

# Jesus Our Hope - Part 2

by Roy Hession

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*Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes that Jesus is our hope, offering restoration and revival even for those who feel cut down and hopeless.*

**Duration:** 1:22:40

**Scripture:** Job 14:7, Psalm 14:7, Isaiah 40:31, Jeremiah 17:7, Matthew 6:33, Luke 13:6, Romans 15:13

**Topics:** "Hope"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the hope that Jesus brings to the hopeless. He uses the analogy of a tree that can sprout again even if it is cut down, highlighting the resilience and renewal that can be found in Jesus. The preacher also mentions the purpose of the Gospel, which is to give hope to feeble and failing individuals. He refers to a parable in Luke 13 about a fig tree that did not bear fruit and was cut down, illustrating that sometimes God may cut down certain trees in our lives. The sermon concludes with a mention of the book of Job, specifically chapter 14, where the preacher is searching for a specific verse.

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## Transcript

Well, we were almost back at Southwold a few years ago when John was running things and so often conducting the singing, and the last few years seemed to slip away quickly, and we were back there again. I don't know about this retiring, I think some people who've retired are really frauds. They're no different today than they were years ago, and they're just as fresh as ever.

Praise the Lord for that. We don't always feel as fresh. Some people say we look fresh, but they don't know what aches and pains we're developing.

There's no escaping it, we've got to go through it with the Lord. But I don't think John's doing too badly, do you? Amen. Now this evening, I want you, if you will, to turn to the book of Job.

The book of Job. Job comes before the Psalms, chapter 14. I'm looking for my verse.

I've got it down. Verse 7. Thank you. You guess what I'm going to take.

Verse 7. Now our theme is Jesus, our hope. If you like, our only hope. He's the hope of the hopeless.

The purpose of the Gospel is to give sinners a hope. There's some type of message that leaves none of us with any hope. We're called upon to climb the steep ascent to heaven.

And we know we're not going to make more than the first few steps. And we're defeated before we ever start. Now that's not the Gospel.

The Gospel is designed to give feeble, weak, failing people a hope. And praise the Lord that's the way round it is. I want to read then this verse, the second in our little series on the subject of Jesus, our hope.

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again. And that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth.

And the stalk die in the ground or appear to die. Yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a young plant. This is a great revival text.

Listen to it again. There's hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again. And that the tender branch will not cease.

Though the root wax old or appears to in the earth. And the stalk seems to die in the ground. Yet in a very simple way at the scent of water.

That stalk that seems so dead will bud and bring forth boughs like a young plant. I see here four pictures. The first picture, we're in the forest.

Like to think we're in California. Mike, what's the name of those great glorious ancient huge trees? The Redwoods. Yes, they are tremendous.

Some of the biggest and the oldest. They were going ahead in the days of Abraham. And they're still there, these huge trees.

And we're going to imagine that for some reason or other they want to fell one of those mighty giants. And it really is a very spectacular sight. I'm sorry I've not actually viewed it myself.

But I can well understand it. They've got various ropes attached to make sure that it falls and lies in the right place. But you better beware lest you're in the wrong place yourself.

And this great, great giant is cut down and it falls with a crash on the ground. So there's the first picture this evening. The tree cut down.

It talks about if it be cut down. God sometimes cuts down his trees. He does.

Indeed the Lord Jesus told us the story. The parable in Luke 13 6. A certain man had a big fig tree planted in his vineyard. And he came and sought fruit thereon and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard. Behold these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down, why cometh it the ground? And God sometimes sees fit to cut down his trees or some of them.

Scripture abounds in stories of trees that God cut down. Nebuchadnezzar was one such tree. Indeed he had a vision of himself as a tree.

A mighty tree. Tremendous height. Widespread branches.

The beasts of the earth taking shelter in its shadow and the birds on its branches. And when he wanted to know the meaning of it. Especially what was the meaning of what the watchers and the holy ones, the angels.

Who uttered the word cut it down. He wanted to know what it meant. And he had the very searching answer.

That tree O King is you. And that great monarch so proud. With power extending all over the known world.

And proud of it was cut down. In his case he took the form of madness. And he was driven out of the habitations of the sons of men.

And for seven years he lived in the fields. As a wild beast almost. With his reason gone.

And God saw fit to cut down that tree. Then there was another great tree that God cut down. And that was Samson.

The strongest man of his day. Israel's champion. Who more than once single-handed put to flight the armies of the Philistines.

And accounted for many of them. But the time came when he compromised. And he played with sin.

And he allowed Delilah to find out the secret where in his great strength lay. And she cut his locks. And he became weak like any other man.

Though at first he didn't know that the Lord had departed from him. But at last the unbelievable happened. They were able to take him captive.

To put out his eyes. To bind him with tethers of brass. And to make mock of this one before whom they had trembled up to that point.

And he was put to work grinding in the prison house. Oh what a mighty tree. Oh what a glorious man.

But no, he's cut down. Just as in that parable, so here. Yet another tree I'm thinking of is Manasseh.

Maybe you aren't too familiar with the story of Manasseh. Billy Graham rightly says he was the wickedest man in the Bible. He made the streets of Jerusalem run with blood.

And he led the people into unspeakable sin and idolatry. And God sent to him his servants the prophets again and again. To tell him to turn to the Lord his God.

But he wouldn't heed it. And it indeed happened. As was foretold.

Wherefore the Lord brought upon him the captains of the host of the king of Assyria. Which took Manasseh with chains and bound him with fetters. And carried him to Babylon.

And there he was left to rot in a Babylonian dungeon. Oh there are a number of cases of trees that God cut down. And God sometimes does that today.

Amongst sometimes his own people. Sometimes among those of the preeminent servants of his. But they played with sin.

They compromised. They departed from the straight and narrow road that led to life. And God has cut down sometimes those men.

Every now and then were shocked and horrified. To hear of the scandal and the fall of some quite eminent man. And God is not above dealing with all of us.

In such a way if that's the best thing for us and everybody else. But I want to say however. When God does see fit to cut down any of his trees.

It's not punitive. It is rather restorative. Don't think that God's chastening is laid upon you as a punishment.

Because of this or that in your life. No matter how closely it may lie next to such a thing. God's purposes with us are all the time restorative in their intention.

And they are not to be regarded rather as punitive. He wants you back. And sometimes chastening of one sort or another is the only language we'll understand.

And God has to resort to it. And I'll tell you why it's not punitive. Because it can never be regarded as severe enough.

I care not what the suffering may be that you may be called to go through. I care not what the deprivation of position or something else that you may have to suffer. It's never to be regarded as a punishment for the simple reason it isn't severe enough.

The only adequate punishment for sin. Is that which the Lord Jesus bore on his body on the tree. And as he did so he had to cry out where was God forsaking him? For so it appeared even to him.

It was for our sins. It was our sins that he was bearing there. And that was the only due punishment for sin.

But he's exhausted it. And therefore his dealings with you with me. Sometimes in the realm of chastening is never to be regarded as punitive.

That's the only due punishment for sin. And that's being exhausted. Behind that frowning providence under which you may be living.

Behind it there is always a shining face. And he's designed to bring us back, to restore us. And sometimes that is the way.

And so it is the first thing we have in this particular verse in Job. Is the picture of the tree cut down. Now to what extent in any degree that may be true of us I don't know.

You've known of cases. And in some degree perhaps you have been humbled by God. And you've been deprived of something of position or influence or prosperity.

In some degree or another we have or we may yet experience. This matter of being a tree cut down. Maybe you hardly like to admit it yourself.

You wouldn't like to talk to anybody else about it. But really in some degree or another you may well have to acknowledge. That you are a tree who's been cut down at least in some measure.

Now the next thing I see in this verse. It says here. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk die in the ground.

This particular great tree all that's left of it is the stalk. The stalk in the ground. And it's been there a long time.

Many of the branches and the major portion of the tree has been carried away. But its original stalk still remains. And it's been there a long time.

And sometimes God's chastenings seem to last a long time. You may know some cases. You may know something in your own life.

God had his hand on your affairs in chastening for a long time. And perhaps others have written you off. You were so different.

There was such promise in your Christian life. That sphere of service that you were going to occupy. But it hasn't worked out that way.

You've missed it. And as I say it can seem to last a long time. Not only do others perhaps sometimes write a man off.

But he writes himself off. He used to be so different. And he's really down.

And he can think of the bright prospect which he knows have passed for him. But in spite of the fact that that tree in some degree can be regarded as a tree cut down. It is still history.

I remind you of the case of Nebuchadnezzar. It was specially said as the heavenly ones ordered the tree to be cut down. Leave the stump in the ground and put round it a band of iron and brass in the tender grass.

I don't want that stump to disintegrate. You see there's hope of a tree. Always hope of a tree if it is cut down.

That it will start again. And therefore there's this care taken. Even with the stump in the case of Nebuchadnezzar.

And even though he was there in the field. Largely living the life of a madman. There was a kindly providence still looking after him.

He was still God's tree. I remember when Billy Graham first came to England. He used to announce his sermons ahead of time.

And he announced one night that he was going to speak the next night on God's delinquents. And I couldn't go the next night. And I was so interested to find out.

What was the subject going to be? Who was God's delinquent? And he was speaking about Samson. A delinquent indeed. But listen, God's delinquent.

And that is always the case. No matter how severe the chastening of God upon a life. That life, if it once knew the Lord is still his.

And is still the object of divine solicitude. As was that trunk that represented Nebuchadnezzar. There's hope of a tree.

If it be cut down. That it will sprout again. Jesus our hope.

And here's another verse about hope. The hope of a tree cut down. That it will sprout again.

Anything with a gain is a picture of revival. Revival is God giving life again. And here's his word again.

The glorious possibility of a life that's messed it up. That had to be chastened by God. And he himself or she herself and others wrote them off as finished.

Don't you believe it? Because there's always hope of a tree. That it will sprout again. That's what it says.

A very lovely picture. And then I want you to see a third picture. I see that stump in a very dry area.

On a dry hillside. Even in the rainy season. It doesn't seem to get much rain at all.

It's dry. And for that reason you think it would never sprout again. But I'm watching that old trunk.

And I'm realizing that the rainy season is a little heavier than it used to be. It's coming a little nearer to that part of the field. That part of the country.

No, it's not much of a rainfall. Do you know what it is apparently? It's the scent of water. That's not much.

But apparently that's all that was needed. It says so. There's hope of a tree.

If it be cut down that it will sprout again. That the tender branch will not cease. Though the root wax old and the stalk appear to die in the ground.

Yet at the scent of water it will begin to bud. And I love that phrase, the scent of water. Came out of church one day and my wife said, you know I didn't get much of the scent of water this morning did you? What a lovely face.

Do you know what it means? It's a lovely picture of the message of grace. And it only needs the scent of water. It needs a little bit of that message of grace and a poor dear man or woman who's ridden themselves up.

There's hope again. And there's the beginning of revival again at the scent of water. Yes, I would take that to represent for us tonight the message of grace.

The knowledge that their God was gracious was a revelation known only to Israel. It was indeed I believe their greatest riches. When they were coming out of Egypt and being made a nation they had to learn who their God really was.

I mean every tribe, every race in those days had some sort of tribal deity. In what did their God differ from other gods? They had to learn, and learn in experience. And they learnt three wonderful things in which their God differed from every other tribal deity.

The first thing they learnt in their exodus from Egypt was that their God was sovereign. When Moses told his father-in-law the story of the miracles by which they'd been brought out of Egypt Jethro said, so it was

that the thing wherein they dealt proudly the Egyptians, he was higher than they. And they were utterly convinced of it when they saw their enemies dead on the seashore.

That was the first thing. Who could compare with such a God as this? And God was making himself known as to where he really was. And then you remember they spent a year, a whole year if you please, in camp at Mount Sinai.

That was the time when Moses went up into the mountain up and down on a number of occasions to receive the law of God written on tables of stone and much else. And there they learnt something else about their God in which he differed from every other God. They learnt that he was moral.

Not only sovereign, but moral. He loved righteousness, he hated iniquity. Who ever heard of a tribal deity who loved righteousness and hated iniquity who was moral? But they made the astonishing discovery that their God was a moral God.

And if they were to walk with him they'd have to deal with moral issues of right and wrong. But then they learnt a third thing about their God in which he was utterly different from every other one. That their God was not only sovereign, not only moral, but he was gracious.

That was discovered in the matter of the golden calf. What a terrible thing it was to make that idolatrous thing and says, these be thy gods that brought thee out of Egypt. And God threatened to extinguish them and make of Moses a greater nation.

And maybe he might have done it had not Moses seen that God's glory was at stake and he stood in the gap and prayed for that sinning people and God forgave them the iniquity of their sin. And continued with them. This isn't what they deserved.

This isn't what they expected. They were dealt with a magnanimity that they hardly thought possible. And they discovered that their God differed from every other God in that he was gracious.

The God of grace. And this knowledge of their God it's there detailed there in Exodus 34 was one of the most important things. Again and again the prophets referred back to that revelation of God given to Moses.

The Lord passed by as he was there in the cleft of the rock and proclaimed his name to Moses. Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful, gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness, ready to pardon. And they discovered theirs was a God of grace.

And this revelation that was given by God of himself was basic to them. Whenever Israel was suffering under any form of chastening the God in Israel when they prayed always referred God himself back to that revelation he'd made of himself in Exodus 34. There are no less than 17 allusions to that great passage.

Tremendously important. And their God was a God of grace. If they were taught anything they were taught that.

Or much else. But certainly that. And it was a memory of what they'd gotten.

Some of them in the case of Samson or Manasseh in childhood. Nebuchadnezzar listening to Daniel. He'd somehow got the message that Israel's God was a gracious God.

And as in their hour of misery and remorse they began to go over those old truths. It was like the scent of water. And the God under whose hand they were suffering was none the less a gracious God.

And it was the very scent of that message which caused the old tree to sprout again. Can't you imagine? Nebuchadnezzar after those years with his nails untrimmed his hair like birds feathers little more than a beast slowly a little bit of reason returns and he says what did Daniel say? I seem to remember him telling me about Israel's God. I know it's Israel's God under whose hand I'm suffering but I seem to remember he's merciful and gracious to sinners.

And you know it was the beginning of new things for him. When he realized that this was the God he was dealing with and he was enabled to humble himself and repent because nothing that encourages you and helps you to repent has a new vision that it's a God of grace you've got to deal with. If he isn't, what's the point of humbling yourself? In a court of law if a man pleads guilty it doesn't greatly change the situation.

If he's guilty he's got to be sentenced. But we're not in a court of law and a wonderful thing it is it's a court of grace. And there's mercy offered to those who take God's side.

If that were true in earthly courts there'd be a rush for people to take that place. I've been in a jury and we did admit men who did plead guilty. It didn't make a lot of difference because we weren't there to dispense mercy we were there to dispense justice.

But our God he doesn't call it a judgment seat he calls it a mercy seat. I can see something beginning to happen. It hasn't been a big rainfall but just a scent seems to do enough.

It's in the atmosphere and you see the sprouts beginning you see a repeat of what we see at spring and that after terrible drought at the scent of water. And you know I believe there's nothing like this to encourage repentance. I think dear old Samson in his prison he remembered what he'd been told when he was growing up.

What he'd been taught of Israel's God. He says, oh God is it true for a man like me and the mere suggestion there's mercy for such a man is encouraging him to take the sinner's place. And I'm quite sure God restored to him for that last great act his lost strength because there'd been some repenting going on and that in turn had been due to memory that there's mercy with the Lord.

Oh I want to tell you this is the way out. You had your moments when you got cold and were away from him. Things have gone wrong back.

Happy the man who hasn't forgotten that old old message of Jesus and his love. Happy the person who knows is still with such a God as gave his son to him. Good news for bad people.

And just because you have got cold just because you have got and oh what a wonderful thing it is in your hour of need to get that scent of water. That scent of water. You don't always get it.

You don't always get it in every sermon. Something good for sinners. Something gracious for those who have done the wrong thing and made a mess of things.

Some of those who have tried so hard and can't attain. We are called we who have to preach not to give good advice but good news. The joyful news of sin forgiven of hell subdued and peace with heaven.

And at the scent of water I can see something beginning to happen. It hasn't been a big rainfall but just a scent seems to do enough. It's in the atmosphere and you see the sprouts beginning.

You see a repeat of what we see at spring. And that after a terrible drought at the scent of water. And you know I believe there's nothing like this to encourage repentance.

I think dear old Samson in his prison he remembered what he'd been told when he was growing up. What he'd been taught of Israel's God he said oh God is it true for a man like me? And the mere suggestion there's mercy for such a man is encouraging him to take the sinner's place. And I'm quite sure God restored to him for that last great act his lost strength because there'd been some repenting going on.

And that in turn had been due to memory that there's mercy with the Lord. Oh I want to tell you this is the way out. You'll have your moments when you've got cold and are away from him.

Things have gone wrong bad. Happy the man who hasn't forgotten that old old message of Jesus and his love. Happy the person who knows is still with such a God as gave his son for us.

Good news for bad people. And just because you have got cold, just because you have got in a tangle that very need and that very culpability qualifies you to that marvellous grace of our loving Lord. Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt yonder on Calvary's mount outboard there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

And so we have this. There's what our fourth. Oh we think of Manasseh.

Oh I like Manasseh. Our preachers have a go at preaching on Manasseh. In the time of his distress he besought his God in that Babylonian dungeon and humbled himself greatly.

Do you know what that phrase humbling yourself is? It occurs more often in the old than in the new. And I want to tell you it's the Old Testament word for repentance. You'll be surprised when I tell you the Old Testament word does not use repentance as a rule to indicate repentance.

The only time, times when repentance is used strangely make of it what you will, when it says God repents, means changes his mind. When he saw Nineveh humbling themselves and repenting and put away their sins he repented of the evil of the calamity he thought to do unto them. But as for man repenting it isn't really the word.

Strangely I'm surprised myself to find in consulting my concordance that it is so. Oh it's there. But it's not repentance which is the word.

A better word, more expressive, humbling myself. God said to Elijah, seest thou how Ahab humbled himself? He repented. And it is a humbling thing because the repentance is to say, oh God you're right and I'm wrong.

You said so often the other way round. It isn't fair. I'm alright.

Change your mind man. And say, oh God you're right, I'm wrong. And it's always a humbling thing and that is the glorious word you have in the Old Testament.

It's there in many cases. Look it up. If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves.

They're not just feeling humble. It's really with regard to sin. And admitting that I who said I was right I now confess myself to be wrong.

Especially is it humbling when other people have been telling you you're wrong and you wouldn't have it. And God says, you go back to those people and you tell that person, maybe your husband or your wife or someone else, you know when I justified myself I was wrong. I've got to tell you I've been wrong.

You've been right in that discussion I'm the wrong one. God's been right but I'm the wrong. And so this is the great word and so it is.

The fact that there is good news for those who put themselves in the wrong is the biggest incentive to put ourselves in the wrong. You think I'll cut my own throat morally if I start admitting I'm wrong. You do nothing of the sort.

You put yourself in a place of greater opportunity as the wrong one than you ever did when you said you were the right one. You see there's something, God's got something for people who are wrong. But if you're so so right you don't need the grace of God and you don't need the blood of his son by fainting your innocence, you put yourself outside the sphere where grace operates.

And the sphere of grace is the sphere where all the power of God is at work. I don't see his power so much in creation as I do see it in the realm of grace. The moral and spiritual reclamations that are accomplished by grace, there's the power of God.

And nothing is more likely to induce us to take the sinner's place again than the fact that there's the sinner's remedy. There's the fountain flowing for the soul unclean where you can wash and be clean. That there's glorious restorations plus.

Oh when God restores a man and restores a situation he does it in style. In real grand style. That's why the word that's always associated with grace is abounding grace.

There's so much of it. You see if it was a love that was conditioned on how you were behaving it couldn't it wouldn't be much abounding about it. Because your behaviour hasn't really come up to much.

But if it doesn't need to find a procuring source in you but only in God the sky's the limit. And I want to tell you the man who learned to take the sinner's place he's on the receiving end of the great things of God. And so it is in the cases I've mentioned these were men who were provoked to a splendid repentance.

And what else? The last little picture I see in this verse is as a result of the scent of water that moisture in the air not only are the branches beginning to bear fruit but they're beginning to grow. Small ones admittedly not the great big ones that came down with the main trunk but something just as nice so fresh so gentle so green. What I mean to say is this there could conceivably be a collapse in a Christian's life and he forfeits perhaps places of leadership and influence.

You may not have those places of influence and importance restored to you. Why should he? You've got no divine right to be out at front all the time. Would that be gross? I tell you what will happen.

You'll be like a new convert all over again. And do you know those were your best days? When it was all so fresh when Jesus was so new and it can begin that way. It says and they'll be seen these branches yet though through the scent of water it will bud bring forth boughs like a young plant.

It's important to see that. It's important to see that. I know of a man who was disciplined by his church because of some unseemly immoral behaviour and he was forbidden to take communion and he was perhaps later they would rescind that discipline but they didn't immediately and he sat behind and he went on sitting behind and he went on sitting behind.

He said I like this. What sort of a church is this? I've said I'm sorry they're still leaving me behind. So he upped and tried to become a member of another church.

He wasn't repented at all. He said he's I'm sorry. Real repentance is I'm put behind forever.

I won't quarrel with that. And of course they would have been so convinced of a great work of grace in his heart they would have been glad to have him in their parish brigade but he wasn't there. And so we have this picture.

Now listen let's take hope with regard to ourselves and let's take hope with regard to others about whom we're concerned. Listen, there's hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again. What glory that would give to a God of grace.

To see in this case, that case and the other such a beautiful work of renewal and restoration that he's like a new Christian all over again prepared to take any old place if only to get back into fellowship with Jesus and the way back has been made by the Lord Jesus by his blood the new and living way and so here is our picture here is our picture hope of a tree hope of a tree if it be cut down in what any degree that it will sprout again only because of the scent of water and you prepare to respond and say yes Lord, you're right and I want to tell you it won't be very long before you've been restored and rejoicing again through the power of his blood let us bow our heads for a moment Lord Jesus we thank you for this picture and we ask Lord that it shall be fixed in our hearts show us wherein we've missed it show us Lord where we've been deprived by some disciplinary action of thyself may we not quarrel with it may we agree with thee and then above all may we hear that loved message of grace that comes to us from the cross and may some of us who've been away from thee a long time this evening, see that their very needs, their very lacks their very wrongs, if confessed make them makes thy grace available to them, they qualify for it we ask Lord that thou would interpret these things to all of us

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