

From Where I Sit . . .

"Hope"

It's a simple word but a very encompassing thought arrives from it. "Hope." Years ago I learned a big difference exists between "just wishing" and "real hope." I used to wish I would get all sorts of expensive things for Christmas, but I knew there wasn't much reason to hope for those things as they were out of my family's financial reach. Kids still do that don't they? In spite of our spending more on Christmas than we ever imagined we would, we still can't produce everything on the "wish list." Hope gets us down to reality where we have some strong and reasonable expectation of receiving a thing.

That, my friends, is what is so wonderful about the religion of the New Testament. It overflows with the abundance of hope. God's message to mankind is that there are realities just beyond the vale of death that we are entitled by His grace to hope for. Even in this life there are things we can hope for which those outside of Christ have no more than just wishful thinking about. Like a little street urchin, they can see through the glass a family gathered at the table feasting on food and love for each other. Yet the urchin has no hope of sharing in that joy, unless!!! Unless the parents within that home reach out and make that child a part of the family! And that is what God has done for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.

You see, being a child of God makes one an heir. As an heir, the benefits of sonship are real and present. Those who are not children of God can wish that their name would appear on the family roster all they want, but wishing doesn't make it so. The marvel is that they have not been abandoned in this state of hopelessness and wishful thinking. God has given them a reason for hope and it is that they can be born into the family of God and immediately receive the birthright.

There was a people at another time who had no hope. They were the Gentiles to whom God had not given the opportunity to be in His family (Ephesians 2:12). In that state we are told that they were *"without hope."* The text continues, however, *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ"* (Eph. 2:13). God brought them in - included them.

This marvelous truth makes becoming a Christian the most meaningful transition we'll make in this life - from death to life; darkness to light; despair to hope!! The realization of this hope makes all the difference in the world in the choices we make. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (I John 3:2-3).

We must call upon all our friends and all those we don't even know, and share with them the words of hope that in Christ Jesus we can have everlasting life. I call upon you who may be outside this family of God of which I speak. Jesus said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16).

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