

“The Power of Hope”

07-13-14

The economy is slowly getting better, but still has a long way to go! The Federal deficit is the highest it's ever been! The world is at war in more places than ever! Death and destruction are all around us! Living in love and forgiveness seems like something from the past! To say “I have hope!” almost sounds like a fantasy statement!

Turn to Romans 8. As we live each day, we're challenged more and more, and seem to be at battle on many fronts. We battle against the world. Every advertisement, every movie or show is giving us a picture of the way to live, and unfortunately, most of them are not following God's Will at all.

We battle against Satan. Satan is working hard to have us come to the conclusion that being a Christian, and facing the persecution that comes with it as we stand firm in faith, isn't really worth it. He's doing a good job having us not see Jesus Christ as a guiding force in our lives. He makes it easy for us to fall into patterns that don't give Jesus praise.

We battle against our own flesh. Because of our own human nature, we look for the ways we can get what we want when we want them. Our inner being continues to ask, “*What's in this for me?*” We don't want to commit to serving God, the Church, and each other because it might cut into our personal time. We don't want to be different, we want to be just like everyone else. We want to come to Church, sit back, and relax! Sometimes we even start to think that God doesn't care about us so why should we care!

Look at verses 14-17, “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*”

As we move outside ourselves and focus on God, we realize we're special in His sight. He calls us His own. We're His children and heirs. As children and heirs, we receive an incredible inheritance. We have an inheritance that's incorruptible. As we walk by the Spirit of God and follow Him with all our hearts in faith, eternal life in heaven is ours. The world, Satan, and our own flesh can't take the inheritance away!

Our inheritance is perfect! As humans, we work hard to have the perfect life. We want the perfect spouse, the perfect job, the perfect figure, the perfect house, and perfect family. But the sad part is, we never seem to reach that goal. We're continually fighting for perfection but never seem to reach it. But our inheritance from God is true perfection!

Our inheritance is eternal. If all we focused on was an earthly inheritance, it would have an end, but our inheritance goes on forever. God loves us so much, that He sent Jesus Christ to suffer and in our place and by faith in Him alone, He wants us with Him forever. Heaven is ours for eternity!

And this is where hope comes in! Look at verses 24-25, *“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”*

We know that heaven exists even though we haven't seen it. This hope defies logic! Hope is a constant expectation of an unseen reality. To the unsaved mind, it's preposterous to believe in what you cannot prove by experience. But we believe it because God has come into our lives and the Holy Spirit has filled us with His presence and we're not the same anymore. We're changed!

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”* Every part of our Christian life must start with faith! We are saved by faith, but our hope is in Christ's return.

Because of Jesus Christ and being called God's own, we can anticipate heaven's glory. God gives us this blessed hope. As Jesus ascended into heaven, He said He would be back to take us to Himself, or as Titus 2:13 says, *“We're waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

As we wait for Jesus to return, we need to wait with patience. We don't know when the end will come, but we know it's all going to happen. Jesus promised it and His promises are always true! He can come at any time! But this shouldn't be a time of fear, but a time of trust and joy.

Hope has power! Researchers performed an experiment to see the effect hope has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned.

When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope! Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should it's effect be on our lives!

Hope motivates us to keep going and not give up. Lucy and Linus were sitting in front of the television set when Lucy said to Linus, "Go get me a glass of water." Linus looked surprised, "Why should I do anything for you? You never do anything for me." "On you 75th birthday," Lucy promised, "I'll bake you a cake." Linus got up, headed to the kitchen and said, "Life is more pleasant when you have something to look forward to." Do you have a steadfast unshakeable hope in God?

You see, the good news is that in Christ you live in a constant state of hope that the battles of this world will give way to the painless reality of heaven. Jesus has promised He will dry all your tears. As you live for Jesus Christ, you have a reason for joy! You have a reason for life! You have a reason for hope!

As one called God's own, redeemed by Jesus Christ, as you walk with Him, you will always have the power of hope! Listen to this blessing from Romans 15:13, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”*