

Never Lose Hope
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In our country many people are feeling hopelessness and despair. This election year has left them wondering “Who can we trust?” Can we trust those who are leading our country? Everywhere we turn we have government leaders who are accused - and in many cases obviously guilty - of immorality, perjury, illegal practices, lying, name calling and who knows what else.

And these are the ones who are running our country. They’re the ones were supposed to trust with our future. Many of us worry about what our world will be like for our children and grandchildren. It’s hard to know who to trust. But guess what? We do know who to trust. Psalm 20:7-9 says:

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm. O Lord, save the king! Answer us when we call!

As believers our trust is in the Lord our God. Regardless of who is in office, our trust is in the Lord our God. Governments may rise or fall but we stand firm because our trust is in the Lord our God.

You see in Old Testament times Israel wasn’t allowed to have a multitude of horses or chariots. Chariots gave the enemy great advantages in war, because they were fast and provided protection. Since their enemies had a great number of chariots and horses, this put Israel at a great disadvantage.

But David didn’t see it that way because his trust wasn’t in chariots and horses. His trust was in the Lord His God. You see, when Israel said “*They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.*”... they were totally confident of their victory. They considered it already done. Those who trusted in chariots and horses would be defeated but those who trusted in God alone would have victory.

The same is true of us. Our enemies will be brought to their knees but we will rise up and stand firm. We already have the victory. It’s done...stick a fork in it.

You see our trust is not in chariots or horses or who’s in office, or the latest news report or for that matter the latest doctor’s report or the latest weather report or the economy or our job or our spouse... our trust is in our God.

Many have lost hope because they have put their trust in people.

If you’re trust is in man you will lose hope.
 If you’re trust is in God you will have hope.

My sermon today is titled “Never Lose Hope.”

Hope means to desire with the expectation of obtaining.
Synonyms for hope are: Faith, belief, and expectation.

Hope causes us to expect good things. It determines what we think about, how we plan, and what we do. Hope gives us joy and satisfaction.

Martin Luther said “Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.”

Some people stop hoping because they’ve been hurt or disappointed. They don’t want to get hurt or disappointed again. But I want to tell you that isn’t good. Proverbs 13:12 says:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Losing hope makes you heart sick. When you’re heartsick, you feel a heaviness. You may even feel despondent or depressed.

In the book *Man’s Search for Meaning* - Victor Frankl tells his story of being a Holocaust survivor. He describes being forced to strip naked in two minutes or be whipped. He existed in the cold, full of fear. He suffered starvation, pain, lice, dehumanization, and exhaustion.

Yet, Frankl wrote that he was able to survive because he never lost hope. On the contrary, the prisoners that lost hope declined rapidly. They died from the inside out.

Frankl said this happened quite suddenly. One day they would just refuse to get up, get dressed or go outside. No amount of pleading from others helped. Not even threats from their captors made any difference. They simply lost hope and gave up. They would just lay there until they died.

Frankl believed that the difference between life and death was hope. Those who survived – survived on hope. This story shows us how powerful hope can be. Hebrews 6:19 says:

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Hope is our anchor. An anchor keeps a ship from drifting due to the wind or current. If we lose hope we are just drifting. We’ve lost direction and our life is off course. We may end up anywhere in life, blown here and there by the wind or currents.

Some of us are expecting good things to happen.
Some of us are expecting bad things to happen.
Some of us aren’t expecting much of anything to happen.

We have given up and feel hopeless. Someone once said, "There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them."

So – what are you expecting? The dictionary defines expectation as to confidently believe something will happen in the future to the point you prepare for it. That's what hope is – it's faith for the future.

In the New Testament, one of the meanings for expect means to wait with outstretched hand. Expectation implies an anticipation of receiving. This is more than an "I hope so" mentality. This is more than maybe or possibly or "it might happen."

Many people think of hope along the lines of:

"I hope I inherit a million dollars,
or I hope I get that job that I applied for,
"I sure hope God heard my prayer."

You hope God hears you? This is not at all the kind of hope that the Bible talks about. Bible hope sees the future by faith before you receive it. God doesn't answer "hope so" - He answers faith.

Expectation is the belief that what you are looking for is on the way and you are positioning yourself to receive it. You feel it deep down in your spirit.
You hold on to it through the waiting.
You hold on to it when others doubt you.
You hold on to it because God spoke it and you know it's true.

So how do we have hope?

1- God should be the source of our hope and expectations

Psalm 62:5 says:

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

When we know we've heard from God we can stand in faith even when we have to wait. And you will have to wait. That's always part of the process. The first key to hope is to hear from God. When God is the source of our expectations we have faith to persevere.

2- Realize God meets us at the level of our expectancy

Over and over in the Gospels people would call out to Jesus and He would ask them... "What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:51 And He usually did what they asked. In other words, they got what they asked for, they got what they expected. I'm sure there were many people who Jesus walked by because they did not call on Him.

So what do you want from the Lord? What are you asking for? If you are asking small and believing small you need to:

3- Ask Big

Too many of us pray small prayers. Too many of us pray safe prayers. What do I mean by that? We ask for something small. For something that is not risky. But Ephesians 3:20 says:

He is able to carry out His purpose and do superabundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or think infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams.

Wow! We should believe big and trust big because you will never rise above your expectations.

Trust that God has a better plan for you. Don't let His "No" or His "Wait" discourage you.

Here's what we should do when we know we've heard from God:

4- Don't give up.

Too many of us give up when things don't happen as fast as we thought they would or exactly the way we expected. So we settle for nothing.

Here's the word of the Lord to you: Expect more. Expect better. Expect a miracle.

What I'm talking about is faith in God and His Word. Abraham is a perfect example of this. God promised him he would be the father of many nations. For that to happen, he and Sarah had to have a baby. But the years went by and Sarah didn't get pregnant. So what did Abraham do? Romans 4:17-21 tells us...

In the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

This is such an awesome example of godly expectation.

Abraham did four things with great expectation:

- 1- Contrary to hope, Abraham believed. If he did not have great expectations it may never have come to pass.
- 2- He refused to consider the things that were contrary to what God had spoken. He did not consider his old body or the deadness of Sarah's womb.
- 3- He literally counted the promises of God as done even though they were not yet done in the natural. He expected it to happen.
- 4- He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief.

To waver means to vacillate. Many of us waver at the promises of God. Especially when things don't happen as fast as we think they should.

Trust me, I understand how this feels. Pastor Joe and I have been believing God for land and a building for Grace for about ten years. When it didn't happen as soon as we thought we began to waver. We'd say to each other "Well, maybe we missed God. Or, maybe we've done something wrong. Then one day I was reading Hebrews chapter 11 (which we call the faith chapter) and God really showed me something.

This chapter commends all of the ancient men and women of God who had faith. For example:

- By faith Noah, built an ark to save his family.
- By faith Abraham, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.
- By faith Joseph chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.
- By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land.
- By faith the walls of Jericho fell.

And on and on it goes listing many heroes of the faith. But then Heb. 11:39 says:

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

That means they did not receive the fulfillment of the promise; or all that was promised. Yet they still believed and they died in faith believing.

You see, you probably won't get everything you believe for...but believe anyway. Even the apostle Paul didn't get everything he hoped for. Romans 15:24 tells us Paul had hoped to go to Rome. He actually longed to go there because it was possibly one of the unreached regions for the gospel.

In Romans 1:10 Paul said *I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.*

It was one of Paul's greatest hopes to go to Rome. However, He never got there in the way he expected. Paul's only time in Rome was as a prisoner.

So you see not all our hopes and dreams come true and when they do it's not always the way we expect. But we must have faith and hope anyway. We must hope against hope. We must be prisoners of hope.

We all know Romans 10:17, which says:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

When you know you've heard from God, faith and hope rise up in you.
 You don't waver through unbelief.
 You believe His promise.
 You confess His promise.
 You pray His promise.
 You expect God to fulfill His promise.
 You don't give up on His promise.

In the 1800's George Frederic Watts painted a work of art titled "Hope." It shows a female sitting on a globe. Her eyes are blindfolded so she cannot see ahead. She is holding a harp with all the strings broken except for one. The sky is dark and blank except for one single star.

I'm sure there are many interpretations of this painting but I see broken strings that represent a broken life.

I see a blindfold that represents no vision for the future.
 I see someone whose hopes and dreams have been shattered.
 I see someone who can't see the possibilities... yet she reaches for the last unbroken string.

That one last unbroken string is a string of Hope. I can imagine her striking that one last string as a melody of hope rings out and the distant star shines brighter than before.

Maybe you're like this woman...your hopes and dreams are shattered.
 You feel hopeless and alone. You can't even imagine a better future.

But I want to tell you today you still have one last unbroken string.
 It is a string of hope.
 It's not too late for you. God isn't finished with you yet.
 He hasn't run out of possibilities for your life.
 He has a bright and hopeful future planned for you.

After his death George Watts' widow wrote that the message of the painting was that "Faith must be the companion of Hope."

As Hebrews 11:1 says - Faith is the substance, the assurance of things hoped for, because it is the evidence of things not seen."

To me this says "Never lose hope" because... there's always one last unbroken string of hope.

Even though you feel all alone in the world... there's always one last unbroken string of hope.

Even though you're surrounded by darkness and you can't see the lone star in the distance... there's always one last unbroken string of hope.

Even though you only have one string left to make music... there's always one last unbroken string of hope.

Will you put your hope in God today?
Let's pray.