

VOLUME III: CAMPAIGN

9) *What Must This Campaign Proclaim?*

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Postlude



II

BECOMING PRISONERS OF HOPE

How to Re-capture the Church for the Supremacy of God's Son

It was near the end of the second hour, part of a six-hour convocation. More than one million men huddled across the vast expanses of the Mall in Washington, D.C. Called *Stand in the Gap*, this historic gathering convened to spend a day fasting and praying over the desperate need for revival in the churches of America.

Baking under a hot early October sun, participants obviously were ready to pray. My place in the program had come. My assignment was to prepare the men for the next season of intercession. Minutes before mounting the platform, however, I was overcome with a profound sense that what we really needed to do at that moment was to get *silent* before the Lord — making room for Christ to reveal Himself afresh to us. After I approached the microphone, I recited verses from Revelation 1. The passages reminded the crowd of the matchless, magnificent Master whom John saw. This vision of Christ caused the apostle to fall down in absolute silence like a dead man as John waited for his Savior to make the next move. I proceeded

to invite a million strong to prostrate themselves on the ground in the very same way John did.

For the next three minutes that's precisely what we did. An awesome scene unfolded before me as participants responded — out-stretched, flat on their faces, humbled before the King in a holy hush — spanning the mall to the Washington monument! Everything became so eerily still that one could hear a faint breeze rustling trees along the walkways.

What happened to the participants during those sacred moments? Most of all, they experienced a fulfillment of Psalm 46: "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth." It was the Holy Spirit's wake-up call for us to seek the Kingdom of God's Son like never before. Before the day was over, not a few told me they had experienced a rebirth of hope at that point — hope that one day our nation might see genuine revival and be covered with the glory of Jesus Christ.

Over the years since, numerous times men from the Mall event have approached me to talk about the gathering and report that of the entire six hours, it was as they bowed to reaffirm the preeminence of our Lord Jesus Christ with a few minutes of total silence — when no one *did* anything! — that they were transformed forever with fresh confidence about the advance of Christ's purposes in our generation, and their place in it.

Stand in the Gap was convened by a national men's movement called Promise Keepers. PK founder Bill McCartney, a former university football coach, wrote me a personal note just before the gathering in which he said: "We need to know the playbook. We also need to understand the whole game. We need to understand the big picture of what God is doing. We need to understand our point in history. Then, we must step into position. There's an awesome move of God across our nation and the planet. We live in a day of great hope — hope of a genuine, Biblical revival. You and I are meant to be a part of it. All of us need to pray for and prepare for a God-given awakening to Christ. Millions of men and women are rising up to do so."

That represents the breadth of vision for Jesus that lies behind every Campaign of Hope. As we've begun to explore in ***Volume Three***, Messengers of Hope seek to captivate fellow Christians with the same hope that flooded the Mall that day — the promise of the Church's awakening to the greatness of God's Son — reproducing what I call *Prisoners of Hope*. This phrase defines the second cure for the crisis of supremacy. Once we begin to herald the hope, we must move on to help our hearers understand that (as chapter 11 will explain):

- Every Christian must become such a prisoner to really thrive in his/her life in Jesus.
- God Himself is *determined* for us to be captivated by a much larger vision of His Son.
- We can learn to receive hope more fully in a daily walk with the King of Glory.
- There are effective ways to rebuild *confidence* in God's promises in Christ so that we are bold to receive what His reign offers.
- *Repentance* and *suffering* are keys to increasing our *capacity* to receive Kingdom promises.
- Recovering our hope in Christ always works best in the company of *other* Prisoners of Hope.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Realize how great is the hope to which He is calling you — the magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians—and how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and gave Him the place of supreme honor in Heaven. The Church is His body, and in that body lives fully the One who fills the whole wide universe.

(EPHESIANS 1 — PHILLIPS TRANSLATION)

The Biblical Profile of a “Prisoner of Hope” (Zechariah 9:9-10, 11-12, 13-17)

Captivity to hope — that was the unexpected gift the Father gave an avalanche of men that historic Fall afternoon in 1997, literally before the eyes of a watching nation (since it was broadcast on C-Span and hosts of TV outlets). From that day on, many began a new journey with Christ. They became what I call “*Prisoners of Hope*”. Where does the term come from?

It's hinted at in a number of passages. Take, for example, 2 Corinthians 2. There Paul designates Christians as “captives” to Christ, marching in a

triumphal procession, moving forward with great expectations in His mighty power, spreading the fragrance of His glory everywhere they go. This picture comes from the defeated armies Rome paraded before the Emperor after a battle, now slaves of the Empire for the rest of their lives. That's how we share in our Holy Emperor's victorious inheritance! Out of His decisive defeat of sin and death, the New Covenant has made us Jesus' grateful bondservants for His royal purposes forever. In the same sense, Ephesians 4 urges Christians to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received", because we serve the Lord who "when he ascended on high, led captives in his train and gave gifts to men".

However, Zechariah 9 actually uses the phrase "prisoners of hope" to encourage a remnant of disheartened exiles:

As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.
Return to your fortress, *O prisoners of hope*.

Even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

(verses 11-12 emphasis mine)

On this side of the Ascension, how does this promise apply? What do such captives look like? Come with me to three countries — South Africa, India and Afghanistan — and let me introduce you to modern-day Prisoners of Hope.

THINK WITH ME ...

What might Prisoners of Hope look like today?

Some years ago Zechariah's text was first introduced to me by a leading black Christian pastor in **South Africa**. Within the social ferment aimed at the scourge of apartheid, he witnessed repeatedly how ordinary Christians made courageous differences toward ending racial injustice, even in impoverished communities like Soweto. They labored in the hope that no matter how the government oppressed them, Christ's Kingdom would prevail. Hope in Christ became their daily passion. They couldn't help themselves, this pastor insisted to me. They were *prisoners* of that hope! As a result, disenfranchised believers helped transform the face of a nation, preserving it from massive bloodshed by their peaceful demonstrations and persistent negotiations — above all, by their prayers. They stunned the world with the impact of their efforts in spiritual, social and political liberation.

I've met similar prisoners in my travels across **India**. I've found hope's captives among many leaders of Indian missionary organizations. The founders of one mission society told me how years earlier, while still in their teens, six of them began to ask God to grant major breakthroughs for the Gospel among masses of Hindus around them. Their prayers and labors for Christ grew increasingly tenacious because God's Word filled them with great expectations for their nation. So, they set out to be Messengers of Hope. By proclaiming to Christians a larger vision of Christ and His Kingdom, they worked at renewing discouraged congregations across South India. Eventually hundreds of volunteers stepped forward for missionary service, men and women ready to serve Christ because they had recovered hope and passion for Him. The laborers were sent out, in turn, by the prayers and sacrifices of thousands of other Indian Christians quickened by the same promises. Despite their own financial poverty, these partners agreed to fund hundreds of new missionaries. Both senders and goers responded at great personal cost because they had become Prisoners of Hope.

In another part of the world at the opening of the 21st century, God miraculously set two young missionaries free who had been held hostage for months by terrorists in **Afghanistan**. Dayna and Heather left a safe, predictable life in America to obey their Savior's call to one of the most dangerous nations on earth, to work among impoverished Afghans. Imprisoned on the Taliban's death row, they became pawns in history-shattering events. Yet their utter confidence in Christ as Lord-of-All kept them hope-filled and faithful. After miraculously being freed from their iron chains, they set about to launch on behalf of the beleaguered nation a new avenue of ministry which they called the *Hope Afghanistan Foundation*. At the same time the young women published the best-selling *Prisoners of Hope* on their adventures for Christ's Kingdom. Still captive to *spiritual* chains, they continued to pursue Christ's call to serve the nations.

South Africa, India, Afghanistan ... In each arena hope was awakened within Christians enveloped in humanly hopeless situations. But vision for the supremacy of Christ took them captive so fully, that they prayed and prepared, served and sacrificed, in the unshakeable conviction that God's best lay still ahead. How does the Father harness His children to unquenchable zeal for the preeminence of His Son? Let's explore some answers.

THINK WITH ME ...**What is God's primary way to create Prisoners of Hope?**

Have you ever sat in a courtroom and studied prisoners awaiting trial? Frequently the accused are dressed in street clothes, a suit and tie perhaps, so as not to prejudice the jury against them. They appear as normal and free as everyone else in attendance. But in truth, prisoners are not “normal” at all! Outside the courtroom they are completely at the disposal of the penal system. Decisions about what they eat, how they dress, where they sleep and where they reside are totally controlled by others. At trial they may look like you or me, but privately they are preoccupied with a very different agenda. They're ruled by forces and futures larger than themselves.

The same is true of every “Prisoner of Hope”. Because of Christ's finished work for us, God is forever in the business of delivering Christians out of “waterless pits” (the dusty trenches of our own making, dry with hopelessness and despair) to soak in the Living Water. He imprisons us within a most extraordinary hope, as the context of Zechariah 9 indicates. The prophet describes nothing less than the supreme promise of Redemption's worldwide revolution under the reign of Messiah King (see verses 8-9, which the Gospels claim were put into motion at Christ's triumphal entry on Passion Week). *This* vision gets us out of waterless pits and holds us captive to hope. God's strategy for creating Prisoners of Hope comes down to vs. 12 (emphasis mine):

Even now I *announce*
that I will restore *twice* as much to you.

In anticipation of sending Israel's Deliverer (vs. 8-10), the living God commits *Himself* to step directly into the drama. Not only that, He broadcasts to Israel precisely what He's up to — God becomes the prime Messenger of Hope to a crowd of weary refugees. The prospects for them are amazing, He declares. He will not take them back to where they were before, even to the best of the pre-exilic days they had known. Instead, they will surge forward to where they've never gone before — into blessings they have never known before — “I will restore *twice* as much”, He promises.

So, goodbye, *pits!* Hello, *hope!* God *announces* the hope. He *heralds* the hope. He *proclaims* the hope. And they become *Prisoners* of Hope.

“Faith comes by hearing, and what is heard is the message of Christ” (Rom. 10). When the Spirit shows us a future in Christ that's too wonderful for us to produce (creating in us desperation) but too wonderful for us to

live without (creating in us anticipation), we have to surrender (creating in us subjugation), yielding to the blessed hope we have in Him.

The lordship of Jesus chains us to the Father's Plan for the Ages. As Zechariah testified, whenever the Head of the Church speaks His promise to His people, He invites us into "twice as much". By His power at work in us, God wants to do for us "exceedingly above and beyond all that we ask or think" so as to bring Himself far greater glory "in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever" (Eph. 3).

So, how has this process unfolded in your walk with the Lord? How far along are you in becoming a Prisoner of Hope?

THINK WITH ME ...

How fully have you been taken captive to hope in Christ?

Stand in the Gap convened under the banner of a movement called Promise Keepers. Borrowing the motif of a "promise keeper", let me suggest a process I've watched unfold with many Christians to recover hope and passion for the Lord Jesus. This series of *transitions* could be regarded equally as *benchmarks* along the path as we follow the Master — a *metamorphosis* believers must go through to grow into full-fledged Prisoners of Hope.

There is nothing arbitrary about how we move through these phases. From the moment we commit ourselves to Christ, all of us are somewhere along this path. With each transition we grow to know Him more deeply, engage Him more passionately, and walk with Him more responsively. Passing through each phase we become more *captive* to our vision of Christ's supremacy.

Which benchmarks have already been set in your life? What does this tell you about your very next step in growing as a Prisoner of Hope?

- **PROMISE-SLEEPER ...**

This describes believers who are *unaware* of most dimensions of a Biblical hope focused on Christ and His supremacy. As God awakens them for the first time to these realities, through His Word and His Spirit, they may choose to become a ...

- **PROMISE-PEEPER ...**

For this phase any believer qualifies who initially senses he (or she) must put their hope in Christ *alone*. A Christian chooses not to turn

away to other possibilities, sensing it's time to ponder how to respond appropriately. Next, God helps this person become a ...

- **PROMISE-SEEKER ...**

Every Christian worthy of this name has transitioned into actively pursuing (by the Word, prayer and obedience) the meaning and implications of God's promises for them in Christ. As each disciple seeks more of Jesus' glory, God keeps her or him growing in a vision of the Lord until each becomes a ...

- **PROMISE-KEEPER ...**

This title belongs to all believers who hold firmly to God's promises with the intention of focusing every area of their lives on Christ and the abounding hope His supremacy offers. They grow in their passion to make Christ's Kingdom glory their highest ambition. That's why God is able to transform anyone like this into a ...

- **PROMISE-LEAPER ...**

Christians who respond with hope-filled praise, daily celebrating the Redeemer toward whom the promises point, are "leapers" who "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5). They also celebrate all the ways God is preparing to reveal the glory of His Son in days ahead. Simultaneously, however, each leaper grows into a ...

- **PROMISE-WEEPER ...**

Hope-ers with heart show it! They ache for individuals who are weary with waterless pits, lacking any sense of the wonderful prospects found in the Empire of the Son. At the same time, weepers carry an intensified longing that God's extraordinary blessings be fully revealed to the Church as a whole as well as to the nations. They are very aware of how much grace many believers are still missing and how much praise still awaits the Lord of Glory. A Prisoner of Hope longs to take another Christian captive to the same hope by being a ...

- **PROMISE-SPEAKER ...**

A hope-filled Christian will speak up and share God's Word in a way that helps others find fresh promise in Jesus. He will speak out about the King — proclaim Him — in order to awaken others to His supremacy and to the glorious future He brings. She or he will

challenge fellow believers to be re-converted back to Christ for ALL that He is, and to reorient their walk in the light of Christ's Kingdom. Ultimately, every Messenger of Hope becomes a ...

- **PROMISE-REAPER ...**

Prisoners of Hope want to harvest brand new "hope-ers" — first of all *inside* the Church. They sign-up other Prisoners of Hope to live out the full implications of Christ and His supremacy right now. They help shepherd new captives through the transitions listed above until each becomes a promise-reaper in his own right.

Sleepers. Peepers. Seekers. Keepers. Leapers. Weepers. Speakers. Reapers ... Once again let me ask: Where do you find yourself in this process? Toward which benchmark are you currently moving? How fully has hope in Christ's supremacy captivated you up to this point? How fully have you become a Prisoner of Hope thus far?

THINK WITH ME ...

What makes any Christian a good *receiver* of the hope Christ brings?

To move from "promise-*peeper*" to "promise-*reaper*", every Prisoner of Hope must learn to become a better "promise-*receiver*". We must recognize the Spirit's voice. Then we must learn to receive His words of promise to us just as we received the Son of Promise the day we entered the Kingdom. We can start by nurturing an *attitude of readiness*.

Vigilant like city watchmen alert for the crack of dawn (Ps. 133), we need to anticipate what is coming, stay open to what lies ahead, remain prepared for more of God's grace (1 Pet. 1). The Father invites us to regularly *seek* more, not simply *do* more, so as to *receive* more of what He wants to give.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

O, My God! In all my dangers, temporal and spiritual, I will hope in thee who art Almighty power, and therefore able to relieve me; who art infinite goodness and therefore ready and willing to assist me.

O, precious blood of my Redeemer, O, gaping wounds of my crucified Savior. Who can contemplate the sufferings of God incarnate, and not raise his hope, and not put his trust in Him?

Blessed hope! Be thou my chief delight in life, and then I shall be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

("A PRAYER FOR HOPE" BY RICHARD ALLEN — c. 1815)

Are you growing every day in a spirit of *expectancy* toward Christ? Prisoners of Hope are always ready for Christ to take them where they have never gone before — always expecting more of His glory to be revealed; always preparing for God to give them “twice as much”; always welcoming fresh manifestations of Christ’s Kingdom to draw them out of status quo dead-ends (in their lives and in their churches); always anticipating new advances of the Gospel. Walking with our sovereign Savior may carry no *risks*, but it creates plenty of *suspense*!

To what might we compare the experience of a good receiver? It’s like standing near a runway and watching a plane’s final approach. For a time it’s almost impossible to discern if the plane is even moving because it seems to hover motionless while suspended in the mid-air. Only in the last few moments as it touches down on the runway does one realize that through the entire landing maneuver the plane was actually traveling nearly 150 miles per hour!

The advance of Christ’s Kingdom is like an approaching aircraft. It never ceases to be constantly in motion as it moves toward us. To us it feels

QUOTABLE QUOTE

The secret of hope is that things can be all right at the center of our lives even if everything seems wrong at the edges. Because at the center, where we open our hearts to the living God, we are inseparably bound into a future for which He leads us, loves us and cares for us unconditionally. He gives, and we simply receive.

(DR. LEWIS SMEDES)

like the opposite — as if He may have become inactive or uninvolved. Prisoners of Hope remain patient, waiting without undue complaint, even when the vision they profess seems “suspended” between promise and fulfillment with little indication of any changes any time soon. Because they “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5), they know that at just the right moment He will wonderfully invade the present with His glory, one way or another. He will “touch down” in their lives with fresh foretastes of the Age-to-Come (Heb. 6). And there will be *no* disappointment when He does! So, they fend off the fatalism that says: “If nothing appears to be happening, then nothing is happening!” Under His reign something is *always* happening. Promises are always taking shape no matter what our eyes may tell us.

To become a good receiver of hope sometimes a Prisoner of Hope needs to stop everything and assume the *silent heart*. Shutting down the

clutter, chaos and constant motion of their lives, they may need to practice what I call the “*strategy of silence*”. A choice can be made to set aside time to listen to God, maybe during a half-day prayer retreat or in a secluded corner of the train on a daily commute to work. Prisoners of Hope need to become enthralled with the word of Christ, be taken captive by the voice of Christ, spend time listening to the heart of Christ and be exposed to the Spirit of Christ. Whenever Christ imparts more *vision* of Himself to us, He imparts more of His *life* in us. “No eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who *wait* for him”, Isaiah reminds us (Isa. 64).

The *Seven Confidence-Builders* to Help You Grow as a Prisoner of Hope

(John 20: 24-31)

For more than twenty-five years I’ve been sustained as a Prisoner of Hope by drawing on seven important insights on God’s promises. They provide practical ways to organize and apply many of the perspectives on Christ’s supremacy shared with you in this manifesto. Each principle is comprised of an *irrefutable reason* for any Christian to pray and prepare for greater demonstrations of Christ’s lordship with the absolute confidence that God will not disappoint us. Any of the seven taken separately is enough to inspire a redoubling of commitment to a Campaign of Hope. Put together they provide unassailable assurance in the ultimate outcome of that campaign as well as the overall advance of Christ’s Kingdom.

Above all, they enhance a strong Biblical Christology. They help us see God’s Son more thoroughly in His rightful place as Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, Ruling Head of the Church, and Eternal Lord of life.

In similar fashion they provide stimulating “talking points” for pressing fellow believers to reconsider for themselves what a reclaimed vision for Christ’s supremacy should include. Frankly, these points provide the compelling rationale for re-engaging Him with a healthy hope and passion based on what His lordship is all about.

The seven confidence builders include:

- The decisive person
- The dramatic preparations
- The divine pattern
- The distinctive praying
- The dark prospects
- The determined people
- The disturbing paralysis

A few years ago I treated each one separately with its own chapter in my book *The Hope At Hand*. Now, you can download those chapters for free at my website. Here is a very brief review of each concept:

- **The DECISIVE PERSON** — Who Christ is, in the full extent of His supremacy as the ordained centerpiece of everything in God’s plan for the ages, *guarantees* the fulfillment of all the promises. God will never fail to respond thoroughly and unconditionally to the One to whom all the prophecies and promises ultimately belong. Because He is decisive, we can have hope.
- **The DIVINE PATTERN** — How God has consistently triumphed in Christ in the millennia-long history of His people, and through their witness among the nations, *guarantees* the fulfillment of all His promises. What God has done before to glorify His Son we can expect Him to do again and again and again. When we remind ourselves of His faithfulness to His own ways, we can have hope.
- **The DARK PROSPECTS** — God’s unwavering desire for His Son’s glory to be displayed among all the nations, especially in the midst of the raging spiritual battle with Satan’s hosts, *guarantees* the fulfillment of all His promises. He intends for the nations to become the inheritance of the Lamb on the Throne. Because of His determination to dispel the Darkness we can have hope.
- **The DISTURBING PARALYSIS** — God’s irrevocable intention is to liberate the Church thoroughly so that His people truly live before the nations as the Body of Christ. His commitment to heal our crisis of supremacy — to exorcise our debilitating disunity, suffocating self-sufficiency, missionary lethargy and spiritual impotency — *guarantees* the fulfillment of His promises to us. From eternity He has ordained to exalt His Son *through* His Church, not apart from it. Resting in His plan for His people, we can have hope.

- **The DRAMATIC PREPARATIONS** — The way God has set the stage so clearly in our generation both in the Church and throughout the world for major advances of Christ’s Kingdom on all fronts *guarantees* the fulfillment of the promises. This is especially true among the three billion unreached people of Earth. He who has begun a good work will bring it to proper completion. He is preparing the way for all flesh to see the revelation of the Lord of Glory. Surely, we have hope.
- **The DISTINCTIVE PRAYING** — God’s commitment to answer the current cries of millions of individual saints as well as whole movements of prayer within denominations, cities, regions and nations *guarantees* the fulfillment of the promises. He has stirred up bold prayers in Jesus’ name, for Jesus’ sake, that must now be answered to bring unto Jesus praise in all the earth. He takes our prayers seriously. Of course, we can have hope!
- **The DETERMINED PEOPLE** — God’s recruitment and empowerment of millions of passionate believers everywhere today who, with great expectations, are already wholeheartedly committed to serving Christ at any cost for strategic breakthroughs of His Kingdom purposes, *guarantees* the fulfillment of His promises. In fact, these current Prisoners of Hope are the first wave throughout the Church of the promised awakening to Christ we so desperately need. They are the sign of good things to come. Thus, once again, we can have a sure and certain hope.

Such breadth of vision will cause any Campaign of Hope to thrive. Such confident perspectives will hold any Christian captive to hope in Jesus. Experience shows that as Christians spend time meditating on the realities behind each insight, these Confidence-Builders will naturally enlarge one’s passion for Jesus by the huge boost in Kingdom-vision the seven give. They can inject into any congregation antidotes to cure the crisis of supremacy wherever it is found. They can give Messengers of Hope another way to shape their own “Message of Hope.” Clearly, then, they ought to help *you* become and remain the Prisoner of Hope you are meant to be.

How *Repentance* and *Suffering* Take Us Captive to Our Hope in Christ

(Joel 2:12-32)

Citizens of Pasadena, California (where I once lived) are grateful when the Santa Ana winds sweep in and blow suffocating smog out of the San Gabriel Valley on out to sea. As a result, people on the street are able to breathe more easily once again. They can also enjoy a view of the magnificent, multi-peaked San Gabriel mountains, previously veiled for days by brownish haze.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Almighty and merciful God, we exult in the reflection of your might and mercy in your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ ... O, how we need the whole Christ! Open our eyes to see the fullness of His excellence. Remove the lopsided and distorted images of your Son that weaken our worship and lame our obedience. May the power of the Lion and the love of the Lamb make our faith in Christ unshakeable. So deliver us from small dreams and timid ventures and halting plans. Embolden us.

(DR. JOHN PIPER)

In the same way, the Holy Spirit — God’s wholesome wind of hope (called “the promise from the Father” in Luke 24) — desires to fill every Prisoner of Hope with clear vistas on our Victorious One, removing all foggy thinking about Him and enlarging our horizons of hope as we breathe in the freshness of His Kingdom promises.

Sometimes we stifle the Spirit by *apathy* toward opportunities to grow in knowing and serving Jesus as Lord. Sometimes our joy in Jesus is suffocated by *arrogance* when we smugly assume we have Him pretty well figured out already and don’t need to know that much more. However, if we’re ever to experience an “abounding hope” restored in us by “the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15), God may need to recapture us for Christ’s supremacy by two dramatic developments: by leading us into *repentance* and by leading us through *suffering*.

To be sure, God’s promises in Christ always present unlimited horizons. As we’ve seen throughout this manifesto, Biblical hope is as infinite, unfathomable, uncontainable and inexhaustible as our Lord is. However, that’s not the whole story. We can experience temporary limits on the impact of Christ’s supremacy by how well *prepared* we are to receive more of His greatness and glory. His *accessibility* must be coupled with our *ability* to encounter more of Him.

Not only must Prisoners of Hope become good receivers — anticipating and welcoming what God will do because Jesus reigns — but also they must grow their *capacity* to take in as large a vision of the Son as the Father wants to give them.

Just as enlarging a General Motors factory increases its capacity to build more cars; just as angioplasty increases an artery's capacity to handle an increased flow of blood; just as a clean windshield increases the driver's ability to arrive safely where he intends to go — even so the twin experiences we're about to explore (*repentance* and *suffering*) increase a believer's capacity to see, seek and speak about Christ for all that He is. Let's discover why this is so.

THINK WITH ME ...

How does *repentance* increase our capacity for more of Christ?

The New Testament Greek word translated “repentance” — *metanoeo* — means “to think again, to retool one's perspective, to alter one's outlook on something”. For the Christian, repentance acts as the *hinge* of hope. It swings us *from* destruction, despair and defeat *toward* all the promises offered under Jesus' reign. It turns us *from* whatever opposes God's Kingdom purposes and turns us *toward* a whole new identity and destiny related to the King. It shifts us from *self*-absorption over to the happy state of “Christ-absorption”. That's why repentance must become a way of life for every Prisoner of Hope.

Repentance is not a synonym for self-loathing. By it we embrace the truth of our sinful depravity on the *inside*, to be sure. But repentance prepares us for so much more: to be seized by the hope-filled vision of Christ's majesty on the *outside*. As one pastor put it, repentance is motivated by “an awakened taste for pleasure in God”. We take at face value what Scripture says about where God is headed in His Son. We desire to head in that same direction with Him. So we eliminate everything that might get in the way, laying aside every sin that could entangle us or distract us as we run toward Christ alone (Heb. 12).

Christ-filled repentance *renounces* the sin within us that hinders the promotion of God's glorious purposes in Christ. It *denounces* everything around us or among us that contradicts the exaltation of His Kingship. But it also *announces* (to all who will listen) our intention to share fully in delight-

ful displays of Christ's dominion in our daily walk now as well as in all the ages to come.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Look on Him whom thou has pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul: "What have I done" What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace, have I despised and trampled on! What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? Do I account communion with Him of so little value, that for my vile lust's sake I have scarce left Him any room in my heart? What shall I say to the Lord? Shall I grieve that Spirit whereby I am sealed to the day of redemption?

(JOHN OWEN)

Someone might ask: Which comes first, hope or repentance? The answer is that the Spirit works from both directions. But, His starting point is always hope. As sinners we are simply *not capable* of repentance without God's preceding it with a larger vision of His Son. More than unmasking the seriousness of sin's offense against a righteous God (which must happen, see Jn. 16), the Spirit's most powerful way of breeding heartfelt repentance is by filling us with greater expectations toward God (Isa. 11; 61; Lk. 4). Peter says it well: We have been given "very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Pet. 1). As our hope in Christ abounds, this fact alone compels us to repent, making us ready to receive more of Him in our lives.

Jesus verified the wisdom of this approach by how He constructed His own "Message of Hope"

in Mark 1:15. (Review our study of this in chapter 9.) Notice once again: Three parts of His message emphasized hope ("the time is fulfilled", "the Kingdom is at hand", "believe this good news"). Only one part underlined repentance ("repent"). Furthermore, the repentance theme came third in order. In other words, for Jesus repentance had to be in response to a hope-filled vision for His redemptive purposes.

Here's the major reason, I submit, we do not see the level of ongoing repentance in Christians today we know we should be experiencing: *We have not been saturated with a grand enough, glorious enough, majestic enough hope in our Supreme Savior to inspire such a response.* The Christ we proclaim is simply too small to make us *dissatisfied* with sin (along with our dead traditions and our religious flesh), to *want* to turn from sin and turn toward Him. The lack of adequate daily repentance in my own life, frankly, is simply the crisis of supremacy viewed from another direction.

There's another form of repentance, however, that also enlarges our capacity for a greater vision of God's Son. I call it "dismantling" — the laying aside of *good* things. These might include personal spiritual ambitions, or commendable ministry projects, or honorable denominational tradition — wonderful initiatives we may treasure for Jesus' sake but which, to our surprise, have begun to interfere with the sharper focus on His lordship we desperately need.

We may need to "dismantle" — to strip down, to repent of — dreams, activities, relationships and priorities that were useful once to the Kingdom but are now hindering (often unwittingly) full enthusiasm for Christ's glory. Maybe it is a worship style. Maybe it is a hobby. Maybe it is being too focused on the stock market, or television, or on theological nuances. No matter how well-intended or Christ-centered in its appearance, if something in our lives or our churches is not compatible with magnifying Jesus' majesty and extending His Monarchy, it must be dismantled with impunity. By setting aside distractions to our devotion to Christ true repentance becomes *proactive*. It increases our capacity to embrace and enter into God's eternal purposes wholeheartedly. Prisoners of Hope grow in captivity to Christ's glory by dismantling even the good (when necessary) to be ready to receive more of *God's best*.

THINK WITH ME ...

What Kingdom issues need to be addressed by hope-filled repentance?

True repentance will penetrate the core of a Christian's life as it confronts the crisis of supremacy head-on. The profound level of repentance — repenting for how we've diminished Christ's supremacy, wounding the heart of our Savior — will take us into the most disturbing experience of spiritual *brokenness* we'll ever know. But in doing so it will increase our *capacity* for more of Christ and allow us to receive more of His reign in our lives. It will cause us to entertain questions many Christians would never dare to ask, such as:

- How have I *neglected* Christ by my self-serving ways?
- How have I *diminished* Christ, bringing Him down to my own level?
- How have I *resisted* Christ's supremacy by half-hearted, partial obedience?

- How have I *hindered* Christ's work because of fears, selfish ambitions, or the need for control?
- How have I *substituted* other things for Christ's role in my life, maybe by religious activities performed in His name or by putting confidence in impressive personalities who claim His name?
- How have I *exploited* Him, that is, sought to appropriate His blessings for my own gratification and comfort?
- How have I *contradicted* Him by ignoring His Kingdom purposes, remaining indifferent to so many who live in injustice and without hope in Christ?
- How have I *abandoned* Him as I've bought into counterfeit promises, either offered by the world or propagated by other believers?

Take your answers to each of these questions and turn them into prayers of repentance and recommitment. Nothing may be more effective in taking you fully captive to Christ and His Kingdom. (Also, consider re-reading *Interlude II: A Prayer Over the Crisis of Supremacy*.)

THINK WITH ME ...

How does *suffering* increase our capacity for more of Christ?

That night so many years ago is still vivid to me. It came at the climax of months of personal agony. Mine was an inner pain. It rose out of unbearable ministry setbacks that overwhelmed me. Late one night I reached the point where I had nothing left to say or pray to the Father. I was out of tears. I was void of hope.

Then, in the stillness of my darkened room the Spirit brought my thoughts to 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. There Paul records how he too despaired of life itself because of his sufferings in Asia Minor. Paul felt, as I did, in his very soul "the sentence of death". He wondered if he could take another step. It was at this low point through what he suffered, Paul writes, that God taught him all over again to cease relying on himself and put his hope in the God who actually raises the dead (vs. 10).

The Holy Spirit seemed to apply Paul's conclusion to me directly in those moments. In my helplessness the following words formed in my mind:

You are right, David.
 You have no ministry.
 And you will never have a ministry,
 unless I raise it with my Son from the dead,
 day by day by day.

Then and there I embraced personal suffering as I never had done before. This was God's way to increase my capacity for more of Christ's resurrection power in my life. As He had done for Paul, God awakened me more fully to all of His promises, both for myself and my ministry. Those dark moments transformed me into a much richer (and freer) Prisoner of Hope. Paul concluded: "This happened [his agonies in Jesus' service] that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead".

Imagine that! Even a spiritual giant like Paul, after years of faithful missionary service, still needed to be awakened, by his *sufferings*, to a more comprehensive hope in Jesus as Lord. Certainly, then, how much more is it required in our own lives!

As it did for Paul, so for every Christian: suffering magnifies our *lack*. It confronts us with a sense of our futility apart from Christ. It amplifies the worth of the blessings from Heaven for which we groan. It convinces us that God has something *better* for us to be found in His Son and sends us seeking it. God is determined to do whatever it takes to prevent anything from sedating our deepest hungers for more of Christ. He loves us too much to let us feel *completely* satisfied with anything in this life apart from Him. *When suffering has exhausted for us every other alternative to Christ and His supremacy, then Biblical hope in Him can take on a compelling new force in our lives.*

Evangelical French philosopher Jacques Ellul wrote on this experience in *Hope in a Time of Abandonment*. In the book he documented how faith in the promises of God and in the God-of-Promises reaches its apex when everything seems to suggest God is no longer there, that He's forsaken us. Why? Because, as Ellul observed, when

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Suffering comes before laughter, the pain of birth precedes the wonder of new life, and questions must be asked before confidence develops. The Spirit of God must first disrupt something bad within us before he entices us with the promise of joy. The road to finding God takes us through darkness before it brings us to light. Disillusionment is the soil in which hope grows.

(DR. LARRY CRABB)

everything is stripped away — including a sense of God’s intimate presence — we discover that Christ really is all the hope we have for deliverance. Hope in Him shines brightest in our darkest despair. It is then that we see Him to be all that remains, and truly all we need. As I sometimes say,

No pain, no gain.
But no pain is ever in vain.
All pain makes things plain.
My pain magnifies Christ’s reign.

THINK WITH ME ...

How have you grown through the “discipline of dis-illusionment”?

Our sufferings become God’s opportunities to help us come to terms with our ultimate nothingness *apart from* the abounding hope He has given us in our Redeemer. We need to let God’s Kingdom *overwhelm* our pain with the anticipation of things above and things to come, arriving from the Throne where Christ, who is our life, sits supreme (Col. 3).

Disappointment was quite a familiar companion for 19th century missionary statesman Oswald Chambers. He was distressed by debilitating experiences on the mission field that defied his ambitions to serve Christ. Working with orphans in England, recruiting young people to missionary service and eventually serving in Egypt, he often suffered what he described as the “*discipline of dis-illusionment*”. This experience was not in spite of, but more *because of*, his desire to proclaim Christ and to magnify Him. All suffering, he learned, *dis-illusions* us. That is, it unmask the *illusions* in our lives. It exposes false hopes and dreams we’ve harbored (often mistakenly attributing their source to God). It forces us back to the time-tested truth of the living hope revealed in the Word.

Just as Chambers learned, amazing as it seems, illusions can rise out of misunderstandings (or misapplications) of God’s Kingdom intentions toward us. Maybe we misread God’s timing, or misinterpret a Biblical promise out of its context. In fact, illusions that seem to have scriptural warrant may be the hardest of all to forsake (like the claim that obedience guarantees a Christian health and prosperity). But illusions must be discarded if we’re to see Christ more clearly for all that He is. Illusions clog up our capacity for more of His glory in our lives.

Once we've been *dis*-illusioned by suffering (whether through financial setbacks, or physical debilitations, or malicious rumors, or spurned love) we're ready to embrace the *true dreams* God sets before us in His Son. Like a sunrise, dis-illusioning experiences dispel silly shadows that shade our vision of Him. They help separate us from the fog of foolish fables that so often imprisons us in despair. Dis-illusioning experiences shake us and wake us to the rousing reality of all we have in Christ, bringing us into captivity to the hope of His Kingdom advances.

I think Chambers would have agreed with someone's suggestion to change one letter in the word dis-appointment: To replace the "d" with an "H" so that it reads *His*-appointment. That is to say that the very life-experiences that break our hearts are really, in the end, God's appointed moments to involve us more deeply in Christ's glorious reign, to draw us more fully into who He is, where He's headed, what He imparts and how He is blessed.

Bedridden for years while with a debilitating disease, a good friend of mine discovered one of her appointed moments of life. Despite relentless pain, her capacity for Christ's sovereign presence continues to expand. This internationally-respected Christian leader, a prime mover in one of today's great missionary societies, wrote me recently about how huge her hope in Christ has become:

I will be eternally grateful for what I'm suffering!

I'm not agonizing over the fact that

God hasn't yet fulfilled His numerous promises to heal me.

I am so utterly convinced that "as for God, His way is perfect."

I am not [merely] living in the light of this little bit of time here on earth.

How I pass this season of severe testing

determines what God can do with me

throughout the ages of eternity.

I'm living and focusing upon the BIG PICTURE that's ahead.

Besides all that,

God has opened up a huge door of opportunity since my illness,
to minister to many the truths of Christ He has entrusted to me.

These understandings from His Word could have only been revealed
through prolonged suffering.

Furthermore, this long period of physical pain and partial disability
is conforming me so much more to the image of God's Son.

Truly, I am blessed.

That's the beating heart of a Prisoner of Hope. That's the blessed impact of Son-saturated suffering, helping us become truly captive to the lordship of Jesus! His followers choose to lose — to exalt the Savior by giving themselves up to and over to His lordship alone, no matter what the price. Why? Because despite the cost Jesus assures us that in losing our lives for Him we will *find* life indeed (Mark 8). Such promises render believers His prisoners for now and forever. Indian evangelist Sadhu Sundar Singh, writing from a jail cell during the British Raj, understood the principle well: "Christ's presence has turned my prison into a blessed heaven. What then will His presence do for me in heaven itself?"

What is it we sometimes sing? "My *hope* is built on nothing less than Jesus *blood* and righteousness ... all other ground is sinking sand." That's where you'll find Prisoners of Hope standing whenever the floods of suffering start to swell!

Our Need for Other Prisoners of Hope

(Hebrews 10:19-25)

In *The Wall Street Journal* not long ago a brokerage firm rolled out a two-month ad campaign around an overused word: "Vision". In a full-page ad with large, black letters they shared their definition for "vision":

Vision is an acute sense of the possible.

It is seeing what others don't see.

And when those with vision come together,

something extraordinary occurs.

They believed their organization was unlike many others because it was equipped to uncover promising investments in the stock market other brokers failed to see. They offered a bold but accurate fix on the future of the market. Clients who chose to invest with them could expect extraordinary returns. However, none of this would happen (so they claimed) unless investors pooled their resources *together*, assumed the same confident outlook and submitted their resources to the proven investment strategies of this one firm.

For disciples who are zealous for the Kingdom the wording of this ad highlights a vital spiritual principle. Committed to Christ and the glorifying of His name, Prisoners of Hope also are aware of God-ordained possibilities that other Christians don't see as yet. Thus, if these captives come together around the promises of God, extraordinary things can start to happen, both in them and through them. For our hope in Jesus to remain vibrant and productive, we need each other. We need to become *a company of hope-ers*, jointly investing in our shared vision of the supremacy of God's Son. Let's look at some of the reasons this is true.

THINK WITH ME ...

What does the infectious nature of hope say about our need for *community*?

In chapter 9 we noted that in Scripture hope is more often a noun than a verb, that with God hope is ultimately a person: His Son. The Bible suggests something similar about Christian community: *Hope is often another person in my life who is re-discovering and sharing with me the full extent of Christ's supremacy and the hope this brings.* God knows hope is infectious. It spreads life to life — from Christ to me; then from me to others. Where people gather around His Son, hope explodes so that they hold to a vision of His supremacy, living and serving with their eyes on the End Himself.

By contrast, *hopelessness* breeds best in an environment of *isolation*. Isolation keeps us from witnessing the promise-packed activity of God in other Christians' lives. When facing personal setbacks it is nearly impossible for isolated believers to envision on their own the fulfillment of Christ's reign in their circumstances.

Prisoners of Hope are in a battle. We're engaged in "the fight of faith" because we dare to "lay hold of eternal life" and nothing less (1 Timothy 6). Vigilance — watching for every evidence of the crisis of supremacy — is the price we must pay to grow in our captivity for Biblical hope. But we were never meant to triumph in the battle by ourselves. We need each other to *inspire* and *re-fire* each other; to stir up our faith and confidence toward God, to purify our passion for Christ and His global cause; to sustain our pursuit of His Kingdom advance in our generation; and to remain fully alive to all the hope we were meant to have.

 QUOTABLE QUOTE

**Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,**

**Her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one
birth;**

**One holy name she
blesses, partakes one holy
food,**

**And to one hope she
presses, with every grace
endued.**

(FROM "THE CHURCH'S ONE
FOUNDATION" BY SAMUEL WESLEY)

Prisoners of Hope need a strategy to mobilize other captives to walk with them in their commitment to Jesus as Lord. There's something wonderful about serving alongside Christ-dominated companions. When our own desperate cries for more grace seem so futile, we can interact with others for whom God-given blessings seem for the moment to be in greater abundance. They infect us with their confidence. Our hope in Jesus is restored. In equal measure, at some later point when they begin to stumble and falter, we can return the favor! No wonder we're told in Hebrews 10 never give up coming together for a larger purpose. We're to encourage each other to follow Christ boldly because we see the Day of Christ itself (the Consummation) approaching.

THINK WITH ME ...
How can we go about building a community of hope-filled disciples?

How do we get this mobilization started? How do we *find* other Prisoners of Hope around us? Good news — you can! Here are *six simple principles* many have employed to successfully do so:

- ❖ **UNCOVER THEM ...** In point of fact a host of hope-ers — potential prisoners — *already* reside in our churches. God has gone ahead of us to raise them up. They are a gift from God just as much as the hope within them that so delights them. Many, however, are waiting to be discovered. Or more properly, they need to discover themselves! You could be the key to making this happen. One way to start is to begin sharing with fellow Christians the larger vision of Christ embodied in this manifesto. Watch for those who “light up” when you do. Note those who “open up” to express personal struggles with a spirit of hopelessness they want to conquer. Expect those who have a hunger to experience Christ's power and presence more fully in their lives to say so once they find out you're after the same thing. That's the primary clue that you are in touch with a Prisoner of Hope-in-the-making.

- ❖ **DEFINE THEM** ... With those who exhibit such initial responses begin to share more of your own pilgrimage as a Prisoner of Hope. In addition, expose to them some of the hundreds of Scriptures related to Christ and Consummation that have touched your heart. Consider taking them through this manifesto in a formal study, investigating some of its central themes. Above all, help them realize how *unique* their hunger for hope really is, and that it is God’s gift to them for very special purposes.
- ❖ **INVITE THEM** ... Encourage them to join you in discovering all that it means to live a hope-centered life under Christ, to seek greater impacts of His supremacy. Invite them to take new steps in their conversion experience, to turn more fully toward Christ and His supremacy. Offer to walk out these changes with them. For example, you might discuss with them the various transactions outlined in this chapter. Help them pinpoint which phase they are in and ask them where they would like to go next as they grow from promise-sleepers to promise-reapers. Or you might read together the *Prelude* in this book (“*Put Your Hope in Christ*”) to see how they respond.
- ❖ **GATHER THEM** ... Show them they are not alone. Introduce them to others with the same passionate hope stirring in their hearts. Bring all your newfound Prisoners of Hope together, like coals gathered to start a fire. Set up regular meetings, perhaps in someone’s home on a week night, or maybe during the Sunday school hour on Sunday morning. Again, rely on this Manifesto to start the journey together, possibly facilitating weekly discussion sessions to digest the book one chapter at a time. Or you can create a shorter curriculum using suggestions in chapter 9 based on “H.O.P.E.”
- ❖ **EQUIP THEM** ... Teach them how to expand their vision of Christ and His supremacy, perhaps using one of the four approaches to Bible study in chapter 10. Lead them to explore a life of “anticipatory discipleship” (covered in the next chapter). Provide them with overtly Christ-exalting passages to explore during their daily devotions (see *Appendix V*). Challenge the group to grapple honestly with personal repentance, as needed, to release hope more fully in their lives. Or

debrief together the ways some of you may be suffering in your Christian walk. Then explore how the suffering could make God's promises in Christ more alive for you. Of high priority, mentor them in prayer by teaching them how to pray in hope by doing it together. (Chapter 12 has more details about this.)

- ❖ **RELEASE THEM** ... Rally them to join you in spreading their emerging vision of Christ and Consummation among believers right where you live. Encourage them to fulfill their special opportunity to be a Messenger of Hope, both in your congregation and beyond. Discuss using the H.O.P.E. strategy to reshape how they proclaim Christ and teach about His supremacy within their families or among their friends. Pray over them — better still, have them pray over each other — to send each other into the glorious mission of spreading a vision for the supremacy of God's Son in all things. Then, be ready to be a mentor and a resource to them as their own ministries of hope unfold.

As suggested earlier one tool available to you is this *Joyful Manifesto*. **Christ Is All!** offers a 13-week study on hope and the supremacy of Christ that can become the perfect “launch point” for a gathering of potential Prisoners of Hope. *Appendix I and II* provide guidelines on how to use it effectively in a group setting.

THINK WITH ME ...

How would you shape a weekly gathering for Prisoners of Hope?

Once you've uncovered a few other “hope-ers” to work with, you may wonder what to do (in addition to activities suggested above) as you come together. Here are a few ideas based on personal experiences of doing it myself. These are very practical starting points any time you gather:

- ***Above all, talk about Christ.*** In what ways has your vision of Christ expanded since you were last together? Perhaps use the “Four F’s” (focus, fulfillment, fullness, fervency) to organize your sharing sessions. How is your Christology being transformed?
- ***Share the hope*** that is already growing in your own hearts. Talk about what you anticipate God will do in your life (as well as in the world beyond your own daily walk) in the days to come.

- **Talk about what you see God doing among others** even now, either where you are or in some other part of your community, nation or the world. Explain how this illustrates what “approximations” of the ultimate displays of Jesus’ Kingly glory might look like for you or others. (Refer to examples in chapter 4.)
- **Work through barriers** that are currently robbing you and others of confidence in Christ. Talk honestly about your struggles, disappointments, sufferings, doubts and fears. You could refer to issues discussed in chapters 7 and 8.
- **Report on ways you are seeking to stir up hope in other believers.** Describe successes as well as specific challenges in doing so. Talk about how to improve your ministry as a Messenger of Hope.
- **Focus on building into each other fresh confidence toward God.** You might want to reflect on and discuss the seven Confidence-Builders outlined in this chapter. Which ones do you find most helpful? Which ones need to be better fortified in your own thinking?
- **Study specific Scripture passages** on hope and the supremacy of God’s Son (see Appendix V). Or tackle major texts related to the Consummation itself to see how your vision of Christ and of your destiny in Him might be changed. Start with the inductive questions recommended in chapter 10. Also, talk about how each of you might share the focus of these verses with someone in your family or with one of your friends.
- **Discuss the implications** of all you’ve explored for your daily walk with Christ. Pinpoint specific aspects of “anticipatory discipleship” you need to work on (the focus of chapter 12). What practical changes do each of you need to make in light of the hope-filled insights into Christ you’ve just uncovered? In other words, make sure your meetings always lead to fruitful *action* for Christ and His Kingdom.
- **Spend much time praying together.** Pray that God will set you free of barriers to hope, fill you with renewed passion toward Christ, expand your vision of the work of His kingdom, and thus empower

you to be a Messenger of Hope. Also, pray for a hope-filled awakening to Christ within your families, churches, communities and beyond.

- **End each session by re-commissioning each other** to herald this wonderful vision of Christ’s supremacy to everyone you meet and to bring others with you into all the hope Christians were meant to have. Be prepared to invite some into your future gatherings.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand — out in the wide open spaces of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise. In alert expectancy such as this, we are never left feeling short-changed. Quite the contrary — we can’t round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit.

(ROMANS 5 — THE MESSAGE)

Any group pursuing such activities will rapidly awaken to more of Christ and His supremacy. As a result, they will become a major stream of healing for the crises of supremacy in their churches. Your “band of captives” can help foster a reformation of Christology among other believers while serving together as Messengers of Hope, co-laboring to awaken hope fully for others, and thus helping empower them to be part of vital advances in the work of Christ. A Campaign of Hope can never be accomplished by a party-of-one! It wouldn’t be a *campaign*!

But, you may ask, what should one call such weekly gatherings? Well, for starters, how about calling them “**Christ Huddles**”? At least that’s how *Appendix II* refers to them.

By whatever name, this group will eventually begin to look like what the whole Church should look like: “**Vanguards of Hope**”. I use the word “vanguard” to describe Prisoners of Hope

who are committed to serving as Messengers of Hope and who have begun to promote a Campaign of Hope right where they live.

“Vanguards of Hope”. It has a rather intriguing ring to it, don’t you think? Our final chapter is all about what it means and where it leads.