

### **INHERITANCE NUMBER ONE – Hope**

God is a God of promises and covenants. Scripture is filled to overflowing with the promises of God. This gives us hope. Scripture tells us that every believer is a joint heir with Christ. This means that you and I are privileged to receive quite a few inheritances (goodies we receive) from God as believers. *We can receive benefits only if we are willing to show up and claim them.* Paul boldly tells the little church in Rome: <sup>17</sup> *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:17, NKJV).* When I practiced law, much of what I did involved creating wills and trusts and handling the "probate" of estates. Probate comes from the Latin word "*probare*," which means "to prove." It is when the lawyer goes to court and presents evidence to the judge that the document presented is indeed the testator's last will and testament. Much of my practice involved what is called "estate law." That's the part of law that helps people plan where they want their worldly goods to go. It then involves getting it to the beneficiaries once a death has occurred and the estate needs to be settled. There are quite a few legal terms used in the Bible describing our relationship with God. Let's go over a few of them.

**Will and Testament** – We use two words in English meaning the same thing. Those words are will and testament. The word "will" comes from our Anglo-Saxon language roots (meaning our 'desire'), and a testament comes from the word "testare" in Latin meaning "to testify." A **will or testament** is a document that tells the world exactly what you want done with what you have accumulated in your life after you die. It will include a **testator**, the person making the will. It includes **beneficiaries** who are the "**heirs**" that are named and who are entitled to receive something under the provisions of the will. It also contains the bequests or **inheritances** that list the "goodies" that the heirs will be entitled to receive under the will. It names an **executor** (or **executrix** if it is a woman) who will be the person entrusted with paying any debts the testator might have had at the time of their death, and it designates who will distribute the goodies in the manner in which the testator desired that they be given. It will also include provisions for how the testator is to be buried and other desires and wishes that he or she might have. The last thing that triggers an inheritance to be available to the beneficiaries is a **death**. We use the word "testament" in the biblical sense when we talk about the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament." These bodies of scripture tell us God's past and present desire for His interaction with mankind.

### **The " Old Testament"**

#### **Israel's Inheritance**

Israel received an earthly physical inheritance along with several other spiritual inheritances. The Church has not received a physical inheritance. When God blessed Abraham, he named six promises/covenants that Abraham and his offspring would receive: (1) Abraham would become a great nation, (2) Abraham's descendants were to be given the Promised Land (Canaan) "forever," (3) Abraham would have innumerable descendants who would be as many as the

"dust of the earth" and the "stars in the skies," (4) God would be their God and they would be "His special" people, (5) Abraham would be a blessing to all nations/families of the earth through his offspring, which was fulfilled through the Messiah Jesus (Galatians 3:16), and (6) a promise that God would bless those that bless Israel and curse those that curse Israel.

For the subsequent four sessions, I will talk about four spiritual benefits that we as believers have received from the Lord as an inheritance. These are spiritual rights that are repeatedly assured to us in scripture. INTERESTINGLY, as mentioned, a death must occur to trigger an inheritance. Likewise, a beneficiary who is entitled to receive something under a will must show up in faith that there is something there for them, and they must claim it to receive it. It is precisely the same with us as Christians. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection to glory was necessary to make an inheritance available to us. We can either receive it, or we can RENOUNCE or DISCLAIM that which is rightfully ours as an inheritance. We **trigger** receipt of that inheritance and become promised beneficiaries by putting our faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross as complete satisfaction of each of our sins. So...what exactly is "faith?"

The writer of Hebrews tells us, *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1, NIV).* I like to think of faith as a platform. It's what we stand on enabling us to have hope. It is what supports us as we experience all that God has for us as joint heirs with Jesus. It helps to look at the underlying (no pun intended) meaning of the unusual word used in Greek in the Bible. The writer of Hebrews describes faith as the "*hypostasis*" of all we hope in. I like to think of it as a platform or undergirding of sorts that we can build our lives and our attitudes upon.

<sup>1</sup> "Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. This says, "Faith is the platform/foundation/support of what is hoped for, and it is the proof of what is unseen" (Hebrews 11:1, Author's paraphrase).

That fifth word which is highlighted above is "**hypostasis**." We all know the meaning of a **hypodermic** needle. It goes UNDER the skin. **Stasis** has to do with "standing." Think of it like a platform that we stand on. The writer is saying that things that we hope for are on a foundation of faith. Faith provides the underpinning, the platform under, the thing that is solid (substance), the foundation that we stand on to receive our inheritance of hope. So, faith is not only involved in receiving our inheritance, it is required. Faith is the evidence (solid thing) of things not seen. It is a FIRM belief in God and His promises. That produces a confident expectation of the good that God intends for each of us.

## Hope

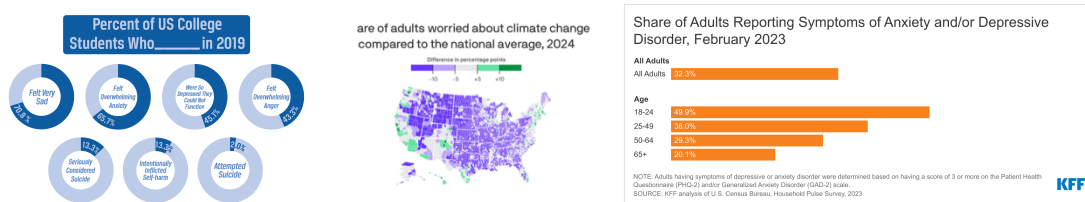
Scripture tells us that without Christ, we are without hope. Paul tells the church at Ephesus: <sup>12</sup>*that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* <sup>13</sup>*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:12-13, NKJV).* In contrast, Hebrews 6:19 tells us that *the hope of believers is an*

*anchor for the soul, firm and secure. (Author's Paraphrase). We will look at a few statistics below that show us just how dire the situation is for the unbeliever.*

Our hope as Christ-followers is a living hope. It is not a hope that is akin to "I sure hope that it is going to rain." Instead, it is an expectant hope that makes one say, "I know it's going to rain so I'm going to get my umbrella and put on my raincoat." That's a kind of hope filled with expectation. For those who are bilingual in Spanish we know that the word *"espero"* means both "I hope" and "I wait." It is a hope that is there waiting. It's waiting for what will occur. Hope is that part of us that either believes or doesn't believe that things have a purpose and that somehow things will work out for some kind of benefit in the life of a believer. This is Romans 8:28 lived out. It is being in the midst of trials and yet knowing and understanding that *"28 ..... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28, KJV).*

We live in the most materially prosperous country in the world, so if hope is tied to our wealth and prosperity, there would be no hopelessness in America. Yet the numbers of those who are hopeless are staggering. Hopelessness is at an historic high among our youth. Forty percent of high school students reported feelings of deep sadness and despair in 2023. The numbers are even higher for LGBTQ high schoolers at 65%. For young adults, a whopping 51% feel depressed or hopeless. And 48 million adults (18.3% of the population) in America are being treated with medication for hopelessness and depression.

Psychologists and psychiatrists give little insight and few remedies for getting out of this hopelessness. MHA (Mental Health America) offers advice to people who are feeling hopeless.<sup>1</sup> Some of the proposed solutions include: "texting, DM, Face Time, or playing video games with friends. They also include playing with a pet or a friend's pet, and inviting a friend to hang out or going to visit them." I suspect that looking for meaning in such things as these have led many into depression to begin with.



It should be no surprise to any of us that this drop in mental well-being is correlated to a decline in spiritual interest and faith commitment in America. We are a nation that has in great part grown alien to the God Who is, and we've chased after other gods. The Bible speaks loudly and clearly that HOPE is the inheritance of every believer, so as belief in God and in the promises of His word wanes, hopelessness will abound. You won't grow hopeful by playing video games with your friends. You won't grow hopeful playing with your friend's dog or cat. You might have a

<sup>1</sup> <https://mhanational.org/resources/everything-feels-hopeless-what-now/>

little enjoyment, but you won't grow hopeful. If you find that you're feeling a little hopeless at present, it is time to take a fresh look at the promises of God.

## HOPELESSNESS AND HOW TO CHANGE IT

At this point, you might be feeling pretty despondent about the state of affairs in the hope department in this country. I have news for you! You can't pet your dog or your neighbor's dog enough to overcome your anxiety and your depression for long. There is only one real way out of hopelessness. That is to know and understand that you and I have a God who made us, and to love and serve Him gives purpose to our lives. Hope and purpose go hand in hand. The only real abiding hope comes when we stop putting our faith and trust in the things that the world promises, and we put our faith and hope in Him and Him only. There is a God in heaven who hears your every cry. He has put the tears that we shed into His bottle (Psalm 56:8). He knows of your broken heart, and He alone can mend it. Depression and discouragement are real. They make us feel like we've fallen down into a dark pit and we have no clue how to crawl out.

King David, the poet king, dealt with depression and hopelessness a lot. He points us to Him Who can bring us up out of the horrible pit of depression.

*<sup>2</sup> He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps.<sup>3</sup> He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD. (Psalm 40:2-3, NKJV).*

As David's life often fell apart, he spoke the truth of the only thing that would bring him out of it. It is God alone who can get our feet back under us, dry our tears, and put a fresh song in our mouths.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah and tells us this,

*<sup>19</sup> Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall. [bitterness and my bitter cup] <sup>20</sup> My soul still remembers and sinks within me.*

*<sup>21</sup> This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.*

*<sup>22</sup> Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.*

*<sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" (Lamentations 3:19-24, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).*

Jeremiah reminds us that we can cry out to God, reminding Him of our wormwood and gall. Wormwood and gall are the bitterness and the bitter cup we sometimes must drink from in our lives. We think on these things and our hope can fall right through the floor. When I suffered post-radiation sickness from cancer treatment, and seemed to be at the bottom, I was so miserable that the only thing that could bring me hope in that moment was realizing that someday I might feel hopeful again. I found myself repeating Psalm 27:13-14.

*<sup>13</sup> I would have lost heart, unless I had believed  
That I would see the goodness of the LORD  
In the land of the living.  
<sup>14</sup> Wait on the LORD;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD! (Psalm 27:13-14, NKJV).*

In that moment, I couldn't see the goodness of the Lord, but I believed that I would again see it someday "in the land of the living."

You might be saying this morning, "What in the world can I do to restore my hope?" You and I need to recall ONE THING. Notice that the memory of the wormwood and gall are not removed. Notice that our soul will remember these things and sink low. BUT IT IS BY HIS MERCIES THAT WE ARE NOT, AND WE WILL NOT BE CONSUMED! By God's new compassions we are able to face yet another day, and in that day, we will find ever new mercies, new grace, because His compassions they fail not.

### **God Has Plans for You and Me**

Now let me say that I realize that the following declaration was to Israel as a distant hope for them beyond their years of captivity in Babylon. But, when I read this, I too understand that beyond by suffering and my "captivity" God has a positive outcome for me. That is my hope.

*<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans that I have for you, ' declares the LORD, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster, **to give you a future and a hope.** <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NASB).*

Brothers and sister, hope is a major component of our inheritance. It is promised to those that put their faith and trust in Jesus. I urge you today to reach out and take hold of it. It is yours to have. It is part of your inheritance. If you are weary this morning, there is hope for you. This is a hope that you may have to recapture again and again, but it is real and it is yours. Weariness is part of life on this earth. It is part of growing old in these corruptible tents. Paul calls our bodies tents, saying: *<sup>4</sup>For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (2 Corinthians 5:4, NKJV).*

David, the poet king, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit encourages us.  
*Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God. (Psalms 42:11b, NIV).*

When I become so weary and sometimes feel very hopeless in my situation, I reflect on scripture which I learned as a little boy at Camp Peniel.

*<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.*

*<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.*

*<sup>30</sup> Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, <sup>31</sup> But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31, NKJV).*

When I was a small child and felt discouraged or hopeless about some situation, my mother assured me that God had great things in store for me. I can still hear her saying:

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3, KJV). She would add: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its [his] leaf will be green, and [he] will not be anxious in the year of drought, now will [he] cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).*

My friend, these promises are YOURS when you are counted among the family of God. If you're already in the family, return to the first of your inheritances as a believer. You have a living hope. Take hold of it and live it. If you don't know Him, then this inheritance of hope can be yours by trusting in Him today. I am here to exhort you to get back to the reading of the will. By that I mean it is up to you to go claim what is yours! You are a beneficiary in waiting. Choose today to no longer participate in the hopelessness of your circumstances, materialism, commercialism, psychobabble, and whatever else the world has to offer. Come to Jesus. An expectant hope can be found only in Him.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.