

Elements of Motivation (Part 3)

Hope

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Given 30-Dec-95; Tape #214

As I begin this sermon I want to remind all of us that the following statement is what precipitated this particular series. One of the major reasons undergirding the changes which took place in the Worldwide Church of God is the doctrinal concept of "*once saved, always saved*," that once one accepts Christ, salvation is assured.

Now that is true, but there are at least two conditions attached to it. One condition is that we remain faithful. This means being full of faith, which implies being loyal to conditions or terms, or to a person or family, a team, a company. or to an agreement. We have to remain faithful and loyal. The faith that saves is *living faith* as the Bible clearly shows, and living faith works and produces within the person having it. This gives rise to the second condition, and that is we must be growing, changing, and overcoming.

The doctrine ["once saved, always saved"] makes salvation into nothing more than the acceptance or mental agreement with a proposition, and the proposition is that Jesus is Savior. Indeed He is Savior, but it totally fails to address the question of "*Saving for what purpose?*" Why save us? God has a purpose in what He is doing. There is a great over-riding purpose. There is a cause for His calling, His leading us to repentance, His granting us conversion, and the giving to us of His gift of the Holy Spirit. That cause is His new creation, [as] called in other parts of the Bible. We might also call it *the making of sons and daughters in His image*. Brethren, we can never let this huge and glorious concept get very far from our minds.

As we begin this sermon I want us to turn to I Corinthians 15, and we're just going to review a small portion where Paul brings this purpose to bear.

I Corinthians 15:40-50 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy:" the second man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49 And as we have

borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Brethren, we are going to bear the image of the heavenly. The image is not merely that we would be composed of spirit, even as He is, but that our very nature and character be as His. If God determined that we be merely spirit, He could have made us as angels, but angels are not God. They are angels. God is working a work in which we will be like Him, not like angels. His purpose requires that we cooperate, and though our part in this is small in comparison to what He is doing, it is nonetheless vital. Notice again how Paul draws this beautiful section in I Corinthians 15 to a conclusion by drawing our attention to what it is going to take *our* part to make God's purpose work.

I Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Notice the word *victory*. It comes from exactly the same root as the word *overcome* in Revelation 2 and 3. The great rewards that Christ pronounces to each one of those churches is given to those who overcome, and it takes work, it takes labor to overcome, to become a victor. Notice the words *your labour*. Now the labor is whatever it takes to yield to God so He is able to do His work. The metaphor that is used a number of times in scripture is that God is the Potter and we are the clay, and He is shaping us. The difference between us and the clay that a potter would normally use is that the clay God is working with is *alive*! It has mind and will of its own, and it can choose to resist or to yield.

Perhaps most important of all to us after repenting is to find motivation over the long haul to use our faith to yield to Him in labor, and not merely mentally agreeing to a proposition. Real living faith motivates conduct that is in agreement with what God is doing. It is clear God's purpose is that we grow, or change, to become as much like Him in the time that He permits us to live allows. II Timothy 2: 15 is a scripture I personally find to be very encouraging. We're going to read II Timothy 2: 15 and verses 19 through 21.

II Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

If your Bible is fairly modern, it's likely that it's going to have a little number beside the word *study*, and in the margin it will say "*be diligent*." The word study means to be diligent. I'm going to paraphrase that. Paul says to Timothy, "*Be a diligent workman, who never has to be ashamed before God because he is rightly using (dividing, discerning) the word of God.*" Following that verse comes a mention of the doctrine of the resurrection that was being *falsely* taught by some.

V19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. V20 But in a great house [family or dynasty or building, as in *temple*] there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

Notice the application Paul makes of it.

V21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified (or holy) and meet (fit) for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Verse 21 again is referencing back to labor. It's something the man has to yield to so that he can be purged, cleaned up. What I find encouraging is that all the vessels in God's house [in His family, in His temple] are not of the same quality. But if we work and really apply ourselves to purge that which is dishonoring, we can become a vessel of honor. We don't have to stay the way we are. I think it can be rightly understood that every single one of us begins this journey as a vessel of dishonor. We all start out, you might say, on a level plane. We are all wood, hay and stubble. Not a single one of us can trumpet our value and worth before God because it's not our works at all that justifies us. It is God's grace given because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and because His righteousness then is imputed to us.

Turn now to Philippians 2:12.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. V13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

I think it is pretty clear that Paul believed in works. There is a responsibility laid on us to work in partnership with God. Work's purpose is not to earn salvation, but rather God to do His creative labors in us. He wants us to be prepared for the Kingdom of God. He wants us to glorify Him with the witness of our lives.

In the past two sermons in this series that I have given, we have examined two elements that motivate us. The first is *the fear of God*, which is a deep and heartfelt respect for Him. Respect means *to hold in high regard*, and it moves us to defer to God's instruction in each facet of life as we come to understand what His instructions are. The second element is *vision* or foresight. Foresight comes as a result of the revelation of God. It's the companion of wisdom, of prudence, of judgment and discretion.

As we saw last week, all of these work to enable us to see *cause and effect* much more clearly than our limited human experience would normally allow, and thus vision preserves life. It

protects us from harm and it helps us to achieve goals. Today we're going to add to those two. We're going to add *HOPE*. In many biblical contexts hope is so closely related to faith that they seem almost that they're one and the same thing. In fact the verb *form* is frequently translated in English bibles as *trust*, but there are differences.

Turn now to I Corinthians 13:13. At the end of the "*love chapter*" Paul says:

I Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.

Here hope appears as one of the three greatest virtues of Christianity. Now whereas faith is the foundation upon which the other two stand, love is the object because it enables us to communicate properly, and it unites. Hope is the quality that motivates and provides qualities to life that energize by keeping us in anticipation of better things to come. Now hope [as it is used in the scriptures] is not difficult at all to define. It appears as both a noun and a verb.

Hope in the Bible means *the absolute certainty of future good*. In this verse [I Corinthians 13.13] it is listed as those things which remain, or abide, or continue. In other words, even in the Kingdom of God there will always be a looking forward to some blessing - age upon age - as they unfold upon us. This is because God's revelation is unending, and because He Himself is an inexhaustible resource! It stuns the mind to look at what we can already see of how great His mind is as revealed in the creation. He has lived age upon age, forever and ever. Can we even begin to imagine how much yet He has to give us? We can always look forward with exciting anticipation of even *more* as He reveals these things to us.

I think it's good to go to Ephesians 2. Here Paul talks about the Gentiles to whom he was writing, or who were included with that group to whom he was writing. I think that we all [though we may not be racially Gentiles] can put ourselves in the same category as this verse shows.

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past
Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is
called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that
time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of
Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope,
and without God in the world.

I want us to see this because *hope* is uniquely Christian among the religions of this world. No other religion, no other way of life can give its adherents a hope that is absolutely certain. No Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, or any other kind of "ism" can "promise and deliver" as the God of creation can. Now there are three reasons for this that I can think of. Maybe you can add to this.

1) Though those religions may be moral, they are not from God; therefore they speak only from men's and/or demons' experience.

2) Their god is not God. If they have a demon as a god [though the demon may live forever], it is still not God.

3) None of those religions has the expectation of a Messiah. [I might add here that all the Bible implies about what is going to happen when the Messiah returns.

With that in mind, I think to what I think is naturally the next question to ask. Where does our hope come from? The Bible leaves no doubt. In fact it's very specific right within the book of Ephesians in chapter 4 and in verse 4.

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

Here Paul clearly associates the hope that we have with our calling, and that calling is God's invitation, or summons, to come to Him. The hope that is unique to Christianity is in us only as a result of God's call. If God had not revealed Himself, invited us, we would never have that hope. We would be blinded to it. So the implication right in the context here of Ephesians 4 is that this hope is one of the factors uniting us into one body. We should all have the same hope. The intensity of that hope, the intensity of that expectation, may differ from person to person, but the hope -- the ground of that hope -- should be the same in every one of us.

The fact that we have this hope is generally seen as an end. It is an end to pessimism and despair. It is as a beginning of a life filled with endless possibilities because it is hope which gives positive expectancy to life. You look at the things of this world and there is no reason to hope. Everyone of us who is an adult has had enough experience and knows enough about the history of men, of where the civilizations of men and where the cultures of men always end. They always end in warfare and in the trashheap -- the same pile of garbage of all cultures that have gone before us.

The civilizations of men cannot sustain a good way of life that will produce hope generation after generation. All the devices of men come to naught. We know that. We're listening to the news, aren't we? We know what's going on in our cities, in our counties, and in our states, and it doesn't fill us with hope that this generation is going to succeed. We need to take through our understanding of where our hope comes to another level yet, because the hope of a Christian is a continuous hope. Hope abides. It's not merely a flash in a pan. It's not a one-time thing.

For God to call someone merely means that He's invited or summoned that person to Him. The hope of a Christian exists in Him continuously. Now it must be this way if it's going to lead to anything of any value. It is of such importance that Paul rates it right up there with *faith* and *love*. Turn to Ephesians 2:12 again. Right in the context there are two big clues as to why.

Ephesians 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Notice it says that *you* . . . "At that time *you* were without Christ, being aliens."

An alien is a person who is not a citizen. These people were alienated, as it were, from the Commonwealth of Israel, and they were *strangers* to the covenants of promise. Now the Commonwealth of Israel could be either a nation or a church. It's interesting to read in more modern bibles how they have translated that word *commonwealth*. Sometimes they will use the word *nation*. Sometimes they will use the word *society*, which is interesting. I have even seen the word *culture*. They are a little bit ambivalent as to exactly how that should be translated. The Commonwealth of Israel could be either the nation or the church, because [here's why in context] ancient Israel, under the Old Covenant, did establish a relationship with God, *and* that in turn with a small measure of His promises and the hope of a Messiah. But I think what Paul had in mind [the primary meaning here] is *the Church - the Israel of God*, because it is in the New Testament described as a nation.

The Commonwealth of Israel could very easily be *those who have made the New Covenant with God*, because those people to whom he was speaking there were aliens from it. They were separated from the covenants. It is the New Covenant which contains the confirmed promises. So being part of ancient Israel under the Old Covenant would not have given them access to many of the promises that give us reason to have hope. Can you have hope if you don't know whether your sins are forgiven? Can you have hope knowing what you now know if you have no access to God? Can you have hope if there is no promise of the Holy Spirit and if there is no promise of eternal life? *None* of those four was in the Old Covenant! This is why I think the Commonwealth of Israel Paul was talking about is in reality *the Church*.

This next level of understanding where the hope comes from is that we can have a continuing never-ending hope because the New Covenant ensures a continuous relationship with God. I should say not only a continuous relationship, but a continuous *close family* relationship with God. Now that necessarily involves the other part of the same verse 12, because Paul says they were *without Christ*. Therefore their sins were not forgiven. They didn't know the Savior, *and* they were without God in the world.

It is not merely we have made a covenant that we can have hope, but a greatest importance of all is *with whom* the covenant is made. Turn now to Romans 15: 4. Verse 4 introduces the word *hope* into the context.

I Corinthians 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

That tells you a little bit about where hope comes from. It comes from the scriptures, as we learn of God. Now drop down to verse 12.

V12 - And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Here the word *hope* is translated *trust*. If any of you have a New King James Version, your Bible will say *hope*. I think almost in any modern version it will say *hope*, because you look in

the Greek, and it says *hope*. "In Him shall the Gentiles *hope*."

V13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word *hope* [translated *trust* in verse 12], and the Greek word translated *hope* in verse 13 [one is # 1679 in Strong's, and the other is # 1680] both come from exactly the same root. Both mean to anticipate simply different tenses. That's the only difference between the two words.

The Christian's hope derives from his calling through the New Covenant and finds its ultimate source in God. He is the *God of hope*. But God is more than the source of our hope. He *is* our hope! His very being, His very person, is our hope. In verse 12 where it says "In Him shall the Gentiles hope," this means that He is the *object* of their expectancy, or our expectancy, or our anticipation. In another place it puts it this way: In the Old Testament it says, "The desire of all nations shall come." Hope indicates desire, expectancy.

In verse 13 where it says "He is the God of hope," it means that He is hope's source. So in verse 12 He is the *object* of the hope, and in verse 13 He is hope's *source*. Anyway you want to cut it, without God we have no hope except for the normal desires common to the unconverted -- things like filling our belly, getting a good sleep, satisfying our eyes and ears, experience thrills, accumulate power and money, and to get things. None of those things is intrinsically evil, it is just that God wants our hope to be *exceedingly higher* than those things. He doesn't mind if we hope to have things, but there has to be hopes that are higher than those.

Verse 13 gives us a *major* condition to having this hope, and thus having the motivation that it provides. It says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope." Remember I said in previous sermons that *faith* undergirds all the elements that motivate, and these elements show then why living faith produces. The condition is that we believe God. From here I want you to go to I Peter 1. There are those commentators who feel that the main theme of I Peter 1 is *hope*.

I Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a *lively*
lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

V21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead,
and gave him glory; that [to this end] your faith and hope might be in
God

We can abound in hope because we believe in the faithfulness of the God who gives us reason to have hope. Now the strength of hope therefore rises or falls on our perceived dependability of the expectation. If we think that the chances of us receiving whatever it is can be depended upon, then our hope, and therefore our motivation, is going to be very strong. We can thus conclude that the expectation [or why the expectation is dependable] is left decisive as to whether we will be motivated. Is God dependable? That's the issue. If He is dependable, then our expectation can be very high.

What did Peter mention here? He mentioned that God raised Jesus from the dead! Now we have a *living* hope because Jesus Christ is alive. The Father is alive. Our hope then is God-grounded, God-sustained, and God-directed. We can then know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called of God. Following that, our hope should not merely be ephemeral wishes or dreams based on wishy-washy sentimentality, but on *solid* realities, because there is nothing more real than God and His word.

Nothing is more absolute than what God says! If He gives us a promise, it's absolute. There may be conditions to be met, but that doesn't turn aside the surety of what God says. What this means then is that our hope is flowing from an inexhaustible unending source, and therefore no trial should ever be able to quench our optimism concerning future good. Our hope then is the response to His working among us, and that response is expressed in trust, patience, endurance, and an eagerness to continue on. The Bible gives us quite a number [I would have to say] "glorious things," both as objects to hope for and to stir up our hope. I want you to turn with me to Acts 23: 6-7. I'm just going to give you three of them. Now here is a Christian's most commonly-known hope:

Acts 23:6-7 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

When I was a boy, the local volunteer company held an annual street fair in order to raise money. You are probably familiar with those things. They also raffled off a Buick Roadmaster. Those of you who can think back to those times is when they had four-holer jobs. That was a Roadmaster. A three-holer job was just a Buick Super, or a Special, but the four-holer job was the Roadmaster. That was the big luxurious boat! The volunteer company did that for the adults.

For the children they raffled off a Schwinn Roadmaster bicycle. To me that Schwinn bicycle was the "cat's meow," as we used to say. It had a horn built right into the crossbars with a battery operated button. You pushed the horn and it actually beeped! It had a light mounted on the front fender, which was a real stream-lined thing. It even had a knee-action spring that was mounted on the front fork so that when you hit bumps it would flex a little bit, and it would absorb the shock of going over a bump. The one they raffled off [believe it or not] had a radio mounted on the handlebars.

Every year that bicycle was the end of the rainbow for me, but I had *no hope* of ever having one unless I won it. The Ritenbaugh family didn't have any money for such things, and so my only recourse was to buy a raffle ticket and hope that I would win it. The raffle tickets usually cost a dime a piece, and so I would scrape my pennies together each year, buy a ticket, and hope. *I never* won it. [You're probably wondering, "*What does this have to do with the resurrection?*"] The point is that it was my desire, it was my hope that motivated me to scrape

my pennies together so that I *would* have a chance of winning the Schwinn bike.

What Paul is saying here in the context is that he was on trial because his hope of the resurrection of the dead motivated him to do the things that caused him to be on trial. Anticipation, desire, expectancy, and *hope* motivate. They make us *do* things! Turn now in II Corinthians 3:11-12. The subject material here in this context is different.

II Corinthians 3:11-12 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.

The context here in broad terms is the change in covenants, which in more specific terms brought about the change from the ministration of death to the ministration of the spirit. The result is that the potential of the administration of the spirit is *boundless*, and it filled them with such great hope that it in turn motivated them to be *bold* in the way that they spoke. [The "we" in the context there is the apostles -- Paul and the others.] Again, hope motivated an action. In this case it was boldness. Turn now to Romans 5:1-5.

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

Are you aware that faith, hope and love all appear in those five verses? The word *hope* appears *three* times in those short five verses. In this case it is tied to justification. In verse 2, hope motivates one to rejoice! We rejoice in that we can look forward in positive expectation of the *glory* of God; not the glory of a perfect human, or even of angels, but of God, and brethren that is hard for us to imagine. It almost sounds blasphemous to say something like that, but there it is, right in the Book! We can rejoice in *the hope* of the glory of God! Brethren, no *wonder* a Christian can be optimistic about life in the face of all that is going on. If you don't have something like this driving you, today's news is going to put you into despair. You're not going to be able to face each day with an optimistic outlook. You're going to know that you're surrounded by a world constantly pressing in it's despair, it's discouragement. When that begins to happen, just know that you're losing a bit of your hope which would keep you optimistic and positive.

I said earlier that hope is produced by the activity, or at least in part is produced by the activity of God amongst us. Now here in verses 3 and 4 he says, "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, *hope*." That's partly where the activity of God amongst us is drawn from. What it means is that the trials borne while God is part of our lives leads to the production of hope, and

this hope is one by which a person is *never* embarrassed. That's what it means. "Hope makes not ashamed." (verse 5). It never embarrasses through failure, because God [who is our hope] never fails. He loves us! His love is communicated to us. That's what it means, because this is why hope never fails. Hope in God, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. So we can know that He is working in us. I want us to go now to one more verse that I think is terrific. It shows the motivating power of what hope will do to a person who has it. Turn to I John 3: 1-3.

I John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should