feel:** Appreciate the relationship between faith and hope, especially within the context of desperate suffering.

**Do:** Choose words of hope rather than words that discourage when talking to suffering people.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Resurrection Hope**

- Ⓐ How could Job speak about hope and, at the same time, talk about death?
- Ⓑ What does Christ's resurrection have to do with Job's suffering? What does it have to do with our suffering?

**II. Feel: Hope and Faith**

- Ⓐ How can you find hope in a situation in which there does not seem to be any way out and all the solutions have failed?
- Ⓑ Why does James 2:20–22 speak about the works of faith? Don't faith and works contradict each other? Explain.

**III. Do: Speaking Hope**

- Ⓐ What can we learn from Job's friends in terms of how we should or shouldn't speak to people who are suffering?
- Ⓑ How can we find words of hope in a situation in which there does not seem to be any hope?

► **Summary:** Through the seemingly endless dark speeches of Job's friends and his desperate replies, there are sudden rays of hope. This lesson dwells upon these rays, which point to a hope in the resurrection that Job called his own. Ultimately, the reason for this hope can be found only in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Learning Cycle

### ►STEP 1—Motivate

#### **Spotlight on Scripture: Proverbs 17:28**

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The tongue is a powerful tool or, in some instances, a highly destructive weapon. It is the selfsame body part that can issue a fatal blow to a person's last grip on life. Or it can infuse a word of hope that can mark the beginning of recovery from suffering and pain.

Job's interaction with his friends shows the detrimental power of the tongue. But it also shows that, amid all the judgmental theological gibberish, Job found hope that was not grounded in human words but a hope in Yahweh and in the resurrection of the dead. We should learn from the friends' anti-example.

**Just for Teachers:** The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not immune to indulging in gossip, judgmental talk, and even slander. As a matter of fact, every close-knit community of people who share their joys, sorrows, and personal struggles with one another is susceptible to unhealthy chitchat and backbiting. It might be a good opportunity to discuss with the class how backbiting and gossip affect your church or congregation, even if such a discussion can turn out to be a painful exercise.

**Opening Discussion:** A father frequently reminded his children that there were two things that could not be taken back: a launched arrow and a spoken word. He usually mentioned these proverbs to his children in the context of their saying something that should have been thought through a bit more carefully or when they had said a hurtful word to another person. It is almost impossible to undo the damage that a harshly spoken word can cause in somebody else's soul. The comparison with an arrow is most appropriate. It can pierce through the last bit of self-worth a person still has or quench the only glimmer of hope he or she desperately clings to. Job's friends successively seem to specialize in this kind of verbal warfare, and Job's resistance to their continuous battering of him almost seems superhuman.

When have you experienced the destructive power of negative words? Or, on the positive side, when have you felt the hope-infusing impact of a good word spoken at the right time (*compare Prov. 25:11*)?

### ►STEP 2—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** Hope is the golden thread that runs through

**Scripture.** From the moment of the Fall, in Genesis 3, God responds with a message of hope in verse 15. The seed of the woman, in the singular, has been taken as a reference to the Messiah. While being hurt by Satan (“bruise His heel”), the Messiah would, at the same time, destroy the power of the enemy (“bruise your head,” *NKJV*) through His death and resurrection. Interestingly, the most ancient translation of the Old Testament before the Christian era, the Septuagint, already understood this reference as pointing to an individual, the Messiah, as there is a grammatical disagreement in the Greek between the seed, *sperma* (neuter gender), and the personal pronoun *autos* (masculine gender). Thus, from the very beginning, hope in future salvation was the remedy for the darkest moments of humanity. It still is.

## Bible Commentary

It is interesting to note the traces of hope that also run through the book of Job. While they appear sparsely within the generally desperate tones of the main protagonists, they are there nevertheless, connecting Job’s fate with the future Messiah, as He becomes the guarantee for humanity’s hope.

### I. “Though He Slay Me” (*Review Job 13:1–16 with the class.*)

Following Zophar’s speech in chapter 11, Job 12–14 concludes the first cycle of speeches. Chapter 13 begins with a response of Job to his friends in which he finally characterizes their words as “proverbs of ashes” (*Job 13:12, NKJV*)—not a very flattering comparison. Sitting in ashes, scraping his sores, is exactly how they find Job when they come to visit. He very well may have accompanied his words with a handful of ashes, thrown into the air and dispersed by the wind.

But after dismissing his friends’ counsel, Job now turns to God. It is the last verses of chapter 13 especially that have a powerful message. The reading of the Hebrew text in Job 13:15 has provided some confusion, as reflected in certain modern translations that reverse the meaning negatively: “See, he will kill me; I have no hope” (*NRSV*; compare also *NLT*; *NKJV* is positive). This reversal is the result of two different readings in the original text, suggested by a group of ancient Hebrew scholars called the Masoretes. However, the continuation of Job’s words in verse 16 provides some clarification as to the reality of his hope. He refers to God as his salvation, pointing to the stubborn hope he has, despite his circumstances, which motivates him to press on until he can find vindication before the Judge of the universe (*Job 13:17–19*). Job longs for God’s response as the only way to understand his situation.

**Consider This:** How did Job find some hope, despite the hopeless words of his friends?

## **II. Stubborn Hope** (*Review Genesis 22:8, Daniel 3:16–18, James 2:20–22, and 1 Corinthians 15:11–20 with the class.*)

Scripture is full of stories that display the incredible power of a hope that is stubbornly fixed on God, against all odds. There is Abraham, who soothes his son's perturbed question with a resounding “‘God will provide’” (*Gen. 22:8*), which prepares Isaac to lie down in faith on the altar on top of Mount Moriah. There are Daniel’s three friends standing before an enraged Nebuchadnezzar, issuing an unheard-of challenge to the most powerful man on earth during Babylonian times, as he threatens them with the fiery furnace: “‘But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods’” (*Dan. 3:18, NKJV*). There is the thief on the cross who, recognizing the divine Majesty hanging next to him between heaven and earth, timidly expresses a humble wish at the end of a futile life: “‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom’” (*Luke 23:42, NKJV*).

The list could go on, but the question really is: Where did these people find the basis for such a stubborn hope that could withstand the deathly threats of their current circumstances? Whatever they understood at the time, the ultimate answer needs to be located in the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides the basis for all our hopes and specifically for those that let us look beyond the confines of death. Paul hinges the truth of his whole preaching on the fact of resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:11–20*). James points to the delicate relationship between faith and works in reference to Abraham, which really becomes tangible in the hope held amid dire circumstances. Job had the same hope that was grounded in a just (though, for the moment, not understandable) God who could see him through even beyond the grave (*compare Job 19:25, 26*).

**Consider This:** What is the basis for your hope?

## **III. Hypocrites** (*Review Job 13:16 and Proverbs 11:9 with the class.*)

A popular definition of a hypocrite is somebody who preaches one thing but does another. Especially in the religious sphere, hypocrites can cause a lot of damage, though we are all susceptible to hypocrisy.

Job’s usage of the Hebrew word *chanaf* in 13:16, as an implicit reference to his friends, is very strong, and it also could be translated as “profane, irreligious, godless, perverted.” As a matter of fact, as an adjective, it is most frequently attested in the book of Job (eight times, versus five other times in the rest of the Old Testament). So, hypocrisy is actually more than just failing to do what one preaches; it is a form of ungodliness, which perverts the character of God. This ungodliness is what Job detects in his

friends (*compare Job 8:13, 15:34, 17:8, 20:5, 27:8, 34:30, and 36:13*). We can only pray to God to protect us from being guilty of the same.

**Consider This:** Why does it seem so easy to fall into the trap of hypocrisy?

### ►STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** **Job's hope is a hard-earned one, and this week we see a bit of the deep struggles he is going through in order to attain this hope. But he stubbornly holds on to it.**

#### Thought/Application Questions:

- ① How do you understand the expression of “stubborn faith”?

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- ② Can you recall any situations in your life when your hope was a hard-earned one? If so, share your experience.

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### ►STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** **Hope in the midst of the storm is something that often defies human logic. We can only marvel at it.**

#### Class/Individual Activities:

- ① Share the inspiring story of the circumstances that accompanied the writing of the famous hymn, “It Is Well With My Soul,” whose words were written down by Horatio Spafford at the exact location where his four daughters had drowned on a voyage from America to England in 1883.

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- ② Sing the hymn and then talk about the incredible hope we have as Seventh-day Adventists. You might also still want to sing “We Have This Hope.”

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