

Restoring the Spirit of Hope

April 13, 2003

Ephesians 2:11-13, Romans 8

How many of you would agree that life's tough at times? Have you ever cried, "Doesn't anyone care what happens to me, or what happens in my life?" Have you been lonely and isolated? We are living in a generation of hurting people who want to know that someone cares truly about them. Sometimes so many things hit you all at once that you begin to unravel. That is called "getting the hope kicked out of you." Some of you may feel pretty hopeless this morning. Maybe you feel hopeless about a marriage situation, about your children, about your financial situation, or an illness. Maybe you are struggling in the school — perhaps graduating from college soon for some—larger questions loom on the horizon: What does God have for my future? What am I going to do exactly? Especially in a recession economy nowadays? Most of us are not graduating from any school at this time, but the challenges are no less in our daily lives, such as job security or in dealing a difficult personal relationship. Or maybe it's because you believe you are in a situation that is just never going to change - it did not matter what you have done. You were hopeless, felt nobody care, and the world is sinking all around you and you know you may be the next to sink down. No way out; no possible escape? Thinking that no one cares about you and no one is available to help you? Where to find hope? Where it is hopeless, how to restore the spirit of hope?

One in Christ Ephesians 2:11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - 12 Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Uncircumcision is the most direct term to describe that fact that Gentiles were outside any covenant relationship with God. Who are the Gentiles? All non-believers. What happen to them? There are five estrangement (alienation, loss of friendship or love) of Gentiles (1) separate from Christ, (2) excluded from citizenship in Israel (3) foreigners to the covenants of the promise, (4) without hope and (5) without God in the world. You may say I don't need citizenship in Israel; I have American citizenship. How about citizenship in heaven? Being separate from Christ is the fountainhead of futility and hopelessness. Everything we mentioned when we first started the sermon today. All non-believers need to understand what a great deal this is that's being offered to you. It's an offer you cannot afford to refuse.

*But you may say Christians experience the same frustrations and hopelessness! Because we even as Christians fail to place our total trust in Jesus Christ! Notice the verse 13 'But now' joins with "but God" (v.4) as gloriously pivotal words upon which everything in life turns from death to life, sin to salvation, and hopelessness to hope. Our text gives us reasons for hope. In the past you were without Christ and you had no part in the promises God made to His people. But now you're in Christ. This text tells us if we put our trust in Christ, we can always be hopeful. We are always hopeful. We cannot be hopeless. Why? Because of what God's promised. What are His promises to restore my hope? Look at **Chapter 8:1-2, 28-32 of Romans**, it is an incredible chapter and it lists six promises we have from God to help us keep our hope alive.*

Romans 8 *Life Through the Spirit* ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law

of sin and death. ...²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. His pardon erases my guilt
2. His power breaks my sinful habits
3. His purpose transforms my problems
4. His protection relieves my fears
5. His provision supplies my needs
6. His promise secures my future

1. HIS PARDON ERASES MY GUILT

Romans 8:1 "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We can live guilt free without condemnation through Jesus Christ. That's good news because the number one cause of hopelessness is hidden guilt and hidden shame. We violate God's standards and we think: "I can never be forgiven for that." I'm going to carry it with me the rest of my life. But that guilt can be erased.

Now if Jesus took every sin you've ever committed and every sin you're going to commit and has already paid for it, you don't have to pay for it. That's good news! But don't think that the consequences of the sin won't affect you though. They're still there but with God's help you can work through them. We have hope because the pardon of Christ has erased our guilt.

2. HIS POWER BREAKS MY SINFUL HABITS

But not only does God take care of the past, He also takes care of the present. Most hopeless problems people have can be summarized into two statements. The first one goes like this: "My life is out of control." About the time I'm getting ready to make the ends meet somebody moves the ends. I try but the pressure and the pace of life destroys me. The second one goes like this: "I just can't seem to change." I know what is right, I even want to do what's right but I just don't have the power to do it. I know that this habit is bad for me but I still do it. I know this relationship is destroying me but I just can't seem to let it go. I don't have the power to change.

Well that is why you need Jesus because He gives you the power. You plug into His power and you answer both statements. **Romans 8:2** "because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. " Remember: "I don't have to be controlled by anything."

3. HIS **PURPOSE** TRANSFORMS MY PROBLEMS

Life is a series of problems, one after the other. If you say, oh, everything is going fine with me – no problems. I will be very skeptical about that. For you know, you're right now in one of three situations. You're either just coming out of a problem, or you're in the middle of a problem, or you're headed into a new one.

As a church, we need Jesus, too. Because we have problems, too. And I am saying this with the truest sense! At one time the famous Chinese evangelist and Tiananmen Dissident, Mr. Yuan Zhiming was asked: 'do churches have problems?' He said, 'Sure'. And he said that he would like to know any church without a problem. In fact, he went on to jokingly say, if there is a church which has absolutely no problem, by the time you go in there, there will be problem. Why? Simply put, we are all human. Business as usual will have to be gone. Some miracles will happen and some lives will be forever changed. God's working in miraculous ways in our midst.

When you do see a purpose behind the problem, however, you see a meaning or some kind of benefit from it. God gives you a reason for hope; He has a purpose for every single problem you go through no matter how big or small. One of my favorite verse is **Romans 8:28**, which says "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Notice it doesn't say, "all things are good" since this is earth, not heaven. Cancer is not good, family problems are not good, that is why we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So things aren't perfect here but don't blame God for the sins of other people. It doesn't say "all things workout the way I want them to." So what then does the verse say? First it says, "we know God causes all things to work together for good." WE KNOW! We don't think, we don't wish, we don't imagine, we don't guess, but we have absolute confidence that God causes all things to work together for good. Secondly, it says "ALL things", not just SOME things. That means in our illness, marriage problems, financial problems, death, accidents, church problems and all of our mistakes and sins, God fits all things to work together for GOOD! Not separately but together! Thirdly, it does have a qualifier. This promise is NOT for everyone. Only if you've given your life to Christ and have a desire to live in the center of God's purpose does this happen.

4. HIS **PROTECTION** RELIEVES MY FEARS

Fear is another great cause of hopelessness. It's a very damaging, destructive emotion. When you're full of fear, you cannot be full of hope. Fear pulls you down and brings you to despair. God says 'fear not'. **Romans 8:31** says what, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? If you're a Christian, God's is not only WITH you, but He is also FOR you. Put God on my side and I'll take on the world. It's God and me so I never have to fear. **Hebrews 6:19** says, "we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, "

Have you ever read in advance the last chapter of a novel to relieve the suspense? Or perhaps you have gone to the back of the book for keys and answers for some tough questions you are working through the class? Well, I did something like that this morning, and I went to the last book of the Bible and what I've found out is: "We win." We may lose a few battles now and then and here and there along the ways of our lives, but we ultimately win the war wages against the Satan! God's protection relieve my fears.

5. HIS **PROVISION** SUPPLIES MY NEEDS

The fact is God has promised to meet the needs in your life if you will trust Him. All needs! **Romans 8:32** says, He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? God want to bless your life. Philippians 4:19 says, "my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." What a promise!

As we consider the offerings for "Arise and Shine" which is just 3 weeks away on May 4th, this really is the bottom line for us. The issue is "How much do I trust God?" Do I really believe God when He says, "I'll take care of ALL your needs if you put ME first?" If you do believe that God will supply all your needs, then you can learn to give by revelation and by faith in a way greater than you ever thought possible. You can and will want to give sacrificially. You will want to be a part of the future of what God's doing here. God will meet your needs through hope in Christ Jesus.

6. HIS **PROMISE** SECURES MY FUTURE

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This verse actually says that nothing will ever make God stop loving me. Once I've put my life into the hands of Christ and have become a part of His family, I cannot lose that relationship.

Giving sacrificially is saying that 'we believe God is in control and that there's a future.' We are building a worship center of our own to better share the hope of Christ Jesus. We do this because we care to do God's work by caring. To care means "to have thought or regard toward another, or to feel concern about!" If we are going to be a church or a Christian that pleases God we are going to have to be people who care for the hopeless. Jesus is the hope of the world and that's why we do what we do at Tulsa international Baptist Church. Do we see and understand the needs of others? We say that we have a love for God, for our fellow believers and for the lost: but do we really love them? Romans 12:9 "Let love be without dissimulation." "Let love be genuine."

Let's pray!

Conclusions:

Invitations:

To non-believers, the end time is near; people will flourish to His throne room. Christ could return at any time to judge the world, to judge you and me. God want you to know His Son as your Lord and Savior. Accept His son Jesus Christ and be a part of this excitement of seeing Him return.

To the believers, how prepared are you to rise and shine? Come and blessed by God for whatever services you believe He is calling you into. Or be lifted up from your burden so your light will so shine that people around you would know Him because of you! Come and take the challenge! If you do not know where or how to serve, let me pray for you. Or if you are looking for a spiritual home, this is the right one for you. You have not come here by accident. God is about to do something exciting here. You can be part of it.