

A LIVING DOG IS BETTER THAN A DEAD LION

Ecclesiastes 9:4

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Solomon wrote: “But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.” **Ecclesiastes 9:4**. A bit of explanation is in order:
1. In Palestine the dog was not made a pet and companion as it is among us. It was considered a loathsome and despicable object. They often traveled in packs and destroyed animals, attacked people, etc. (As sometimes packs of wild dogs would do today in rural areas).
 2. The lion was considered the noblest of beasts, representing power and greatness.
 3. “So this proverbial saying means that the vilest and meanest creature possessed of life is better than the highest and mightiest which has succumbed to death.” (Pulpit Comm, Vol. 9, p. 227).
- B. As long as man lives, there is hope. *“Where there is life, there is hope.”*
- C. Hope - is an interesting word — but one whose meaning is not clear to many people.
1. For most of us, hope is just another word for “wishfulness” – it even has a sad nature to it. “I hope I get that raise,” or “I hope I pass that test”, or “I hope the Braves win the World Series,” or “I hope it doesn’t rain tonight....” In our society hope often carries the weak idea of wishful thinking.
 2. We say, “I HOPE SO” and often mean “I DOUBT SO.”
 3. A small child may ask if something is going to happen, and the parent will often say “maybe so.” One time a small child asked her father - what does “maybe so” mean? A lot of people’s hope is like that - maybe so.
- D. The Bible doesn’t use the word hope as a synonym for *wish*.
1. It’s much stronger than that.
 2. It’s a confidence. It is confidence and even certainty in the face of circumstances that present no visible reasons for such emotions.
 3. Thus faith and hope are eternally tied together.
- E. Hope is *not just being an optimist*.
1. A lot of people mistake hope and optimism. An optimist sees the glass as half full and the pessimist sees the glass as half empty.
 2. A person of hope sees that the glass is *FIRMLY HELD IN THE HAND OF GOD*.
 3. We cheat ourselves when we fail to understand hope
- F. A working definition of HOPE: “Desire + Expectation.”
- G. Hope involves the future and the unseen. **Romans 8:24-25**.
1. You don’t hope for what you have. I wouldn’t say, “I hope I get a blue sport coat for Christmas” -- I already have one. That would not be hope.
 2. Hope looks to future blessings. In this context, Paul is writing about the hope of a new immortal body in heaven (verses 23-25).

H. The word *hope* is found 129 times in the Bible (*hoping*, 2 times).

1. OT: 69 times.

2. NT: 60 times.

I. Today let's study about the hope of the gospel:

I. HOPE IS AN ANCHOR--TO SUSTAIN US IN LIFE'S STORMS.

Hebrews 6:18,19.

A. Paul says the Christian hope is "an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19).

B. Ask the seaman as he throws his anchor overboard if it will hold. Does he say, "I hope so?" He looks at the great iron claws of it and he answers that he is sure it will hold (cf. Acts 27:29, 30). It has never let him down. The anchor braces the ship against storms, wind, and raging waters.

C. In Greek and Roman culture the anchor was a symbol of hope.

D. What an anchor is to a ship, hope is to the soul. "If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, *and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel* which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." Colossians 1:23.

E. Amidst the storms of life hope is our staying power.

F. Socrates said, "To ground hope on a false assumption is like trusting in a weak anchor."

G. "My Hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and Righteousness."

II. WHAT DOES HOPE DO FOR US?

A. *Hope gives us patience in trials, Romans 5:1-6.*

1. Tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

2. ILLUSTRATION: A few years ago the psychology department at Duke University conducted an interesting experiment. They wanted to see how long rats could swim. In one container they placed a rat for whom there was no possibility of escape. He swam a few moments, saw there was no possibility of escape, and ducked his head to drown. In the other container, they made the hope of escape possible for the rat. The rat swam for several hours before finally drowning. We usually say, "*As long as there is life, there is hope.*" The Duke experiment proved, "*As long as there is hope, there is life.*"

3. Through HOPE we can sing: "When sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul."

B. *Hope produces a optimistic outlook.* God is the God of hope, and His truth, like Himself, carries the atmosphere of good cheer.

1. Optimism is an attitude produced by faith.

2. If our Heavenly Father is in control, why should we fear?

3. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13.
 4. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,
Romans 8:28.
 5. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" **Romans 8:31.**
 6. All things work together for good - to those who have real hope.
- C. *Hope produces peace in the face of death.*
1. While the world sees death as a hopeless end, the Christian rejoices in an endless hope.
 2. Because of what Jesus did, we do not need to sorrow as others who have no hope. "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13).
 3. In his book, *The View From A Hearse*, Joseph Bayly tells of trying to comfort a woman whose small son was dying. He said, "It's good to know, isn't it, that even though the medical outlook is hopeless, we can have hope of our children in such a situation. We can be sure that after our child dies, he'll be completely removed from sickness and suffering and everything like that, and be completely well and happy." The woman replied, "If I could only believe that. But I don't. When he dies, I'll just have to cover him up with dirt and forget I ever had him." It is sad, but all too often, this woman's words express the hopeless plight of so many people all around us. ----- "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*" **1 Cor 15:19.**
 4. A believer in God lay on his deathbed. He was confined to his room and unable to move. He told a friend, "I'm like a person going on a journey in a stagecoach, who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out the window for it--I am packed and sealed, and ready for the post."
 5. I have talked with a number of people who were "ready to go home."
 6. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4.

III. THREE TYPES OF HOPE.

A. **A LIVING HOPE.** 1 Peter 1:3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

1. Today's Living Bible says "we live in the hope of eternal life because Christ rose again from the dead."
2. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" Titus 1:2

B. **A FALSE HOPE.** Matthew 7:21-23.

1. They no doubt had hope based on their own opinion.
 - a. They had hope because they thought they had done enough good deeds.
 - b. Jesus said they had not done His will, thus they had false hope. vs. 23
2. Some today are prisoners of false hope. They have not obeyed God, yet they hope for some way to be saved.

C. NO HOPE!

1. Those who are not serving Jesus, who have not claimed Him as their Savior - Have NO HOPE.
 - a. What an awful sound - No Hope...
 - b. It will ring throughout eternity - No Hope.
2. The Gentiles were once without hope, **Ephesians 2:12.**
3. Do you have a solid living hope?

CONCLUSION:

- A. Peter says we should .. “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: **1 Peter 3:15.**
- B. Do you have hope today? What is the reason for your hope this evening?

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