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|  | By **Martha Rodman** on January 30, 2025 |

*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15: 13 NLT.*I had the chance to talk with another widow this week. Her husband and mother passed very close together about four years ago. She is a firm believer. She wasn't questioning God's goodness. Instead, she was seeking to learn how to walk through these sometimes paralyzing struggles that grief can often bring. Somehow during the conversation, someone used the word "hopeless." As we talked, I thought about "hope less." versus hopeless. Had my hope level dropped amid so many challenges?Think about a thermometer. When we take temperatures for fevers, we want the numbers to go down. Can you see it now? A hope thermometer? Is your hope increasing or decreasing? I had to admit that in some areas my hope is less than it used to be. It was a reality check, but in a good way. Life hasn't been easy for many lately. Those close to me have been dealing with very hard things. I talked with a lady yesterday at church. She had been a wonderful life group leader. She shared she had to step down, because her husband was diagnosed with early stages of Alzheimer's. Her mom had passed away from the same disease, so she knows sort of what lies ahead.She told me, I still believe in our God who heals, and am trusting Him for our future. When life sends us these curves, it is hard. Many older saints are facing even more difficult trials than ever before. I asked the Lord about it, and He said, "it's time to apply everything we've learned in the past". It is not a time to give up and lose hope or heart. It is a time to lean even harder on Him and His character. This last season of our life gives us the opportunity to really live as an example of the believer. Not easy, but it must be doable!I realized I had actually lost some hope (hope less). I began to pray and ask Him to help me. Proverbs 13:12, is very clear: *hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life. NLT.* When things are "deferred" put off, delayed or even suspended we can become discouraged. Little children can fuss and fume over short delays, but as we mature we can endure it a bit better. There comes a time when we have to admit, "Lord, I think my heart is sick". You may be trusting Him for healing, finances, a relationship fix etc. But it hasn't happened yet. So what do we do? Grow sicker and sicker? No, my friend. We need to go back to the Lord. I wanted my husband to miraculously recover from his heart attack and stroke. When we began to see improvement, we were all so excited. But, after caring, trusting, praying and loving him, two and half years later he joined Jesus.So now what? I admitted my heart was sick. I had many conversations with Him, sharing my feelings and disappointments. Some I wrote, some were simply heart felt prayers. I had learned enough about Him I did not stop until peace came. The scripture in Romans 15:13 tells us He is the God of ALL hope. So it makes sense to go back to the source and ask Him to restore your hope. Paul was praying for the Roman church, that the God, the source of hope, would fill them completely with joy and peace. He wanted them to experience the fullness of the Good News. This is God's wish for us, that we will be filled completely with joy and peace. I admit, I am still working on that!Hope can be a bit elusive at times, which is why we find this exhortation in Hebrews 10:23. *Let us hold****tightly****without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.* Isn't this the crux of the matter? Do we believe He is trustworthy? When hope wanes, we often take our eyes off Him and onto the immensity of the situation. Our enemy wants us to blame God, get us to believe "if He really cared..." (you fill in the blank!) Paul told Timothy, *This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of believers. 1 Timothy 4:10.*I want to remind you and me today that He has already proven His loving care. Do whatever you have to do to focus on the Living Loving God, then your hope will rise.Psalm 119:74 states: *May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word.* If you lose hope, many around you will too. But if you stand strong in God's Word, you will also strengthen those around you. Lately, when I turn on either my Alexa or Spotify worship, there are so many songs about warfare and struggles. It made me wonder if God is causing His artists to write and produce such songs. We must need them. I found my faith rising as I listened to these encouraging sounds. If you are not a musician like me, we can forget about adding it to our warfare weaponry. But when I do, it is so refreshing.I want to remind us again that in this world we are going to have trials and tribulations. We can either become hope less, or grow in our hope.Not just regular hope, but confident hope. Hope that makes us not ashamed or afraid. Do I feel disappointed in myself that my hope thermometer went down? Of course, I felt disappointed. However, I am so grateful for the Holy Spirit. He helped me get back on the right path. Remember Romans 5:4-6. *And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and dies for us sinners.**Father, I thank you for showing us that even though we may lose some hope, we don't have to become hopeless. You teach us to not lose hope. We can hold on and not become hopeless. Help us to grow in Your hope, a hope that encourages us to trust You no matter our journey. You are the source of all Hope and we can depend on you. In Jesus' Name, amen.* |

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