

Fading Lines, Unfading Hope

## About This Book

This book is the result of the labors Roger Ellsworth and the thought he has given to various passages of Scripture over the years. You may read more about Roger on page 141.

We hope you will enjoy these Bible-based meditations. We would love to hear from you, so please send us a note to tell us what you think—which ones you liked most, and how they made a difference in your life or in the life of a family member, friend, or work associate. To reach us online, go to [www.mycoffeecupmeditations.com/contact](http://www.mycoffeecupmeditations.com/contact)

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## From God's Word, the Bible...

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*1 Peter 1:3-5*



## Fading Lines, Unfading Hope

We had to spend quite a bit time in the barn on the little family farm that I called home during my childhood years. The cows had to be milked each morning and evening.

That barn was already old and rickety when my dad bought the farm. In wintertime the wind would whistle through the cracks in those barn walls and chill us to the bone.

My dad's remedy for the problem was to nail cardboard over those cracks. That certainly didn't make the barn cozy and warm, but it helped.

That cardboard became precious to me. Precious cardboard? It sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?

The preciousness of it had nothing to do with it knocking down the frigid blasts of the wintry wind. It rather had to do with the sketches my dad drew on it. He had been reading the Apostle John's description of the throne room of heaven

in the fourth and fifth chapters of Revelation, and he was so excited about what he read that he just had to share it. So he took the pencil that he invariably carried in the bib of his overalls and drew a couple of diagrams on the cardboard.

My dad died on August 4, 1985. When I went home for his funeral, I suddenly found myself thinking about those sketches. So I walked out to the old barn, which was now even more weary and rickety. The cardboard was still there. I brushed away the cobwebs and dirt, and there were dad's sketches. The lines were now faint and faded, but I could still make them out.

As I stood there gazing at lines drawn so many years ago, a couple of things came to mind. One was how very blessed I was to have a father who believed and practiced these words: "And these words which I command you to-day shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7).

We seem to have little trouble passing our political views on to their children. And we do very well in passing to our children our allegiance to various sports and teams. But how are we doing in passing spiritual things on to our children? Christian parents should give priority to talking to their children about:

- ▮ their faith and why they hold it;
- ▮ their lives and how they have made it;
- ▮ their hope and how they prize it.

And if we have been blessed with such parents, we should daily give thanks to the Lord in heaven.

I also found myself thinking that day about the hope that those faint lines represented—the hope of heaven!

The word “hope” has lost some of its weight over the years. When we say we are hoping for something, there is an element of uncertainty. We’re not sure that the thing we’re hoping for is going to be the case.

When the Bible uses the word “hope,” there is no uncertainty. Hope is rather being so convinced that something is true that we stand on our tiptoes and crane our necks to see it. The Christian’s hope is “both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19).

So the Christian doesn’t wonder if heaven is a reality. He or she knows it is and looks forward to it with eager expectation.

Dad’s lines had become very faint when I last saw them in 1985, and now they, and the old barn, are gone. But the hope of heaven is not faint, and it is not gone. My dad’s soul is already with the Lord in heaven, and one glorious day the Lord Jesus will bring that soul with Him, will raise my dad’s body from the grave, rejoin it with his soul, and he and all God’s children will be forever with the Lord in “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1).

I’m glad my dad treasured that hope while he was on this earth, and God used him to help me treasure it as well. Do you, too, have an unfading and certain hope for heaven?

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## **From God's Word, the Bible...**

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*Acts 2:42*



## The Old Corn-Sheller

Growing up on our small family farm in southern Illinois meant daily chores for my brother and me. The cows had to be brought in from the pasture, fed, and milked. The hogs had to be “slopped.” The chickens had to be fed, and eggs had to be gathered.

We often fed the chickens shelled corn. The corn-sheller was an odd-looking thing. It had a cone shaped device at the top into which we fed ears of corn. As we pressed each ear into that cone, we would turn the large handle on the side of the machine. That pressing and turning would force the ears between two large wheels with iron teeth, one turning one direction and the other in the opposite direction. Those wheels would remove the kernels of corn from the cob. The kernels would be funneled through a chute into a bucket and the corncobs would fall into a compartment at the bottom.

It was a tedious process. The shucks had to be removed from the ears of corn before the actual shelling began. And only one ear of corn could be shelled at a time. Simultane-

ously pressing the ear into the cone and turning the handle was something of a test of coordination. But the process was effective. As the shelled corn was scattered around on the ground, the chickens would eagerly gather and eat. If they had known about the tedium, they wouldn't have cared. All that mattered to them was the tasty meal produced by it.

The knack to doing good things that are tedious in nature is to keep in mind the good produced by them. The corn-sheller helped to feed the chickens, and those chickens helped to feed us! The tedium produced good things!

The Bible is the most wonderful book to ever come into human hands. It has God for its author, the Lord Jesus as its hero, salvation for sinners as its theme, and eternal glory in heaven as its end. But the wonderful nature of the Bible doesn't prevent tedium from setting in as we read and study it. The more familiar we are with the Bible, the more likely we are to experience slowness and sluggishness in the handling of it. It ought always to thrill us, but sometimes it doesn't.

How are we to combat the tedium that comes from familiarity with the Bible? By reflecting on what a wonderful thing it is and by remembering the good that it produces. Even when Bible reading is laborious, the Bible is doing its work in us by building our spiritual strength and increasing our faith.

Prayer can become tedious. We set for ourselves the discipline to pray, and before we know it we find ourselves merely saying words, hurrying to get through, and promising ourselves that we'll be more engaged next time. All of this comes about because we so easily lose sight of the wonder of prayer. Think about it! We speak on earth, and our Father in heaven bends His ear to listen! The good produced by prayer is immeasurable. We are brought close to God and given strength to face life's demands. We learn to rest in

God's will and to trust in His guidance. And we come to appreciate more the Lord Jesus. Praying makes us realize—at at least, it should—that prayer itself is a privilege purchased for us at a dear cost.

And that cost? The death of Christ on the cross! We have never adequately understood Christ's death if we think of it in physical terms alone. It was much more than that! The Lord Jesus actually received on the cross the wrath of God in the place of sinners so that all who trust in Him in His death never have to receive that wrath themselves. Through that death, we are made right with God and given access to God through prayer.

As the tedium of corn shelling produced good results for the chickens and for our family, so the tedium of Bible study and prayer will produce good results for us. So get to shelling!

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## From God's Word, the Bible...

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.  
And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not  
worthy of Me.*

*Matthew 10:37*

*So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,  
"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"  
He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."  
He said to him, "Feed My lambs."*

*John 21:15*



## Needed: An Overpowering Love (1)

One of the things that concern me most about the current generation of Christians is the absence of what I will call an overpowering love. I'm talking about a love that is so mighty that it subdues and conquers other loves. More particularly, I'm talking about a love for the Lord that is so fervent and passionate that it drives out of our lives things that we shouldn't love at all, and properly orders things that we shouldn't love as much as we do.

There are things we shouldn't love at all. Take pornography for example. Recent surveys not only indicate that a very large percentage of Christian men regularly visit pornographic sites but also that a high percentage of pastors do as well. What is lacking is a love for the Lord that is so powerful that it drives out this thing that should have no place at all—a love for the Lord that is so strong that the Christian man can say to the devil: "Tempt me all you want, I am not going to yield!"

That kind of love for Christ seems to be increasingly rare these days.

Then there are those things that we shouldn't love as much as we do. It's okay to have a love for them, but they are not to be loved to the degree that they often are. Sports may be the best example of this. There is nothing wrong with having an interest in baseball, football, basketball, and golf, but Christians very often allow their interest in sports to override everything else. It's very common for Christians to excuse themselves from church services so they can attend a game or so their children can participate in one. And, increasingly it seems, this is viewed as a legitimate reason for skipping church.

I wonder where those Christians are who say this: "Yes, I love sports, but the Lord is my greatest love, and I will not put any other love above Him."

Many churches have abandoned Sunday evening services. The rationale that is often given is that this allows their members to spend time with their families.

And I wonder where those are who say this: "We certainly love our families, but we love the Lord who gave us our families even more."

How did we arrive at the conclusion that Sunday evening is the only time we have to spend with our families? What happened to the other evenings?

So we are face to face with disturbing questions: Where is that love for Christ that is so powerful that it excludes false loves and properly aligns legitimate loves? Why is it that we don't love Christ more? Is it because we don't really understand what He has done for us? Is it because we think we can love Him without following His commandments? Or is the problem that many of us who think we are Christians have never been truly converted?

Yes, the world is so very alluring; the flesh is so very

weak; and the devil so very strong and clever. But shouldn't there be in Christians something greater than the world, the flesh, and the devil? William R. Featherston evidently found it to be so:

*My Jesus, I love Thee; I know Thou art mine.  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou.  
If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now.*

Amazingly enough, Featherston penned these words aged just sixteen. Born July 23, 1846, in Montreal, he came to know the Lord in Toronto in 1862. Shortly after, he wrote a poem to celebrate his conversion and mailed it to his aunt in Los Angeles. Somehow it was set to music and appeared in a British hymnal in 1864. Featherston himself was to have only ten years to walk on this earth with the Lord he so loved before actually meeting Him in glory at age twenty-six. These words indicate that he eagerly looked forward to that meeting:

*In mansions of glory and endless delight,  
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright.  
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,  
"If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now."*

## *About the Author*

**R**oger Ellsworth is a retired pastor, active in ministry and writing, who lives in Jackson, Tennessee. He and his wife, Sylvia, love the message of the Bible, and they enjoy sharing the wonderful counsel of the Word of God in language that ordinary people can understand and appreciate.

Roger has written numerous books on the Christian faith, and has exercised a preaching ministry for over fifty years. His sermons are available to listen for free on [SermonAudio.com](http://SermonAudio.com).