

need, to keep up with people that we don't like. This hope recreates you and makes you new. It saves you, and fits you for heaven; and it fits you for dying because you know you hold the rope of eternal life. There is hope for you today. If you want to start life over, God will give you a clean sheet of paper on which to write the story of the rest of your life.

2. Hope regenerates: The second thing you need to know today is that hope regenerates. You may have had a spiritual experience before. You may have felt good about you and God but something happened and you lost it. And you have never been able to recover it. Your life today may be something like this light bulb. It's dark! It seems useless! We know it is a light bulb, it is made in the image of a light bulb. And it once gave light. If it hadn't, I could not have bought it in the store. Behold!!! When it is regenerated, it can fulfill its purpose. You see, at sometime, the bulb was created, then it was screwed into a socket; there it burned brightly for a short while and gave light, but then it was disconnected from the power and it darkened. This is where hope comes in for you. You can be regenerated to meaningful and purposeful living again if you grab the rope of hope that Christ is extending to you. Regeneration will lift you about selfishness and self-centeredness. First Baptist Church: churches need hope. Also! Churches need regeneration. Also! Churches flounder and drift if the rope of hope is not obvious. If you are not filled with hope, you have nothing to extend to this city. People will not enter a place that does not

offer vibrant hope. You can stop thinking about yourself so much. It can call you out to a life of service in Jesus' name. Jesus said, "To this purpose was I born and to this end I came." Regenerated in Christ you can know your purpose for being in the world. Hope can teach you that it's not about you but it's all about Jesus. If you walk down the street tonight and see a dark house and you have this bulb in your hand and you go up to the door and offer the people light, I can assure you that they will not care if this bulb is made by G.E. or Sylvania, or Westinghouse but only that it gives light.

Regenerated by hope in Jesus, you will have an unchanging goal. When Robert Morris went as a missionary he stated his goal as, "Here let me burn out for God." A light isn't lighted to be hidden but to be put up for all to see, especially the hopeless who have lost their way. Receive the message of hope today. Take the rope that will anchor you deep in the heart of Jesus' love and know that regardless of how dark the night might be or how stormy your life situation has become, you can never drift beyond God's love and protection.

Conclusion; Hebrews 6:19-20 says this hope is firm and secure because it is in heaven with Jesus. Members of First Baptist Church, grab this hope today. Citizens of Memphis and this metropolitan area, grab this hope today. Seekers after faith, grab this hope today. If you have given up, there is hope for you in Jesus Christ.


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Let Us Share First With You.

The Pulpit Ministry



February 3, 2008

Transfiguration Sunday

Sermon by:

Pastor Charlie Chilton, Interim Pastor

The Effect of Hope

Romans 5:1-5

First Baptist Church of Memphis
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When I introduce myself to someone for the first time I get a varied reaction. After the exchange of names, the American approach is to ask you, "What do you do?" When I reply that I am a Baptist minister, that usually brings on a strange look. It seems that many people see Christians as compared to the last of the dinosaurs, the whooping cranes, or the American buffalo. Then there is some patronizing remark about how the church and Christianity served time well in the past but this is a new age and there is a need for new ideas. It may be pointed out that churches now only reach from 10 to 20% of their membership or the population and that the church is aging and dying out. The implications are that a generation that has cybernetics, laser beam heart surgery, robot prostate surgery, I-Pod, and Xbox 360 certainly has enough things to entertain it without needing the church. But the thing that stands out to me is that in spite of all the playthings and time savers this is a generation without hope. Hope has been lost. I heard an announcement on the radio that said, "If your mortgage is being foreclosed, call 955-Hope." I wonder how many called.

As I introduce myself to the First Baptist Church and to the people of Memphis today, I thought I should use the words of 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." I will always be bringing you a word of hope, both as a congregation and as a city. This will be vital for all of us. Romans 5:5 says, "Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured

out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit." You see, hope is unique to Christianity. You cannot find it in another religion in the world. You might find a wailing wall! You might find that the best you can expect in the next life is to be reincarnated as a cow. You might find that the next step for you is to be absorbed into the great nothingness of Nirvana. Or you may read that there is no promise beyond what you are experiencing right now. But I am here to tell you there is hope. And hope does two very important things in people's lives.

1. Hope recreates. The hopelessness of man's condition today is explained in the Bible very simply: Man is born, then at some point he rebels against God, and then he dies. He may keep walking around for many years but he is dead toward God and Godliness and hope. So when Paul says in II Corinthians 5:17, "If a man is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away and everything becomes new" it is describing the new birth and the new life that has been recreated when man places his hope in Jesus Christ. Before I go further, I need to define the word hope. The usual definition is a wish, desire or expectation beyond reasonable odds. The Biblical word hope is based on the root of the word "rope." Here is a picture; when a sailing ship in Biblical times traveled it did not go too far from the shore. It had no lights for night travel, so when darkness came or a storm came up the ship placed the anchor in a small boat and the small boat took the big anchor into a little protected cove and dropped it overboard

and it sunk deep in the mud. Now the ship was in no danger from the night or storms because the anchor was safely placed in a protected place. The rope connecting the two places made the difference. The word for hope is the same root as the word for the rope. The rope gave hope to the ship and fear was replaced with security. Hope gives birth to faith. When hope goes from dead things or idols to a living God, we are saved. The hope is placed in an actuality. When you find Christ, you find yourself and life begins anew. Remember the prodigal son? He had a good time for a long time (the Bible says) partying and drinking and fornicating until "he came to himself." He had not been himself since he rebelled against and left his loving father. He looked at the wasted years and thought with despair of the time lost away from his father and headed toward home with the hope that the father's love had not changed. He was born again into the family. When you discover hope in Christ, folks enslaved to passion and lust become free. The key to real manhood and womanhood and getting rid of insecurity is by hoping in Christ. Grabbing the rope that is Christ. A revealer of our hopelessness in America is though we are only 5% of the world's population, we consume 50% of the cocaine in the world. When you walk in a grey fog, cocaine even looks good, even though it is death-dealing. Recreated by hope, we are set free from the arm-breaking task of holding up our mask. Pretense! Pretending we are something we are not. Spending money we don't have, to buy things we don't