

Dear Friends

This last month has seen the start of the new football season.

My friend Dave Gundry and I are both season ticket holders at the Milton Keynes Dons. We don't sit far from each other in the stadium, and we often travel to the matches together. Both of us also support other teams. Dave is a West Ham supporter and I've been an Arsenal supporter all my life.

We have been commiserating with each other recently because the Dons haven't been doing very well, and neither have the Hammers or the Gunners. All our teams have had very poor starts to the season. We have agreed that our teams doing well this season is more about hope than expectation, Dave texted me yesterday, 'Hope is very powerful emotion.'

That leads me to reflect that the hope that our teams do well is very different from the hope that we have as Christians. In the worldly sense, hope is about wishful thinking. However, that is not what the Bible means by hope. The biblical definition of hope is confident expectation. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews puts it this way: 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' And Peter wrote in his first letter: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you.'

If you support a football team, I hope that your team does well - except, of course, if they play the Gunners or the Dons. But more than that, much more than that, I hope that whatever life throws at you, for good or for bad, you will know the hope, the confident expectation, that is yours because of your faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With every blessing for the coming month.

Your friend and pastor

David