

THE REASON WE HAVE HOPE

- A. Introduction: We're talking about knowing the hope to which God has called us (Eph 1:18). As part of this discussion we're focusing on the angst many are experiencing over the political turmoil in our country.
1. We have hope because we're part of something that is bigger than this moment in history. We're part of God's overall plan and purpose. The key to dealing with fear and anxiety is learning how to look at things in terms of the big picture. It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see.
 - a. Let me restate the big picture: The Lord created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ and He made the earth to be home for His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18
 - b. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. But God devised a plan called redemption to undo the damage and carry out His plan. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12;19; Rev 13:8; etc.
 1. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay the price for sin so it can be removed from those who believe on Him and they can be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons.
 2. Jesus will come again in the not too distant future to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and restore it to a fit forever home for His family. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:10-12; etc.
 - A. The Bible is clear that there will be increasing chaos in the world as Jesus' return nears. But it is equally clear that God will provide for His people in the midst of the chaos.
 - B. Fear arises when we believe what is coming against us is bigger than the power and resources available to us. But nothing can come against us that's bigger than God.
 - c. It's very easy to get focused on what is happening in the moment and lose sight of the big picture. We need to realize that since the beginning of time millions have lived through political, social and economic turmoil. It's part of life in a sin cursed earth. But none of it is bigger than God.
 2. One of the reasons there's so much anxiety over election results is the widespread belief that if "their" candidate wins and enacts "their" programs it will be the end of society as we know it. The economy will collapse, there'll be no jobs, money will become worthless, etc. Remember the big picture.
 - a. Matt 6:25-34--Jesus assured His followers they don't have to worry about where the necessities of life will come from (food, clothing, shelter) because we have a Heavenly Father who cares for us.
 1. Jesus summed up His words with this: v33--Seek God's kingdom and His righteousness and you'll have what you need. If you do that you don't have to worry about tomorrow. There're many aspects to Jesus' statement (other lessons for other days). But note one point.
 2. To seek first God's kingdom means keep your priorities right. The most important thing is not who wins this election. It's that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus to they can have a place in God's eternal plan.
 - b. Such statements can make people feel nervous or guilty or both. Possibly you're thinking: On top of everything else I have to do just to pay the bills and keep the household running, you tell me I have to pass out tracts and be at church every time the door is open.
 1. I'm not saying that at all. We all live under the pressure of time and toil to make a living. That's part of the curse in the earth because of sin (lesson for another day). Gen 3:17-19
 2. But as you live life there is much you can do. Instead of cursing politicians and the people with whom you disagree, pray for them. Ask God to bring laborers into their harvest field to share the gospel with them (Matt 9:37,38). Ask Him to use these unfolding events by causing them to serve His eternal purposes and bring good out of bad (II Cor 4:17; Rom 8:28).
 - c. Here's the big one, the one we're going to focus on in this lesson. Be ready to give people an answer for the hope you have. I Pet 3:15
- B. Last week we discussed the fact that at the root of most if not all fears is the fear of death. It's the biggest "something" that can come against a human being. But it's not bigger than God. He has conquered death. Therefore we have hope. Let's briefly review and then add more information.
1. Death is not part of God's plan nor is it His will. Death is present in creation because of sin. The Lord

didn't create any living being to die. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:19

- a. At physical death the outward man (body) and inward man (spirit and soul) separate. The body returns to dust and the inward man passes into another dimension, either Heaven or Hell.
 1. Human beings retain their appearance and identity and are fully conscious when separated from the body. Luke 16:19-31
 2. God didn't intend us to be disembodied spirits living in an immaterial world. He gave us a physical body to live in a material world. Redemption includes restoration to physical life.
- b. Jesus came to earth the first time to deliver us from death and the fear of death by abolishing it along with its root cause (sin). Heb 9:26; II Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14,15
 1. At the Cross Jesus joined us in death to bring us out of death. He was the first human being to come out of death permanently through resurrection. Death has been conquered. I Cor 15:26
 2. His resurrection is the guarantee that all of our bodies will be raised from the dead. He is the firstfruits. I Cor 15:20-23
- c. Resurrection of the dead is the reuniting of the inward and outward man which separated at death.
 1. Physical death is called sleep, not because there's something called soul sleep, but because it's a temporary condition. Our bodies "wake up" out of it at the resurrection of the dead.
 2. If you are born again (your spirit regenerated) then your body will be restored to life on this earth. This inward change is the guarantee, earnest, or firstfruits. Eph 1:14; 4:30; Rom 8:23
2. When Jesus celebrated what we call the Last Supper the night before He went to the Cross He used the bread and wine at the meal to illustrate a number of points about what He was about to do.
 - a. There are many points we aren't going to discuss, but note this one from Paul. He was not present at that meal. Jesus later gave him information about it.
 1. Paul recorded a detail not found in the gospel accounts. In communion we show (proclaim, tell openly) the Lord's death until He comes. I Cor 11:23-26
 2. When Paul refers to Jesus' death it automatically presumes a resurrection because that was the plan all along. And if He's not raised, we are all still in our sins. I Cor 15:17
 - b. We've made communion about ritual and ceremony and miss the impacted. In communion Jesus actually gave his disciples and us a visible reminder that He's coming again to help us live with the consciousness that His unfolding plan of redemption will be completed when He comes.
 1. Every man Jesus sat at the table with the night before He died (except for Judas) would face persecution and hardship as they went out to preach the resurrection of Jesus. All but John would experience death as a martyr. Communion was meant to give them reason to hope.
 2. II Pet 3:13--Peter (the one who wrote: be ready to give a reason for the hope you have) faced his death looking expectantly for the new earth. That will mean reunion with his resurrected body to live on earth again forever—earth cleansed of all corruption and death.
 3. Part of keeping a proper perspective in these troubling times is recognizing that we aren't the only people concerned about all of this. No one ceases to exist when their body dies.
 - a. Everyone born on this planet (including Adam and Eve who were directly created by God) is somewhere right now.
 - b. Countless people are in Heaven waiting to return to earth to be reunited with their body and live on earth again when the plan of God is completed.
- C. Let's briefly go back when the plan began. After God created Adam and Eve He told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because if they did, they would die (Gen 2:17). There's way more in that statement than we're going to deal with now, but consider several thoughts.
 1. Gen 3:7-10--After Adam and Eve disobeyed God they knew immediately that something was different. Adam hid from God and declared himself to be afraid because he was naked.
 - a. Gen 3:16-19--God made statements about the consequences of Adam's sin on the human race and the earth. But He promised the coming of a Redeemer to undo the damage. v15

- b. Gen 3:21--Adam and Eve saw death for the first time. An innocent animal was killed to provide a blood covering for them, picturing what the Redeemer will do—shed His blood to pay for sin.
- c. Gen 4:1-8--Adam and Eve produced the first humans through natural processes. The firstborn Cain killed Abel the second born. A man died. What must that have been like for Adam and Eve, to see and experience all this, especially after knowing life on earth before death existed?
- 2. God instructed men to begin to keep records of His unfolding plan of redemption. Gen 5:1--This is the book—the written record—of the generations of the off-spring of Adam.
 - a. Gen 5:1-32 is not a list of all his offspring. It's a list of the line through which the Redeemer will come down to Noah (Luke 3:36-38). It's filled with death: v5--Adam died; v8--Seth died; v11-- Enos died; v14--Cainan died; v17--Mahalaleel died; v20--Jared died; v27--Methuselah died; v31--Lamech died.
 - b. Gen 5:22-24; Heb 11:5--The exception in this list is Enoch. He was taken into the invisible realm without experiencing physical death. This was a demonstration of the fact that no one ceases to exist, there's life beyond this life. Death is not the end.
 - 1. Adam was alive during the first part of Enoch's life. Before Adam left earth Enoch prophesied that the Lord will one day come to make things right. Jude 14,15
 - 2. Rom 15:4--This information was recorded to provide every generation with reasons to hope.
- 3. We get additional insight into how these first people viewed reality from the Book of Job. Job is the earliest book of the Bible. The events of his life occurred during the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - a. God instructed Adam and his descendants to keep records. They did so and passed them down through the generations. Adam lived into Enoch's life. Enoch's son, Methuselah, sired Lamech (Noah's father). Methuselah lived into Noah's life so the records were preserved from the flood.
 - 1. The records and oral traditions were passed down to Abraham (a descendent of Shem, one of Noah's sons) whom God called to journey to Canaan (Israel) 427 years after the flood.
 - 2. God set Abraham and his descendants apart as the group through whom the Redeemer would come. They were commissioned to preserve the written record of the plan. Rom 3:2
 - 3. Abraham fathered Isaac who fathered Jacob. In the time of Jacob the family (75 in all) went to live in Egypt during a famine. They were eventually enslaved and stayed for 400 years.
 - b. God raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt and back to Canaan. This group refused to enter Canaan and spent 40 years living as nomads in the deserts between Egypt and Canaan.
 - 1. During that time Moses compiled, edited and added to the written record of God's unfolding plan of redemption. He wrote the first five books of the Bible (Gen-Deut) along with Job.
 - 2. Job's story predates Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Before becoming Israel's leader Moses spent 40 years in the land of Midan where he came in contact with Job's story.
 - A. In the Book of Job we find the oldest written record of someone anticipating resurrection of the dead indicating men were looking for it from earth's earliest days. Job 19:25,26
 - B. Job understood that death of the body is temporary and that he would live on earth again because a Redeemer is coming who'll restore what has been lost to corruption and death.
 - c. Job is actually a mini story of redemption (lessons for another day). The only New Testament comment on Job directs us to the end of his story (James 5:11). God turned the captivity of Job and gave him twice what he had (Gen 42:10; 12,13).
 - 1. Job received restoration of what was lost because of the death present in this world due to sin. Some of the restoration came in this life. His health and wealth was restored. Job 1:2,3
 - 2. Some restoration is in the life to come. Job had ten more children. That's not double—unless you understand that his first ten children didn't cease to exist at death. Job was reunited with them when he left this earth and all the new brothers and sisters met the first set. All will return to live on this earth in their original bodies when Jesus comes again.

D. Back to Peter who penned the key verse in this lesson. He was aware of everything we've just discussed.

Peter was alive when the Redeemer (Jesus) finally came to earth. He saw Jesus die and then witnessed His resurrection (the visible proof death has been conquered). Peter devoted the rest of his life to telling the reason for the hope he had even in the face of death.

1. When Peter wrote his first letter persecutions had begun in Rome (under the Emperor Nero). Christians were also being mistreated in the provinces of Asia (Turkey). Peter wrote to encourage and give hope.

a. I Pet 1:3-9--He began by reminding his readers that because of the resurrection of Jesus we have been born again to a living hope. He encouraged his readers not to be moved by the persecutions (trials) they faced, reminding them of their hope, a salvation ready to be revealed from Heaven.

b. v10-12--He went on to remind them it's the salvation God has been promising since Adam sinned, the same one that has been the focus every generation of believers since mankind's earliest days.

2. Then he exhorted them, v13--Therefore, concentrate your minds, with the strictest self-control, and fix your hopes on the blessing that is coming for you at the Appearing of Jesus Christ. (20th Cent)

a. Peter's admonishment to them in the face of challenges generated by government and societal decisions was: Focus on the big picture:

1. v18-21--You've been redeemed, not with perishable things, but with the precious blood of Christ. He was chosen for this before the world began and has been manifest in these last times. A plan is unfolding. God raised Him up. We have hope. Jesus will complete the plan.

2. Because you've been redeemed you have a part in it. You have a life ahead that far outshines anything this life offers. Peter faced death with that confidence. Rom 8:18; II Pet 3:13

A. This doesn't mean there's no help and provision for us in this life. Scripture is filled with examples of God giving temporal help to people in difficult times--including Peter.

B. He was in the crowd the day Jesus said: Seek first God's kingdom and your needs will be met. He understood what's most important: that people know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

b. Peter recognized that when people have hope in dark times it shines on the world around them.

Therefore he told Christians: I Pet 3:15--But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to any one who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully (Amp)

1. If you are focused on the big picture you'll have hope no matter what happens in this country or the world. If you have hope it will be visible to those around you.

2. Then, when people ask why you have hope, because you understand the plan, you'll have something of eternal value to share with them. In doing so, you'll fulfill Jesus' instructions to seek the kingdom first. You can invite them to the hope to which you've been called.

E. Conclusion: Consider this thought as we close. It's not true that if "their" candidate wins it's hopeless and it's all over for us. We have hope because we've been called into God's family. It's not over for us. Our future is just beginning. Our best days are ahead, first in Heaven and then on earth made new, the family home restore. God and His family on earth forever. More next week.