

### 3. UNDERSTANDING HOPE

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We now want to talk about what hope is, as we have alluded to it in the first two messages.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*      Romans 15:13

God is not only the God of love and the God of peace; He is the God of hope. He wants us to be filled, in fact, overflowing with hope. Hope is one of the most powerful sustaining forces of life. You can take a person's freedom and lock them up, you can take away their health, their finances but if their hope remains they will be able to endure it. When their hope goes they crumble.

Many people are losing hope today in the world. They look at conditions in society and global upheavals taking place, and despair. A lot of young people are committing suicide – New Zealand has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world. Many young people are just living for their next drug fix, their next rave, or their next drink, – all designed to numb the pain. If you don't have hope you are just going to live for the now and do all the wrong things. We need more than highs, we need hope. If you go after highs you get disappointed because you need a bigger high next time, but if hope sustains you, you will make it.

Hope is the parent of faith, Hebrews 11:1 says "*faith gives substance to what we hope for.*" So if you don't hope for things you will not have faith for them. Hope is the parent of faith; it is also the parent of love.

I love this quote from Thomas Fuller "*If it were not for hopes, the heart would break*". And Martin Luther said "*Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.*" That's a powerful statement; he meant everything that is worth something will come out of hope.

## WHAT IS HOPE?

We often use the word in a very weak kind of way. We say things like we hope the weather will be fine for my holiday or I hope I get the promotion or I hope things go okay for you. That is mere wishful thinking. But, biblical hope is much stronger than that.

In the Old Testament there are lots of Hebrew words for hope, but there are two main ones that keep recurring. The first one means '*expectation and longing for*' and the second main word means '*trust, waiting for and patience*'. In the New Testament there is one main Greek word for hope and it means 'joyful

**Biblical hope is a confident and patient expectation of good**

*anticipation, expectations and confidence*'.

If we put all this together, we get a definition of what biblical hope is. Biblical hope is a confident and patient expectation of good.

Confidence and patience – they go together.

If you are confident you will endure until you receive the thing you are hoping for.

Hope is not based upon some personal fantasy or desire. The hope that is biblical, the hope that is from the Spirit of God is based on the revelation of God's promises to his people. Many of those promises are generic and common to us all. They are found here in the Scriptures. The fourth message in this teaching series is the panorama of God's purposes through the ages and where we are headed for. There is a glorious hope that we should have as Christians and the Word of God has many promises that should inspire hope in us all.

There are also specific promises God gives to us as individuals, maybe by making part of the Bible uniquely applicable to our lives. Or by visions or dreams or prophetic words that come from time to time. These are designed to produce hope in us. Hope is to do with the future but it fills us with confidence in the present and inspires a patient endurance as we wait for the thing promised.

*And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.*

Romans 8:23-25

Hope is important. Hope is powerful. But hope can be killed.

## **WHAT KILLS HOPE?**

You can lose hope; you can become hope-less. Many things can kill hope. Like any disease, the disease of hopelessness has symptoms. You can diagnose if you have that disease by asking if some of these symptoms are present in your life. What are some of the symptoms of dying hope? Here are a few:

- A spiritual or emotional malaise – it's like a sickness, you just feel off colour.
- There's a dullness that has come into your life.
- There is numbness – you just don't get excited about anything, anymore.
- It's hard to believe, it's hard to have faith – you've tried it and it hasn't worked.
- It's hard to love and trust – there is a coldness of heart.
- There is a passivity, where instead of the "violent taking the kingdom by force" there is sleepiness in us.
- There is prayerlessness – we don't pray much. Jesus said, "Stay alert and pray otherwise temptation will overpower you."
- There may be cynicism and scepticism.

These are just a few. If there are two or three or more of these present in our lives then it could be that hope is dying. So if that's happening what produces these symptoms?

**Disappointment** – Proverbs 13:12 says, *“hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.”* When you have longed for something and it finally comes there is all this life and joy in you. But when you have longed for something and it never comes, you get to a place where you are heartsick. Many years ago that happened to me. I just went through two or three years where I got disillusioned with everything. I questioned everything. I thought everything I’ve done – what’s it all accomplished? Everybody goes through this; it will hit you at some point. God jerked me out of it with this scripture from Proverbs. I was praying and said, *“Lord that’s how I feel.”* He said *“David, I am changing the season in this nation, over your life and over other people’s lives. There has been a season of hope deferred among many of my people and they have become disillusioned. But, I am changing the season to one of desires fulfilled.”*

One of the deep desires that my late wife Jane I had carried for many years was to travel and minister and encourage churches in this nation and overseas. That is what God had put in our hearts many years ago. It just all seemed so hard and I kept saying, *“Well, heal Jane and we will go.”* And around that time the Lord spoke about the change of season. He said, *“David how long are you going to sit around. Get going. Don’t wait for healing, just move.”* Ecclesiastes 11:3 says *“If you wait for perfect conditions, you’ll never get anything done.”* I would have rather gone with Jane walking by my side, but we had to get a special vehicle and go. When she later passed away I thought the dream was dead. But God brought Greta into my life and now we constantly travel within New Zealand and to other nations. The dream, if God has given it, is never dead

I believe the season is changing for many people and if your heart has become sick because of hope deferred, be encouraged. Hold on to God, because He does want to fulfil those desires.

**Disillusionment** – this is where we lose the vision, we lose the dream. It just doesn’t look like it is going to happen. Perhaps there is disenchantment with lack of authentic Christian living. Some people

have lost their faith in this nation because of inauthentic Christian living. It doesn't match up. What we do on a Sunday doesn't match up with what we do on a Monday. We have to be the same. That's called integrity. Integrity means you are the same in the meeting as you are at home. I'm not talking about perfection. I'm talking about an integrity that when you turn up in the workplace you are as zealous to do a good day's work as you are to lift your hands and worship God at church. Because it all matters to God.

We can get disillusioned by what we see. Listen, I'll tell you a secret: there's no perfect church; there's no perfect believers (not yet anyway). If you look hard enough you will always find fault. You can choose to be disillusioned by that or you can choose to go on and you let it stir you to become a man or woman of integrity and authenticity in your Christian walk.

**Despair** – Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:8 *“We were under pressure beyond our ability to endure so that we despaired of life.”* God will let you face pressures beyond your ability to endure. There are going to be times like this in our lives. When you are in a time of prolonged suffering, prolonged hardship, and prolonged difficulty, then despair can set in.

**Idealism** kills hope – it is always looking for a better future, a more perfect day ahead and it hates the present. Hope is different. Hope is looking for a better future as well, but it sees the present as a stepping stone towards that future. It uses the present and it uses the now to head towards God's purpose. It doesn't hate the now. Yes it feels the same frustration, it feels the same dissatisfaction, but instead of saying 'I hate my life' or 'Where's that dream, why has it not come to pass?', hope says my present difficulties and sufferings are a stepping stone towards the dream God has for my life.

The **demonic** realm kills hope – sometimes you are just going along and you become enveloped with a cloud of despair or depression or hopelessness. It is like a thick fog that rolls in on you. At that time you need to resist those spirits. They can be spirits of unbelief,

depression, death, or hopelessness. These can attack you from time to time and you will know it is demonic because it is just out of the ordinary. It's like a thick fog. You need to get others to pray for you and resist that. Anyone with prophetic gifting will particularly be prone to attack in that dimension. If you carry any sort of prophetic gifting, it is to encourage others and inspire hope. So the devil will target it because he loves to discourage.

Everyone is going to journey into the valley of lost hope at some point, but the valley of trouble can become a doorway of hope.

***I will ... transform the Valley of Trouble into a doorway of hope.***  
**Hosea 2:15**

## **WHAT RESTORES HOPE?**

*"If a tree is cut down, there is hope that it will sprout again and grow new branches. Though its roots have grown old in the earth and its stump decays, at the scent of water it may bud and sprout again like a new seedling.*

Job 14:7-9

Some of you today may feel like a cut-down tree. You feel like there is just a stump left – take hope that at the scent of water you can sprout again. At the activity of the Holy Spirit – if you'll open your heart - hope can be recovered. Sometimes we can stay in hopelessness by an act of our will and we need to repent of that. You don't have to be a hero to stay hopeless, but it takes something of the hero in you to come out of it and be a man or woman of hope. Though you have seen all kind of horrible things you still walk with a simplicity and purity of a child who hopes. That's what children do – they have optimism about every day and that is what Father God wants you to do. Perhaps you have lost hope; I want to dedicate this song to you.

**You Raise Me Up**

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;  
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;  
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,  
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;  
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;  
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;  
You raise me up ... To more than I can be.

There is no life – no life without its hunger;  
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;  
But when you come and I am filled with wonder,  
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity

You raise me up ... To more than I can be.

*From Once in a Red Moon by Secret Garden*

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Remember when you were a little child? Your parents would take you to a parade and there were lots of people. You're just a little person and you can't see the parade very clearly trying to look through the legs of people. And you want to see. What do you do? You just lift your arms up to your Dad – that's the universal signal: 'lift me up.' And your Dad lifts you up and sits you on his shoulder. Now you get a clear view of the parade over all the heads.

Some of you have lost sight of God's parade of life because hopelessness has come like a cloud. You have become disillusioned, you've been disappointed, you've been hurt, you don't understand why certain things have happened to you, why other Christians have let you down, why promises to you have been broken, why prayers have not been answered. So you've turned away and instead of being right at the front of the crowd cheering the parade on, gradually you've just slipped to the back of the crowd. You can't see very

clearly anymore and all Father God is waiting for is the universal sign – ‘pick me up Daddy God’. And He does, He bends down and picks you up and He places you on His shoulders. God wants to do that for His children because He is the God of hope and He wants us to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God uses certain processes to create new hope:

1. **His Word** – *“I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the hope to which he has called you”* Ephesians 1:18. We need revelation from the Word of God. e.g Seasons changed word from God.
2. **Hardship** will produce hope – *“We also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope”* Romans 5:3-4. Perseverance is a key. Too many give up too easily. It hurts to keep going, but it’s worth it – talk to any athlete and they will talk about hitting the pain barrier. You hit it and you have to decide to give up or press through it. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, *“We were under pressure beyond our ability to endure,”* then says, *“but this happened,”* and I don’t know how big a gap there was between him feeling despair and him saying, *“but this happened so that we might not rely upon ourselves but on God who raises the dead and on Him we have set our hope that he will yet deliver us.”*
3. **Power of the Holy Spirit** – we overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Intimacy with the Holy Spirit is a great key to walking in hope. Fellowship with the Spirit of God, asking His help. He’s our comforter our helper.

Hope is risky because you can set yourself up for disappointment but I’d rather hope and be disappointed than not to hope at all. Many people reject hope. To quote Frederick Nietzsche – he was a God hating man, and seemingly very bitter - *“Hope in reality is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs the torments of man.”* He is saying why bother hoping? You just torment yourself. Well I prefer what

Erich Fromm said *“To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is not birth in our lifetime.”*

*“Come back to the place of safety, all you prisoners, for there is yet hope! I promise this very day that I will repay you two mercies for each of your woes!”*

Zechariah 9:12

If you lose hope it is a dangerous place because the glasses of cynicism will pollute your vision of everything. Come back to the place of safety. Be held captive by hope. Don't move from hope. Let it captivate you. Let it ensnare you because it a good thing. God says He will give two mercies for every woe.

I remember a great young couple, Ant & Nina in our last church. They had a desire to serve poor and needy people in our city. With a team from the church, they found a decile 1 school – the lowest socio-economic rating – and asked the headmaster for permission to help. He said he had seen Christians come for a while but then they get tired and go. The young couple said they would not do that. Big promise – they've been at it many years now. As they started to minister into the school, God gave them an expanding vision. Remedial reading, homework groups, after school clubs, sponsorship for computers and other equipment all contributed to the children blossoming.

Early in the piece they left a nice home in a good suburb and went and lived beside the school in a home that wasn't that nice. All along they had a desire to have children but Nina couldn't get pregnant. They would try and try but nothing would happen. Then finally she became pregnant. About two months into the pregnancy, she started bleeding and they put her in hospital. All through the night it was touch and go. Ant was scheduled to go to church the next day and share the vision of what they were doing. He struggled, believing that he really should stay with his wife. Nina said he must go and tell the people about the kids at the school – they need help. So he went and shared

the vision. Nina lost the baby – it really cost them. They were heartbroken. But, they recovered and they kept serving God and they kept pouring themselves out for these kids.

A few years later Nina became pregnant again. Twins! She gave birth to a boy and a girl. *“I will give you two mercies for every woe.”* He’s wonderful, He’s wonderful. Now I know some stories don’t end up like that but in eternity they will – if not here on earth then there.

## **WHAT NOW?**

*Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1Peter 1:13

That word *fully* means: completely, without wavering, to the end.

We need to have hope, completely, without wavering, to the end because it will be worth it. No matter the pain, no matter the disappointment it will be worth it. That is not minimising the reality you and I face every day – the pain, disappointment, disillusionment can be all real. But, I praise God that these things happen that we might not rely upon ourselves but on God and on Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us. Amen.

*“Faith walks simply, childlike, between the darkness of human life and the hope of what is to come.”* ...Catherine de Hueck Doherty.

