

Elements Of Motivation (Part Three)

Hope

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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 is 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 a *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 it is 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. 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. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 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 on *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, 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.

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.

II Timothy 2:19-20 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. 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:

II Timothy 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these...

This is a reference back to labor. It's something the man has to yield to so that he can be purged, cleaned up.

II Timothy 2:21 ... he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified (or holy) and meet (fit) for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

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 2:12-13 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. 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 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—all who were unconverted can put ourselves in the same category as this verse shows.

Ephesians 2:11-12 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; 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.
- 3) None of those religions has the expectation of a Messiah. I might add here, 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 city, in our county, and in our state, 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 has 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* . It is 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.

Romans 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.

Romans 15:12 - 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* ."

Romans 15:13 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 have 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* hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I Peter 1:21 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. 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. 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 *boundles*s, 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: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 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; 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 be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; [Tie this to Romans 5 and in verse 2 where we can hope in the glory of God]...when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And **every man that hath this hope in him PURIFIES himself**, even as He (**God**) is pure.

I don't know of another verse in the Bible which shows the motivating power of what hope will *drive* a person to do. It will *drive* a person from sin so that we can be like **Him!** Is hope important? It's one of the big three! I doubt very much whether we're going to grow very much if that hope is not burning in our mind. Let's turn to Ephesians 6:17. This is the context where Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation.

He does not say there what that helmet is, but if we look in I Thessalonians 5:8 it says, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a *helmet*, the *hope* of salvation."

The "hope of salvation" is compared to a soldier's helmet. The helmet protects the part of the body that is **most** vital to a healthy life. A soldier in combat can lose a finger, a hand, an arm or a leg. He can lose a foot, an eye, or both eyes. He can have his ears chopped off, but if he loses his head, that's

it. Life ends. If because of a blow on the head he is allowed to live, but the blow is so strong that it scrambles his brain, what's the quality of his life like? A person can be hit in the head and lose some of his faculties; one, or many. He can lose his eyesight from a blow on the head. He can lose his ears. He can lose his mobility in his legs or his arms.

You ought to be able to begin to see why hope is so important. Hope protects the most vital area of the body in terms of producing or impinging on the quality of life—the thinking part, which is the part where choices and judgments are made. It is the part where attitudes reside. It is the part where attitudes surge forth in conduct. It is that part which holds our memories of all of life's experience. The part that is going to determine the kind of life we lead. It is that part where most of Satan's fiery darts are going to be aimed.

Hope is seen in this metaphor, not as an offensive weapon, but as a *defensive* weapon—a motivator to protect us from the law for the glorious *end* to God's purpose. Now why is this? It is because the only thing that can really defeat and destroy us is for us to give up. To quit. Jesus said, "He that *endures* to the end, the same shall be saved." Hope's fruit is not merely an optimistic and positive outlook, but is the *drive* to persevere, to endure "*come what may*," and to *drive on* ! Only the hopeful will do this. The others will give up.

Romans 8:24-25 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

So powerful is hope's action that Paul says we are saved by it. This in no way conflicts with "By grace are you saved through faith," because both of them are needed; faith for its reasons, and hope for its reason. Faith, brethren, operates in the present. It is a factor that is visible *right now* , even at what you're doing. Because you have faith, you are at a Sabbath service and not at a Sunday service. That's evidence of your faith. Faith is visible right now of the things not seen.

You're keeping the Sabbath because you believe the purpose that God is working out, and you hope that it will be achieved in your life. So what you

do in the present is visible, and that's faith operating. Doesn't it say in Hebrews 11:1 that "faith is the evidence of things *not* seen, but hoped for?" Hope, you see, has a *future* reference. That's what the verse we just read says. What does Paul say then? He says that if a person has hope he is motivated to patiently wait for what he hopes for to be seen. The hopeful are motivated to endure whatever it takes to receive whatever it is they hope for. They won't give up.

Turn now to Hebrews 6:9. Here we have a very interesting section in regard to hope. We're going to go all way to the end of the chapter.

Hebrews 6:9-20 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. [Tie that in with I Corinthians 15:57-58] And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Here hope's source and function is expanded on considerably. It's been said, "*The quality of a person's hope is the measure of the man.*" Now the writer of the book of Hebrews hoped for the people to whom he was writing was for

the better things of salvation. That appears in verse 9. Now better than what? The context from the beginning of the chapter shows that he feared they were falling away. His hope for them is then clearly stated that he wants them to have *a full assurance of hope* [verse 11]. Why? Whoever wrote this was no dummy! He knows that hope motivates!

These people needed to be stirred up, and so his hope for them was that they have a full assurance of hope *to the END* ! Other translations translate that "*or the full development of the hope.*" Now why? In order that they not become lazy, but get moving!

To put it in a more positive light, is that they be diligent and in earnest about their responsibility to God in heaven all the way to the end. It is that they be fully spiritually enthusiastically energized in going about their Father's business. Why? Because a movement, an ideal, or a dream that does not inspire hope will not grip the hearts of people so that they will give themselves over to its accomplishment. The writer's spoken prayer is that somehow they will capture again the full assurance of hope, that somehow it would ignite in them the desire to plunge on, to fill them with expectancy so that they would get out of their spiritual funk, and get going.

Again we have another context here in three verses (10 through 12) of faith, hope, and love. All appear again. I think brethren that we frequently overlook the importance of hope's motivational qualities. He tells them in verse 12 that they be not slothful or lazy, but followers. The word would have been better translated *imitators* . It doesn't mean just merely to follow along the same path. It means to do *exactly* as those who went before them. It means to copy them, to imitate them.

Do you remember the song "*High Hopes*"? "*He's got high hopes, high hopes!*" Frank Sinatra made a real popular recording of it a number of years ago. Let me give you one little stanza of that song:

Once there was a little old ant,
Thought he'd move a rubber tree plant.
Now everyone knows that an ant can't move a rubber tree plant.
But he's got high hopes. He's got high hopes.

He's got high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.
The problem's just a toy balloon. They'll be bursting soon.
They're just bound to go pop!
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant.

Then another verse talks about a goat which had a dam in its way.

Now a goat can't knock down a dam, or can it?
Whoops! There goes another million kilowatt dam!

You get the point of the song! You get the point of the context here, why the writer of Hebrews wanted these people to have a full assurance of hope. It motivates people to overcome because they have such expectancy, such anticipation, such desire, such hope of what lies at the end. Because of the promises of God, they are willing to pay the price and drive themselves to do what seemly is impossible.

The people to whom the author was writing were going through a hardship that is never fully explained. It is explained that they were regressing from what they formerly had been. Hardship in many cases is a trial in which little can be done except to patiently endure it. The world is out there. We can't change it. We can keep ourselves from getting involved in that which is evil in it, but we can't change it, so we have to patiently endure the fact that it is there putting its pressure on us. But that patient endurance all by itself is a good work, because, at the very least, it's exercising self-control.

The author goes on and gives them the example of Abraham who lived by hope. In fact he tells us in Romans 4:18 that Abraham, against hope, believed in hope. So strong was Abraham's hope that in spite of Sarah's being beyond the child-bearing age, so that he would have no physical reason to have hope that she could ever bear a child, he nonetheless hoped to that end, because God had given him a promise. His hope was vindicated 25 years later when Isaac was born. Do you know, do you realize that he had to wait another **60 years** after that before grandchildren came along? But it was enough to show Abraham that God was fulfilling His promise and that his hope in God had not been in vain. The author of Hebrews offers that up as evidence that it pays to hope in God. Have any of you waited 25 years, or 85 years for anything?

We live in a land and in a culture where people are sworn into government offices, and they promise to uphold the office. They promise that they are going to uphold the laws, but it seems like in due course of time they break their vows. Government promises that its money is good. Banks tell you that your savings with them are safe. Insurance companies tell its policyholders that their pensions are secure, and then they go broke. What does it produce in us? At the very least it produces the skepticism of the promises of men, and maybe at the worse a raging cynicism and despair because we know that in men **nothing** is very likely to work out.

But God has promised, and He wanted Abraham and you and me to feel so secure that He swore. God, who never lies, doubled up His promise by swearing on Himself, and the fact that He lives forever. If we would follow this book of Hebrews right on through, by the time you get to the end of it He says in Hebrews 13:5, "I will *never* leave you nor forsake you." Can we have hope? It's a *powerful* motivator.

What does a person do when he realizes that he is in danger? Doesn't anybody in his right mind make for a safe spot as quickly as he possibly can? Well, that's what the author's advice is here in verses 18, 19 and 20. He says there is a place of refuge, a place a safety, that deeply involves *hope* .

I wonder whether the author had the cities of refuge of Numbers 35 in mind when he wrote this. I don't know, but he says, in effect, "*Take hold in your hardship, in your trials. Take hold of the hope offered.*" The Greek word that is translated here "*set before*" or "*offered*" pictures hope lying before us, spread out like some inviting prospect there for us to take.

In the context of the whole book these people were in danger of falling away through lethargy, through lukewarmness. We might call it Laodiceanism. They were lazy, and they were careless in their reaction to life and what it had dealt them, and all the while they were possessors of *the greatest hope* a human could possibly entertain. In the passage of time it had become blown in their minds almost to non-existence, and they were forgetting it.

So the author then compares hope as being an *anchor* to our lives. Even as an anchor keeps a ship from drifting onto the rocks, hope anchors us so that we don't idly drift to our spiritual destruction. Hope keeps us safe. It is a major stabilizing force for the whole of our lives because it has hold of something that doesn't move despite of all the tempest around us.

Our God is a rock. He changes not. His purpose is absolutely secure. Hope is anchored in Jesus Christ who has entered beyond the veil and into the heavenly Holy of Holies on our behalf as our High Priest. You will remember from Romans 5:9-10 that though we are justified by His blood, we are saved by His life, by the fact that He lives. He intercedes for us. He watches over our lives to bring us successfully into the Kingdom of God, and that's why the author then goes into an explanation of the Melchisedec Priesthood in chapter 7.

Now let's finish in Hebrews 3:6.

Hebrews 3:6 But Christ [as compared to Moses] as a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if* [here's a condition] we hold fast the confidence *and* the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Hope, too, is a motivator. It's primary function, as I see it in the scriptures, is to enable us to endure because we know, and we know that we know that our hopes are sure because they are in God who is absolute and all-powerful. Hope is another wonderful gift from God by His spirit, and if we are to be saved, it means to fulfill. It must come from God. The relationship established through God's calling, Christ's sacrifice, and our making of the New Covenant with Him provides that means. We must do all we can to fulfill our part of that relationship. It means *EVERYTHING* to our salvation.