

Finding Hope In Hard Times “Hope For Your Future” (Part 5)

Intro: It’s just impossible to predict the future. Will the economy get better? / Will my job continue? / Will my health improve? / Will we ever get out of Iraq and Afghanistan? / Will swine flu return this Fall? / Will there be a good Spring Chinook run? Will my deer repellent work? The future is so uncertain. How can we have a hope about the future?

- Hope for our future is the result of believing correctly about eternity. This life can be uncertain and disappointing. God wants our hope fixed on truths that will never change. Let me give you 5 Biblical truths about your future that you should get excited about today! 5 facts about eternity that you should be looking forward to.

I. Eternity Is Real

A. There is a literal place to look forward to

John 14:1-2 “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?” (NLT)

1. It’s pretty tough to experience hope if there’s not a real, tangible, literal, place to hope in. We can’t put hope in make believe / or an imagined place. What good does that do?
2. Jesus is very clear about this. There is a literal place; a literal residence where we will go when we physically die. Heaven is real!
3. Heaven is also tailor made for us! Notice Jesus said He is preparing a place for us. He is making something for us with you and me in mind.

Illustrate: For years, Lisa and I had tropical fish. Before, you ever go out and buy your fish, you have to set your tank up first. You have to get the environment just right. We would prepare the tank with the type of fish we had in mind. Tailor made for them.

4. This is what Jesus is doing for us. He is tailor making a literal place for you to enjoy. You don’t have to worry about if you will enjoy it or not . It’s guaranteed.

B. We continue living as literal people

Matt. 22:32 “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ So he is the God of the living, not the dead.” (NLT) Jesus was stating to the religious leaders that people continuing existing after they physically die!

1. We do not become angels. We do not get issued a set of wings. We don’t go into some mystical soul sleep of unconsciousness. We continue on as the people who God made us to be. Abraham was still alive as Abraham in eternity. You will still be you!
2. God made each us in a unique way. He created us with distinct personalities, gifts and abilities, passions and desires. Who we are is carried over into eternity. Why

- would God remove the good things He created you with?
3. There are also plenty of examples in Scripture that imply we will be recognizable as well. To some degree, I will still look like Dale...you will still look like you. Now I hope that doesn't disappoint some of you.
 4. Some of you are wondering what age we will look like. I have no idea! I do know we won't be disappointed. Eternity is very real and this fact should produce some very real hope!

II. Eternity Is About Relationships

A. Our relationship with Jesus continues

John 14:2-3 "I am going to prepare a place for you... so that you will always be with me where I am." (NLT)

1. The relationship we begin in this life with Jesus continues for all eternity. We get to be where Jesus is at. We get to enjoy Him forever. We get to have a face to face relationship with Him.
2. Currently, there is this veil between us and eternity. Death removes the veil. What we used to see dimly, someday we will see fully. Can you imagine physically sitting down and talking with Jesus? (Sure we talk to Him now – but the veil removed?)
3. Someday we will literally see the scars on His hands. We will literally see the wounds on His body that freed us from sin. Someday you will be able to put your hand in His and walk with Him.
4. In eternity, the intimacy with Jesus increases.

B. Our relationships with others continue

Heb. 12:22-23 "You have now come to Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city of the living God, where thousands and thousands of angels have come to celebrate. Here you will find all of God's dearest children, whose names are written in heaven..." (CEV)

1. This has got to be one of the most encouraging truths regarding eternity. Relationships in Jesus are eternal. You and I get to enjoy others forever. Death is merely a temporary separation from those we love.
2. I believe that when I get to heaven and see my grandparents, I will still call them grandpa and grandma. In heaven, I'm still going to call my parents dad and mom. My daughters will call me dad. These relationships carry over into eternity.
3. The hope of reunions...the anticipation of being reunited with family and friends is one of the most hopeful truths I know of. Relationships in Jesus are eternal! They last forever!
4. Years ago I was at the graveside for my Grandfather's brother. My Grandfather was already close to 90. There were 6 brothers. Now he was the last one. At the graveside, he walked up to the coffin, knocked on it, and said, "See you soon." That's hope!

5. Who are you looking forward to seeing again? Not only to relationships continue, but they will also be ones. We will make new friends for all eternity as well. We will get to meet historical figures, biblical characters. Do you have a favorite biblical character you'd like to meet? (Share)
- Eternity will be all about relationships!

III. Eternity Is About Rewards

A. Rewards give us motivation in this life

1 Cor. 3:12-15 "Whatever we build on that foundation will be tested by fire on the day of judgment. Then everyone will find out if we have used gold, silver, and precious stones, or wood, hay, and straw. We will be rewarded if our building is left standing. But if it is destroyed by the fire, we will lose everything. Yet we ourselves will be saved, like someone escaping from flames." (NLT)

1. The Bible is very clear regarding the fact that how we live this life matters. Our eternal location is NOT based upon our works but on our faith in Christ. Yet, in eternity, our works will be judged to determine rewards.
 2. Unfortunately, because so many followers of Christ are so earthly minded, they give no consideration to eternity. They fail to consider the fact that it's more than just getting into heaven that's important. Our lives will be judged as well. What did our lives do for the Kingdom of God? What Kingdom did we live for?
- Too many believers are obsessed with their own kingdom / portfolios / own desires
 3. I have talked to so many Christians over the years whose only worry is about getting in. "I don't care about rewards" they say, "As long as I get in." This type of thinking is just plain wrong / immature / and is used as an excuse to not submit your life under God's authority!
 4. Accountability produces motivation. Would you enjoy having your life played back for you to see? I guarantee that in this moment of evaluation, we will all care deeply wishing we had different priorities in this life.
 - What about my past sins? (Explain)
 5. This is why we talk so much about the Kingdom of God here at Foothills. This is why we encourage you to get involved in ministry. This is why we ask you to participate in what God is doing at Foothills. This is why the sacrifice of your time / resources / and even your money matters! It's not all about this life!
 6. I am counting on the sacrifices that I have made in this life counting for eternity.

B. Rewards will be enjoyed eternally

Matt. 6:19-20 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal." (NLT) In other words, work for rewards that are eternal!

1. People ask, "What are these rewards in heaven?" I don't know! BUT, since heaven

- is tailor made for us, you can bet the rewards are as well. They will be wonderful / glorious / and will be enjoyed for all eternity.
2. There is this popular belief among Christians that these rewards don't really matter because they believe we will simply cast these rewards at Jesus' feet and give them back. Boy, that sure sounds spiritual but it is entirely incorrect. Nowhere in the Bible does it say we will do this!
 3. This belief originates from a passage from the book of Revelation where the 24 elders cast their crowns at Jesus' feet. This passage has absolutely nothing to do with us and has nothing to do with our future rewards!
 4. It's as if someone started the belief that rewards are unspiritual. How can that be true? God is the ONE who created the incentive program. He is the One who said, "Obedience = Blessing." If God set this principal up in this life, why would He change it in eternity. God doesn't play "Bait and Switch."
 5. This also means that people will not all be the same in eternity. We will recognize those who have been rewarded for their faithfulness / obedience in this life. This will not produce jealousy / animosity in heaven. All sin is removed.
 6. For those who are truly sold out to follow Jesus, this produces tremendous hope through the hardships of this life.

IV. Eternity Is About Renewal

A. God will renew our physical bodies

II Cor. 5:1-3 "For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies." (NLT)

1. In eternity we will not be disembodied spirits floating around. God is going to renew our physical bodies someday. Paul says that we grow weary in these present physical bodies. They are weak / they wear out / they get sick / aches and pains.
2. Someday, we get brand new ones. Ones that are not limited like the ones we have now. Ones that don't grow old / sick / ones that are strong not weak / Ones that will last forever.
3. What a great hope this is. Think about the person who is paralyzed / blind or deaf / has a disease / those at the end of their life watching their body just wear out? Knowing that we get to trade the weakness and limitations of this body for an eternal new one.
4. I like talking about this truth at funerals all the time...especially if someone has suffered and died from a disease. No more suffering / crying / or pain. The body that was destroyed by a disease has been transformed into an eternal / perfect / flawless one. One that can never get sick again!
5. Everything in this life wears out / breaks down / falls apart and our bodies are a

constant reminder of this truth. BUT, someday, this will all change. We have the hope of renewed , eternal, physical bodies someday.

B. God will renew His physical creation

Rom. 8:21-22 “...the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (NLT)

Rev. 21:1 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared...” (NLT)

1. Not only is God going to remake our physical bodies He is going to remake the entire physical creation. Not only are we suffering the results of sin upon of physical bodies, the creation actually suffers from the effects of sin as well.
 2. Therefore, God is going to set the creation free from the effects of the Fall. God is going to eventually transform the physical creation. Just like He is going to take our original bodies / personalities / gifts and abilities and transform them into something glorious and perfect, He is going to do the same thing with creation.
 3. He’s not doing away with the creation, He’s transforming it! It will no longer be dangerous for us to live in it. No more tornadoes / hurricanes / earthquakes / volcanoes / It will be a perfect environment for the people God loves.
- Knowing that eternity is all about renewal gives us incredible hope.

V. Eternity Is About A Residence

A. The current heaven is not our final destination

1. The current heaven is part of the process of eternity, but not the final conclusion of all that God has for us. God has more to come. Therefore, in the meantime, we will enjoy the current heaven in all its glory and anticipate God unfolding of all He has planned..
 2. Don’t be disappointed just because the current heaven isn’t our ultimate end. It’s not like any of us will be disappointed. The current heaven is part of God’s unfolding drama of His plan for redemption.
- So, what is our final destination?

B. The new heaven and new earth is our final destination

Rev. 21:1 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (NLT)

1. This is where we’re headed. This is the culmination of God’s redemptive work for His bride. The Bible talks about the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven residing on the new earth.
2. It’s as if the barrier between heaven and earth is removed and they are joined into one. Heaven and earth combined into one! WOW! No more separation between

the physical and the spiritual / between eternal and temporal / flesh and spirit. All one! Jesus resides in this city with His people Forever!

3. The new Jerusalem is a city beyond description. It is a 1500 mile cube. (explain) We will reside forever with Christ on a renewed, perfected planet that will be beautiful beyond description. Think how beautiful the fallen planet is. Imagine a perfected one! We will enjoy our residence in a city that is beyond description.
4. I used to not get very excited about the whole New Jerusalem thing. I don't like living in a city. I'm a country boy! BUT, I'm convinced that this city will not disappoint. Once I read that there is a river going through this city, I felt better.

Maybe there is nothing right now in this physical world to put your hope in. It all seems dark. Can you put your hope in eternity? It is real / there are relationships waiting / rewards waiting / a new body / and an eternal residence that is out of this world! This is where our hope needs to be in. This is all possible because of our relationship with Jesus!