

"The God of All Hope" • Romans 15:4,13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Verses

(Rom 15:4) For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

(Rom 15:13) Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Virtue

1. Ladies, what comes to mind when I say, "A knight in shining armor?"
 - a. is that a negative picture or a positive?
 - b. are you repelled or attracted?
 - c. who do you see—Dennis Rodman or Sean Connery?
2. That phrase, "A knight in shining armor" is for both men and women, a picture of virtue and strength
3. It's the epitome and essence of *nobility*
4. One of the most fertile ages of history for modern literature was the *age of chivalry*
 - a. dozens of novels are written each year about knights and their glorious quests
 - b. books and stories about King Arthur and his Roundtable continue to be penned
 - c. every few years, Hollywood puts out another movie about the age of chivalry
 - 1) an age when manliness was determined, *not* by mere force of arms
 - 2) but by strength of character
5. What is it about the era of chivalry and knights that we find so appealing today?
6. I think the answer is found in this: We live in a profane age
 - a. our times are marked by a crass materialism that puts very little value in anything that isn't tangible
 - b. today, a person's worth is determined by how many points they can score
 - 1) or how photogenic they are
 - 2) or how much wealth they can accumulate
7. It seems that—gone are the days when a person was judged on the basis of their character
 - a. when *virtue* was honored and valued
 - b. in fact, the word *virtue* has all but disappeared from our vocabulary
 - c. for many, *virtue* is a feminine word
 - 1) it's used to describe a woman who is old fashioned—
 - 2) and not hip to modern morality
 - d. *virtue* is rarely a word they would use to describe a strong man;

- 1) that would be an insult
- 2) it would make him sound weak
8. That's sad, because the word *virtue* actually means "strong"
 - a. virtue is strength of character, not weakness
 - b. it is a word which refers to those qualities of life that marks a person as *steadfast* and *sure*
 - c. they are moral excellencies
9. I think the age of chivalry appeals to us today because we *regret* the loss of virtue
10. We yearn for a return to the time when a man or woman was valued for their character rather than their balance sheet

C. Hope

1. In chapter 12, Paul calls us t not allow ourselves to be pressed into this world's system, but to instead be transformed by the renewing of our minds and --
2. As Christians, we are called to be people of virtue
3. We aren't to merely yearn for a return to an age nobility, we are to *be* noble
4. Being conformed to the image of Christ means growing in virtue
 - a. and there are many of them
 - b. patience, loyalty, joy, courage, are just a few
 - c. but chief among the virtues of the Christian life, are three that stand head and shoulders above the rest
 - d. Paul mentions them at the end of 1 Corinthians 13
 - e. He writes, "Now these three remain: Faith, Hope, and Love, and the greatest of these is Love."
 - f. when reading that passage we usually then go on to talk about the pre-eminence of *love*
 - g. and often left out of the discussion are *faith* and *hope*
5. While love is indeed the pre-eminent Christian virtue, faith and hope are indispensable companions of love
6. In Romans 15, Paul focuses on *hope*

II. TEXT

A. Romans 15:4

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

1. As Paul wrote this, he was thinking of course of the OT
2. He saw the scriptures as being a guide book for the life of faith
3. He knew what it was to face trouble
 - a. he knew what it was to endure hard trials
 - b. and problems that seemed to overwhelm him
4. But time and again he had turned to the bible for comfort and strength and had found in its pages the answer to his need
5. So he writes, "**Whatever things were written before were written for**

our learning"

- a. not just to fill our heads with the facts of bible history
 - b. but to teach us how to live before God and one another
6. How many times in your own life have you been comforted by the scriptures?
- a. how many times, when you have been going through deep waters, has the Holy Spirit reminded you of the story of Peter sinking among the waves?
 - b. how many times has your heart been breaking when you read a Psalm and found there the very words you have been crying out to God?
 - c. how many times have you been downcast and in despair and then you were reminded of Elijah alone on the mount and God ministering his love and care to him?
7. Indeed, the word of God is an inexhaustible supply of comfort that has calmed the hearts of millions through the centuries
8. Paul says, "Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, **that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**"
- a. one of the ends for which God has given His word to man is to fill us with *HOPE*
 - b. we have already seen in chapter 10 that "*faith* comes by hearing the Word of God"
 - c. but here we see that scripture also builds our hope
9. Let's think about that for a moment . . .
- a. hope, by its very nature, can only exist in the present absence of the thing that is hoped for
 - b. if we *have* what we hope for or hope in, then we no longer hope: we have it, so it's no longer hope, it's possession
 - c. Paul spells this out in Romans 8 . . .

{22} For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

{23} Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

{24} For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

{25} But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

10. Really, the Christian lives a *deferred life*
- a. what I mean is that while believers can experience a life of great joy and pleasure now because they are in right relationship with God—
 - b. their *real hope* and expectation is not in this life, it's in the next
 - c. this world is not our real home, it's just a big Motel 6 and we're merely passing through
 - d. we are pilgrims and sojourners here
 - e. our real home is heaven
 - f. and we wait with eager anticipation the day when our hope will be realized

11. John Todd was a 19th Century pastor who was raised from the age of 6 by his aunt
 - a. his parents both died and he was left alone till he was taken in by that aunt
 - b. 35 years later, she became seriously ill and wrote him a letter, wondering if death meant the end of everything, or if there was some hope beyond the grave
 - c. Todd wrote back these words . . .

It is now 35 years since I, as a boy of six, was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I have never forgotten the day I made the journey to your house. I can still recall my disappointment when, instead of coming for me yourself, you sent your servant, Caesar, to fetch me.

I remember my tears and anxiety as, perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar, I rode off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and I became lonely and afraid. "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" I asked Caesar. "On no!" he said reassuringly, "She'll stay up for you. When we get out o' these here woods, you'll see her candle shinin' in the window."

Presently we did ride out into the clearing, and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close about me—a tired and bewildered little boy. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper you took me to my new room, heard me say my prayers, and then sat beside me till I fell asleep.

Some day soon God will send for you, to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey, or the messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting, and you will be safe in God's care.

12. In our modern times, we put a high priority on the instant
 - a. our homes are filled with gadgets and appliances that make getting the chores of life done more quickly and with less effort
 - b. we have instant foods and instant beauty products
 - 1) noticed the word "Instant" on the hair conditioner bottle the other day
 - 2) INSTANT! What does that mean?
 - 3) don't have to leave it on for 60 seconds anymore
13. In this age of the instant – we don't like waiting
14. And as a result, we devalue the virtue of hope
15. This is one of the reasons the heresy taught by men like Hagin and Copeland is attractive to so many people today
 - a. they promise a faith of instant rewards
 - b. if you just manipulate the laws of faith and prosperity the right way, you can have it all now
 - c. in fact, Kenneth Copeland once said, "As good as heaven is gonna' be, brother by faith I can have that now!"
 - d. this is nothing more than the crass materialism of our present age clothed in the terminology of faith
16. The reason for our hope in heaven is not because of the wealth and prosperity there, but because that is where we will get to see God in the fullness of His glory and commune with Him without distraction
17. The faith teachers probably don't really hope for heaven because in their

thinking God is little more than a genie who exists to do their bidding as they rub the magic lamp of faith

- 18. Again, hope is a virtue that only exists in the absence of the thing hoped for
- 19. And often, hope only shine in its fullness when we are faced with difficulty
- 20. That is why Paul writes here,

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

- a. he speaks of hope that comes in the midst of trial
 - b. when we are faced with challenges that require patience
 - c. when we are troubled and need comfort
21. Without hope, then what is the point in being patient?
- a. why would one want to persevere if there were no better day ahead?
 - b. Viktor Frankl was a well known psychologist who was put in a death camp by the Nazi's during WWII
 - c. he saw many of his fellow Jews die
 - d. after the war he wrote a book titled, *Man's Search For Meaning* in which he recounted what he learned during his internment
 - e. he said that the "loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect on man."
 - f. he wrote that when a man no longer possesses a motive for living, no future to look forward toward, he curls up in a corner and dies.
 - g. he said that "any attempt to restore a man's inner strength in camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal."
22. I have witnessed this in my own counseling times
- a. if a person has no hope that things will ever change,
 - b. they have no will to try
 - c. they have no patience to endure more till God can work
23. Do you realize what this means? If hope is one of the main Christian virtues, and hope only exists in the absence of the thing hoped for, then that means God will allow things to come in to our lives that will press us so that we might look beyond the present to the future when He will make all things right
24. And when we are pressed, and hope lifts us out of the moment to trust in God's help, then we know what it means to be comforted in the midst of present trouble
25. This is why the Christian has an unshakable joy in the middle of trial and testing
- a. this is what drives unbelievers nuts—they want to know why we don't fall apart when life turns upside down
 - b. you see, they have no real hope
 - c. they just expect the law of averages to fall in their favor and bring an end to whatever is bothering them
 - d. the idea that even trial and trouble has a divine purpose to make them more like Jesus is a totally foreign concept

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Just as love is the distinctive badge of the Christian, so is hope
2. Paul knows that when hope dwells in the believer's heart, then joy and peace will also abide there
3. You see, if we know who we are, why we are here, and finally, where we are going, then nothing can shake us
4. This may be a painful example, but think of going to the dentist
 - a. you have a cavity but don't know it
 - b. it shows up on the X-ray and your dentist, being the kind person he or she is, tells you it needs to be filled or it may cause serious pain and damage later
 - c. so you sit there in the chair and endure 10 or 15 minutes of drilling
 - d. but your mind isn't just on the pain you are feeling as the dentist works and the drill spins
 - e. you know this pain, though difficult to endure, is saving you from a worse pain later
 - f. so you endure, hoping for the moment when the drill will stop, the filling will be in place, and you will hear those blessed words – "Okay, you're done. You can go"
 - g. in the midst of the drilling, you hold on, thinking of the future and why you are there right then
5. Christian, in a way, you are in the dentist's chair
 - a. you see, sin has created cavities in your soul, and many of them you may not even see yet
 - b. but the Holy Spirit does, and He wants to fill them with the truth and grace of God
 - c. in order to do that, He may need to do some drilling first to remove the decay and prepare you
 - d. that process is painful – but hold on
 - e. and take peace in knowing that His goal is to heal you and make you whole
6. The dentist says, "Okay, you're done. You can go."
7. What we wait to hear is, "Okay, I'm finished. Come home."

III. CONCLUSION

A. Churchill

1. Winston Churchill planned his own funeral
2. It was held in St. Paul's Cathedral and was a stately affair
3. Many of the great hymns of the church were sung and the Anglican liturgy was performed
4. But to end the service, Churchill gave instructions that a bugler was to be secretly placed high in the dome over St. Paul's
5. He was to play "Taps," the universal signal that the day is over
6. As the sound of the bugle filled the cathedral with its somber notes, it was a

- fitting end for a funeral
7. But there was one more instruction Churchill had given: another bugler stood on the opposite side of the dome, and as the last note of Taps echoed through the hall, he began a rousing call to “Reveille” – It’s time to get up, It’s time to get up, It’s time to get up in the morning!
 8. He wanted to remind all there that life does not end in death; there is life beyond the grave
 9. And believers will spend it with God in heaven!
 10. One day Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout and the heavenly trumpet will sound Reveille and all who have died in faith will be raised, while we who are alive will be caught up to meet them in the air-and so we shall ever be with the Lord
 11. This hope breathes life and purpose into everything we do and are
 12. It yields joy and peace, patience and comfort

B. To The Unsaved

1. What are you hoping for?
2. You know, if you were to ask the average person on the street what they expect to happen to them after they die, most would say they were going to heaven
3. According to recent polls, over half of those questioned said that they would go to heaven because they were good people [\[1\]](#)
4. Now if people could get in to heaven on the basis of their good works, then why did God send His Son to die for our sins?
5. That would be not only pointless, but unnecessary and cruel
6. That Jesus came and died proves there is no other way to heaven than by faith in Him
7. And that is precisely what He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.”

[\[1\]](#) Barna, George, *Virtual America*, Regal Books pg. 110-111