

“COMMITTED BUT NOT CONFORMED”

Romans 12:1-21

Dr. Paul L. Walker

NOTE: Dr. Walker’s comments prior to beginning of message. If you will find your Bibles turn with me please to Hebrews chapter 12 - for those of you who may not have been with us this morning, I didn’t preach what I had planned but I am going to preach it tonight. I am going to talk a little bit about - “The Heritage of Hope” - we will look at Hebrews chapter 12 if we might and prepare our hearts for the Word this evening.

I am reading from you tonight from the New International Version - Hebrews chapter 12 - we are going to read together the first 3 verses. It may be one of the most important passages that we have in our everyday living because it gives to us a heritage really -- a heritage of hope.

In our day more than ever before this probably has relevance and meaning probably more than anything else could possibly have.

As we read the word of the Lord this evening let’s allow it to sink into our hearts and become a part of our own experiences.

Let us recapture and regain what it really means to live for Jesus Christ in every aspect of our being.

So we hear the writer of Hebrews writing to us as well as writing to those Jewish Christians who were scattered around...

READING OF SCRIPTURE & PRAYER

Without a doubt we are living in a society that desperately needs to recover the full meaning and the power of a 4-letter word called “hope.” We live in a society that has been plagued with fear -- the fear of AIDS, the fear of drug abuse, the fear of ubiquitous violence. We live in a society that is insecure -- it is insecure economically, it is insecure emotionally, it is insecure spiritually. We live in a society that is uncertain. It is uncertain about its status, uncertain about its significance, it is uncertain about its place. We live in a society that is ambivalent. It has mixed feelings about morality, about ethics, about lifestyle, about pleasure and about the future. We live in a society that has separated itself from God - from the secular viewpoint, God is discounted from a standpoint of validity. A society that has rejected His will, that has refused His grace and that disobeys His laws.

All of this adds up to the fact that we find ourselves in a position in this nation in which we are living in a state of diminished hope. Above everything else in the world, we need a renewal of what it means to really have hope.

But that brings up the question we often ask, “what do we mean by hope?” How do we define it? What is its definition? Well, we have to understand that hope is more than just wishful thinking. It is more than just saying,

“I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow.” Or “I hope that my wife has dinner when I get home from work.” Or the wife says, “I hope that my husband shows up for dinner this evening,” or “I hope I get a better job.”

It’s more than just wishful thinking, its more than just fantasy planning where we build air castles in the sky.

ILLUSTRATION

I heard the other day that the neurotics build the air castles; the psychotics move into them; and the psychiatrist collect the rent on them.

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But what we have to understand it that when we talk about hope it is more than some kind of fantasy planning. When we talk about hope it is more than the power of position thinking. It is more than just an optimistic attitude.

ILLUSTRATION

I read not long ago about a farmer who had his first crop of potatoes. He’d never planted and raised potatoes before, so he didn’t know what to expect. One of his farmer friends was talking to him and said, “How was your potato crop?” He said, “Oh, I thought it was pretty good.” He said, “Well, what size were the potatoes?”

The farmer said, “We had some the size of fifty-cent pieces, some

the size of quarters, some the size of nickels, and then, there were a whole lot of little ones.” Now that’s optimism, if I’ve ever heard optimism before.

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But when we talk about hope, it is far more than wishful thinking, it is far more than fantasy planning, it is far more than just an optimistic outlook and the power of positive thinking.

All of these have a place in our lives, but when we talk about hope, it is defined as desire plus expectation. It is the confident anticipation of fulfillment.

But it’s interesting that this word hope is an exclusive word. And you cannot really know the fullness of its meaning and the power it has until you connect it to God. As long as we are in God, there is always hope. When we are without God, there is no hope.

So hope is a word that has to be tied to the reality of the living God, else it is a synthetic and a false understanding. It is only a feeling, it is only an emotion, it only an intellectual mode. But when we tie it to God it becomes something more than that.

When we tie hope to God, then it becomes the very foundation of the revelation of God. And God has revealed to us that hope means that life can be

meaningful. It means that death is eternal and we have the hope of heaven. The alternative to the hope of heaven is the horror of hell.

But when we talk about hope, it is the revelation of God. When talk about hope, it is the response to what God is doing. It means that we can experience God. We can grasp God. We can understand and know God from a personal standpoint of our own individual lives.

When we talk about hope, we have to see that it is a relationship to God. Hope is a radical change on our lifestyle. It is discipleship in which the old things pass away and behold, all things become new.

But when we really talk about hope, it is the understanding of a revolution. Because to follow Jesus Christ is to always have the hope of revolution.

The Christian really believes that things can be different. The Christian really believes that things can change. And the great revolution that is needed in our country today, is the spiritual revolution that will turn it around and make it to understand that if we're going to recover the American dream, it has to be tied to the hope that God is alive, that Jesus Christ is Lord and God is in control. Amen, amen and amen. Well, praise the Lord in this place.

But with that understanding, we begin to understand that hope is redemptive history. That we're not just living in some kind of randomization happenings. The world doesn't just rise and fall at random.

But the world has a pattern. The world has a plan. And hope says that God is in control. And He is guiding us by his hand. And he is moving this world toward a goal. And that goal is to redeem us to the point that Jesus Christ can become Lord and that some day he's going to rule and to reign in a situation that is called the millennium and every child of God will rule and reign with him. And our blessed hope is we shall see him, for we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is. Amen, amen and amen. If you believe that tonight, praise the Lord in this place.

Well, when we really take it a step further, we understand then that hope is Job chapter 13, verse 15, where we hear Job saying, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust him." And that's the meaning of hope.

Hope is Job chapter 19, verses 25 through 27, when he says, "I know that my redeemer ^{LIVETH} ~~levity~~, and at the last day he shall stand upon the earth. And though the skin worms eat my body, yet in my flesh I shall see God. And I myself shall see him with my own eyes. How my heart yearns within me."

ILLUSTRATION

Hope is Psalm 23.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leads me in the path of righteousness for his name's sake.

Hope is,

Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemy. Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Hope says,

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But when we turn to the New Testament, hope is Romans 8:28,

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, and are called according to his purpose. For those whom he did foreknow he did predestine to be conformed to the image of his son, that in all things he might be the firstborn of many brethren. And those whom he did predestine, he also called. And those whom he called he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? Therefore, if God be for us, who can be against us?

Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah be to God. Well, praise him in this place. Let the people of the Lord, praise the Lord.

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Thus it is, when we talk about hope, it's not something that can be synthetically manufactured. Hope is something that comes from the very throne of God.

You can't find hope in a pill. You can't find hope in a bottle. You can't find hope in a weed. You can't find hope in a needle. You can't find hope in a pornographic mind set. You can't find hope in a one night adulterous stand. You

can't hope in an alternative lifestyle. You can't find hope in Dun and Bradstreet.

You can't find hope in the stock market. You can't find hope in materialistic gain.

Hope comes from one place, and that is, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Amen, amen and amen. Well, praise the Lord in this place.

Well praise him! Let the people of the Lord, praise the Lord.

And when we get an understanding of that hope, we begin to see hope in action in our lives.

Well, you say, "Pastor Walker, that sounds fantastic. If I live in that kind of hope. But everything in my life is so frustrating. And nothing seems to work for me.

ILLUSTRATION

I had a man call me not long ago, and he said, "You know, you've heard that old statement, 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' " He said, "That's never worked for me. I heard the other day something that is appropriate to my life." "If at first you don't succeed, well, so much for skydiving!" If you'll think about that for just a moment, there is no second chance with skydiving. I like that story. I don't know how you felt about it. But sometimes we get to the point of feeling that way.

The same man said, “You know, I’m kind like one of the stories you tell about people who jump out of an airplane and pull the rip cord and it just does not open. Do you remember any of those stories? Tell me one of those stories.

Well, I hate to tell a man who is depressed a depressing story. But knowing misery loves company, I said, “Well, you know, you are probably talking about the story of the man who trained in the paratroopers. He got ready for his first parachute jump, and they briefed them just before they got on the plane. They told him to remember to count to ten and pull the ripcord. If the regular cord doesn’t work, just count to three, and pull the emergency cord. And remember when you get to the ground, we’re going to have jeeps there to pick each one of you up. We’re going to take you back to the barracks and we’re going to celebrate - it’s your first real jump.”

They got up into the airplane, the signal was given and they all jumped out. About 20 of these men jumped out of this airplane. This particular man counted to ten, pulled the rip cord, nothing happened. Counted to three, pulled the emergency cord, nothing happened. And his friends heard him as he hurtled down through all of the paratroopers floating down, “And I’ll guarantee you, it’s just my luck that jeep won’t be waiting there for me either.!”

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Well, sometimes we begin to feel that way, and we lose our hope. I mean, that's a good way to lose our hope.

But then we have the book of Hebrews that comes to us. And the book of Hebrews was written to give people hope. And when you look through the book of Hebrews, you see the word "hope" used on several different occasions. And in Hebrews, chapter 12, there is the heritage of hope.

Now Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians, most of whom lived around Jerusalem, many who had had to flee because of the persecution. It cost a lot for a Jewish person to become a Christian in that day. It was probably written between 65 A.D. and 68 A.D., which meant right before the Roman/Jewish war.

So these people were under the persecution of the Romans, but they were also under the pressure of their own people. To leave Judaism was a very difficult thing. And they always had the pressure to go back under the law.

These people had a great feeling for National Israel. It was their heritage; it was their background. They had a real love for the temple. But suddenly they had lost all that.

Now it had been 30 years since Christ had resurrected from the dead. And in that 30 years time they kept looking for His return, but He had delayed his return. So they were concerned about it. Some of them had lost patience. Some of them

had lost hope. Some of them had followed after false teachers. Some of them had gone back into Judaism under the law and found themselves with no salvation, because they were trying to trust again in the law.

There were others of them that had become immoral in their actions and their Christian joy had diminished.

So the writer of Hebrews, who was possibly Paul the Apostle or perhaps in all probability it was Apollos. He wrote to them to give them the understanding that there was a hope that they had. And they had to recover that hope.

As I look at the Christian Church in America today, I get the feeling that sometimes they are in the same position that these Hebrew people were. We have lost our joy; we have lost our edge; we have lost our power and we have lost the sense of hope. And so the book of Hebrews is so relevant to us.

And the writer of Hebrews told them in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 14;

Now your hope comes out of Jesus Christ, but we have a high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith that we possess.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way as we are tempted and yet

without sin. Therefore, let us come confidently into His throne of grace and let us receive mercy and let us find grace to help us in the time of need.

That is the whole theme that you find in the book of Romans.

In chapter 12 he begins to give them a formula of how they can really have hope and he said,

I am writing these things to you so that you will not grow weary and you will not lose heart, so that this hope can be alive in your heart.

And the first thing he tells them is that you have to see the context of hope. In verse 1 of chapter 12 he says - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses." And the context of hope is the witness we have of people who have been there just as we are there now. He is trying to help these Hebrews to see that the constancy of those people who suffered for the Lord and did the work of the Lord before them - that same God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob would be there God. They are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. He is saying to them - Draw from history. I know you are under persecution. I know you are under pressure. I know that your hope is waning, but what you have to understand - you can draw from history because the God that opened up the Red Sea, that is your

God. The God that invaded the Promise Land, that is your God. The God that stopped the mouths of lions, that is your God. The God of the wind and the rain and the mountain and the snow, the God of all nations - the creator, God, is your God and He will see you through. Amen, amen and amen...

The problem that we have in the scientific, modern America -- we have a difficulty in really understanding historicity. We are dealing in the day of revisionism, when people want to somehow write God out of the history of America that is an utter impossibility. Without God and the idea of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and finding a nation based on religious freedom with is the foundations of Christianity to be the very heart and soul of what America is - there would be no America.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and we have got to come back to the hope that is in Jesus Christ our Lord if we are going to turn this country around. Amen, amen and amen.

I think of that old song - "My hope is built on nothing else, on Jesus Christ and righteousness. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand."

We need to come to the place that the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Amen, amen and amen...

So the first step is that you have to see the context of hope. It is to draw from history. If we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.

But the second step is that we have to see the conditioners of hope.

Let us through off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily tangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Our hope has to be conditioned. Hope has to be developed. Hope has to grow. It has to spring up in our lives. What he says is - You have got to see the conditioner. He says here - let us throw off everything. The King James Version says - "Let us throw off the weight." Let's get rid of the excess baggage. Let us learn to travel light. Too many of us carry around too much baggage. There is too much clutter in our lives. We get too caught up in what is going on in the world. I am concerned about America. I am concerned about its direction. But I am concerned about something far greater.

I am concerned about the fact that Jesus Christ is coming soon and there is not one thing to prohibit His rapture taking place and - Oh I want to see Him and I want to be ready when He comes. Amen, amen and amen...

The writer of Hebrews is trying to get these people ready so they would know. So let us throw off, let us discard. The word weight means excess weight.

It means just that - excess poundage, excess baggage, those things that drag us down. When it says to throw off it is not just to discard, but it is to condition ourselves to be prepared for whatever comes our way.

If you throw off the things that easily hinder us; we throw off the sin that entangles us.

Paul the Apostle talks about it from the standpoint of conditioning. The greatest difficulty that we have is really conditioning ourselves. We are all caught up in the health kick today. We have just heard about the new protein that might solve all of our obesity problems. Many people have quit their exercising, waiting for the new miracle pill to come. But there still becomes the point that we are put together that we need to use this body. But spiritually we need to be conditioned.

This is what Paul the Apostle is talking about in Romans chapter 12 verse 1 when he says -

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God
that you present your body as a living sacrifice which is
your reasonable service and be not conformed to this
world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind
that you might prove what is that good and perfect will of
God.

When he is talking about that, he is saying - condition yourself.

When we look at First John chapter 2 verse 15 it says to -

Love not the world neither the things that are in the world.

If any man loves the world, the love of the father is not in

him. The things of the world will pass away but that does

the will of the Father, that person will live forever.

And he is saying - condition yourself.

It is interesting that the Apostle Peter got into the ball game in Second Peter chapter 3 and verse 10 when he said - Look,

The day of the Lord is going to come as a thief and the

when the day of the Lord comes then the heavens are

going to disappear with a roar, the elements are going to

be burnt with fire and the earth and everything in it is

going to be laid bare. Therefore, what sort of people

ought we to be? We ought to live holy and godly lives.

The reason we ought to do that - in verse 11 - is the fact that because we have this promise -The promise is that - “There is going to be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.”

So we condition ourselves to run the race with perseverance so that when He comes we are ready to meet Him. Amen, amen and amen...

None of us like to think about conditioning. We don't like to really think about conditioning.

ILLUSTRATION

The other day I was talking to a golf professional and I was talking about how I could improve my golf game. Those of you who have played with me you are glad to know that I am interested in improving my golf game.

He said, there is only one way to do it. If you want to get your score down and lower your handicap, what you have to do is hit balls at least three times a week - 30 to 45 minutes at a shot and play twice a week.

Well, there is no way that my schedule will allow that.

Then he said, If you can't do that just be content with the game that you have got and enjoy it.

So from now on I'm going to be content with the game that I have and not enjoy it. You understand what I'm talking about.

Pavorasky said, You know - I practice 8 hours a day. If I miss practice one day I know it. If I miss practice two days my teacher knows it. And he still had someone that was coaching him. If I miss it three days - the audience knows it.

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The conditioning factor is so important.

First Corinthians chapter 9 verses 24 through 27, Paul said - "Every runner that runs in a race runs to win a prize, so you should run in such a way that you will try to win the prize."

Everyone who competes in competition goes into strict training and he goes into strict training because he is trying to get a crown and that crown only last a short time. But we are working for a crown that last forever. Then he said - I don't run like one running aimlessly and I don't fight like one beating the air. I don't just shadowbox, but what do I do? I bring my body under subjection. I beat my body and I make it a slave so that after I have preached to others I myself might not be disqualified for the race.

God is saying - I want muscular Christians who will stand up and be counted, who can look the devil in the eye and say - "You are a defeated foe and the power that is in me is greater than any power you have got." Amen, amen and amen... He is able...

Those are the conditioners of hope.

But then he talks about conquest. He says - "Run the race with perseverance." Run the race with staying power. Run the race with continuous. God has a plan for each one of our lives. He is calling each one of us to do His will.

We talk a lot about the will of God.

In Colossians chapter 1 verse 9 we hear Paul saying -

Ever since we heard about you we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

We all have a race to run. We all have a plan that God is working out in our lives. When we talk about that conquest and we talk about that challenge we are talking about the fact that He wants us to do His will. What is His will? To be filled with knowledge and spiritual understanding. We know the writer of Colossians - Paul goes on to say - I am writing this to you so that you might walk worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way. That's the race that we all run.

TAPE IS TURNED OVER

... work and growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened - hallelujah with power according to His might so that you can have all endurance and you can

have patience - so you can run with perseverance. But there is a joy here - joyfully, [hallelujah] - giving thanks to the Father who qualifies you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Have you got all of that? He is saying - I am going to give you the power, I want you to run the race and as you run that race you do it with praise and you do it with joy and then you are going to win the race and you are going to do it with joy as you come into the finish line because Christ is running the race with you.

I don't know where you are with this? Let's just praise Him one more time.

Get rid of the excessive baggage.

Colossians 1 and 4 says -

Put to death sexual immorality and impurity and lust and evil desires and greed which is idolatry.

Ephesians 4 and 31 says -

Get rid of bitterness and anger and rage and brawling and slander together with all malice.

Galatians 5 and 19 says -

There is no place for the deeds of the flesh in the spiritual being - sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry,

witchcraft, hatred, discord, fits of rage and selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy and strife and murderous and drunkenness and the things like that. Those people who do those things they will not enter into the kingdom of God.

But once you get rid of that He says -

I want to put something in its place - I want you to learn to live by love and joy and peace and patience and gentleness and goodness and faithfulness and kindness and self-control.

And when you have the fruit of the Spirit you are the conqueror. Amen, amen and amen...hallelujah be to God. Praise God forever.

Those are the conditioners of hope.

I want you to run that race with perseverance.

But none of that means anything unless we see the catalyst of hope.

Let's go on to the next verse. When you look at verses 2 and 3 you look at this catalyst.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith for the joy set before Him endured the cross,

scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God -- consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The catalyst here, the helper here, is the intercedor here - that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans chapter 8 and verse 24 we get a beautiful picture of who Christ really is and what He is doing. It says - "Who will condemn?" Who is he that condemns? Christ died. He was raised from the dead. He is at the right hand of God and He is also interceding for us.

This is exactly what the writer of Hebrews is saying. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him suffered the opposition of sinful man. Then He was raised from the dead and sat down at the right hand of the Father on high. Consider Him who did this suffering. When you consider Him, contemplate Him, internalize Him, bring Him into your life. Make Him Lord of all that you do because He was dead, but He was raised again and He went to the right hand of the Father and He is making intercession for us. That means that He intercedes in each one of our lives for He is

the catalyst. He is the helper. He is the One who goes ahead. He is the one who has all the answers.

That means He can save completely - -to the uttermost because of His intercessory work.

Hebrews chapter 7 verse 25 - it tell us in verse 24 that “Jesus Christ lives forever.” What a marvelous statement. “Jesus Christ lives forever, therefore, He is able to completely save those who come to Him through God, for He lives to make intercession for them.” Hallelujah. He lives to make intercession.

What we don't understand is - that the Book of Hebrews tells us what Christ is doing now. Matthew - Mark - Luke and John tells us what Christ did while He was on earth. But the fifth gospel is the gospel of Hebrews and it tells us what Christ is doing right now. He lives to make intercession for us. Because He can save completely. Does that get anybody excited at all? That means that you can have forgiveness. We have to concede the fact - I don't imagine there are too many people here who live the perfect life.

Some wife is saying in his heart - my husband thinks he does.

But I would imagine there are times when we have to go back to do our first works over. Am I on track here? But you have the kind of God who understands and gives us the grace and the Christ who makes intercession and He saves us

completely because He lives to intercede for us. Hallelujah be to God. I love that concept. I love that idea because He is a catalyst.

Hope comes through that intercessory work.

We have to understand to that in this intercession He strengthens us.

You remember in Luke chapter 22 verse 32 - you remember what was going on there? When Christ looked at Peter and He said - "You need to get behind me because Satan is going to sift you." He said, "I am going to pray for you Peter." I am going to intercede for you that your faith will be strengthened and after you return - which gives us the understanding that He will follow afar off - but he will deny Christ - after you return, after you return, then I want you to strengthen your brethren.

He strengthens us. You see the intercessory work of Christ is a catalyst that gives us hope to strengthen us.

Peter you are going to mess up.

Peter wasn't going to mess up. Everybody was going to leave him - but not me - Lord, you can count on me. I'll never leave you. But the thing we have to understand is to be strengthened. God wants to work in us the Spirit that will give us power to overcome.

You remember First Samuel chapter 17 when I go to Israel, I like to go to the Valley of Elah. You remember the story of David. When I was growing up I just loved my father to tell the story of David.

David went up to check on his brothers - as you remember - a little shepherd boy - and his father sent him up to check on his brothers. He got up there and Israel was defeated. They had lost hope and they were hiding because Goliath was challenging them and everybody was afraid of the big giant - the Philistine Goliath. David got anointed of the Lord and said - I will go out and fight him. They all laughed at him but they persisted. So finally Saul said, You can't go; you are going to be defeated." In verse 37 he said, "Look, the Lord has delivered me out of the paw of the bear and the paw of the lion, He is going to deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.

So Saul said - Okay put on my armour. He put on the armor and it wouldn't fit. He put on the helmet and he put on the armor and he had to tie his sword around and it wouldn't work.

He said, I can't wear this armor.

So it tells us that David went down to the brook and he chose five smooth stones and he took his sling and threw stones in a staff. He went out to meet Goliath - what a contradictory scene if you follow the dimensions the Bible gives us

- Goliath was 10 feet tall. Goliath had on a bronze helmet. He had armor that weighted over 200 pounds. He had a spear or a javelin type spear that was several inches in diameter and at the end of it it had a 25 pound spear head. He had on bronze leggings.

He walked out there and saw that young handsome, boy come up and he was embarrassed. He was put aside and said, “What are you doing sending me this boy out here? What do you think I am a dog?” He said, “Come on forward. I am going to feed your body to the birds of the air and I am going to feed it to the beast of the fields.”

What did David say to him? He said, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin. But I come to you in the name of God Almighty, the Lord of the armies of heaven.” Snap - down he went with one stone. Hallelujah be to God.

That’s the answer that God has for you.

He says I want to strengthen you. That’s the catalyst of hope. Hope comes through the strengthening, intercessory work of Christ.

What we have to understand too is that Christ prayed a prayer of intercession for the Church.

We are here tonight as a group. People are meeting all over the world in the different time zones. Thousands - millions of people right now praying and seeking

God. The reason we are able to do that is because of the catalyst of hope, Jesus Christ. Because He prayed a prayer for us in John chapter 17 verse 6. He said - praying to the Father - this was the prayer for the Church, John 17. It is an intercessory prayer. He said -

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world. I am praying for the ones that you gave to me because they are yours.

That is each one of us. And Christ says - I am praying for you. I am going to answer your need. I am going to give you hope.

You see hope is such a powerful force.

ILLUSTRATION

I was preaching in Dallas on one occasion in a conference. I had spoken in the morning session. Went back to the hotel to freshen up and go to lunch with some people. I got on an elevator and started up and there was a lady sitting in a wheel chair on the elevator and she had a cherry, beautiful smile. I looked at her and I said, "My what a beautiful smile." She said, "I know you. You are Paul Walker." Said, "I listen to your tapes and I heard you this morning." She said, "You know I

have been wanting to get in touch with you. By your tapes and by praying to God I had a stroke and they told me that I would never sit up. But I sat up. Now I am able to get in a wheelchair. But they tell me I am never going to walk. I just want you to know I have hope in God. I have trust in Him. One of these days I am going to walk. When I walk I am going to get my daughter to bring me to Atlanta and I am going to walk down the aisle of your church because your church and the ministry of your people through the singing and the message and the ministry have been a hope for me and have helped me to get to this point.”

Well I didn't hear anything from her for about a year or a year and a half.

One Sunday after preaching at Central at the close of the service a lady came down to me and said - “I don't know if you will remember me or not, but you met my mother in Dallas and later you met me. I want you to look to the back of the church.” There that lady came walking down the aisle of Mount Paran, walking without a wheelchair, walking without a cane because of the intercessory work of Jesus Christ in the Church. Praise Him in this place...

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The Lord wants you to leave here tonight with hope.

You have to remember that the very context of hope is that - “you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.” You can draw from history.

To remember that the conditioner of hope is that you “lay aside every weight. You got to lay aside every sin.”

Then the catalyst of hope is Jesus Christ Himself who has done the work for you.

If you are sitting here in this congregation tonight or you find yourself wherever you might be and you feel as though that you are without hope, that you are just lost and there is no resource available to you. I am telling you tonight that there is a source and there is a hope. That hope is available to every person that will accept Jesus Christ as Lord of His life.

To those of you tonight that might be struggling we are going to open up this altar for you. And to those of you that need prayer we are going to be praying for you. We are going to ask God to fill you with His hope because He has given to us in the book of Hebrews the Heritage of Hope.

I am asking every one of you to bow your heads please and to close your eyes.