

The Gables – Hope

Donna: Story # 1 – Sometimes hope comes directly from God

As appeared in *Angels ON EARTH*

I was on a business trip when Dad passed away, finally losing his battle with kidney disease.

“Don’t worry. I’ve already booked you a flight home,” my husband, Mark, told me over the phone. “I’ll be waiting at the airport to pick you up. I love you.”

I cried the entire flight. Dad had always been so strong—he was a soldier in World War II—and seeing him so weak had been painful. But not as painful as this.

Tears filled my eyes as I got off the plane. I could barely see. All I wanted was to be taken care of, to fall into Mark’s comforting arms. But I felt lost and alone in the throng of travelers.

I asked a guardsman for help. “I just lost my father,” I said between sniffles. “I’m supposed to meet my husband here, but I’m all turned around.”

“I’ll show you the way,” he said softly. He looped my arm through his and led me out of the crowd past the security gates. I spotted Mark right away.

“There he is!” The soldier escorted me over, and I wrapped my arms tight around Mark’s waist. When I looked over my shoulder the soldier was gone.

“What is it?” Mark asked.

“My escort, the soldier,” I said. “Where did he go?”

Mark looked at me strangely. “There was no soldier with you, Donna. You walked over to me alone.”

Rick: Story # 2 – Sometimes hope comes from other people

One lonely candle lighted the basement room. I tried warming my hands around the tiny flame.

Strange shadows moved across the walls, and I shivered from fear as well as the cold. How could it possibly be Christmas Eve? I’d never felt further from Christmas in my life.

I was 22 that December night in 1944, an MP in the 104th Infantry Division of the US Army. My unit had taken shelter in a bombed-out house in Eschweiler, Germany. We had been fighting for eight days in what came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge, one of the bloodiest events of World War II.

My buddies were out on patrol. I’d stayed behind because I’d been wounded in an explosion three weeks earlier, and I walked with a limp. The medics had patched up my leg, but they couldn’t do

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anything for my ears. The blast cost me most of my hearing. Now I strained for every sound. Death could sneak up behind me before I knew it.

We'd had nothing but K rations for days, and my stomach ached with hunger. Back in Kansas Mom was preparing Christmas dinner. I longed for my home and family. *They don't even know where I am tonight.*

A noise—I whipped around. Someone knocked at the door. I glanced at my watch. Midnight. *Who was out there?* I moved closer. The last thing I should do was to open the door to enemy soldiers. The knock came again. Louder. Harder. Even more determined.

Soldiers wouldn't knock, would they? They'd just break in. I picked up my rifle. *Dear God, be with me.* I opened the door. There were no German soldiers. In the doorway stood a girl, 10 or so, with clear blue eyes and long blonde hair. A man stood beside her.

The candlelight shone on the girl's face as she gazed up at me. "My name is Hilda," she said in halting English. "My father and I bring you bread and coal. Merry Christmas!"

The man offered me six coal briquettes and three loaves of black bread. "Thank you" was all I could say before Hilda and her father hurried off into the night. They would have been shot if they'd been caught helping us.

A warm room greeted my buddies when they returned, and we shared the bread like it was manna from [heaven](#). Hilda had brought more than food and warmth. She'd brought Christmas cheer that gave me [hope](#). My family didn't know where I was, but God did.

I knew I'd always remember Hilda—there was no doubt—and my injury never let me forget the war. My damaged leg still troubled me years later. I had four surgeries in Oklahoma where I lived, all unsuccessful. I was ready to give up hope forever. Then, in 1952, my doctor recommended seeing a neurologist in Chicago. "It's a chance," my wife said. I went, reluctantly.

The first day at the hospital, a young orderly came in to clean my room. "Hello," she said, and I recognized a German accent. She seemed familiar somehow, this girl with long blonde hair. But, of course, I had come in contact with many Germans during the war. She came nearer, to straighten my bedside table. The lamp highlighted her features, and I saw her face. Her clear blue eyes.

"What part of Germany are you from?" I asked. "Near Cologne," she said. "What town?" I said, knowing the answer. "Eschweiler, sir."

She told me she and her father had helped American soldiers whenever they could. She had eventually married a GI and had come to the States. Hilda's face shone, just as it did in the candlelight on that December night in 1944. The night she and her father brought me hope when I had none.

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And here she was again. In spite of the war, in spite of my injuries, I had a good life. A full life. Hilda. The angel who twice gave me hope.

Permalink: <http://www.guideposts.org/angels/everyday-angel-saves-soldier-twice>

Dialog –

Rick: Donna, what do you think of when I say the word, “Hope.”

Donna: A Hope Chest... and it's full of money.

Rick: Donna! Please! This is a Bible Study. You *really* shouldn't be so materialistic!

Donna: Sorry, Rick. I can't help it. But I do hope I get a hope chest some day... I hope...

Rick: Shhh!

Donna: What do you think of when you hear the word “Hope”?

Rick: I think of the verse in Hebrews 11:1 that says “Now faith is being sure of what we **hope** for, and certain of what we do not see.”

Donna: That's interesting. What other Bible verses deal with the topic of “Hope”?

Rick: Well, the word hope is used 174 times in the New International Version of the Bible. Here are a few of them:

- Job 13:15 - Though he slay me, yet will I **hope** in him...
- Psalm 25:3 - No one whose **hope** is in you will ever be put to shame
- Psalm 33:18 - But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose **hope** is in his unfailing love...
- Psalm 62:5 - Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my **hope** comes from him.
- Psalm 147:11 - the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their **hope** in his unfailing love.
- Proverbs 11:7 - When a wicked man dies, his **hope** perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.
- Ecclesiastes 9:4 - Anyone who is among the living has **hope** —even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!
- Isaiah 40:31 - but those who **hope** in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
- Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope** and a future.
- Lamentations 3:25 - The LORD is good to those whose **hope** is in him, to the one who seeks him...

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- Romans 8:23-5 - Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this **hope** we were saved. But **hope** that is seen is no hope at all. Who **hopes** for what he already has? But if we **hope** for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
- Romans 15:13 - May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 - And now these three remain: faith, **hope** and love. But the greatest of these is love.
- 1 Corinthians 15:19 - If only for this life we have **hope** in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.
- Ephesians 1:17:19a - I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the **hope** to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
- 1 John 3:2-4 - Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this **hope** in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Rick: The last time I checked the human mortality rate is still 100%. Each and every one of us will die someday. The greatest question any human being needs to answer during their lifetime is: *Where will I go when I die?* What is your hope in?

Do you hope you will go to heaven to be with God – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit – the holy angels and all believers? Are you sure about that? How firm is your faith (Hebrews 11:1)? Do you think you can't know where you'll be going when you die? Or have you given up and don't care if you end up in to hell?

We all have to make a choice. Thomas Hobbes said, “Hell is the truth seen too late.” How can you be sure you’re going to heaven?

- Step 1 is to acknowledge that you’re a sinner. Romans 3:23 says, “... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” Most people don’t get past this. They don’t think they’re such bad people. But Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that we must be perfect (Matthew 5:48). Revelation 21:27 says, nothing impure (imperfect) will be allowed into heaven. Revelation 20:15 says that “If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.”
- Step 2 is to repent. That means to change your mind, to turn away from your life of sin. Most people aren’t willing to do that either. The fact is, most people won’t end up in heaven. Jesus said, “But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:14).

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- Step 3 is to realize that you need God to save you from your sins and that you can't do it on your own. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our lord." Ephesians 2:8 & 9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."
- Step 4 is to accept Jesus as your savior. Romans 10:9 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Here's a final story. Laura Hillenbrand, in her book *Unbroken* (page 373) about Louis Zamperini a World War II prisoner of war, quoted Billy Graham preaching in 1949:

"Darkness doesn't hide the eyes of God," Graham said. "God takes down your life from the time you were born to the time you die. And when you stand before God on the great judgment day, you're going to say, 'Lord I wasn't such a bad fellow,' and they are going to pull down the screen and they are going to shoot the moving picture of your life from the cradle to the grave, and you are going to hear every thought that was going through your mind every minute of the day, every second of the minute, and you're going to hear the words that you said. And your own words, and your own thoughts, and your own deeds, are going to condemn you as you stand before God on that day. And God is going to say, 'Depart from me.'"^{**}

* Excerpts taken from "The Only Sermon Jesus Ever Wrote," sermon by Billy Graham, © 1949 Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Author's transcription from audio recording.

God knows you're a sinner, and He knows you need a savior. He's waiting for you to accept his free offer of forgiveness. Will you do that today?