

**HOPE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD**  
**GENESIS 9:7-17**

Can you imagine Noah's frame of mind as he and his family stepped out of the ark? There was around them overwhelming evidence of the judgment of God on this earth. The signs of death could be seen everywhere. The devastation of the flood was complete. The evidence of man's existence on the earth was buried beneath the rubbish and the ruin of the flood. Noah must have thought, "What if God does this again? Is there any reason to hope that we can have a continued existence upon the earth?"

Soon after I came to Texas to attend Southwestern Seminary, I became aware of the devastation of tornadoes across this state. While they may occur from time to time back East, there is not the regular occurrence that you have across Texas. I remember meeting the J. V. Tucker family. They were members of the first church that I served in Texas. They had, what appeared to me to be, an unwholesome fear of tornadoes. At the least evidence or rumor that a tornado was a possibility, they would rush into a place of hiding as soon as possible. What I did not understand was that the Tucker's had been through a tornado. Living through the devastation and death of a tornado had affected them for all time. They would never see a cloud that had the potential of a tornado without a certain element of fear. Noah must have had some of that. Every time there was a cloud, a clap of thunder, some lightening, he must have thought, "Is God going to do it again?"

As you and I live in the world in which we live there is much reason for fear and not much reason for hope. One famous scientist summed it up some time ago when he said, "I am a frightened man." We stand in a day of great opportunity, but one that is also filled with great uncertainty and great danger. If there is one need that we have in our day it is hope. This is particularly true among the young. The young have seen their homes decimated by divorce; they have seen their friends shot down in gang warfare; they have seen their friends victimized by drugs; and they wonder is there any hope in a world like this?

This old story of God putting the rainbow in the cloud gives us some important lessons concerning hope. There is a reason for hope in an uncertain world like this.

## **I. THE SEARCH FOR HOPE.**

As Noah moved out from the ark into the freshly judged earth, God began to speak to him. He gave him words of instruction about his conduct on the earth. In response to what God said, Noah bowed before God in worship by offering a sacrifice. God in His grace had dealt with Noah and his family.

I wonder though if the sacrifice offered by Noah was not a part of a longing for some certainty concerning the future. Could he not have been expressing some of the anxiety that he felt as he walked across the earth.

I learned early in my ministry just how important hope really is. The first funeral I conducted was a triple funeral. It was a service for a mother and her two children. The person was a young

adult who had wrapped her life in the man that she loved. Into their relationship of love were born two precious children who became a source of special joy in her life. But things went wrong in the marriage. He was a highway patrolman and became unfaithful to his wife and it led to divorce. But his ex-wife maintained a hope in her heart that some way they still might be reconciled and their marriage might be saved. Then the news came that he had indeed married another woman. When she heard this news, her hope of a restored marriage died. It was more than she could bear. Burdened down with despair she took her two children out to a lake and in the waters of the lake she drowned her two children and then drowned herself. It was my responsibility to stand in the pulpit as a young pastor and to try to give a word of hope against the background of eloquent evidence that you cannot live without hope.

If you are searching for hope tonight don't give up! Your search for hope does not have to end where that lady's ended. There is a reason for hope in an uncertain world like ours.

## **II THE SOURCE OF HOPE.**

Where do you find hope?

Not in man! Noah knew himself and knew that there was no basis for hope within. He knew that in himself he was capable of the kind of sins that had caused God to bring judgment upon the earth. He knew that he bore the same deadly disease in his spirit that had brought the world to ruin.

You will never be able to find hope in the wisdom, power, achievements, or the promises of man. Man has no way of giving you hope. Such attempts to find hope in man may end up like

the experience of the man in New York City. A policeman found the man about to commit suicide by jumping from the Brooklyn Bridge. He could tell by the look on the man's face that he was not faking. He meant to jump. The policeman laid a firm hand on the man's shoulder and drew him back to safety but the desperate man protested to the policeman saying, "You do not understand how miserable I am and how hopeless my life is. Please let me go!"

The kind hearted officer talked with him and said, "I will make this proposition to you. You take five minutes and give your reasons why life is not worth living and then I will take five minutes and give my reasons why I think life is worth living. If at the end of the ten minutes you still feel like jumping from the bridge, I will not try to stop you."

The man took five minutes and stated his hopeless case. The officer took his five minutes and tried to make a case for hope for life. At the end of the ten minutes the two joined hands and leaped from the bridge together.

If you are turning to man and his institutions for hope, you will end up leaping from life or slumping beneath its unbearable burdens.

God is the only source of hope. While Noah was without hope as he stepped out of the ark, God broke in to his world with a word. God established a covenant with Noah. In the covenant he assured Noah that He would not destroy the earth with water again. In love and grace he said, "And I behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with you seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with

you; from all that go out of the ark to every beast of the earth, and I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there be any flood to destroy the earth. And God said, “This is the token of the covenant which I made between me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” It was God’s promise to Noah and to all of his descendents. This promise to human kind became the bases of man’s hope. God promised that never again would he cut off man by flood.

Because of this word from God, there does not need to be an unwholesome fear of storms that come. While they do come with regularity and from time to time bring devastation to the human situation, they will all soon go their way. There will be no earth encompassing destructive storm or flood ever again that will end human existence on the earth. God has made a promise to man. On the basis of that promise we can establish our hope.

God made the bow in the cloud as the sign of this special agreement between the creator and His creation. Every time you see a rainbow in the cloud, you should be reminded that there is a judge of all the earth but that He has promised not to destroy the earth again with water.

It is against this background that we understand the basis for a larger hope. In the New Testament God makes an even greater covenant. It is a covenant that is based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the basis of the death of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, God has made a covenant. This covenant declares that God will forgive all of our iniquities. It declares that God will place His Holy Spirit in our lives to be our guide and our

strength in the struggles of life. It promises that God will be with us; that we will be His people and He will be our God.

This covenant has a sign also. The sign of this covenant is a meal, a supper. Every time Christians gather around the table and partake of a piece of broken bread and drink the fruit of the vine, they are being reminded of this new covenant. They are being reminded that God has based this covenant on the death of His Son and that it includes the forgiveness of our sins.

What a covenant! What a promise!. And then you can add to that the other promises that Jesus gave. Jesus says to us, “Let not your hearts be troubled, if ye believe in God believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also.” Such a promise gives us hope. It gives us a basis for hope. The only real foundation for hope is a promise from the God of love and grace who cannot lie.

### **III THE STRENGTH OF HOPE**

Hope is a strong thing. Noah found great strength by looking at the bow in the cloud, which reminded him of his covenant with God.

1. There is strength for service in hope.

God has a work for all of us to do. We find the strength to do that work in our hope in Jesus Christ. The Apostle wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

2. There is strength to sustain in hope.

You can walk through almost any circumstance, bear almost any burden, and endure almost any trial, if you have hope. Hope buoys you up under the burdens of life. There is the strength to sing in hope.

A singing heart is one filled with hope. The book of Revelation which speaks of the hope of the people of God has more songs in it than any other New Testament book. This book came out of a time of suffering and speaks to a people in the midst of suffering but yet it is full of song. It is full of song because it is full of hope. People who have hope have a song.

There is someone here tonight who is in great need of hope. I point you back to Noah's encounter with God and the bow in the cloud. It speaks to us of a God who makes promises to man and keeps His promises. I point you back to the cross and the empty tomb. They speak to us of a God who has acted in His Son to establish a new covenant. I point you back to Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus Christ is our hope.