

Hope

John 3:14-16

I. Introduction

- A. **A young psychology student serving in the Army decided to test a theory. Drawing kitchen duty, he was given the job of passing out apricots at the end of the chow line. He asked the first few soldiers that came by, "You don't want any apricots, do you?" Ninety percent said "No." Then he tried the positive approach: "You do want apricots, don't you?" About half answered, "Uh, yeah. I'll take some." Then he tried a third test, based on the fundamental either/or selling technique. This time he asked, "One dish of apricots or two?" And in spite of the fact that soldiers don't like Army apricots, 40 percent took two dishes and 50 percent took one!**
- B. **Expectation is a very powerful mover in our life. What you expect often comes to pass as a self fulfilling prophecy...And our expectations can affect others as well.**
- C. **Hope — Expectation of good things**
- D. **Some confuse hoping for something with wishing for something. Hope isn't a wish. Hope is an *expectation* of good.**
- E. **God intends for us to live a life of hope based on His promises... having great expectations of good things...These expectations should shape us and impress the lives of those around us.**

- F. Unfortunately, our hopes are often shaped by circumstances rather than promises...on what we are experiencing rather than on what Christ has said
- G. G K Chesterton — Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all...As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.**
- H. **What Chesterton is really getting at is the simply this...**If our expectations are dependent upon our present circumstances we never really know what hope is at all.
- I. **Genuine hope is the expectation of good things independent or in spite of circumstances...**
- J. This begs two questions...Do you know what hope really is? And where are you finding hope this morning?**
- K. **Real hope is only available to those who have faith in Jesus. God alone is unmovable and unchanging. God is the only one who can back up His promises with absolute certainty.**
- L. **So if your hope is built on someone or something other than Christ you have no real, lasting, guaranteed expectations of good...you have no certain hope.**
- M. If your future expectations are founded upon anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ you are on shaky ground. Your expectations may or may not come to pass.

N. Wouldn't you like certain expectations for the future?

Wouldn't you like some hope that lasts???

II. Hope Lost and Found

- A. The illustration Jesus references in John 3 is a story very familiar to Nicodemus (recorded in Numbers 21). It's a story about people who lost hope because of tough circumstances they were facing.**
- B. The Israelites were walking through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt and life was hard. There was little water or food and the food they had was less than pleasing.
- C. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey but it was taking too long and the journey to their expected future was a rough road.
- D. They became impatient and lost hope that what God promised would come to pass...so they began to grumble and speak against God and Moses.**
- E. Now think for a moment what this grumbling expressed...The people said, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness."
- F. The journey had become difficult and they ceased expecting the promised land and instead expected to die a miserable death in

the middle of the desert. They believed God and Moses had led them to a desert wasteland to die!

G. The people were faithless and without hope. They no longer believed God could or would do what He had promised them.

H. When our circumstances fail to give us confidence in what God has said about our future we have face a choice...have faith to realize our hopes or watch our hopes die. It is a choice!

I. Lack of faith and the end of hope never leads you anywhere you want to go...

J. Because of their lack of faith and hope, God sent fiery serpents which bit and killed many of the people. All of sudden they could see that God really had been with them all along! He had been directing their steps and keeping them safe. He really had been providing for them everything they needed to live.

K. A few moments apart from God's protective care showed them just how rough and deadly life could be without Him

L. The people went to Moses and said, "We have sinned against the Lord, please pray for the serpents to be removed from among us."

M. And it is at this point that God does something unusual and unexpected...He commands Moses to construct a bronze

snake and put it on a pole. When the people were bitten by a snake they were instructed to look at the bronze snake and they would be healed.

- N. Why did God do this??? It was a shadow of the Cross to come...the snakes were the curse...When they looked up at the snake they were looking at the curse and discipline of the Lord...but as they gazed upon it they were also confessing faith in God's power to defeat the curse.**
- O. A person looking at that snake was already bitten. He or she knew they were poisoned and dying unless God did something to save them. Their only hope at that point was to be found in God and the only way to see that hope realized was by faith. As a bitten person looked at the snake and believed God for his healing he was saved.**
- P. Now back to our passage from John. Just as Moses lifted up the snake so Christ must be lifted up...He would become a curse as He took all of the sins of mankind upon Himself when He was lifted up on the cross...**
- Q. When human beings realize they are bitten...realize they are poisoned by sin and are dying...they can look at Jesus hanging on the cross...the one who became a curse for their sins...and place faith in God's promise to save them through His sacrifice**

R. Those bitten by a snake in the wilderness had faith in God's power to heal them when they looked at the snake...And we have faith in God's power to save as we look at Christ hanging on the cross.

S. The people in the desert had their hopes restored when they were healed of the snake's poison...and our hopes are restored when we are healed of the poison of sin and death in our soul

I. Conclusion

A. There seem to be two clear applications to our passage of scripture today...The first is eternal and the second is for the here and now...this temporary life on earth

B. Share the Gospel

C. In terms of this life here and now...some of us, even those of us who know Jesus...have been bitten by a besetting or habitual sin and need deliverance. We need hope that things can change and we can get on track again.

D. The place to find such hope is in Christ...look to the cross and the deliverance from the poison given us there. Place your faith in Jesus for deliverance from sin...find your hope in Him again

E. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly

lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.

F. Are you enjoying the hope you are meant to experience in Jesus Christ?

G. In some countries you have to watch your P's and Q's. In Mexico, however, when you take a bath or shower, better watch your H's and C's as well. An "H" on the faucet means Helado -- cold. A "C" means caliente -- hot. For the unsuspecting, the result can be a bit surprising.

H. Some of you have been expecting a “hot life” and have instead experienced some frigid waters tough to navigate. You are faltering, wavering and wondering...you are beginning to question whether God will come through for you...your hopes are on thin ice. It’s time to look to the Cross and again find a firm footing for the hopes you profess.

I. Some have yet to experience the hope found in Christ at all... aren’t you ready for some real, genuine, unchanging hope today? Expectations for good that absolutely will come to pass?

J. Advent is a time of expectation and preparation for the celebration that is Christmas. Are your expectations built upon Christ, His Cross and His promise of salvation?