

Romans (15:4)

Hope to Shout

Part 86 – October 22, 2006

IS THERE HOPE?



This is the submarine crew of the USS S-4. In 1927 she was accidentally struck and sunk off Cape Cod; no one aboard survived. But recently interviewed crew-member, Joe Dawson had been transferred just five days before. Amazingly, the ship he was transferred to was immediately sent to salvage his old sub. He said that when the divers went down to recover the vessel, they could hear tapping ... Morse code.

- The message was a simple question: “Is there hope?”

I don’t know if Joe is still alive (he was in his 90’s at the time of the interview) but I know that the tapping of his doomed friends will be with him until the day he dies.

What a haunting, fundamental question. It’s asked everyday in countless situations. Anyone who’s faced a marriage counselor, or a divorce lawyer, or an oncologist, or bankruptcy, or uncontrollable kids, or an addiction, or the consequences of sin, has tapped and waited.

- [Because] When hope is gone, life is over.

We just need somebody to tap back: “Yes; hope is here!”

In verse three, Paul quoted a prophetic Psalm. And now, in verse four, he pauses to comment on why he quoted scripture; and in so doing, Paul “taps back” in a big way.

- It’s a very valuable verse regarding the role of scripture.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. - *Romans 15:4 NIV*

When Paul said, “Everything that was written in the past” he was referring to the Old Testament (*all* scripture at that time); for believers, the “past” now includes the New Testament as well.

And then he says that all of it: “Was written to teach us”

Q: How many of you have never read your car's Owner's Manual? (I don't mean consulted it ... I mean read it!)

Q: How many of you have assembled a Christmas gift (or whatever) without reading the instructions? Did you have leftover parts?

Q: How many of you have tried to cook an unfamiliar meal without bothering with a recipe?

Q: What is it about *us* and instructions?!

- We want the fruit without laboring in the vineyard!



Whether we're talking about a car, a bike, a pot roast, or a human life, the same simple rule applies:

- Neglect the instructions and it'll show.

The engine will run a little hot, critical, and hard to get along with. You'll leave a self-centered taste in the mouth.

- But it'll show most, when you're "tapping in the dark".

Life is filled with seasons of calm and seasons of storms ... for *everyone*. And it's during the quiet times that we must fill our hearts with His purpose and plans and promises.

- That's what keeps us from being blown and tossed by the wind.



Q: Do you know what the Christian symbol for hope is?

A: An anchor (We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. - Heb 6:19)

- [Be wise] During the calm, prepare for the storm.

We tend to think it's the storms that *cause* hopelessness. It isn't; it's the lack of preparation and equipping beforehand.

Q: What did Jesus do when He was tempted in the wilderness?

A: He relied on the scripture He had equipped Himself with.

Satan came to him three times - the devil even quoted scripture. But Jesus knew His Word, and used it effectively. (Mat 4:1-11)

Q: Here's the question: If Jesus depended on God's Word for *His* own comfort and strength, how much more do *we* need the same?

TAKING THE REMEDY

And hope doesn't come from head-knowledge alone. There are two things that go hand-in-hand to produce genuine hope.

So that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope

Two key words here: "Endurance" and "Encouragement"

- Endurance (obedience) is *our* part of the bargain.

Let's say a man suffers a mild heart attack. His doctor examines him and says, "You'll be dead in a year." (Not a great bedside manner!) The man wants to know if there's any ... what? Hope. The doctor says, "Yes! If you change your diet, exercise, and stop smoking, you can expect to have a normal life-span."

Q: This is hope, right?

A: No. Haven't you been listening?! It's only half the equation.

- This may sound like hope, but it's not; it's encouragement.



The doctor has given the man a plan with a promise; but it won't become hope until he decides to follow the advice.

- Hope is the result of applied encouragement.

Attending church and hearing the Word, and not applying it as absurd as getting a prescription but not taking the remedy. Then, when you're overwhelmed, you try reading the prescription again (and again), and wonder why you still feel so hopeless.



Here's a poem I sent to a friend who was facing a medical storm (heart surgery, away from home). She was trusting God, but she didn't understand His purpose. She knew He wouldn't leave her nor forsake her - that He works all things to the good for those who love Him.

There was comfort and strength, but still she had unanswered questions of why.

Two frogs fell into a can of cream, the sides of which were steep.
The frogs were old, the cream was cold, and not to mention, deep.
"Oh, what's the use?!" croaked number one, "There's no hope to be found!"
"Goodbye, old pal. I'm out of steam." And then he simply drowned.
But number two - with faith and hope - dog-paddled in that can;
Back stroke; breast stroke; butterfly; this much, his only plan.
An hour or two he kicked and swam; not once he stopped to mutter;
But kicked and kicked and swam and kicked; then hopped out via butter!

We don't have to understand the purpose. We just have to have confidence in the One who offers the plan with the promise.

Heart-attack man might loathe the treadmill, crave the French fries, and suffer the nicotine fits. But at his three-month check-up, when his cholesterol is down, and his lung capacity is up, and his blood pressure is lower, and his life-expectancy is higher - his hope will be renewed!

When it comes to God's Word, time will always serve to confirm:

- A. The encouragement is trustworthy
- B. The endurance is worthwhile

And what God has spoken to us through His Word will have had its intended effect, that: "We might have hope". This is one of the ways that God's Spirit empowers us to *keep* going on the path of obedience, even when we're ready to throw in the towel.



You've heard the Nike expression, "No pain, no gain" ... well, there's another that's just as true:

- No hope, no cope!
- The strength to endure comes from God-given hope.
- God-given hope comes from obedience to scripture.

Continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. - *Colossians 1:23 NIV*

Q: As you run out of steam in a race, what happens?

A: You slow to a walk; then you stop; then you sit.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his *delight* is in the law of the Lord, [He appreciates its value] and on his law he *meditates* day and night [He reads, reflects, and re-reads]. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. - *Psalms 1:1-3*



Not just a tree - a lush tree with its deepest needs being met, and in turn it can know the joy of meeting the needs of others. And, its leaf does not wither: it endures!

- Plant yourself in the Word and your leaves won't wither.

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