

02

EZEKIEL 11:2-4,14-21

HOPE IN DARKNESS



THIS WEEK'S **focus**

It's never fun getting your hopes up about something only to have it fall through. Hope is a powerful reality that can pull us through the darkest of times. When we are working hard, we hope for the moment we can finally rest. When we experience loss or grief, we hope for the day that it won't hurt anymore. Because we live in a broken world, we will all experience hardship, pain, and trial. But God's hope remains even in the darkest of times. His hope isn't flimsy or temporary, either—it is an anchor for our souls. The Israelites had to cling to the hope of God while they were exiled far from home. Those who chose to rebel against God would experience His judgment. But our text today will remind us that even in judgment, God offers us hope.



CENTRAL **truth**

Even in judgment, God offers us hope.

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE EZEKIEL 11:20

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about man?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

EZEKIEL 11:1-4

DWELL



Why did God say that the advice from the leaders was “wicked” (v. 2)? What was wrong with giving the people hope?



What are some things you put your trust in other than God? How can you trust in God more?

The metaphor the Israelite leaders used in Ezekiel’s vision might be confusing at first. What did they mean by “the city is the pot, and we are the meat” (v. 3)? Most interpreters believe that the pot represents safety, protecting the meat from the cooking fire. The “fire” is the judgment of God, in the form of Babylon’s armies. The leaders were giving the people false hope, telling them that the time of God’s judgment was over and it was safe for them to settle down in the city. They were encouraging the people to trust in the protection of the city walls, rather than the protection of the Lord. When we place our ultimate hope in anything other than God, we are standing on shaky ground.

MEMORIZE

Use a phone or computer to record yourself reading Ezekiel 11:20 aloud. Listen to this recording throughout the week.

PRAY

Thank God that He is our trustworthy, never-failing source of hope.

day 2

EZEKIEL

11:5-13

DWELL

The warning that God told Ezekiel to give the leaders was grim and graphic. The city walls of Jerusalem would not protect the people as the leaders were claiming. The “pot” (that is, the city) would indeed be filled with “meat” (see v. 3), but not in the way they claimed. The “meat” would actually be the people who would be killed—as well as the many who had already been slain—due to the leaders’ negligence. God’s judgment would fall on the leaders and the people of Israel because rather than worshipping the Lord and following His commands, they had been worshipping idols and following the examples of other nations.

↑ Why would God give such a grim message of destruction to a nation He loved?

→ What have been some consequences in your own life when you trusted in things other than God for your hope?

MEMORIZE

Write Ezekiel 11:20 on a note card and place it in a folder or binder where you will see it frequently. Read it to yourself each time you see it this week.

PRAY

Pray that you would turn your focus back to God when you find yourself tempted to put your trust elsewhere.

day 3

EZEKIEL

11:14-17

DWELL

The Israelites who were still living in Jerusalem had a false understanding of God’s judgment. They thought that because they had been left safely in Jerusalem while others had been taken captive in Babylon, they were more righteous than the exiles. They assumed God was far away from the exiles. In reality, they had it all wrong. Our Almighty God will be with His people wherever they are, and in Babylon He was teaching the exiles to worship Him truly. Even though they had been scattered far from their home, He did not leave them without hope. He promised that one day He would return them to Israel.

↓ What does the attitude of the Israelites in Jerusalem teach us about their hearts? Were they truly righteous, like they thought?

↔ How can we encourage one another to trust that God is present with us, no matter what we’re going through?

MEMORIZE

Break Ezekiel 11:20 into 3–5 smaller parts and try to recite a different part to yourself from memory throughout each day.

PRAY

Ask God to show you that He can work in even the parts of your life you fear are too difficult for Him.

day 4

EZEKIEL 11:18-21

DWELL

God promised to bring the exiles back to Israel after a time—but He wasn't interested in simply moving people from place to place. His desire is always for our transformation. He would remove the Israelites' old, stubborn hearts, giving them new hearts that would truly love and follow Him. The exile wasn't simply a punishment—it was designed to lead to repentance and growth. Notice, too, what God *didn't* say here: He didn't say "I will wait for them to have new hearts, and only then I will return them to Israel." God would provide the new hearts Himself. Our God never expects us to do our own heart surgery—we can trust that He will do the transplant if we put our faith in Him.



What would be different about the new hearts that God would give the people?



What are some areas where you need God's help to transform your heart?

MEMORIZE

Draw Ezekiel 11:20 on a piece of paper using colored pencils or markers, using a different color for the most important words and phrases. Hang it in your room or locker.

PRAY

Thank God that He is actively involved in transforming and growing us—He doesn't expect us to do it on our own.

day 5

PSALM 51:7-12

DWELL

None of us can fix our own sin problem. The rituals and sacrifices that God commanded His people to perform were only a temporary solution, and even then it was their attitude of repentance and faith that truly restored their relationship to God, not the ritual actions themselves. David knew this, and in this psalm of repentance he pleaded with God in faith to cleanse him from his sin, and to give him a new heart and spirit. God never expects us to fix ourselves before we come to Him—when we come to Him in faith and humility, He meets us where we're at.



What are some of the things David asked God to do in this psalm? Why did he ask for these things?



In what ways do you try to "fix" yourself to be right with God? Why won't this work? What should you do instead?

MEMORIZE

Practice reciting Ezekiel 11:20 aloud from memory with a friend or family member. They can prompt you with the next word if you need help remembering.

PRAY

Read this passage out loud or silently to yourself as a prayer. You can write it in your own words first if you'd like.