

## Books

### Live Like a Christian

Thanks to a combination of printed pages, e-books, and audiobooks, I have finished over 80 books so far this year. I say finish because I have only consumed, studied, and remembered a few of them. Some provided company as I did housework chores, drove to doctors, stores, and the assembly. Some added background noise while writing. But a few were to refresh or create thoughts, impressions, and understanding of scripture. Warren Wiersbe's "Be" series commentaries are helpful in some areas but must be studied carefully to avoid the errors men make. Other books are helpful, but I often turn to familiar preachers' websites and their lessons on subjects I am studying. We all have mentors in the faith that we look up to, but even Paul said only be imitators of him as he is of Christ.

While scanning through some offerings by one book provider, the title "*Dare to Hope: How to Live an Authentic Christian Life*" caught my eye. The publisher invited people to: "Join beloved saints, mystics, and spiritual writers in practicing God's great gift of hope." The book's basic premise is to look at the lives, trials, and accomplishments of individuals who are revered, and some declared to be saints, by the Catholic Church. The conclusion reached does declare a truth which is learned by living a life that follows Christ. "Hope brings healing in the face of pain, strength in moments of temptation, comfort in the midst of sorrow, and clarity in times of doubt." In general, it appears to be worldly rather than spiritual in its presentation.

The writings of Peter and Paul always point to Jesus as the example to follow and develop faith, hope, and strength to endure. Peter says to "*Always be ready to **give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you**, with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter 3:15). Peter continues his petition in his second letter. "*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent to be found by Him in peace**, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--**as also our beloved brother Paul**, according to the wisdom given to him, **has written to you**, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, **which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction**, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, **since you know this beforehand, beware** lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen"* (2 Peter 3:14-18). It is essential to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, not people or even good people.

Paul uses illustrations drawn from the athletic festivals (1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1), the Greek theater (1 Corinthians 4:9), and the Roman army campaigns (Romans 31-39). He shows that he knows the vocabulary of the poets and mystics as he writes, "*Not that I speak in regard to need, for **I have learned** in whatever state I am, to be content: **I know** how to be abased, and **I know** how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I **have learned** both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **I can do all things** through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:11-13). He did not need the example of people; he learned to live and be strengthened in and through Christ.

There are many Novelas and Novels filled with the scenario of sorrow, trials, and misery turned into stories of success and happiness. Most of them do not get into the fact that we have an anchor of the soul seated on the throne in heaven. "*Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs*

*of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:17-20).*

Let us consider Paul's words, encouraging us not to turn from our hope in Christ, as he says, "*if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Colossians 1:23).* We came out of the world to be like God's Son, free from sin and heir of eternity. Why would we turn to people of the world for advice on building our hope and living like a Christian? The New Testament teaches us to live like Christ and use Him and His apostles as our example.

Is our hope grounded by faith in the one that conquered death and offers us a home with Him in heaven?