

Today's kids don't know how to communicate. They don't communicate with adults. They aren't even communicating with each other. Text messages and Facebook are making them "communication challenged" because all they can speak in is short bursts like "C ya later." "Txt me sometime." "Wanna hang out?" Those are barely sentences much less complete thoughts. I don't know if we can have hope for the next generation.

That conversation is one I've had many times with people, especially older people. They seem to look at the younger generation and wonder if they'll be capable of running the world when it's their time. What they forget is that maybe an older generation was looking at them the same way when they were younger. Turnover along with fear and doubt about the next generation is almost guaranteed. When this kind of skepticism works its way into the church it can show itself in rejection or a lack of hope. There's fear the church won't survive. There's doubt many will believe and be saved. There's even disunity and splintering that occurs. Where's the hope?

In the face of a world going downhill many worry there's no hope for the Christian Church, our American way of life, and maybe even our world. Paul wrote to the Romans who were living among a society going downhill. There was doubt society could survive. Even more it was a lack of hope like you've had before too. In the second lesson Paul writes we can,

**Keep on having hope  
Given endurance and encouragement  
Filled up with joy and peace**

Everything was pitch-black. He was alive floating on some mattresses in an air pocket in an overturned and sunken tugboat at the bottom of the ocean. He feared the blackness, the eerie sounds, and the wait. Who would know he was alive? When would they come looking to recover the dead bodies? The Nigerian cook simply waited and hoped. With the entire weight of an ocean coming down on top of him this man endured. Three days later he was rescued in one dramatic video.

Many people don't face ordeals like that, but life has a way of putting crushing weights on us. Personal bravery or going it alone lead to hope like the world thinks of it. That kind of hope is a strong wish for something to happen with no real guarantee that it will. That's no hope. **"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."** Paul describes hope differently. God's Word gives endurance. God's Word gives encouragement. When those are supplied it leads to hope which no one has naturally.

When faced with an ordeal is your first thought like many? You think you have to face it alone. There's something heroic and noble about that. You don't ask for help because you hope in yourself and your abilities. Asking for help would be weakness and you don't want to look weak. At the office or at school people will make fun of the weak. Or you find hope by going along with the crowd. If a whole bunch of people find hope in investments it has to be right. Right? That passes for hope and maybe even unity. You might draw hope and unity from being in a group, but then find it hard to let in someone from outside the group. What if they eat differently or talk different? What if they dress weird or vote different? It's comfortable and you have hope once inside a group that eats, talks, dresses, and votes the same as you. Plus it's easier identifying outsiders and making them conform or making them feel unwelcome till they leave.

None of that is real hope. Hope to endure, encouragement to escape going along with a wrong idea, or hope to find unity doesn't come from you or me. It only comes from God. **"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus."** We might expect because of our sins to have no hope. But God gives us endurance and encouragement in his Word. His Word speaks of Christ. Christ gives us our hope. Everything he did and everything he said was for our hope. The way he loved and lived, the way he talked and acted, and his willingness to suffer and die. All these save us, give us hope, and make us united with other believers. In Christ we have the confident expectation of something better because we belong to an eternal kingdom. When he returns we'll reign with him. We'll have our crown of life.

Today we rest on Scripture alone for our hope. It lets us live in repentance and unity. Christian hope gives unity among a group of believers. We will repent of times we used our unity to force people to do what we personally wanted. We will repent of times when we were unwelcoming to someone new. We will listen to the encouragement of Scripture. **"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."** We have hope from Christ. He has accepted us. Even in our sins he accepted us. So we can apply this hope to unity. Choices in worship like hymns, prayers, confessions, and creeds might be personal. But personal style preference must not stand in the way of unity. We have oneness together in Christ. There is forgiveness and a true hope to bring praise to God.

All this hope comes from someplace. It isn't created out of thin air. It isn't stored away somewhere so that you go and claim it. This hope isn't produced by your efforts. The God who made promises in the Old Testament and kept them in Jesus Christ is the God of hope. He gives hope and produces hope. He also fills people up with joy and peace.

Jesse was the father of King David. His was a royal line that was cut down as soon as Babylon carried Judah off to captivity. But from that stump God was working a plan that would save all people. That little root of Jesse would stand one day as a banner for all people everywhere. Through him would be life and salvation. Jews would praise God for the promises of a Messiah coming true. Non-Jews called Gentiles would praise God for the Messiah King of the Jews who was also their hope. They would have hope, joy, and peace they didn't have before. There would be unity even with different backgrounds. Jews and Gentiles were always part of God's plan. Every quote Paul offers from the Old Testament proves that's true. Jews were to praise God in the sight of Gentiles. Gentiles were to praise God in the sight of Jews. Gentiles then could praise God by themselves. Finally, **"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."** The Jewish King was for the Gentiles' hope.

For every desired outcome in our lives we have our fair share of doubts and uncertainty. There is no joy and no peace with doubt and uncertainty. We might even question God's plan. Do you find yourself being negative about life? Things will only get worse? I'll never make it as anything. I won't survive to retirement on what I have in the bank. During a season full of joy and peace we only seem to have stress and problems. We fail to repent of our sins and it only leaves us feeling worse.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, God raised up the surprising Root of Jesse. Who was he? Sent from God, son of King David, ruler of Jews and Gentiles, and promised in the Old Testament. This was the Messiah. This was Jesus. Jesus was raised up both in his perfect life and suffering on the cross so that all might see him. He was raised up from the dead to guarantee his work was complete. Hope and joy and peace come through Christ. Doubt and uncertainty are completely and totally pushed out. God's love makes us absolutely sure this joy and peace is real and for us. And we rejoice that God included all people as part of his plan. You and me, we are part of this plan. We see God's mighty acts in the Scriptures and believe. In this way we bring glory to God for his mercy.

By the undeserved love and mercy he showed all people, Jews and Gentiles, weak and strong, young and old, rich and poor, he has awakened songs of praise. Christians can be positive people. No need to be forced or show fake positivity. Real positivity found in the hope of Christ is what we have. Joy and peace are certain. Living in that joy and peace allows us to sing of his praises. We live and worship with all believers because we all draw our hope from the same source, Jesus Christ.

Now, **"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."**