**New Hope Sermon August 1 Hope Deferred**

**Introduction – God’s reality**

Hebrews 6:20 says hope “is an anchor for our soul, firm and secure.” It is secured by Jesus Himself because the Hebrews text goes on to say “hope enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (the Holy of Holies within the Temple) where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf”.

Psalm 62:5-6 connects hope with soul-rest: “Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress, I will not be shaken.”

But Romans 5 links hope with suffering: “We rejoice in our sufferings because suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.”v.3-5. This is critical because one of hope’s main roles is to ground our feelings and emotions in the character and purposes of God.

**A different reality**

But life does not always play out as the Bible verses declare:

* Hope gets deferred (Prov. 13:12)
* Answers to prayer don’t come as expected
* Confounding circumstances and relationships lead to discouragement and a heaviness of spirit.
* There are setbacks, reversals, problems like mountains that seem unconquerable
* The continued onslaught of the Covid virus and its variants
* Gnawing uncertainty about the future, which in turn produces fear and anxiety
* Loneliness and isolation due to border closings and Covid lock-downs
* Darkness instead of light and sadness instead of joy

These scenarios create seasons in life which are very hard

- when we feel like the Psalmist who cried: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? (Or, as the Passion says ‘Why are you depressed? Why are you sinking into despair?),

- when we feel barren and desolate, lacking the refreshment from the living water of God

- when we feel lame and disabled with feeble arms that hang down and weak knees.(Heb. 12:12-13).

These inner thoughts and feelings are part of the “flaming darts of the wicked one” which Paul talks about in Ephesians 6, darts which Satan uses to try to defeat God’s people.

**A call to hope with singing:**

But God has made it possible for His people to conquer and not be victims of the enemy of our soul. Let me suggest four ways to victory and four songs to go with each point. This way we can claim God’s word and sing it into our hearts.

First, God has given us the armor of God to resist and the shield of faith which will quench all these flaming darts. As Eph.6:12says, the battle is real. There are real enemies against God and against all of God’s people: 12 “Your hand-to-hand combat is not with human beings, but with the highest principalities and authorities operating in rebellion under the heavenly realms.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.6%3A12&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10656a)] For they are a powerful class of demon-gods[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.6%3A12&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10656b)] and evil spirits that hold[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.6%3A12&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10656c)] this dark world in bondage.” So, we must consciously put on the armor of God every day so we CAN take our stand against the enemy and stand in Christ’s victory. (Eph.6:10-18)

Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armor on, strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son. Strong in the Lord of hosts and in His mighty power: who in the name of Jesus trusts is more than conqueror. Stand then in his great might with all His strength endued; and take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God. That having all things done, and all your conflicts past, you may o’ercome through Christ alone and stand complete at last (Charles Wesley)

Second, keep looking up. Turn the focus of your thoughts and hearts to Jesus. Make him your go-to as the problem solver. Keep him in the center of your attention so you can see things through his eyes. As the hymn says:

My soul are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There’s light for a look at the Savior and life more abundant and free. C*horus:* ”Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

His word shall not fail you – He promised; believe Him and all will be well. Then go to a world that is dying His perfect salvation to tell. *Chorus.* ”Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”(words and music: Helen Lemmel)

Third, cast your burden on the Lord. (Ps. 55:22, I Pet.5:7) That word “cast” means to hurl or roll over onto . Don’t carry your anxieties. Thrust them onto Him.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee; He never will suffer the righteous to fall; He is at thy right hand. Thy mercy Lord is great and far above the heavens: Let none be made ashamed that wait upon Thee (music: Felix Mendelssohn)

Fourth, ask the Holy Spirit for His strength to persevere and mount up in Christ’s victory. As He promises in Isa. 40:29-31: “He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. 0Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion.31But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

With Christ’s resurrection strength we can go up over the problems and sadness and heaviness of spirit. We can soar with wings like eagles:

 Hide me now under Your wings; cover me within Your mighty hand.

 *Chorus:* When the oceans rise and thunders roar. I will soar with You above the storm.

 Father, You are King over the flood. I will be still and know You are God.

 Find rest my soul in Christ alone. Know His power in quietness and trust.

 *Chorus.* I will be still and know You are God. (words and music: Reuben Morgan)

**Conclusion**

There is nothing Christians face that is outside God’s goodness and sovereignty, beloved. We need to rest in His providential care and trust Him with our shield of faith mounted so we do quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one – darts that cause the hopelessness, the discouragement, the sense of defeat and lack of energy and faith that keep us from prevailing in a difficult situation. It may seem to us that that our hope deferred is justified. But our perspective is wrong. Or that we are a victim of our circumstances. We are not. Or that we are powerless in the face of all our negative circumstances and relationships. We are not. We are sons and daughters of our great God. Nothing is impossible with Him and nothing can separate us from His love. Hallelujah! So let’s close in song, singing in faith: “God is good all the time!“

*Chorus*: God is good all the time, He put a song of praise in this heart of mine; God is good all the time, through the darkest night His light will shine. God is good, God is good all the time.

v. 1 If you’re walkin through a valley and there’s shadows all around. Do not fear He will guide you. He will keep you safe and sound. ‘cause He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you and His word is true. Chorus v. 2 We were sinners, so unworthy, still for us He chose to die. Filled us with His HolySpirit now we stand and testify that His love is everlasting and His mercies they will never end. *Chorus.*

v. 3. Though I may not understand all the plans you have for me. My life is in Your hands and through the eyes of faith I can clearly see: *Chorus*: God is good all the time, He put a song of praise in this heart of mine; God is good all the time, through the darkest night His light will shine. God is good, He’s so good. God is good all the time! *(words and music*: Don Moen and Paul Overstreet)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom/13:15). Amen. Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson, Pastor New Hope Global Church 8 1 21.