

THE ABOUNDING JOY OF NEW TESTAMENT HOPE - Part three

Sunday, September 29th, 2019 - 10 a.m. - Teaching #2159

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THE SOURCES OF HOPE: The Grace of God, The Body of Christ, The Encouragement of the Scriptures (Part 2)

1 Peter 1:3, 22-25 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....22-25....Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

Romans 15:4 - "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

The main premise of last week's teaching was if people notice anything about me as a Christian, it should be my **hope**. And they should find it so amazing that they can't keep themselves from approaching me and asking me about it. Their **curiosity** will force them to push past their natural **shyness** about approaching someone they hardly know. So strong is the appeal of the **hope** they see in my life - **1 Peter 3:15** - "...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...."

That's an absolutely incredible verse of Scripture. People who ask me about my hope are looking for more than solutions to philosophic or apologetic issues. They're on a quest for hope.

Obviously, hope is vitally important in the Christian walk. In fact, in future studies we're going to look in detail at the **fruit of hope** - the things that result from keeping our hope strong and bright. Things like **joy, perseverance, purity, righteousness, confidence in prayer, etc.**

Today we're going to focus, not on the **fruit** of hope, but rather, the **source** of hope. If hope is anywhere near as important as the Bible says it is, the natural question is "Where does hope come from and how can I get more of it?"

The three sources of hope are **the grace of God, the encouragement of believers in the local church, and the indwelling Word of God**. Last week we studied the first two of this. Today, the third - **hope from the indwelling Word of God**:

3) HOPE COMES FROM THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES

This link between hope and the Scriptures is made so clear that it's unavoidable in the Spirit's mind for today's church: **1 Peter 1:3, 22-25** - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....22-25....Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

Also, **Romans 15:4** - "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

At least two thoughts are flagged in these verses:

- a) **First, unlike any other book, the Bible possesses its own latent power to do something dynamic inside your own mind.** We should describe this a bit so we don't take it for granted. **Any** book - good or bad - can affect change in your life as you study and remember it. That is simply the way **all** literature works.

That is **not** what Peter means when he says "...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

When Peter says the Word of God is “*imperishable*” and “*living*” and “*abiding*,” he means it *carries* something with it into your human understanding. Everything else, he says, will wear out and fail. Ideological movements come and go. Fads change. Best sellers are soon forgotten. So the impact of all these things is a *fading* influence at their best.

But the Word of God is enlivened by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is God. And God is eternal and Almighty. *This* is what makes the Bible a book of hope. It’s not just that it *tells* us about hope as a subject the way history books tell you about history or cookbooks carry recipes. No. The Holy Spirit works *through* the Word way electrical current carries power.

- b) ***Second, the promise of the Scriptures is hope to the hopeless.*** Listen to Paul’s words again from ***Romans 15:4*** - “***For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.***”

Notice, “*...that we might have hope.*” So the Word brings hope, not just as a *subject*, but as a *possession* to people who previously didn’t *have* hope.

How exactly does this work? Let me give you just one example. Paul uses the story of his own conversion, recorded in the Scriptures, to give *hope* to those who feel they’ve failed God too badly to ever be fruitful and happy again:

1 Timothy 1:12-16 - “***I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, [13] though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, [14] and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [15] The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. [16] But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.***”

Read the Scriptures! You will find wonderful examples of the power of God’s amazing grace. You will see what God has done for others - worse blasphemers than you! Hear Paul’s words: “God did this for me so that you’d know, down through the ages, that if God could reach me, He can reach anybody!”

That’s just one way we receive hope through what is written in the Scriptures. The Word focuses our hearts on bigger, eternal realities to keep us from getting discouraged. There are promises for all of your needs. There are examples to be inspired by. There are mistakes to avoid. There is a beautiful description of the future that awaits the child of God.

Finally, all of this raises a question. If such is the power and potential of God’s Word to inspire hope, why are there so many unchanged, hopeless lives? Why do so many people - who claim to read their Bibles - *not* light up with transformation? Why do people lack hope?

I think the Bible offers explanation: ***Psalm 1:1-3*** - “***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.***”

As improbable as it seems to some, the Psalmist’s message still rings clear and true. But there are actually *two* messages here, not *one*. In other words, receiving hope from God’s Word is a *two-staged* process. And it’s not merely a matter of filling your mind with God’s Word that brings hope and power. This may well be the most common misconception in the church today.

Here’s how it works. Hope comes from *deletion* as much as from *addition*. In fact, hope comes *first* by deletion, *then* by addition. You and I can’t just *add* God’s Word to our lives the way we add cream to coffee.

This is why the Psalm begins where it begins. Don’t start applying the Psalm at *verse 2*. You have to start with *verse one* - “***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers....***”

This is a common spiritual pattern. And it's almost universally ignored by an increasingly tolerant church. Just as I will have to expend increasing effort to **not** forsake gathering with the local church, in spite of the bad example of some, so I will have to **expel** competing voices to make room for God's hope-building Word. In other words, there is a **price to be paid** - and it's going to be a **growing price** - to find encouragement in the church and to find hope in God's Word. And this price isn't going to diminish. Parents, this is only going to get more difficult for your children. Don't give them a lazy example. **Over-do** spiritual commitments so they have a high target to aim at.

But here's the point to remember. The effort required to **amplify the power of hope** in God's Word isn't a losing venture. Those voices competing with the exclusive truth of hope in God's Word are all **hope stealers**. They are empty idols for your false hopes.

There is hope - wonderful hope - to be had for the godly. But it won't be found by the lazy or the careless. Like wisdom, hope is for those who dig for it like it was gold.