

The Fortress of HOPE

Introduction:

1. Scripture Reading: Hebrews 6:9-15.
2. Hope is one of the indispensable qualities of life to face each day. It is what Abraham lived by. It is essential to living faithfully and lovingly. Where would faith and love go without hope? Paul penned: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these [is] love" (1 Cor. 13:13).
3. In the prevailing uncertainty and rampant fears that exist in our world, we must have a fortress of hope with abiding faith and love. I think COVID is warring against *hope* and *faith* today.
4. As this year winds down and we prepare to embark on a new year, I want to speak about hope with the hope that we will move into this new year, as a congregation of God, filled with hope rather than fear, living by faith rather than driven by doubts.
5. Uninspired men have noted the greatness of hope.
 - a. "The miserable have no other medicine but only hope." – William Shakespeare
 - b. Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "To live without hope is to cease to live."
 - c. "A whole stack of memories never equal one little hope." – Charles M. Schulz
 - d. "He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope has everything." – Thomas Carlyle
6. [C] Long ago, Solomon made a connection between *health* and *hope* in Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But *when* the desire comes, *it is* a tree of life." Hope that is postponed, drawn-out, deferred makes the heart *sick* (debilitated, in a state of weakness, depleted, and diseased). Solomon makes a sharp contrast between hope that is *drawn out* where the expectation of a thing wanes versus when "desire" "comes" it is a tree of life. The word "comes" is contrasted with another word that means "go out from." When desire comes into or *enters* a person, it is a tree of life. When hope *exits* a person, the heart is sick/diseased. It is no wonder why the Bible speaks so much of hope!
7. *What is hope?* It is forward-looking faith! Hope mixes a *desire* with a confident *expectation*. How does one plow in hope (1 Cor. 9:9, 10)? He earnestly toils with a forward-looking posture of expectation.
8. Brethren, whatever we face in this new year, we do not face it alone. We can walk through it together with God one day at a time.
9. [C] Hope breeds confidence with eager anticipation. "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5). We are saved through hope (Rom. 8:24, 25). What's our fortress of hope? It is not something we behold with physical sight. It is something we see forthcoming.

Discussion:

I. [C] H – Heaven (anchored in)

- A. Hope is the Christian's anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:17-20). Unlike a ship's anchor which goes down to attach itself on some immovable object, the Christian's anchor ascends upward into heaven, behind the veil!
 1. [cl] "because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5).

2. Our anchor must be firmly attached to our immovable Savior in heaven far above the storms of life here: the cancers, diseases, disasters, deaths, wars, and tumults. Never transpose the problems, the uncertainty, or the chaos that exists here into heaven. It doesn't exist there.
3. [C] What does an anchored hope look like? Because our world appears out of control doesn't mean the governor of the universe has lost control. Christians needed comfort when they faced a raging world that hated them and we need to see the same important themes developed in the book of Revelation for facing any crisis today.
 - a) [cl] Revelation 15:1-4 shows us where heavenly hope takes us—the ultimate victory of saints who are faithful until death. John's image of *something like the sea of glass* is mingled with *fire*. Hope is not some easy wish list; it is imparted by God's power and forged through fire. Perhaps the fire here is of God's wrath...but I think more so it represents the fiery trials that came upon the saints reflected in the sea of glass (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12). The "sea" in Revelation symbolizes separation in much of the same ways that the seas separate people on earth.
 - b) Revelation will not permit forced literal interpretations as such would require the sea to put out the fire or the fire to evaporate the sea. It is symbolic language to view the victory of faithful saints standing on the sea of glass. Regardless of what trials the Roman government poured upon Christians as is referenced in chapter 13 with economic sanctions, torture, intimidation, war, promoting the practice of false worship, death, etc. these Christians here had overcome. Death does not separate the saint from God. It separates the saint from the suffering associated with this life (Matt. 10:26-31).
 - c) How is it that these can stand on this sea as victors? Notice what they are carrying (15:2). Here we find a very practical solution given to us from the Bible to deal with our problems...they have the harps of God!
 - d) So what does this mean for us today?
 - (1) [cl] We find that one of the components of a heavenly anchored hope is where the anchor's cables are fashioned by something vitally important for the church and every heaven-bound Christian...*worship* (15:3). Revelation consistently moves the suffering saint to draw nearer to God in worship. Resist the tendency to alienate yourself from the worship services. Deny the world's accusation that charges worship as a waste of time. Revelation portrays *worship as the solution to the world's problems and adversities!* This may sound surprising to those who take worship for granted.
 - e) Overcoming the world's problems is not facing them alone or with worldly weapons, or worldly wisdom, but rather with true worship.
 - (1) Revelation frequently ties worship to God's unfolding plans (4:9-11; 5:1-10).
 - (2) Worship enables us to refocus on our victory, on our God, on our God's plan, work, and power (15:3-5).
 - (3) God is seen as answering the worshipers with angels coming out of the temple with the seven plagues pouring out the bowls of wrath (15:5-16:1).
 - f) Worship is God's simple and powerful remedy for the saint to overcome Satan and his efforts.
 - g) However, when some suffer, worship is neglected or put off altogether, left behind, replaced with some worldly substitute. When our faith is troubled, let's run to worship and pour out

our prayers unto Him and let Him work out His plan. Let's worship and focus on God's person, power, and promises.

h) [C] We can know at any given time, regardless of the circumstances that surround our lives, that God has a plan and is working for us, not against us (Rom. 8:28).

B. [C] Our hope does not fade away into death and defeat by suffering. It is living through the resurrection of Christ. It ascends behind the veil anchored into heaven's tableland (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Consider God's "abundant mercy" (1 Pet. 1:3). He is not some tyrant lurking over your shoulder and waiting to pulverize you in failure but wants you to win. He is pleading with you, throwing you the lifeline. He has provided abundant mercy for you to be saved. *Abundant* intensifies His mercy like "great" intensifies the *multitude* in Revelation 7:9.

[C] Will you take advantage of His plan by obeying the gospel in baptism (1 Pet. 3:21, 22). As our hope is living through the resurrection of Christ, so baptism saves us through the resurrection of Christ. **-sermon break**

Title Chart – Roman. 8:24. In studying “hope” acrostically, we found *heaven* as a fitting component of the fortress. [C] It is where the Christian’s hope is anchored. It rises above the storms and the fiery trials found on earth above the sea of glass unto the presence of God. Being anchored in heaven, it is connected to an imperishable reality found in eternity and is not subject to being stolen or rust (see Matt. 6:19-21).

[C] While the hope is anchored in heaven, it is established in God’s only Son. Hope has to have reason and the reason for a better life is found in the life of God’s only Son as He lived and suffered the loss of great things to make us rich in eternity.

II. O – Only Son (established in)

- A. John 3:16; 14:1-3.
- B. Hebrews 3:1-6. Christ, God’s Son is over the house and we are that house “if” we hold fast with confidence! The rejoicing of hope is *connected* to the confidence we have.
- C. Paul’s hope of the resurrection was connected to and argued from the resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:22-33; 24:15; 26:6-8).
- D. How confident can we be in the resurrection of the Son of God? What reasons do we have to believe in its historicity? Something happened that led to the change in how we reference time (BC & AD). If not connected to Jesus of Nazareth, what? What facts about His resurrection give us hope? [C]
 1. *Predicted* in Scripture (Psa. 16:9, 10). Christ, Himself predicted it (Matt. 16:21).
 2. *Presented* alive to many witnesses after He was put to death (Acts 1:3).
 3. *Preached* by the witnesses first in the very city where He was crucified (Acts 2:14, 22-24).
 4. *Proven* by the apostles. In performing miracles and by raising the dead (Acts 3:1-16; 9:32-42).
 - a) *Historical note on Lydda*: the birthplace of the legendary Saint George of England. “Its modern name is Ludd. The so-called patron saint of England, St. George, is said to have been born here” (Easton’s Revised Bible Dictionary).
 - b) *Historical note on Joppa*: One of the oldest towns in the world (Fausset’s Bible Dictionary). It is a city that was built and destroyed many times throughout its history (New and Concise Bible Dictionary). It was the seaport city of Jerusalem where cedar logs were imported from Lebanon for both Solomon’s and Zerubbabel’s temples (2 Chon. 2:16; Ezr. 3:17). Was the place where Jonah tried to run away from God (Jon. 1:3). Here a beloved woman died and was raised to life. Here Peter received the vision to know that the gospel is for all nations.

Conclusion:

The Jerusalem gospel was preached here by Peter and the shores of Joppa give us a glimpse of what we look forward to in hope. Where death robbed the community of a beloved and benevolent woman, we anticipate the joy that was restored to these brethren when Tabatha was raised from the dead. When the Lord visits us again in person at His second coming He shall raise all the dead and bring greater joy to us than what can be found in this life (1 Thess. 4:13-18). He will bring us into His Father’s place where there will be no more death, departure, disease, or disasters.

[C] Will you take the Lord’s justification that is offered through His Only Son? Will you repent of your sins and be baptized into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:12-14, 27; 2:12-14). Will you let Bible hope motivate you to obey the gospel today?

Brief review [3charts] – Our hope is anchored in Heaven and saw victorious saints in Revelation 15 standing above the sea of glass mingled with fire. Our hope is established in the only begotten Son of God whose resurrection was *predicted*, and the Lord was *presented* after His death, *preached* by the apostles beginning in the very city that crucified Him, and *proven* by the miracles that were performed. The miracles were attributed to be by the power of Jesus (see Acts 3:12, 14-16). Why are there no miracles today? The word once confirmed doesn't need to be reconfirmed in every generation (cf. Mk. 16:19, 20).

III. [C] P – Promised (discovered in)

- A. The apostles spoke of the promise that was made through David to the fathers through the prophets that God would raise up THE CHRIST from David's Seed to sit on David's throne (see Acts 2:30-36). Jesus was raised up literally from the grave to be savior and Lord. This was *promised* in the word—God's promises are true. Our hope is discovered in reading the word of God (Psa. 119:81, 82).
- B. When God promises, we can have the most confidence in the fulfillment of it. See, Hebrews 10:23; [C2] Psalm 89:34-37.
 1. Recall how Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Heb. 3:1, 6).
 2. We can hold fast to our hope because it is based on the promise of God. God is not a man that He should lie. [C] See Numbers 23:19.
- C. [C] This fortress of hope was operative in Abraham for justification (Rom. 4:18-25; first note how "promise" and "word of God" are used interchangeably, Rom. 9:6-9). Let's also be fully convinced and not waver at the promise. God raised His Son from the dead. Not only was He delivered upon the cruel cross for our offenses, but He was also raised up from the dead for our justification. An opportunity is extended for people to exercise that faith today. It is the nature of the faith that Abraham had regarding Isaac. We can exercise that faith by being baptized into His Son's death and rising to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:3ff).

IV. [cl] E – Eternal Life (realized in)

- A. There are many false and flimsy hopes that men fill their lives with only to experience what we began this lesson with, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick..." (Prov. 13:12).
 1. [C] Arm of flesh fails (2 Chron. 32:6-8, 17, 20ff)
 2. [cl] Material possessions cannot define life (Lk. 12:15-21; 1 Tim. 6:7).
 3. [cl] Anything that is purely connected or imprisoned in this life (1 Cor. 15:19).
 4. [cl] Any life that is lived without God is without hope (Eph. 2:12).
- B. [C] There is something in all of us that desperately yearns for something beyond this life! God, through His Son's cross, offers *everlasting life* to those who will exercise faith in His Son.
 1. As He raised His Son, so He will raise us (1 Cor. 6:14).
 2. It is a promise for you to lay claim to based on the fact of God's enduring word (Titus 1:1, 2).

Conclusion:

1. [C] While not exhausting the study of hope, we can see from what we have studied that it is essential to our faith, our outlook, our salvation (Col. 1:4-6). We must obey the gospel but take care not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23).
2. [C] Preaching on hope spurs on a practical application to daily living with the motivation to be pure (1 Jn. 3:1-3). Have you obeyed the gospel? Have the world's cares moved you away from the gospel's hope?