

- **\*READ Hebrews 11:8-16\*** This morning, we used our time of study to consider the one hope by which we have been called and by which we live as disciples. We noted that true hope isn't just wishful thinking, but that it is a strong desire for that which we can reasonably expect. I can say that I hope to walk outside after we conclude with worship and it be a cool 72 degrees with low humidity, but the truth is that's simply wishful thinking. There is no reason why I should expect such a thing to happen in West Tennessee in the middle of July.
- We then went on to talk about some things in which we should not put our hope. We shouldn't hope for earthly wealth or blessings because they are not what truly sustains us in this life. Likewise, we shouldn't look to mere men as those who can give us our greatest desires. We instead established that our hope is to be found in God and the promises that He has extended to us. Some of his promises will be realized even while we are in this life. We can and should hope for forgiveness from sins, strength against temptation, and peace of soul that will sustain us in our journey in this life. These things have been promised to us by God and it is therefore reasonable for us to expect to receive these things if we desire to obtain them through faith and obedience to Him.
- Yet these promises are not the full extent of our hope in God and Christ. These parts of hope are only pointing up forward towards the ultimate realization of hope that will take place beyond this life. In **Ephesians 1:18**, Paul says, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."* There is an inheritance that awaits for us when this life is over, and it is this inheritance that we are to hope so strongly for.
- It is this hope that ultimately motivates us and sustains us to give our full lives to God. It is the same hope that moved the great examples of faith in **Hebrews 11** to do as they did in their lives. Abraham, Sarah, and so many others lived faithfully to God without having received the ultimate fulfillment of their promises. Sure they received blessings in this life, but they were looking for something greater. They were looking towards the future to that *"better country, that is, a heavenly one."* (**Hebrews 11:16**)
- This evening, as we continue our thoughts upon the subject of hope, I would like for us to think upon the Future Hope of the Saints. Again, this morning we discussed some of the hope that is realized even in this life, but now I want us to move on towards the ultimate fulfillment of our hope that will come when the Lord returns in all of His glory. Let's consider the inheritance of the saints that awaits us when this world comes to an end. The first desire that we can look forward to having fulfilled is the resurrection of our bodies.

#### I. We have hope in the resurrection.

- A. Unfortunately, we sometimes get caught up on the specific details of the future resurrection, and that distracts us from the joyful hope we should have in it.
1. While there are some details concerning the resurrection in **I Corinthians 15**, the reality is that we often read those details and leave with almost more questions than we had to begin with. Sure we read about being changed as is stated in **v.52**, but what will that look like? I have sat in Bible classes where people get so bent out of shape discussing what all that will look like, and my question is... why are we wasting energy caring all that much about what exactly that will look like! We should simply be thrilled to know that the grave will not be the final resting place of all of God's faithful.
  2. The Thessalonian brethren were a people who seemed to have been concerned with the resurrection because they seem to have not been quite sure as to how things would go...and yet Paul didn't encourage them by giving them all sorts of detail concerning that day. Instead, we see him simply reassuring them that the day would come and the dead would be raised. (**I Thessalonians 4:13-18**) Likewise, we simply need to hold on to the hope that we will be resurrected to new life with Jesus.

- B. Our main focus and hope should be in the fact that we have been promised a resurrection from the dead that will lead to eternal life.
1. We mentioned **I Corinthians 15** earlier, and we'll take a closer look at that text to emphasize our ability to desire and reasonably expect that we will experience a resurrection in Jesus. Paul begins in the first few verse by stressing the historicity of Jesus's resurrection and how vital it is to our faith in God. He even gives proof and invites the readers to go and investigate for themselves. (**I Corinthians 15:1-8**)
  2. He then goes on to talk about the logical implications of there not being a resurrection because there seems to have been some who were claiming that there wouldn't be a resurrection. (**I Corinthians 15:12**) *"If there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain."* (**I Corinthians 15:13,14**) It seems pretty clear that our hope in the resurrection is a big deal, and we ought to hope that it is coming. Thankfully, Paul goes on to show us through the reality of Jesus's resurrection that we can reasonably expect to be raised ourselves. *"But not Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead."* (**I Corinthians 15:20,21**)
  3. Therefore, we can expect to be resurrected, and at the very least we can accurately hope in the fact that we will be receiving a new body. (**I Corinthians 15:42**) What exactly will this body be like? I really don't know...but I do know for certain that it will be a imperishable body raised in glory, power, and spirit. (**I Corinthians 15:42-44**) John adds his two cents in **I John 3:2** when he says, *"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."* What will this look like? Again, I simply don't know, but my hope isn't in knowing what exactly we will be like. My hope is founded in simply knowing that we will be raised from the death to live eternally with our God in heaven...that place of eternal comfort.

## II. We have hope in eternal comfort.

- A. This should give us such great joy, especially considering how difficult our lives on earth can be at times with the various difficulties and struggles we experience.
1. We have talked in the past about the different experiences that Satan loves to use to discourage us. When we suffer loss (losing loved ones, pain in our bodies, broken relationships, etc) that is a result of a broken world, Satan wants to use that to cause our faiths to be shaken and for us to begin questioning whether or not God is truly with us as He claims to be. He and Jesus claim to strengthen us to do Their will, but it doesn't seem as if they are actually around to help us in our times of need. Satan wants us to think these types of thoughts.
  2. He especially wants for us to allow the difficulties of life to push us into sinning against our God in any number of ways. He desires for us to curse God and die when we suffer. (**Job 2:9**) He desires for us to love this world with all of our heart to the extent that we put all of our eggs in the basket of the world, and then live life without a second thought of God as we see with the rich man who had Lazarus sitting at his gates. (**Luke 16:19**) He desires to trick us into thinking that true comfort is found within the world, but it shouldn't take us long to find out that even having all of the world leaves us lacking...especially towards God. (**Matthew 16:26**)
  3. Whether we are people of faith or not...we will at times suffer discomfort and loss in this life that can leave us completely drained of all hope if we are not careful. We must always keep our guard up to be able to withstand the difficulties that life throws at us, and it should lead us to desire a place that is better than this old broken world. Thankfully, that is exactly what we hope when we consider the next life because it is a place of never ending comfort and peace.

- B. The future reality that we long and hope for is one where there will be only comfort and peace.
1. That simply isn't possible in a life where temptation and sin are present, but in place where those things don't exist...in a place where Christ and our Father have and exercise full control of all things. In that place there will be no tears, heartache, or loss.
  2. This the picture that is painted for us in the **book of Revelation chapter 21 & vv.1-7** is one that is so beautiful, encouraging, and hopeful. Now, whether or not one believes this to heaven or the church being revealed doesn't take away from the reality that being in the presence of God and Jesus our Savior results in tears being wiped from eyes and mourning, crying, and pain being eliminated. This should be present within the church even now from a spiritual standpoint, but we know this is often not the reality because Satan is at work trying to cause problems for God's people. We desire these things here and now, but Satan hinders it from being a reality.
  3. However, that won't be the case when eternity becomes a reality because those things that cause our pain and suffering will be completely done away with. In **Revelation 21:8**, we read of the unfaithful to God being separated from the faithful. They and all of their negative consequences will be on the outside apart from the people of God. They will have their portion in *"the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* Their absence from that place where God reigns will eliminate the pain and sorrow that we so often experience in this life, and that's a place I want to be. The rich man of **Luke 16** might have had comfort for a time in this life, but he would've much rather been with Lazarus in eternal comfort away from the fiery pain and torment of hell. Thankfully as God's people, we can look for in hope and desire with reasonable expectation that we will be even as Lazarus was in eternal comfort and peace with God and the faithful. That's right! We will be with God...even face to face with Him!

### III. We have hope in being face to face with God.

- A. This was God's original desire for us... that we be face to face with Him, but the sin of Adam created a great separation between God and His favored creation of mankind.
1. In the beginning, in **Genesis 1-3**, we can read of the close and intimate relationship that God had with Adam and Eve as they lived in the Garden of Eden. God made Adam from the dust of the earth, and then He took from Adam's side a rib and fashioned Eve for Adam's benefit. God directly gave Adam permission to name the animals that were present in the garden, and He supplied to him and his wife everything that they might possibly need in order to live a happy and prosperous life there in Eden. It even seems as if Adam and Eve were able to walk and talk with God on a daily basis! (**Genesis 3:8,9**) The relationship between God and man was a perfect one in which love and respect was ever present. At least it was for the moment.
  2. Unfortunately, the sin of Adam and Eve changed that because they could no longer stand in the presence of a holy God because they had made themselves unholy through their transgressions. They were effectively banished from the very presence of God (**Genesis 3:22-24**) Not only that, but they were also separated from God in a spiritual sense because a holy God can't allow those who are guilty of sin to be in His presence. (**Isaiah 59:2**) Yes, we have the opportunity to draw back nearer to God through our cleansing and purification of heart (**James 4:8**), but that original intimacy with God simply isn't something that we can experience in this life. However...

**B. When we come into eternity in heaven, we will once more come face to face with God our Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.**

1. We will be united with Him just as He desired to be with us in the beginning, and this is the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for salvation through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. Paul tells us that in **Ephesians 1:4**, that from before the foundation of the world, God knew that we would need a way to be redeemed and that redemption would eventually come through Jesus.
2. That didn't stop God from creating Eden. He still wanted to have that fellowship with Adam and Eve, and their time spent in the garden continues to serve as a goal for us. We should be striving each and every day to make it to that restored Eden-like paradise which will be present when we reach heaven. There we will be in the presence of God and Jesus just as Adam and Eve were with God in the beginning. We will, as Paul says in **I Thessalonians 4:17**, "*always be with the Lord.*"
3. Just as we mentioned in our second point, being with the Lord means being in eternal comfort, and if there is no longer a devil around to tempt us then we will be able to dwell peacefully with our Lord and Savior for all of eternity. This thought alone makes enduring the difficulties of this life all the more worthwhile. Let's end our considerations of the Word of God where we began at the opening of our assembly. Let's read **II Corinthians 4:16-5:10**, and as we close here, let's consider how our hope for eternity is the same hope that Paul himself lived his life with. He looked forward to the same things we ourselves look forward to, and may we live in such a way that we have the same confidence that he had at the end of his life. (**II Timothy 4:6-8**)

It is so sad that so many people go about living their lives without having any true semblance of hope within their hearts. How sad that people find themselves so dejected in this life and without anything to look forward to in the future. But how thankful we ought to be that we don't have to be like those people! Instead, we can be a people who look toward the future with great excitement and anticipation knowing that there are great promises that will be fulfilled by our great and loving God. Our hope...let us ever hold so strongly to it knowing that it will be that which sustains us through the difficulties of life. Once this life has been overcome, our hope will be realized in the fulfilled promises of God, and we will truly see just how worth it the struggle was. May God be praised and glorified in the hope that we live with in this life as we look forward to that day when all of our hope will be realized and fulfilled.

**\*PRAYER\*** *Our God and Father in heaven...we come before you with humble hearts being so thankful that You are a God who can be trust to fulfill His promises because You have promised us so very much through Your Word. These promises should feel us with such great joy realizing that this life only offers us such a small taste of the enteral glory that awaits us when Your Son returns in judgment. We ask that You would help us to live in such a way that we might experience a glorious resurrection, an eternity comfort, and the opportunity to be face to face with You in heaven forever. Strengthen our hearts when we are discouraged. Help us to remember there great hope that lies within us and press on towards the goal of pleasing You in all things. Please bless us in all that we do this week. May it all be to Your glory. In Christ's name we pray...amen.*