

## CHRISTMAS – CONSOLATION OF ETERNAL HOPE! - Luke 2:25-35

As the saying goes, “Hope springs eternal.” In other words, people always hope for the best! Life is miserable apart from hope! It was Hal Lindsey who said, **“Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air...but only for one second without hope.”** — Hal Lindsey Today it seems more and more people are living with hopelessness.

*A study back in 2015 from Princeton University documents a dramatic increase in rates of death among the middle-aged. Equally surprising, the causes of the increase in deaths were not the usual suspects, such as heart disease. Instead, mortality is on the rise because of higher levels of suicide and greater numbers of drug and alcohol overdoses (along with alcohol-related liver disease). Thus, people are increasingly taking their own lives, or living with reckless disregard for their health and safety, such that they are more likely to die prematurely.*

*A Professor, at the University summarized the results for CNN by saying “more despair and worse health.” Another Professor (Professor Ellen Meara) observed that the study illustrates the sad reality that what we are observing is an **“epidemic of hopelessness.”** (Psychology Today Nov. 12, 2015).*

The good news is, because of Christmas, *the birth of Christ*, there is a cure for mankind’s “epidemic.” **Eternal hope has triumphed over hopelessness!** In our text we find a man by the name of Simeon who focused not on the *cause*, but the *cure* for mankind’s epidemic. Yet, from a *purely* human perspective, *even Simeon’s situation* appeared hopeless!

Consider Simeon’s situation: for *one* his name – **Simeon, literally means: “God hears.”** God had given him a promise, that he would see the Messiah,

*the consolation (hope) of Israel, before he died. Faithfully with that promise lying in his bosom he kept coming to temple every week. Outwardly he kept the appearance of a just and devout man, but inwardly satan mocked him, just as he mocks many of us! **“God doesn’t hear you!”** “Besides, why should He hear you?” “You should probably change your name!” “You’re old, if it hasn’t happened it will never happen!” “Who do you think you are anyway?”*

**The problem with the devil is he knows the word, but his exegesis (interpretation) of God’s character is poor!** Our hope lies not in who we think we are, but rather, who do we know we are, in Christ! **(Titus 3:7)** **“...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** Simeon rested in God’s promise rather than his *opinion* of himself, hoping in the consolation (hope) of Israel – God’s advocate for our forgiveness, eternal justification! **When the “accuser of the brethren” knocks on your door, let Jesus answer it! We’ve been justified by His grace!**

**Simeon’s hope in God provides a great lesson for us today: God’s faithfulness is not measured by time, but truth.** Truth founded upon His word! **The promise of “Messiah” – literally “the anointed One” – Greek “Christ,”** was given a millennium and a half, *1500 years*, before Christ’s birth! Simeon knew this, but God had *also* given Simeon a word; *he would see the promised Messiah before he died.* I’m sure, as Simeon grew older, *doubt tried to creep in* (scripture does not tell us when this revelation was made to him by the Holy Spirit). Yet, he learned to hold fast to God’s word, rather than watch the clock!

**(Isaiah 40:31) But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.** Living by God’s truth, rather than *time*,

actually strengthens the soul and guards us from *irrational, carnal* behavior! Our limited human perspective can often limit our ability to receive the promises of God. Jesus reminded us: **(Luke 18:27) "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."**

Mankind's hopeless condition, separated from God by sin, was initially confronted by the promise of God in the **Book of Genesis, Genesis 3:15**. Where the Lord God declared, *in the midst of Adam and Eve's hopelessness (their sin)*, that through the woman (Eve), *the very one by whom satan initiated his deceitful plot, hope would spring eternal*; for He, the **promised Messiah**, would crush satan's head, destroy the evil works of the devil! **(1 John 3:8b) For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**

The Bible tells us, **"All have sinned,"** *all* are sold under satan's *demonic, destructive* sway! **(1 John 5:19) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.** However, Simeon rejoices here, knowing that our hopeless condition has found a remedy! Thus, he declared: **(v.29-32).**

Christmas is our consolation, ***our hope***, that when we leave this world we can, *like Simeon*, leave in peace! The peace of God, having peace with God through faith in Christ! This hope we have is by faith in God's word. **(v.29b). (2 Corinthians 4:18) "...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."**

We cannot see gravity, or the wind, but we know it's there. The hope we have in Christ, the ***hope of Christmas***, cannot be *quantified* by human reasoning, but is received by grace, according to the working of the Holy

Spirit! (Romans 8:24-27) 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? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

**Notice:** according to Romans 8, as believers, we are never hopeless because Jesus is never prayerless! ***“the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses...and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered!”*** Yet, there are times when *trials* and *tribulations* can threaten to rob us of our hope in Christ. Martin Luther King Jr. said it this way: ***“We must accept finite disappointment. But never lose infinite hope.”*** Martin Luther King Jr. Without infinite hope we will not persevere!

Job had **infinite hope**; hope, based not upon one thing (personal ambitions), but upon the main thing, **God’s Redeemer!** He didn’t know *when* the trial would end, or *how* he would recover, yet he believed in a redemptive hope found only in God! **(Job 19:25-27) For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**

In Christ, we have the hope of salvation, but we *also* have a *present*, sustaining hope - not just a “pie in the sky, by and by,” but a living hope! **(1 Peter 1:3b) “...a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the**

*dead.*” The babe born in a manger 2000 years ago represented a rescue mission of eternal hope, for all mankind! (v.30-32)

**CONCLUSION**: The hope of Christmas is *everlasting hope*, sustaining hope, even in the face of death! Paul said, “We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope!” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). **COMMUNION** – serves as testament to God’s eternal hope, the only real cure for mankind’s hopelessness! **Hope which springs eternal, can only be found in Christ!**