

## ATTITUDE #2 FOR THE NEW YEAR—HOPE IN GOD!

**INTRODUCTION:** Two weeks ago, I began a series on “Attitudes We Should Have Going into a New Year—and a New Presidency.” Attitude #1 is we should have a **hunger to hear God**. Of all the “choices in voices” that we have to listen to, our resolve should be that of the Psalmist as recorded in Psalm 85:8 “I will hear what **God the Lord will** speak...” Why? Because “He will **speak peace** unto His people...”

God is the **only** One who can really **speak** peace to us because He is the only One who can **give** peace to us. Last week we noted that God doesn’t just **say** the word “peace”—He **gives us truths** in His Word about Himself that **give us peace** when we meditate on them and claim them for ourselves.

This morning we are going to look at a second attitude we should have in the new year—and all year long! Take your Bibles and turn to Psalm 43. As I read through this short Psalm, I’m going to bring to your attention a couple of things. First, we will notice the **discouragement** of the Psalmist in verses 1-2.

--v 1 “Judge me, O God...” **Judge** here means to vindicate; to clear of accusation or blame, to **defend**. We see that as we continue on: “**plead my cause** against an ungodly nation: O **deliver** me from the deceitful and unjust man.”

--v 2 “...why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” Some of us are feeling like the Psalmist, aren’t we? And some of us may even be saying the same thing! --‘God, deliver us from deceitful and unjust men—and women—that are oppressing us!’

In spite of the **discouragement** of the Psalmist, we also see his **dependence** on God.

--v 3 “O send out **thy light and thy truth**: let them lead me...”

--Now v 4. The psalmist is saying that when your light and truth lead me, I will come into the place of **your presence**—and the place of **my joy**—and will praise you!

--And in v 5 we see the Psalmist asking **himself** a couple of questions that I’m fairly certain each one of us have **asked ourselves** at one time or another....

--“Why art thou **cast down**, O my soul? And why art thou **disquieted** within me?”

In other words, ‘Why do I feel “down?” Why am I discouraged...why am I so “blah?” Why can’t I “put my finger on” what is **bothering** me?’

--The Psalmist doesn’t bother answering his own questions, though—at least that we have recorded for us—but he does give himself the **solution** to his discouragement: “**hope in God**...”

“Hope in God,” then, is the second attitude we should have as we come into the new year—and should strive to have every day throughout the year. But **how** can we **have hope** when we feel like our **ungodly nation** is turning **more ungodly** every day? **How** can we **have hope** when **deceitful and unjust** men are leading our government—and oppression from the enemy seems to be growing and “winning?”

How in a practical way can we **produce** hope? Can we just “decide” to have hope? Can we “hope” enough for “hope” that we **become hopeful**—or is there more to it than that? The Apostle Paul gives us what I believe is the **formula** for hope in his letter to the Romans. Please turn to Romans 15, v 13. We have here in this verse the person of hope, a prayer for hope, and the production of hope—how we can have it. We will be looking at these things this morning.

Before we dig into this verse, though, I want us to consider...**1. The power of hope**

Is hope **important**? Does it matter if we **have it** or not? What **good** does it do? **One man wrote**: “If I could find a way to **package and dispense hope**, I would have a pill more powerful than any antidepressant on the market.” He went on to say that “Hope is often the only thing between a man and the abyss.”

He didn't define what he meant by "abyss," but I'm assuming he meant "utter despair" because he said that if a person loses hope, all is lost—unless you can help them get their hope back.

Another man wrote: "When you have lost hope, you have lost everything." Still another man stated: "To live without hope is to cease to live."

So, hope is powerful, isn't it? It gets us out of bed in the morning—and keeps us going even when everything seems bleak. But what is it? How would you **define** hope?

Here are a couple of definitions:

1) Verb: "to want something to happen or to be true; to desire with expectation of obtainment."

**Example**: "I hope it warms up soon" or "I hope my car starts after church!"

2) Noun: "the belief that things will turn out okay—even if it doesn't look like it right now."

**Example**: "I still have hope that our country will turn-around—even though it is now heading the wrong way!"

As we look at Romans 15:13, I believe the second definition fits best. If we abound in hope, we will be characterized by a belief that all will be well—even in the midst of the most difficult storm.

Let's consider next... **2. The Person of hope**

Who is the **person** of hope? No; this is **not** a trick question! We have the answer right here, don't we? V 13 "Now the **God of hope**..." Not the only place in the Bible we are told that God should be our hope.

A. Reminders that God should be our hope

**Psalms 38:15** "For in thee, O Lord, **do I hope**: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God."

**Psalms 39:7** "And now, Lord, what wait I for? **my hope is in thee.**"

**Psalms 42:5, 11** "...**hope thou in God**: for I shall yet praise Him for the **help** of His countenance."

**Lamentations 3:24-25** "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore **will I hope in Him.** <sup>25</sup>The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

Number of other places we could look, but I believe you get the point: God is to be our source of hope!

B. Reasons that God should be our hope

But **why** should our hope be in God? I found it interesting to see that the verses we just looked not only remind us to hope in God—they also give us some reasons as to **why**.

From Psalm 38:15, we should hope in God because He will **hear** us; meaning He cares and listens for us.

You can't tell from just v 7, but Psalm 39 reminds us of the **brevity of life**.

--We can't look to **loved ones** for hope because at some point **they will leave us!**

--And loved ones can't **look to us** for hope because at some point **we will leave them!**

--But since God is **eternal**—and we are not—He should be our source of hope—not people!

Psalm 39 also reminds us of the **sinfulness of man**.

--Since God is perfect—and we are not—our hope needs to be in Him and His forgiveness to get into **His** heaven! To hope we will get into **God's** heaven in our **own** way is a **false** hope! (John 14:6)

Psalm 42:5, 11 remind us that we should have hope in God because He is our **helper**. So hope in God...

--Because God is the only One who has the **power** to **fix** the wrongs in the world and make them right!

--And because God is the only One who has the **wisdom** that knows **what** needs to be done and **when!**

C. Resolve to have God be your hope

Question for you—but answer only in your mind! Is God your **Person** of hope? Is He **your source** of hope—the One you **trust in** and **look to**, to make everything okay even though it doesn't look okay right now?

I fear there were too many of us that based our hope on who would be **occupying** the White House instead of basing our hope on the One who **occupies the throne of heaven!**

There is a lot of disappointment about the election—and the direction of the country. There are also a lot of Negative Nancy's and Danny Downer's. But why? Were they putting too much hope **in an election**—and not enough hope in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

"Now the God of hope..." God is the God of hope; **resolve** to have Him be your **source** of hope!

### 3. The prayer for hope

My guess is that some of you were like me in that you didn't initially consider this verse as a **prayer**. But if you stop and think about it, Paul is **asking** God to do **something** for someone—which certainly qualifies as a prayer! Paul uses similar language in other prayers; here are just a couple:

We see similar words right here in the same chapter! Rom 15:5 “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:”

**II Thess 3:16** “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”

Back to v 13. So what is Paul asking the God of hope to **do**? “Fill them with all **joy and peace** in believing...” Some of you might be thinking, ‘Wait a minute—you said it was a prayer for **hope**—but he doesn't ask God to give them hope.’ To which I reply, Paul asks God to fill them with all **joy and peace** and when they are, what will the **result** be? They will “abound in hope.”

It is here, then—in this short prayer—that we see the formula for the **4. The production of hope**

So how is hope **produced**? How can we **increase** our attitude of hope—and become people that are **characterized** by hope, even in the darkest of times?

First, we see... A. God fills

“Now the God of hope **fill** you with all joy and peace....” Notice the desire Paul has for them—that they would be **filled** with **all** joy and **filled** with **all** peace. He didn't want them to have just a **little** joy and a **little** peace—he wanted God to give it to them so that it **overflowed** in their lives.

By **why** would God fill them with these things? Was it just a **random act** by God in answer to prayer—or was there something they had **to do**? What was **their part**?

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace **in believing**....” It wasn't a random act; God would fill them with an abundance of joy and peace as a result of their **believing**! But believing what?

--Believing **better days** were coming?

They might be—but worse days could be coming, too!

--Believing **nothing bad** would ever happen to them?

Just believing bad things won't happen doesn't stop them from happening!

--Believing that **God exists**; that He is out there somewhere?

James reminds us that the devil believes in God—and God certainly won't be sending any joy or peace to **him**!

Flip back a page (maybe) to Romans 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for **our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures **might have hope**.” God's part is to fill us with all joy and peace in believing, but our part is to **believe on the Word of God!**

Stated another way, God's fills, but B. We feed

We need to **feed** on—and **believe** in—what God tells us in His Word. In the Scriptures—Paul was referring to the OT, but we now have both—we see those with a **patient endurance; a steadfastness**—as well as those who are **comforted**. What does that do to us? Gives us perseverance and comfort; in other words, **hope!**

In a way, **hope** is very similar to **faith** and in **Romans 10:17** Paul reminds them: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the **word of God**.”

--When we see Sarah giving birth to Isaac in her old age...and David killing Goliath...and the miraculous conception of Mary, we are reminded that there is **nothing too hard for God!**

--When we see Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace...and Daniel thrown into the lion's den...and Jonah swallowed by a great fish, we see the **powerful, protective hand of God**.

--When we see the steadfastness of Job as he endured incredible loss...and the prayers of Moses for a stubborn people...and the self-control of David in not killing Saul, we see how important it is **to wait on God's timing and not take things into our own hands**.

--When we see the character of God...and the works of God...and the promises of God, it encourages us to **trust Him**. And as we learn of these things and meditate on them, God fills us with **joy and peace** in our believing of what He says.

Maybe I'm looking at it too simply, but when we are not **in** God's Word—when we are not **feeding** on it so we can **believe** on it, we haven't put enough in **our heart and mind** for God to fill us with joy and peace.

Think of your heart and mind like a **garden**. God will do the growing—He will grow the plants of joy and peace—but **you** have to **put seed in the garden** and the seed is the **Word of God!**

Peter used a **milk** analogy instead of seed. **1 Peter 2:2** "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that if you are **lacking** joy, peace, and hope, it is because you are not **taking in enough** of God's Word. But it is not just a matter of **taking it in**, is it? We need to **believe** it! God fills with joy and peace, but we need to **feed** on God's Word for Him to have something to **work with!**

What happens when we do that? C. Hope follows

As we feed on—and believe in—God's Word, **God fills us** with joy and peace—and out of that comes an **abundance of hope**. We **abound** in hope; we are **overflowing** with it! We don't just **hope** things are going to be okay—we **know** they will be because God is in control!

We are—or at least should be—the **eternal optimists** because no matter **what** happens to us here and now, we are on the **victor's** side. We have heaven...and Jesus...and the promises of no more death, sin, sorrow, or crying. If we can have joy unspeakable and full of glory **now**, what will it be like when we are **there**?

How can we have an abundance of hope? What is the process? We must feed on and believe in God's Word. When we do, He fills us with joy and peace. Hope follows, but D. The Holy Spirit fuels it

Sorry; needed another word that started with "f" 😊! The process of having hope **starts** with God...is based on believing the **Word of God**...and happens "through the power of the **Holy Ghost**." Who—or what—is the Holy **Ghost**? Although most of you know that the Holy **Ghost** refers to the Holy **Spirit**, there might be a few who don't know that, so I want to take just a moment to explain the... **i. Person of the Holy "Ghost"**

--"Ghost" here does not mean the "spirit of a dead person" that floats around scaring people!

--Instead, "ghost" simply means an **immaterial** being; something—or someone—without a **body**.

--In the Greek—the original language of the NT—it means "breath, wind, or spirit."

When the word "Holy" is front of it, "Holy Ghost" is referring to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God **the Holy Spirit**. There are not three Gods but are three persons of **one** God!

#### **ii. The Power of the Holy Spirit**

Paul is saying, then, that the **power** behind us having joy...and peace...and hope... is God the Holy Spirit! It is not us **stirring up ourselves** to have these things—it is **God stirring up/fueling** a sense of joy, peace, and hope within us! It is difficult to put into words—at least for me—but it works something like this:

God's Spirit uses God's Word to **assure** us...and **convince** us...and **enable** us to **apply** His Word to **our hearts** and **our situation**. It is not a **natural** thing that we do—it is a **supernatural** thing that God does!

So, are you **hope-filled** this morning—or feeling **hopeless**? Do you **know** everything will turn out right in the end because **God is in control**—or are you wringing your hands because you **don't like** what is going on in our **country—or in your individual life**? If so, could it be that your **lack of hope** has to do with your **lack of feeding** on the Word of God?

There are some people, though, who have hope—but it is a **false** hope. They sincerely believe everything will be just fine in the end. They believe they will die...and be forgiven...and get into heaven... **because they were baptized**...or because they went to church...or because they tried to be a good person.

They have hope—but it is in **themselves** and their works. But salvation is not of works. Salvation is a **gift**—given to us by God through faith when we realize we are **hopeless** and can't get to heaven unless we trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross—not on what we do for ourselves. What is **your** hope for heaven?

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, I want to ask again a question I just asked: What is your hope of heaven? What are you counting on to get there? If you are trusting on **you**, that is a **false** hope. You need to trust what Jesus did for you on the cross—not what you are trying to do for yourself! If you die without Christ, you will **never** have hope.

2. Believer, who is **your** hope in? Who are you looking to for the “salvation” of our nation? Is your hope in God—or a person?

3. Are you feeding on the word of God? God wants to fill you with joy and peace and hope, but you need to give Him something to work with!