

December 8, 2019

- Romans 15:7-13 -

Christmas a Time of Hope

### Introduction:

A Californian doctor has given a health warning about the stress Christmas can cause! The Christmas Season is marked by more emotional stress and more acts of violence than any other season of the year! A Swedish study reported with the most in-depth look at the variation in cardiac events. Heart attack rates at Christmas were 15 per cent higher than in the weeks before and after. But the greatest additional risk was at Christmas Eve, with heart attack rates as much as 37 per cent higher than on the same day a week later or earlier. Christmas is an excuse to get drunk, spend money, over eat, and all kinds of other excesses. No wonder!

This is not the kind a Christmas God desires for us. You see, into this gloomy world, filled with hopelessness and despair, God sent a baby. When God really wants to get a message through that will penetrate the hopelessness and gloom of humanity, He wrapped him up in a person this person was and is Jesus Christ."

Hope is the solid expectation of coming good. Hope is the antidote for divisiveness and conflict. Folks, throughout scripture, hope is also referred to in relationship with the coming of Jesus Christ. The first coming of Christ brought hope to the world. One of the major message of Christmas is the hope found in Jesus Christ. Paul speaks about this hope, joy and peace in Romans 15.

### I. Christ is the Great Hope

1. Paul explains that Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God (15:8a). In other words, Christ came as a Jew to the Jews. As a child He was circumcised and identified Himself with the covenant people. He also confirmed the promises made unto the fathers (Abraham, Isaac...) by fulfilling Bible prophecies (15:8b). This brought the Jews great hope.

2. But He also came that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy (15:9 a). Therefore, Christ came so that the Jews would glorify God for His faithfulness to His promises and the Gentiles would glorify Him for His mercy. In Jesus' day there were no more diverse groups with more animosity toward each other than the Jews and Gentiles.

Folks, Jesus came to bring the two groups together by His death on the cross. Christ's willingness to accept Jew and Gentile is an example to which all believers should conform.

3. To show God's promise of salvation has always included the Gentiles, Paul quotes four OT passages in Romans 15:9b-12. They are Psalms 18:49, Deut. 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:1. All three of the teaching sections of the Hebrew Bible-the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets-were quoted in this passage to support Paul's point that God always planned for Jew and Gentile to be ONE. That hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Why is Jesus Christ the fulfillment of hope? He is the fulfillment of God's promises. All of God's promises and all of God's earthly activity are centered in Jesus. All of history, as far as man is concerned, is built around Jesus. History is divided by birth.

## Application

Christmas is a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Christ. It is celebrated every December 25th, and has been a federal holiday since 1885. All non-essential federal government offices are closed on Christmas Day, and all federal employees are paid even if they are not a Christian or believe in Jesus. There are only 10 federal holidays, four honor men.

4. Paul concludes this section with a beautiful prayer in verse 13. Following Christ's example will result in hope, joy and peace. Our hopes, our good intentions, and aspiration remain unattainable without the Holy Spirit power. We cannot overflow with hope until the Holy Spirit power fills our weaknesses and masters our lives. Are you saved? Christ came to save the lost. Our focus this week is the subject that Christmas is a time of hope.

Christmas can be an intense reminder for others of lost loved ones or of no close family to celebrate with. Some feel overwhelmed, unbearable anxiety and depression. Christmas can potentially be a time of hopelessness and loneliness. It's important for us to remember the hope that Jesus brings. The Incarnation is the very reason why we have hope. Without Jesus, we have no hope and only death to look forward to. We have hope because Jesus came as a man, lived, died, and rose again. But what is hope...

## II. What is Hope?

1. In the New Testament the word translated hope means confident expectation. Hope is the glue that keeps us together in the midst of adversity and suffering and pain! Everyone needs to have hope! For hope is the opposite of despair and defeat. Everyone needs hope to go on, hope to be accepted...Christians should be people of hope and sewers of its Divine virtue.

2. Hope is very important in our lives. Hope is mention in the Old Testament 68 times and in the New Testament 58 times. So 121 times we find hope in the Bible. It must be an important subject. Christmas time brings out the hope in the world and in us than any other time.

Psalms 31:[24] - Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Psalms 71: [5] - For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

Psalms 119 :[81] - My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.

Psalms 147:[11] - The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

## Illustration:

A number of years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect that **hope** has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other lab rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they had hope! Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on people's lives.

3. Hope is not a word that means a mere possibility, a good chance. Hope, as it is used in the Scriptures is speaking of a ringing certainty. That is the certain hope of everyone who has

been justified by faith. If you really have been justified by faith, you know that you have the promises of God.

4." Unbelievers are without this hope (Eph. 2:12. Many people despair when all is lost, but for the believer all is never lost with Christ. People need hope to live. To know Christ is to live with hope. That why Christmas is so important! If there is any one word beside **Love** that should be predominated to a Christians it is the word Hope! We need to spread it around.

### III Jesus is the Hope for Hopelessness -Hebrew 6: 17-29

1. If our fulfillment depends on material possessions, we will be crushed when we lose them. But if our hope is found in the Lord, nothing can disrupt it. Not even a natural disaster or even economic distress. Many folks our hopeless because they have lost all they had. I don't want to undermine that...life will be difficult but with the Lord all things are possible. How many of these victims are lost without Christ...this is the greater tragedy.

2. We were once hopelessly bound to an existence without God and without His Christ. We know now we have an inheritance undefiled... Life may be cold and hard, it may be filled with pain and sorrow, but the minimum promise to all who are justified by faith is that there is a glory beyond death that is absolutely certain.

For now we must pray for those without hope and do all we can to show the light of Christ. We must be the good Samaritans and do good and spread hope for thousands unsaved soul. Christ is their hope of a new life a better life a fulfilled life. We can all pray and give and go the extra mile to reach out and give hope to others, especially the lost.

3. Too many Christians are going around like there is no tomorrow. Your hope is in the here and now. Maybe a dream was shattered or lost but there is still "Hope" abound in hope. Too many Christians have given up and lay down arms against wickedness. We are to abound in Hope. He is our Hope of glory-Jesus. Satan is trying to rob our society from the Hope of Glory. He could not defeat so the only thing left to do is to rob folks from the hope of Christ.

4. In our society hope often carries the weak idea of wishful thinking. We say, "I hope so" and often mean "I doubt so." But when you read that word in the New Testament understand that we are talking about a firm expectation. --- **Titus 1:2**

Eternal hope infuses us now with the ability to turn our eyes away from the glitter and attraction of the world to a much, much greater Light.

Some of us are weak in the face of temptation because our hope tank is on empty. We are gnawing on the husk of earthly things trying to get inspired and failing to see the great big WHY of it all. Learn to draw strength from the possibilities God has set before you.

### Conclusion

There is Christmas HOPE that is the best reason to smile and have a Merry Christmas.

- God's hope is enduring.
- God's hope cannot be frustrated.
- God's hope will never end.
- God's hope is eternal.