

OUR HOPE IS IN GOD

10-97 by Mark Beaird

Text: Psalm 42

Hope is a precious gift -- especially to those who are searching for it. When all seems to be lost, we want to know that there's still hope. When situations seem to be unchangeable, we want to feel that anything is still possible. In times of distress or joy, tragedy or triumph, weariness or excitement, our dependence on hope feeds our hearts and minds. We look to the Lord as the source of that hope and depend on His presence to make that hope real. But what do we do when we do not feel the hope-inspiring presence of God?

■ Addressing our text, G. Campbell Morgan writes concerning the importance of renewing our hope in the presence of God, "In these particular words we have at once a revelation of the uttermost experience of sorrow, and a revelation of the inspiration of hope... The ultimate sorrow is the sense of the lack of God... The thirst for God is the most terrible thirst... Thus the cry of anguish is the expression of hope. That is the one and only hope in the hour of suffering. To find a way back to God, to come and appear before Him is the only cure for the intolerable thirst." (Morgan, 165)

Never forget that it is in the presence of God that we are comforted. We must never lose hope because of our circumstances or because of the way we feel. If we know that we belong to Him, then we know that we have not trusted Him in vain. If we have not trusted in vain, then we shall receive what we have need of, thereby renewing our hope. We must remind ourselves of Whom we have trusted. Our text bears out the *qualities* of the One in whom we have put our trust.

I. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF HOPE (vv. 1-3).

A. We must pursue God, the giver of true, life-changing hope (v.1).

As a drought drives an animal to search for water, so a sense of great need should compel us to seek out an encounter with God. Due to his present circumstances, the psalmist had been deprived of the opportunity to enter into the house of God in worship. He knew that God is omnipresent; but he longed for that experience of worshipping in the house of God with God's people. There are certain worship experiences that can only be experienced among God's people and in His house.

B. We must realize that our hope is found in a relationship with God (v.2).

■ Augustine has said that all of us have a "God shaped vacuum" which only He can fill." (Williams, 310)

Therefore the question begs to be asked, "With what are you trying to fill the void in your life?"

■ "Do we pant for Jaguars, holidays on the Riviera, and certificates of deposit? The psalmist's thirst is no vague spirituality. His soul pants for the "living God." Here is an elemental need that must be met." (Williams, 312)

II. HE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF HOPE (vv. 4-7).

A. Remembering the goodness of God draws attention to our hope (v.4).

■ In verse 4 the writer says, "When I remember..." "this is not an accidental recollection but a deliberate attempt to call to mind certain past events." (Anderson, 330)

His memory is filled with images of worshipping in the house of God. It's important to note that when we are in need, the things which are most important come to mind.

B. Remembering the One in whom we have trusted restores our hope (v.5).

■ Verse 5, "Why are you cast down..why are you disquieted...Hope in God... I shall yet praise Him." Having reminded himself of the goodness of God and how wonderful it is to be blessed by the Lord in worship, he asked himself the question, "Why are you cast down?" As hope begins to build within his soul he responds to his own questioning with the words of encouragement, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

III. HE IS THE SUSTAINER OF HOPE (v. 8).

A. His power will be with us in the day (v.8a).

■ (v.8a) "The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime..."

Note the word "command" in this verse. God will not merely bestow His lovingkindness on us but will "command" it in our hour of need. Nothing will stop the blessing of God from touching our lives.

Constant change can become one of the great problems of living in this present world. To make matters worse, the fickleness of others constantly challenges our ability to cope with relationships. But the One who controls it all needs only to speak the word and the need is met. He "commands His lovingkindness" and nothing nor no one can stop it.

B. His comfort will be with us by night (v.8b).

■ (v.8b) "And in the night His song shall be with me..."

God can still speak peace to your heart in the darkest of nights. His voice can even inspire a song of praise. The peace and the praise comes from knowing that He is near and He will answer your prayer.

■ Max Lucado writes, "The God who spoke still speaks.... The God who came still comes. He comes into our world. He comes into your world. He comes to do what you can't."(Lucado, 29)

IV. HE IS THE FUTURE OF HOPE (vv. 9-11).

A. Before you can see His intervention in your life, He will be there (vv.9-10).

There are times when it may appear that there will be no intervention on the part of God. There are people who will seemingly mock your faith by pointing out to you all the ways in which God has not answered your prayers. Eventually, you will wonder, "Why God?" Hold fast. God is there. You may not be able to see Him; but He is there.

■ Charles Spurgeon wrote, "A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there..." (Spurgeon, 272)

B. Though God may seem far away at times, praise Him for His help and for God himself (v.11).

The feeling that God's presence is far away can be a real and troubling sensation. Though the psalmist knows that God is near, it is how he feels that troubles him. But he will not give in to that feeling. He will hope in God. He will praise God regardless of what he feels. He will praise God because he knows that God is still God.

CONCLUSION

■ Someone wrote, "If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there hope at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, hough the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore his grace is the ground for unshaken hope. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile hope carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent upon oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit." (Spurgeon, 272)

The qualities of the One we serve assure us that He is able to "sustain" our spirits in time of need. No matter where we may find ourselves in life, no matter what we may face, hope is the precious gift that He offers to us all. Those of us who have learned to lean on the Lord know with assurance that we have not trusted in Him vain. If you do not know that same assurance, will you trust Him today?

References

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