

Where to Find the Hope You Need

Isaiah 40:31

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

At the end of World War II, an American sub came back to Newport News, Virginia to dock. As it came into port something terrible went wrong with the mechanism and it began to sink in the harbor. They immediately dispatched coast guard to go out because obviously it was full of crew and they were trying to save the crew. They dispatched divers that would dive down to the hull of the submarine and find out what went wrong. As the divers swam around the sub you could hear that one inventive sailor had a hammer and was knocking on the hull from the inside in Morse code, “Is there hope?”

Is there hope? That is one of the fundamental questions of life. Is life worth living? Is there hope? Can I count on anything in life? Is there hope? It is asked everyday by thousands of people in thousands of different ways. When you are setting in the doctor's office awaiting tests, you hear the question, “Is there hope?” When you are standing by the bedside at the hospital, you hear the question, “Is there hope?” When a couple who have put months and months into marriage counselors sitting there and getting nowhere, they are thinking in their minds, “Is there hope?” When you are dealing with a tax accountant in a bankruptcy court and you ask, “Is there hope?” When a couple or a family hears that their child is missing, they ask the police, “Is there hope?”

You can go forty days without food and three days without water and you can go eight minutes without air. But you cannot go a single second without hope. Hope is one of the essentials of life. When hope is gone, life is over. You need hope to cope.

Dr. Harold Wolfe who was a professor at Cornell University in the medical school did a study on the effects of hope on the human body. He studied 25,000 prisoners of war over an extended period of time to see what hope did to them and what difference it made. He discovered that out of those 25,000 POW's there was one group of men on whom the experience of being a POW had no effect at all, in spite of brutality, in spite of torture, in spite of solitary confinement, in spite of all kinds of inhumane abuse. There was one group it just did not faze. There was no posttraumatic stress syndrome. They did not get ill. They did not have flashbacks. They just handled it and went on with their life. When he studied that group, the one common denominator was an extraordinary high level of hope. Hope makes all the difference in the world. It is essential for handling the crises of life. In his concluding study he said, "When a man has hope he is capable of bearing incredible burdens and cruel punishment. But when hope is gone, people fall apart – emotionally, physically and spiritually."

Tonight we are beginning a new series entitled "How God Meets Your Ten Deepest Needs." We are going to begin by looking at, "Where do you go to find the help and the hope that you need." Because if you do not get hope none of the other things we talk about are going to make sense. You have to have hope to believe that God will work in your life. You have to have hope to believe that God can change your situation, that God can meet your needs. You have to have hope.

Because hope is in such short supply in our society today, people will fall for all kinds of scams. They actually put their hope in false hope. They trust in things like physic hotlines and palm reading and astrology, fake healers, quack cures, all kind of crazy things – crystals; putting their hope in rocks – and things like that. And of course, inevitably, these things disappoint and actually they end up being worse off because nothing is worse than being disappointed by a false hope. Nothing is more useless than false hope. Is there any place

where I can get *hope* I can *depend on*, that I can *count on* for the crises of life, when *things come into my life that I don't plan but blow me over?* **Are there any things like that that I can count on?** Where do I find that kind of hope?

The Bible tells us that you find it in God. God is *the* source – the source of hope.

Romans 15:13 says, “May God, the source of hope, fill you with joy and peace through your faith in Him.” **In other words as you put your faith in God, He gives you peace, joy and hope.** And He says, “...Then you will overflow with hope...” Specifically, God says, “If you want to put your hope in Me, you need to put it in My name.” The Bible says, “In Your name I will hope, for Your name is good.” **What does that mean? How do you put hope in a *name*?** What's the big deal?

You need to understand that *names* meant a lot more back in the past than they do today. Today, we choose names for the way that they sound. *Stephanie* or *Spencer* – kind of sophisticated sounding names. You just like the way it falls off your tongue.

But in ancient cultures, they would choose a name because of what it meant, because of what it described. In fact, your name was usually the definition of your character. You were given a name that matched who you were.

When God chose to reveal Himself to the Hebrew nation, He used Hebrew terms to describe Himself. Did you know that God has a lot of different names? In the Bible, God calls Himself by many different Hebrew names. **Each one of those names is a description of His character.** Each one of those names is a promise to you. Each one of those names is a benefit that God says, “I provide to man.”

For instance, one time God used the Hebrew name *Jehovah Shalom*. That means, “I am the God who gives you peace. And if you

want real peace of mind you come to Me for it.” **In another place He uses the Hebrew term, I am Jehovah Jirah.** That means, “I am the God who provides for all your needs. You can count on Me. You can come to Me.” We are going to be looking at these names in the weeks ahead because, as I began to prepare for this series, “Meeting Your Ten Deepest Needs,” I came to the amazing discovery that for every one of the needs of man there is a corresponding name of God. And God says in so many ways, “You got a need? I can meet that. You got another need? I can meet that.” **On and on.**

At the end of the book of Ezekiel, God gives one of His names. He says “I am Jehovah Shammah.” In Hebrew that means, “I am the God who is always there.” **There is no place that God is not.** There is no place you will go that God is not already there. God has been in your past. **He is in your present.** He is going to be in your future. He is in the good times and the bad times. **He is in the good places.** He is in the evil places. He is everywhere.

This has profound implications on where you find hope. If God is truly with me all the time, whether I feel it or not, if He is truly with me, then that means there are three sources of hope that I can count on. There are a lot of things in life that I cannot count on, a lot of things in life that are uncertain. These are three anchors of the soul as the Bible calls them – hope is the anchor of the soul – things that I can count on so that no matter what happens, I know that life is not hopeless.

The first thing I know about God is...His presence is watching over me. The older I get the more I realize how much of my life is out of my control. The truth is, not only can I not control much of what is in the future, I do not even know much of what is in the future, as seen in Isaiah 41:10, “Don’t worry because I am with you,’ says God. ‘Don’t be afraid, because I am your God. I will make you strong and I will help you. I will support you.’” **The good news is regardless of what happens, you and I do not have to go through it alone.** There

is a God who will be with us. He will be there with you. **That is one of the certainties of life that I can hold on to.** When I hold onto that certainty, I have hope.

There are a lot of uncertainties in life. One of the sad uncertainties of life is that *people will leave you*. Friends and family might move away. **There will be people that you love that will die.** There will be people that you love that will become ill and won't be themselves any more. There may even be those that you argue with and there is a *separation* and that is painful. The sad truth of life is people leave us.

But the certainty of life is God will never leave you. That helps us to have *hope* because *the fear of being abandoned is one of the greatest causes of hopelessness in all of our lives*. This feeling that I am going to be *deserted*, I am going to be *forsaken*, I am going to be *left alone*, I am going to be *overwhelmed* and *there is going to be no one to help*. It is expressed in the two words, “What if...?” **What if my husband/wife dies me and I am left alone?** What if my kids are not there for me at the end of my life? What if these friends are not there? “What if...?”

The truth is, **God will never leave you.**

As a pastor, I have stood at a lot of gravesites with people. After that funeral, many, many times I have seen in their eyes and I have heard the words, “I don’t know how I am going to make it. How am I going to make it to the next step?” I have heard oftentimes this sense of doubt and this, “What if?” I have heard it in the voice of a spouse who has just been *deserted* or someone who has just *lost their job* or a parent who has just *lost a child*. This feeling of, “How am I going to go on?” Some of you might be feeling that way tonight.

The answer is this: **God will be with you.**

Not only is He with us; the Bible says He watches over us. Not just watches us but watches over us and cares for us, as seen in Psalm 32:8, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and will watch over you." Notice the words "guide" and "advise." You and I do not know the future. **We cannot control the future.** God does know the future. God can control the future. **And the fact that God not only knows and controls the future He is willing to guide and advise us concerning the future.** He is willing to show us the way. There is great hope in that.

For many of us, when we cannot figure out why something is happening, there is real sense of hopelessness. If we can figure out why we are having a problem, if we can figure out what the benefit of that problem is going to be, there is a little more hope. But when we cannot figure it out, we have a sense of hopelessness. **One of the great things that brings hope is realizing I do not have to figure it all out.** I just have to trust the God who has it all figured out. He knows and He understands and He is willing to guide and advise me through life.

Lamentations 3 says, "I have hope when I think of this: the Lord's love never ends. His mercies never stop. They are new every morning." **That one verse has enough hope to get me at least through to the next week.** It is all about hope. Nothing can ever make God stop loving me once I put my hand in His hand. Once I put my hand in His hand He will never let go, as seen in that last phrase "**God's mercies are new every morning.**" Many of us look back on our lives and say, "I really blew it there. I wish I had not done such and such." **We feel hopeless because we feel like we have already messed things up in so many areas of our lives.** The Bible says that God gives us a new fresh start every morning. I need that. **I need to realize that everyday God gives me a new start and a new day to live a new hope.** No wonder the Psalmist could say, "This is a day the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and be glad in it."

The second source of hope is this: *His purpose is working in me.*
No matter what is happening in my life – good, bad, or ugly – **God's purpose is working in me.** It is true even when you have a problem that you don't understand the purpose. You know the most difficult kinds of questions of life are, “Why is this happening to me?” **When the problem is some kind of a *freak accident* and it does not have any rhyme or reason to it, it just does not make sense.** Those are the kind of situations that are the most difficult to handle.

On the other hand, *when you see a purpose behind your problem it gives you enormous hope. It also gives you enormous power to endure it.* And God says, “I am working in your life and I have a purpose no matter what is happening.”

If I can understand that God is doing good things in my life even when the situation is bad, even when I do not feel it, even when it does not make sense, even when I have no understanding. If I can understand that in spite of the circumstances God is still doing good things in my life, then, that gives me hope.

I hope by now if you have been a believer for some time that you have memorized Romans 8:28, “We know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” This is such a significant verse I want us to look at it word by word.

Notice first what it does not say. It does not say, “All things work out the way I want them to.” We would like that and we would like to interpret it that way but that is not what it says.

It does not say, “All things have a happy ending on earth.” **Because that is not true.** All things do not have a happy ending on earth. **Reality teaches us that not every patient gets well, that not every couple that gets married lives happily ever after.** Reality teaches us that not every business decision makes a million bucks, not every

problem is resolved. So we know that is not true. All children do not get straight A's and become captain of the football team. What does it say?

First it says, “We know that God causes all things to work together for good.” Notice the words “We know.” What that means is we do not wish, we do not imagine, we do not desire, we do not have false hope, we do not have positive thinking. It just says, “We know.” It is not a wish or a desire. It is a certainty. We are confident that whatever comes after this present circumstance God is still in control.

We know something. What? “...that God causes...” There is a grand master designer of the universe. And there is a plan that is in action and history is His story. There is no such thing as fate. There is no such thing as chance. There is no such thing as luck – good luck or bad luck. There is no such thing as karma, no such thing as what will be will be, or destiny or “I just happen to fall into it.” None of that stuff is true. There is a Master Designer. It is true - all of us make mistakes. We make many mistakes. But God never makes mistakes.

Romans 8:28 says, “We know that God causes all things to work together for good.” Notice the words “all things.” What does that include? Does that include illness? Yes. Does that include unemployment? Certainly. Does it include divorce? Some of you have a question about that one. Does it include a miscarriage? Yes. Does it include failure? Yes. Does it include freak accidents? Yes. Does it include the stupid decisions that I make and the mistakes I bring upon myself? Yes! Absolutely, yes! Everything fits into God’s plan. The good, the bad, the indifferent. The things that I do, the things I do not do. The things that I can control, the things I cannot control. All things work together for good.

Notice: It does not say, “all things are good.” And it does not say (get this) God causes all things. God does not. God does not cause

rape. God does not cause war. God does not cause famine and poverty. God does not cause leukemia and cancer. **To attribute those things to God is to turn God into a monster.** God is not a monster. God is not capable of sin. **It does not say God causes all things.** We bring a lot on ourselves.

But it does say that, “God causes all things to work together for good.” Notice the words “work together.” **It is not by accident and it is not separate.** They work together. **It goes back to that illustration about baking a cake.** When you are baking a cake you have to have some flour and some raw eggs and some Crisco and some sugar and some salt and some vanilla. Any one of those things by itself does not really taste too good. **Have you ever tasted flour?** Crisco? The sugar might taste pretty good. But none of those things on their own tastes good.

There are a lot of things in your life that are difficult to swallow. They are bitter going down and you choke on them. And we ask, “Why is that happening?” **Not all things in your life are good but they all work together for good.** When those elements are put together – just like the element of the cake are put together it produces a cake and the cake is very good. God wants to bake a cake in your life and He wants to take the elements in your life, even the things that are distasteful, bitter, and He wants to work them together.

God is weaving a tapestry of your life. And when He weaves that tapestry He uses some dark threads and some light threads. He uses some heavy thread and some lighter thread. **When He looks down on the tapestry He can see the pattern that is emerging and the picture that He wants to make of your life.** As He looks down from heaven, He has a different view than the one we see looking up. Have you ever looked at the underside of a cross-stitch piece? **It is a jumble of thread that makes no sense at all.** Looking up from the underside of that cross-stitch piece it makes no sense. You ask, “Why did that happen?” **I don’t know.** But one day you will know and you will see

how He was weaving the dark and the light, the good and the bad, the happy and the sad, every experience of life into a pattern. Can God bring good out of the bad? Did He bring any good out of the crucifixion? Absolutely. The crucifixion was not good. It was quite painful. But God brought good out of it. When you understand that God is not only watching over you but He is working in you. We not only have His presence working in us, we also have His purpose working through us. That is a source of enormous hope.

Notice the qualifier of this great promise. It is not for everybody. It says, "... those who love God..." All things do not work together for good for everybody. In fact, if you are thumbing your nose to God, walking out the back door and saying, "Forget You, God!" all things are not working for good in your life. In fact, all things are working for bad in your life. This is not a promise to everybody. It is a promise for those who love God and want to have a relationship with Him and who are trying to live according to His purpose.

Tonight if you are here and you are facing an impossible situation, the next verse is for you. Jeremiah 29:11 God says, "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future." You may think that what God is doing in your life right now is painful and is to no avail but God says, "My plan is good. You just do not see it yet. You need to trust Me. You need to have hope because it is a plan to give you a hope and a future."

If you have walked away from God, and you think, "I was close to God at one time but I cannot get back to Him," then Philippians 1:6 is for you, "God began doing a good work in you and I am sure He will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again." God started something in your life and what He starts He always finishes. You may think you are too far-gone to have any hope. You are not. You have walked away from Him but when you come back and say, "God, I am going to give You the mess, give You the pieces. Give me

Your peace.” **Then that which He started, He finishes in your life.** And He keeps on keeping on.

How do I learn about God’s plan for my life? Through studying the Bible. The Bible tells us in Romans 15 that everything that was written in this book was written for our encouragement and our hope. **The more you get into this book – God’s word, the Bible – the more hopeful you are going to be.** In contrast, the more you watch local news on TV, the more hopeless you are going to be. It is just what you decide to spend your time on. **When you focus on the fact that God’s presence is watching over me and God’s purpose is working in me you’re going to have hope.** But that is not all.

There is a third source of hope and it’s this: God’s place is waiting for me. When things get unbearable in your life you remember that our ultimate hope is heaven. Paul says it like this, “If all our hope is just on this earth, we should be pitied.” **But there is much, much more to life than just here and now.** We have an ultimate destination. This is just the warm-up act. And God is preparing a place in heaven.

Notice what Jesus said in John 14, “Don’t be troubled. You trust in God, now trust in Me. I am going to prepare a place for you.” Notice the word “place.” **Jesus Christ says that heaven is a place, not a state of mind.** It is not some kind of nirvana, nothingness, where you just float around, bodiless, spiritless, whatever. It is a real place and God says, “I am going to prepare a place for you.”

In this series we are going to look at what heaven is really like and what you are going to do when you get there. But tonight let me just say, heaven is a place of relief and release. No fear. No pain. No sorrow. No conflict. No more problems. The Bible says this, “He will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever.” **That gives us a reason for hope.** The acid taste of your faith and your hope is how you handle the funerals in your life. Anybody can have great

faith when things are going great. **But how do you handle the funerals of life.** I have been there, and looked in people's eyes who did not have hope and seen the despair in their eyes at the funeral. On the other hand, I have been in many, many funerals of believers where there were actually celebrations. **When a Christian dies, we rejoice for that person because we know where they are going.** We grieve. But we are not grieving for that person. **We are grieving for ourselves because we are going to miss them.** When a Christian dies, we don't grieve for them. They get to be in a better place. **They get to be in a place where we are all going eventually so we don't grieve for them.** There are no more problems for them. We grieve for ourselves. And the Bible says, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." Not once in scripture does it say, "Grieve not" or "weep not" or "sorrow not." It does say: "fear not." **Because fear that paralyzes us.** **But we do not grieve as one who has no hope.** Because we know where we are going when we die.

There is no way you can get eternal hope from some pop psychology group. No book, no tape, no therapy, no positive affirmation is going to make you competent to handle that kind of crisis. Where does that come from? **There is only one place you can get that.** **A personal relationship with Jesus Christ.** When you get that kind of relationship, you know that God is watching over you, His purpose is working in you, His place is waiting for you and you have hope.

If you are feeling hopeless tonight about something in your life, you have forgotten how much God cares about you. The Bible says in Isaiah 46, "Listen. I have upheld you since you were conceived and I have taken care of you from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and I will take care of you. I will carry you and save you. Can you compare Me to anyone? No one is equal to Me or like Me." **What an awesome God we have!**

Maybe you have felt trapped in a hopeless marriage. Maybe it is on the rocks and you have tried anything and everything and it is going nowhere fast. Or maybe you have felt trapped in a hopeless career and you have bounced from job to job to job and you just have not found where you fit yet. Or maybe you are stuck in a hopeless health problem. You have been to all the doctors and you have tried all the cures but nothing has helped you. Or maybe you have a hopeless situation with a child. You have tried love and discipline and you see to be losing control. Or maybe you have a hopeless situation with your finances and you are not getting out of dept; in fact, you are getting deeper in dept – month after month. You have borrowed from the rent to pay the light bill, and you have that feeling of despair. Maybe you are a single parent and there are those days when you feel powerless and hopeless to cope.

What do you do? You, in faith, give it to Jesus Christ. When you do, you will have a rebirth of living hope in your heart. The bible says, “In God’s great mercy He has caused us to be born again into a living hope because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.” You will have a rebirth of hope in your life. You will go from no hope to new hope. You can trust the promises of God.

If you have just been barely hanging on you need to do two things.

First, you need to remember the presence of God. Remember that He has always with you. Remember that you will never be without Him. You may not feel it but He is there. He is aware. He cares. He can help. Jehovah Shammah – “I am the God who is always there.” When you remember God’s presence, you will understand that you will never go through anything alone.

And two, you need to let other people help. That is why you need a church family. That is why you need to be in a Sunday School class and/or a Life Group. That is why you need to be more than just a

spectator. You need to be a participator. When you are in a crisis - who is going to stand with you? Do you know anybody? That is why you need a church home. You need a family who will be there when the crisis comes on and the heat is there so you can receive from God's people and you can remember God's presence and then you can rely on God's promise.

There are a lot of things in life that are uncertain but these three things you can count on. No matter what happens, God's presence will always be watching over me, God's purpose will always be working in me, and God's place is always waiting for me.

When I have hope what happens? The Bible gives us this promise, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Listen carefully to this statement: when God is in the mix no situation is hopeless.

God brought some of you here tonight so He could say this to you: Don't give up. Don't give in to discouragement or despair. Give it to God and trust Him for the answer.