

Our passage this morning is about hope! Adolf Saphire said the object of this chapter is “to lift (these believers) out of their apathy and gloom, and to raise them to the sunny height of faith and hope!”.

Hope, in the Bible, is not wishful thinking. It is confident expectation of good. It is spiritual optimism rooted in all that God has promised us! The old hymn says, we have “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”. Christian hope reaches all the way to eternity! Proverbs says the godly woman “smiles at the future”. Hope is an outlook on life that affects you, and others can tell if you have it.

Our hope is based in Jesus and all we have through him. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Because of our union with Christ... all that is ahead of us forever is the immeasurable riches of God’s grace and kindness!

Paul said, “We rejoice in HOPE of the glory of God. “We anticipate our future glorious condition and we rejoice NOW, under the power and influence of those things we hope for.

This “hope-producing effect” of the good news is very important! Life can be brutal at times. Things can look very dark in this world. For some they look so dark that they choose to end their own lives.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in those 15-34. Just recently a pastor at a mega church committed suicide, and left behind a wife and two young boys. Even though he had great success in ministry he was living with overwhelming despair.

As tragic as suicide is, an even worse result of losing hope, is to turn away from Christ, in unbelief, and to NOT GO ON to inherit the promises of God. This is the author's concern in Hebrews! Without hope we become spiritually lethargic, dull of hearing, bored and apathetic. Life becomes drudgery. The author of Hebrews exhorts us to "have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish"!

We must do everything we can to nourish our hearts on the hope of the gospel message! Playing around with hopelessness and hopeless thoughts is very dangerous!

Paul prayed that we would have a super abundance of hope. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". God is the God of hope. When you believe God it opens the door of your heart to a hope so full that it overflows.

Hope like this, is an extremely precious possession! It fuels our life. It puts a bounce in our step, a song in our heart. If you are overflowing with hope you are really well off! Far better off than most people! If you lack this quality I urge you to pursue it with all earnestness, and to ask God to awaken this in you.

I am reading a book called "The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service, Mossad". There is a story in there about an Israeli

army officer, Yehuda Taggar, sent to Baghdad to organize protection for Jews in Iraq. His cover was blown, he was arrested and sentenced to death. He was drug from his cell to be hung. They had the rope around his neck and his feet over a trap door but at the last second they let him live. His sentence was commuted to life in prison and he was left to rot in a dark, gloomy cell in an Iraqi prison. Nine years later the Israeli's struck a deal with a new Iraqi prime minister and he was released.

“They placed him on a plane to Beirut, then a flight to Cyprus, and finally he landed in Israel. At the airport, his friends and colleagues were waiting. They expected to meet a broken man, a human wreck-but the man who descended from the plane was the same vigorous, extroverted, smiling fellow whom they had last seen more than nine years ago. How did you make it, they asked. How did you hang on to your optimism? Yehuda said simply, “I knew you would get me out of here”.

That is the power of hope. We hang on to our optimism because we know God will get us out of here! We know we get home safely and we know glory is ahead of us. We know the blessing of God is upon us, forever! Hope is what kept Yehuda Taggar from being a broken man, a human wreck. Hope is what keeps us from gloom and apathy and despair and a broken faith. The only way to live life to the fullest is with hearts full of hope!

In this passage hope is called the anchor of our soul! Verse 19 “We have this (hope) as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul”. Adolf Saphire wrote, “The soul is like a ship tossed to and fro by the tumultuous waves of the sea, exposed to temptations of Satan, the afflictions and sufferings of this present life, the difficulties and

dangers of our earthly course, (we are exposed to) doubts within and storms without. But we have an anchor, hope!!”

And notice where this hope is anchored! Verse 19 “We have this (hope) as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Again, Adolf Saphire said, “And this anchor is fixed, not in the depth below but in the height above, even in the heavenly sanctuary, the everlasting and immovable throne of God!” What a powerful word picture! We have hope that enters into heaven, where Jesus is, in the immediate presence of God.

Our hope is not produced by wishful thinking, wishing upon a star, holding onto our dreams, or merely positive thinking. Although hope does manifest in the most outrageous positive thinking, it is not mere positive thinking!

Our hope is in Jesus Christ, who is fully God, but who is also fully human just like us, who is in the immediate presence of the Father. He is there for us, on our behalf, before the throne of God. Through him, we have forgiveness for our sins, salvation for our souls, through him we receive mercy and grace to help in our time of need. In him we have the hope of resurrection from the dead. Your life will not end at death any more than his life ended at death. We will reign with him forever. We will experience complete joy, perfect love, and unimaginable glory with him, forever, in the immediate presence of the Father!

Our hope in him and all we have with him, is firm and secure, is like an anchor to our soul! This hope brings stability to our mind and our emotions and our entire lives.

*Our hope is firm and secure, because it is based on God's promise AND his oath. Verse 13 "For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely, I will bless you and multiply you."

The full quote from Genesis 22:16 is.."By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed".

Verse 16 CEV says, "When anyone wants to settle an argument, they make a vow by using the name of someone or something greater than themselves". Which explains verse 13 "since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself". There is no higher authority, no one more reliable, that God can go to, to back up his promise! So he vows using his own name.

Verse 17-18 explains God reasons for doing this: "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

We have both his statement of promise and his personal vow. The vow isn't needed because God cannot lie. But God spoke this way for our "strong encouragement"! He wanted to show us in the most

convincing way possible that he will bless us in Jesus forever! He wanted to us assure us that promise is unchangeable! God is passionate about us having hope!

What did God promise us and swear by an oath? Or... What is our hope? It is the same hope he gave Abraham! “Surely, I will bless you”. This blessing was not only for Abraham but for us too. This promise of blessing was so vast and so comprehensive that it has continued on though thousands of years to Abraham’s descendants, it has continued to countless multitudes of people in all nations, through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham.

This is what Galatians 3:14 says, “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus”. If you are united to Jesus, you are in a tidal wave of unstoppable blessing, flowing out of God’s promise to Abraham. We will be abundantly and outrageously blessed forever!

John Piper said, “...the promise is that we will be blessed. "I will surely bless you" (6:14). And he means ultimate blessing, forever and ever with God in eternity, forgiven, accepted, purified, glorified, capable of unspeakable joy, triumphant over all our enemies: sin and guilt and shame and death and hell and Satan. This is God's promise.”

This glorious, unshakable blessing of God is upon us who hold fast to Christ. THIS IS OUR HOPE!

*Yet, we must choose to either live in full assurance of hope...or to allow our hope to be weak and wavering. Verse 11 says, “we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full

assurance of hope until the end”. We are to be deadly serious about having full hope, all the way. So we must consciously and earnestly resolve to LIVE IN HOPE today and tomorrow, all the way! We want that for each one of you!

Verse 18 says, God has given us “strong encouragement to HOLD FAST to the hope set before us.” Our response to God is to grasp on to the hope that is set before us with all our might. Maybe today, or (even this morning) you are holding tightly onto your job, your money, your home, your kids, your life, your personal plans and dreams. Maybe you are holding tightly onto your problems. God would have you loosen your anxious grip on those things and hold fast to the hope set before you in Jesus!

We do this by consciously putting our mind and thoughts on Jesus, who he is, what he has done for us, all that we have in him. I don’t think you can do that without taking time daily, in the morning, and throughout the day, bowing before him, rejoicing in him, trusting him in your problems, thanking him, looking to him for all you need.

Our mind is the door through which our soul connects with Jesus. You must set your mind on him to experience him! Paul said, “Set your mind on things above where Christ is! If you are not consciously doing that, I warn you, in the kindest way possible, that you are probably drifting through life, and doing that without much hope!

Because much of the glory and blessing God has promised us is still out in front of us, this calls for patience in our hope. Verse 12 calls us to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises”. We hold fast our hope THROUGH OUR PRESENT

SUFFERINGS and disappointments. And we hold fast our hope through time! We hope, while we wait, and while things don't always look that good.

We cannot hold fast to our hope, through trials and through the years, with a spiritually careless or lazy approach to life. It takes real spiritual intensity to hold on to our hope! It takes faith and patient endurance! If you want to live in hope, must make a resolute decision to do so and trust God daily for the power of the Spirit.

We are given the example of Abraham for our encouragement. Verse 15 says, "having waited patiently, he obtained the promise". The promise of a son, came many years later than he or Sarah expected it would be. But it did happen! In the same way, someday we will experience all that God has promised us.

Some here may actually think, this all sounds all right for people with lots of problems, but I am doing pretty good, I've got my plans. I've got my family. Opportunities are opening up at work. I'm an optimist by nature. Life is good!

The problem is hopes based in those things won't hold up in the time of trouble or the "day of evil"! Those hopes won't sustain you when your body is weak or broken, or when your friends desert you, when family relationships are strained or broken, when the wheels come off your plans, or if real persecution comes to followers of Jesus! Optimism that is based on anything other than Jesus, won't get you through the valley of the shadow of death. It won't get you through the day of judgment or on into the ages to come!

We need a hope that will generate optimism and joy in our hearts through anything that comes our way....forever!! We have that only in Jesus! We have THIS HOPE as a sure and steadfast anchor of our soul! A hope that enters the very throne of God. That's what this passage means by "the inner place behind the curtain". That means the very dwelling place of God. Do you have a hope that reaches all the way to God? Or are you trying to build your optimism on lessor things? Turn to God. Hope in God. Through Jesus go right to the throne of God. And live with sure and steadfast hope!

This message is a call to actually live in hope! Do you want to really start living in the full assurance of hope? Let's go to God this morning and in his presence let's deal with things in you that need to change.