



Second Half Living Presentations

The Basis of our Hope

Questions for personal reflection and for group sharing

1. Do you agree that “hope” is a poor relation and that we don’t speak or think about it enough? If so, why do you think that is?
2. Tim Keller wrote “that the way you live now is completely controlled by what you believe about the future”. Do you think that is true? If so, how would you illustrate that from your own life?
3. Which definition of hope best encapsulates what hope means to you?
4. We know that we should put our hope in God alone but what are the issues and pressures that cause you to struggle? What is your “default setting” when that happens?
5. Why is it so important that our hope is based on God’s promises? What are the promises of God that have helped you in the past?
6. Which aspects of God’s character help you to have unconditional trust in Him and His promises?

Summary Notes

A culture without hope

Illustration: 1812 Badajoz, Spain – the forlorn hope

Today hope is often seen as

- wishful thinking
- change in circumstance
- imaginative day-dreaming

Biblical summary

Ephesians 2:12 says that when we were separate from Christ we were ‘without hope and without God in the world.’

Romans 15:13 says “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.”

Definitions of Hope

John Piper in “Future Grace” and Paul Mallard in “Invest your suffering” describes hope as a confidence that something will come to pass because God has promised it will.

Hunt and Monroe in “The Hope of Glory” looks to the present enjoyment of a future blessing – it brings the future into the present.

Greg Laurie in “Hope tells us hope is a quiet confidence and a supernatural certainty. Nancy Missler in “Hope against hope” highlights hope as knowing that God will do exactly what He has promised, in His way.

Hope in practice

Biblical hope is rooted in the character of the God of the Bible. He is the God of hope and as we live in dependence on him whatever the circumstances of our lives God’s Spirit can help us discover a hope that is real and stable and helps us persevere.

Easy to say harder to practice. The Bible tells us of some of the things we are tempted to trust in, but which ultimately are futile, such as material wealth, financial security, human resources, power, strength or understanding.

Job 8:14-15 in the Living Bible describes the outcome of a Godless hope.

“A man without God is trusting in a spider’s web. Everything he counts on will collapse. If he counts on his home for security, it won’t last.”

Jerry Bridges quotes an unknown author

“God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.”

God’s sovereignty is our basis for hope. As Bridges puts it, if there were even one event that was beyond God’s control, we would not be able to trust Him.

Psalms 33:10-11 highlights God’s involvement in the plans of the nation’s and even the might of a nation is a vain hope for deliverance. However, God is looking for people who fear Him and whose hope is in His unfailing love.

Two truths in tension:

- an all- powerful God who is totally in control and does just as He pleases
- a loving Heavenly Father who knows and cares about every intimate detail of our lives.

We need both these aspects of God’s sovereignty to trust Him with all of our life.

Hope in Jesus

Jesus sends out the 72 in Luke 10 – Success or failure in ministry is not the foundation for our emotional well-being or God’s approval, instead remember every follower of Jesus has a secure future regardless of the present circumstances.

Upper-room dialogue of John 14 – Having lost their future, the disciples felt rejected, isolated and confused. Instead of addressing their theological understanding of the cross he says,

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus points them to something that is unseen and in the future but the promise is dependable and secure because of the one who is making the promise.

In summary

- Hope based in the wrong things cannot deliver – they are a forlorn hope.
- The God of the Bible is a God of hope who has both the power to deliver on His promises and the love that motivates Him to be intimately involved in our lives.

- For biblical hope to be part of our lives we need to be convinced and act upon the truth of God's sovereignty.
- Jesus encouraged his followers to live in the light of a hope that is unseen and of the future.

One last thought... We read in Lamentations 3:18-23 how the author moved from despair to hope as He came to grasp the extent of God's love and faithfulness.

Bibliography

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