

The curse and cure of hopelessness

Intro: It has been said that the greatest enemy of man is not disease but despair. The world that has so little to offer of anything good in the way of filling the real deep needs of the human soul, so let's notice four things from Scripture that we need to consider, if we are to remain hopeful ourselves, as well as help and encourage other hopeless folks around us. First,

A. We need a hope that is properly focused and understood.

I Peter 3:15 *Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.*

When we share our **faith**, we're looking back on critical events such as. By faith Jesus saved me when I invited him into my life. When we share our **hope** we're looking ahead. We're saying "Here's why I'm confident and optimistic in a world whose future looks so bleak."

Hope is defined as a desire for some future good with the expectation of obtaining it. Hope is confident expectancy. Hope is the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment.

The world's definition of hope is just an optimistic outlook. But for Christians, our hope is an optimistic outlook, based on God's powerful promises. Romans 8:28,29 tells us that *we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters.* I'm optimistic because once I am saved, I have the promise of all things working together to make me like my Saviour.

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us *For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.* Therefore, I'm optimistic because God has only good plans for me.

Read John 14:1-6

I'm optimistic because I have been promised that the Saviour will come back to get me. That's why we hope in Him. That's why we can be honestly hopeful and optimistic. That is why our hope is very different from the hope and optimism the world has.

Peter says *"In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord."* Make him the only focus and then you can share it, to provide the only real hope for a hopeless world.

B. We need to be individually prepared.

Peter says, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

Here are some suggestions about how to do that.

- Remember the Chr. definition of hope. It is an optimistic outlook based on powerful promises.
- Remember the source of your hope, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13:8 reminds us *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Based on this verse we find that our hope never changes. When you share, you are not preaching to them but just sharing what you believe God is going to do for you and why you believe it. That is what giving hope is all about

Notice next that hope is nothing more than

C. Gentleness being sincerely expressed.

I can share my hope in a way that's soft spoken and meek, not pushy and know it all. I can be respectful. I can put aside my agenda for a time and listen to another person's hurts, listen to their feelings, to empathize or share their sorrow with them, offering hope and optimism to those who don't have any. Remember, our hope is in the Lord not in ourselves.

There are two things that happen when we have a properly focused hope built on solid promises and we share this gently. I Peter 3:16 says people will be ashamed of themselves. They'll be ashamed of the fact that they ever thought something bad about you. When you share your hope gently, people are actually drawn to God. Not to you or your personality, but to the Lord through your gentleness.

D. We need a confidence that is courageously maintained.

No matter how easy you make it sound there's always going to be some people that say "Ya, but. Even though God waited patiently all the days that Noah built his ship, only a few were saved, eight to be exact.

For 120 years Noah had to be able to give a reason for his hope and optimism yet in the end there were only all of Noah's family, that was saved. This is encouraging for three reasons: It reminds us

- If Noah had Christ with him, so do we. And if I remember right, hope and optimism are based on the unchanging ever present Christ anyway, aren't they?
- If Noah didn't have to produce results, neither do we. As Christians, it's our job to speak hope to a hopeless world, it's God's job to save and produce it.
- It's my job to do the possible, it's God's job to do the impossible.
- If Noah could handle the insults and the persecution, and still remain hopeful, so can we.

Peter says V 16 that if you're eager to do good and offer hope, then basically the world's real idiots will oppose you but most people will appreciate it. They may not accept it, but at least they'll appreciate you're trying to do good. You're going to go out into a world this week, that's hopeless.

They need hope and they need it bad. People are looking for anything that we can give them. Many people have got their hopes set on all kinds of crazy things that can't deliver. They are taking on a lot of things as their source of hope.

As a Christian, you're as ready as you need to be to offer that hope to a world full of hopeless people. Just remember to

- Be focused on Christ as the source of your hope and the answer to their search.
- Be prepared to present the reasons your hope is in Christ
- Be gentle in your presentation and people will listen more carefully
- To maintain that good confidence and hope.

Why not each of us try and be the Noah of our day and give hope to some struggling individual?

In closing, do you have your hope set on the work of Christ on your behalf as your way to get to heaven? If you do not and would like to just read a few more lines think about them and do what they say and Jesus will fill your heart with hope. Not hope like the world gives but an assured hope.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God. Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)