

This past summer Jana and I drove across the Golden Gate Bridge. Built in 1933, the Golden Gate Bridge is an architectural and engineering marvel. When the bridge was proposed there were concerns that because of the difficulty of spanning such a great distance at such a great height in such cold and windy conditions many lives would be lost. In fact, it was estimated that 1 man per million dollars would lose their lives before the project was completed. The estimated cost was \$35 million. Early on one man did fall to his death and construction slowed to a crawl because the workers became so cautious. Joseph Struass, the man credited with the completion of the bridge, ordered a specially made safety net at the cost of \$135,000. After the net was installed 19 men fell from the bridge...into the net. They all survived. In fact, they even earned their way into the prestigious “Halfway to Hell” club. It is amazing how working with a net can change your perspective and improve your work.

God has give us a safety net. It is called hope. The Bible says, “Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” **Romans 15:4**. Hope is essential to our survival. We can live a few weeks without food, a few days without water, a few minutes without oxygen, but we cannot survive even a few seconds without hope. The good news is we worship and serve “the God of hope” who fills us with His Holy Spirit so that we are hope-full.

But what is hope? The way we use the word hope is often very different from what the Bible conveys. From a human perspective hope is either a fool’s pursuit or some romantic notion that gives us a reason to carry on. When we use the word “hope” it often means wishful thinking like, “I hope the Cowboys win...but they might not. I hope they have my favorite item on the menu...but they might not.” From a human perspective hope is like playing the lottery, you never know when you might get lucky. But the biblical word “hope” is a lot more solid. Hope is not wishful thinking but the confident expectation that what God has promised will come to pass. Hope is a word used to describe something certain that has not yet appeared.

The Spirit-filled life is a hope-full life. If you are full of the Holy Spirit you will be full of hope. Let’s look at a few verses this morning and see if we can fill up on hope.

**The Holy Spirit is the source of our hope.** Eph. 1:13-14...A “pledge” is a word which conveys a partial payment which serves as a legal claim. “Down payment,” “earnest money” or “non-refundable deposit” also carries this idea. The ESV even translates the word as “guarantee.” The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that what God promised will be delivered. In **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** Paul uses a Trinitarian formula to emphasize the guarantee of our inheritance. “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge (arrabon).” The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the guarantee of our future inheritance. When you know what is going to happen in the future you can relax and live a life that is peaceful and joyful.

During WWII two British soldiers bailed out of their wounded airplane behind German lines. They were captured and put in a Nazi prison camp. A high wire fence separated the Americans from the British. One was put with the Americans and the other with the Brits. The Germans made it almost impossible for the two sides to communicate. Every day however the two men would meet at the fence and exchange a greeting. Unknown to the guards, the Americans had a little homemade radio and were able to get news from the outside, something more precious than food in a prison camp. Every day the Scotsman would take a headline or two to the fence and share it with his friend in ancient Gaelic, which was indecipherable to the Germans. One day, news came over the little radio that the German High Command had surrendered and the war was over. The news was delivered at the fence and shortly, a roar of celebration came from the barracks. Life in that camp was transformed. Men walked around singing and shouting, waving at the guards, even laughing at the dogs. When the German guards finally heard the news three nights later, they fled into the dark, leaving the gates unlocked. The next morning, Brits and Americans walked out as free men. Yet they had truly been set free three days earlier by the news that the war was over.

Christ's Kingdom is not yet fully achieved but we know the outcome of the battle. We have been set free. Hope is living with uncertainty today in light of the certainty of tomorrow. While we await our inheritance...

**The Holy Spirit groans with us in hope.** Romans 8:18-22. God has built two things into creation; futility and hope. "The whole creation was subjected to futility." There is frustration and pain and imperfection experienced by all creation. Last week the ground was parched and thirsty. Plants and trees were dying, desperate for rain. God subjects the ground to the futility of drought but He does so in hope, the hope of rain. And it did rain. Rain is a reminder not to lose heart, because our souls will be refreshed and replenished some day. The Psalmist described a drought in his own soul. He says, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42:1-2. David said it this way in Psalm 63:1, "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Why did God subject the whole creation to futility? Because if there were no futility there would be no hope. Our internal yearning points to something that is missing in our present experience. If that something did not exist, neither would the yearning.

C.S. Lewis used the futility of creation to display the folly of atheism. He said, "Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should have never found out that it had no meaning, just as if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with

eyes we should never know it was dark. Dark would be a word without meaning.” C. S. Lewis (“The Rival Conceptions of God,” *Mere Christianity*, pg. 46)

Hope would be a word with no meaning if there were no futility causing us to long for some state that does not currently exist. To be an atheist requires the denial of the internal longing of your soul. But as Alexander Pope, an 18th century poet, said in his “Essay on Man,” “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.”

Romans 8:23-25 says The Holy Spirit is the first fruits, the seal, the guarantee of a future redemption. But he does not remove all pain and suffering and frustration in this life but rather gives us the patience to endure to the end by reminding us that the suffering of this present time is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to the children of God. (v. 18). The frustration and pain were not intended to be the last word. They are only temporary.

We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons. The Bible encourages us to hope specifically for the redemption of our bodies. (8:23). God's final purpose is not to have your soul or spirit floating around without your body. His purpose is to raise your body from the dead, make it new and beautiful and healthy and strong. In fact, His final purpose is not to take you away from the earth to spend eternity in space somewhere, but to create a new heaven and a new earth where you will live in happiness forever and ever. And if this new earth where we will live forever and ever were going to be completely different from our present earth, then why would God bother to raise our bodies from the dead? He could just start over and give us completely different bodies if he were going to start over with a completely different world.

Doesn't it make sense, then, that we should start getting ready by using our bodies as living sacrifices of worship and instruments of righteousness for the glory of God?

**The Holy Spirit gives us a reason to hope.** Romans 5:1-5. Once again the Bible reminds us that hope grows through tribulation. The futility we are painfully aware of has a purpose in this life; to grow our perseverance and character and hope. But v.5 gives us the reason for our hope. Hope grows through the knowledge of God's love. The reason we can be full of hope is that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are truly loved by God. If God is sovereign and all-powerful I know there is nothing He cannot accomplish. If God loves me unconditionally then I know He has my best interests in mind. He is so strong He cannot fail. He is so loving He can never be cruel. Therefore I can face an uncertain tomorrow with a certain confidence.

Steve McQueen was one of my favorite actors growing up. He was tough on screen and off. In spite of his on-screen success, alcohol abuse and a couple of failed marriages left him empty. In his despair he attended a crusade put on by the Billy Graham Association thanks to the influence of his third wife Barbara Minty and his flying instructor Sammy Mason. McQueen heard the Gospel and embraced the hope of eternal life. Shortly after his life-altering decision Steve

McQueen was diagnosed with cancer and he requested an opportunity to speak with Billy Graham. A connecting flight in Los Angeles allowed Dr. Graham to spend a couple of hours with McQueen in the actor's limousine. Billy Graham shared numerous scriptures in an effort to give spiritual hope and confidence as McQueen faced the prospect of death. Like many of us, McQueen struggled with the thought of God giving eternal life to a man with such an immoral and checkered past. But in Titus 1:2, Steve McQueen found his hope – it says *“the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”* He requested something to write down the verse but Billy Graham gave McQueen his Bible instead. McQueen died in Mexico while undergoing experimental treatment for his terminal cancer. His family said he passed into eternal life with his Bible opened to Titus 1 and his finger resting on verse 2. Hope is a powerful thing.

How can I have a hope-filled home?

First of all, if you are full of the Spirit you will be full of hope and that hope will overflow to the benefit of everyone in your home. **John 7:37-39**...Jesus says that all we have to do is drink of God's Spirit and He will quench our thirst. Not only that but His Spirit will overflow and be a blessing to others.

Secondly, just as the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of God's abiding love and presence, so you can make a pledge of your abiding love and presence. Tell your spouse you love him/her. Join us for the marriage weekend and recommit yourself to the marriage. Tell your kids that there is nothing they could ever do that would require you to withdraw your love. There are no “take-backs” or “do-overs” in your home.

Finally, memorize Ro. 15:13 and pray it for your family this week. **“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13**