

HOPE WINS PART 4
HOPE THAT OVERCOMES
HOW WE GET TO THE PROMISE LAND
5/3/2020

“This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” (I John 5:4)

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome everybody. Today we want to talk about how to have overcoming hope, especially in this time of uncertainty. I know many of you, like me, after 8 weeks of the Covid-19 crisis are asking questions like, “Are we there yet? When are we going to get to the other side? What is the other side?” Probably you have been hearing people say things like, “When are things getting back to normal?” I sure have felt the frustrating sigh of feeling, “I am so done with this.”
- B. But of course, let me say up front, I certainly don’t have any reason to complain. I know my family hasn’t gone through anything like so many. Our hearts are especially breaking today for so many who have lost loved ones and their only source of income. It took my breath away and I just wanted to cry when they announced that the American Covid-19 deaths have passed the number of Americans who died in the Vietnam War.
- C. One of the things that makes it most difficult is dealing with uncertainty. I heard someone liken it to going to the airport, finding out your plane was cancelled and waiting when you don’t know if you will get a flight in time for your connecting flight. It’s almost easier when you know a definite, “No, you’re not going to make it to the next flight.”
 - 1. We want to talk about a story in the Bible when the children of Israel were in a similar situation. They had left Egypt and were going through the wilderness on their way to the *promise land*, when they got stuck in kind of a “waiting room of discipline.” One speaker called it the “land-in-between.”

I think we all know the challenge of this time not only from the present crisis but other things we’ve been through, for example: waiting to find the right spouse, being in between the career you hope for and the job you have to go to, having prayed for what you know is God’s will but still nothing has happened. Maybe it is a time when you are trying to teach your kids or teenagers some important lessons and they aren’t listening and you wonder if they’re going to turn out right, or maybe it is in one of those terribly hard recovery seasons of physical rehabilitation or grief as the result of the loss of a loved one, or maybe beginning recovery after a relapse. It’s a place that almost feels like purgatory.

2. We will talk about how to have hope that overcomes in these difficult times. These are times the Lord especially wants to give us hope to get to the other side. I like this passage in Hebrews 10:36-39, *“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, in just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. And, “my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back. But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.”*

Thesis:

Can I assure you of what God’s word is saying to us? We are going to the other side! God hasn’t brought us this far to drop us. We are, as the Bible says, *“going to see the goodness of God in the land of the living.”* (Ps. 27:13)

Here’s one of the Scriptures I’ve been holding on to: Psalms 34:19 (NKJV), *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”*

In fact, we’re not just going back to normal. God is planning to use this time to take us to an even greater normal. When we say “hope wins”, we mean that hope always takes us to a better place than we were in before.

We are getting so many prophetic words and seeing signs of such a beautiful new normal. The *promise land* that awaits us as we move through Covid-19 is going to bring an outpouring of blessings and miracles upon our lives greater than things we’ve ever seen before. In just the last week or so I have heard:

- One network of churches at Easter had nearly 100,000 professions of faith online.
- Yesterday I got to hear and see the testimony of a “barn baptism”.
- Our life groups are ministering. God has deployed the church. In this season we are not at church, we are still being the church in beautiful ways.
- Through the partnership with our giving, well over 1000 families in nations around the world were helped with food and incredible ministry.
- Family altars are happening; parents in our church have led their own children to Christ.

Hope is shouting to us: *Good things are happening and the best is yet to come!*

- D. We are asking how do we get from here to there? How do we get from the problem to the promise? We’re going to see that the answer isn’t so much dependent on those things we can’t control on the outside but critical choices we make on the inside.

1. In this series, we have been emphasizing the importance of choosing hope because as we've said hope is the fuel that keeps us moving towards the *promise land*. Hope is that powerful certain expectation based on God's word that the future is going to be better than the present and that we have the power to make it so.
2. One of the powerful things hope does is put in us the "grit" of a God-given tenacity that refuses to give up and presses through to find the opportunity in adversity. When you're filled with hope, you look for answers and ways that God is working for and through you. When you lose hope, you stop looking.

I heard about an interesting experiment with some monkeys in a cage. They put a delicious basket of fruit near the ceiling and a glass cage around it. Of course, one monkey after another tried to get the fruit but couldn't open the glass. Eventually they quit trying. After a while the experimenter made a latch on one side, where the monkeys could have figured out how to get the fruit. But none of them tried. They brought some new monkeys in who were about to investigate the fruit but the other monkeys stopped them. They wouldn't let them look. They insisted on maintaining a culture of hopelessness.

So many people, families, even communities have fallen into a culture of hopelessness. Yet, when we find the lever to open the gate, we can be people of hope and hope givers. Not only will our lives be changed but the lives of people, families and communities.

We've seen this in our partnering ministry, called *Hope Centers* led by Sue and Russ Yeager. It isn't that kids growing up in poverty are just given food, Hope Centers teach them a mindset of hope. So many of them break out of the cage of hopelessness and go on to help their families and communities to do the same.

How do we move in hope to get from the adversity to the opportunity?

We want to see in Numbers 13-14 how two individuals cultivated an "overcoming hope" that got them to the other side. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. They ended up not only going to the *promise land* but leading a whole nation there with them.

Now, though it is beautiful to see their story, there is a very sad part of the story as well. Their whole generation stayed stuck in "the land-of- in between." It is a sad reality that not everyone makes it from adversity to opportunity. Many people get stuck and stay stuck with their wheels spinning in the mud of frustration and futility. What I want to passionately share with you today is that you don't have to be stuck. You can choose to have the overcoming hope that will get you to the other side.

II. I want to show you the difference between two mindsets and some practical ways you can lay hold of hope that overcomes.

A. Let's read Numbers 13:26-14:3

There are some observations I really hope you see in this story.

1. While the 12 spies were in the same circumstances and saw the same things, two became hope givers and ten became hope killers.
2. The entire future of these people and their families was determined not by what they faced but what they believed about what they were facing. In the middle of this wilderness, there was a decision that was made about what voices they would listen to. There were two voices and messengers going forth: The bad report and the good report.

The voice they chose to listen to and the news or message they chose to believe determined the future they were going to have.

3. The defining moment of their journey from their old life to the land of promise and the future of all that God had for them was whether they were prepared to believe and act on what God said was true.

B. Some incredibly important principles for having hope in the land-in-between and getting to God's future.

1. Hope and hopelessness come not as the result of what happens to us but from what we believe about God and the circumstances around us.
"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
(Rom.15:13 (NKJV))

Some look at Caleb and think that Caleb was successful because he had a positive attitude. It is true that he had a positive attitude but the reason he had a positive attitude was because of what he chose day in and day out to believe. Specifically, he chose to build his belief system on what God said, not based on what he saw.

In Joshua 14:7 (NKJV), when Caleb gives his testimony, this is how he describes his experience: *"I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart."*

In vs. 9, he quotes what God had told Moses, *"So Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever."*

While the ten spies were looking at the giants, Caleb was thinking about the promises of God.

Our ability to get to the other side depends on whether we are going to be the people who interpret the word in light of what is happening in the world, or the world in light of what God says in His word. In other words, hopelessness or hope, fear or faith in our life are going to be dependent on whether you are getting your perspective and focus from God's word or the world. The ten spies had their focus on how big the giants were. They were looking at their own abilities and their future based on what they were seeing. This is such an example of how fear takes over our lives. We hear, see and begin to imagine things that are exaggerated and untrue. I love the phrase, "*We were like grasshoppers **in their eyes.***" I'm wondering did they ask the giants, "How do I look to you today?" No, they let the imaginary giants speak into their minds and their future.

Caleb and Joshua, on the other hand, viewed everything in light of what God said. Their thought process was "God is going to be with us." God is infinite. Any size finite problem compared to infinite power is the same size. How big the problem seems is irrelevant. How big God is, is all that matters. "*God plus one is always the majority.*"

I heard a fun story about the night that Michael Jordan scored 69 points against the Cleveland Cavaliers. Near the end of the game one of the bench players, Stacy King, got to come in and right before the buzzer, made a one-point free throw. After the game someone interviewed Stacy and asked him what he would remember about this epic night. He said, "I will always remember this as the night that Michael Jordan and I combined to score 70 points."

Caleb never forgot that the little we can do against our challenges is not the point. The point is that we are in partnership with an all-powerful God. The point is that you will never have hope if you look at yourself and God in light of your circumstances. You will always have hope if you look at your circumstances in light of God.

One of the things I've begun doing in this crisis is praying through the news reports. I heard where the great Karl Barth said he would never read the newspaper without his Bible opened next to it. The reason is that he wanted to always interpret the news in the light of God instead of letting God be interpreted in the light of the news.

2. God meant for the wilderness time to be a time where his people worked on their beliefs. Victory is not something that we wait to see what happens. Victory is something that happens on the inside, first as we prepare our hearts and eventually on the outside as the result.

While Israel was in the wilderness, they were waiting for their circumstances to change but God was waiting for their thinking to change so He could change their circumstances.

In Deut. 8:3, God was explaining why He had the people in the wilderness. He said: *“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”*

God was saying there is a critical change or transformation that has to happen *in* us to prepare us for all God wants to do *for* us. One author commented that it was much easier for God to get Israel out of Egypt than it was for him to get Egypt out of Israel. To get into the *promise land* they had to go from a slave mentality to a son mentality.

In Egypt they were taught:

- a. You are grasshoppers and powerless.
- b. You can't fight wars. You're not warriors; you're just slaves.

That is why they were shocked when they realized they would be fighting battles.

3. The secret to receiving all that God has for us in the new normal is becoming transformed into a new person on the inside by letting God reconstruct our thinking and renew our minds.

I like to describe the time in the wilderness as the time the caterpillar is in the cocoon to become the butterfly. That transformation happens as we align our old beliefs with His new beliefs.

Romans 12:2 (TPT), *“Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total transformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.”*

One of the most powerful things we are taught is this fact, “You cannot spend time faithfully renewing your mind without the result being it totally transforms your life.” You become a warrior; you become an innovator; an executor of God's divine will in every area of your life, like Caleb and Joshua.

Perhaps one of the most powerful examples in this story is to see what renewing of the mind did for Caleb and Joshua.

Because the ten spies had old thinking, they turned to excuses when faced with challenges. Joshua and Caleb, when faced with the challenge of the battles, immediately looked for opportunities.

This is such an important principle. In times of uncertainty your mind will go one way or the other with defining results. In every situation you will choose either an excuse or an opportunity and whichever one you choose will result in eliminating the other one.

If your mind isn't renewed, you will always find a reason why you can't, shouldn't, or won't be able to succeed. If you have a renewed mind, you will always look for an opportunity for why you can and why something great will happen as a result.

Again, one of my other favorite stories is of Chesty Puller, the most decorated Marine in Corps history. In WWII, the Marines were surrounded by the Japanese, who outnumbered them 29:1. The commander of the operation told Chesty that it was hopeless. Chesty Puller never resigned defeat. He is quoted as having said, "All right, they're on our left, they're on our right, they're in front of us, they're behind us. They can't get away this time."

What you believe will determine in this crisis and in the days to come whether you live on the offensive or the defensive. We have an enemy, one of his names is Covid-19. He is unseen, but so are the weapons of our warfare. One thing I am reminded of is that there is no armor that God gives us for our backside. If we back off, if we hide, if we run, we will get shot. God wants us to be like Quarterback, Tom Brady, and march our team down the field against a formidable foe to score a touchdown. We face a tough challenge, but we have a greater God. We have the opportunity to do more good, to see more lives changed, and discover more hidden opportunities than we've ever had in our life, if we have the hope to move forward.

- D. The last observation I want to make about how to have an overcoming hope that gets us to the other side is this: Like the children of Israel in that day, our whole future will be decided by the voices we listen to and our ability to reject the lies and false beliefs and stand for the truth.

There has never been a time where the air and the air waves are filled with more chatter, more opinions, more fake news, conspiracy theories, fear mongering, blame, half-truths, non-sense, bad advice, and ridiculous perspective. The enemy is having a hay day propagating his favorite thing: bad reports, lies, fantasies, scams, and imaginations.

In the natural there has never been a greater need to be sure that you are fact checking everything. If we're going to get to the other side, we have to "test everything". We have to be sure that we don't listen to every spirit and feeling that comes to our bodies and minds. We have to be ready to do what 2 Cor. 10:5 (NIV) says, "*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.*"

Remember any thought that doesn't lead you to hope in Christ is not of God. If it doesn't lead you to an outcome that ends in, *God works all things together for good*, if it condemns, discourages, causes you to imagine defeat, despair "grasshopper thoughts", it is not of God.

Here's another test. If it leads you towards discontentment, complaining, or going back to Egypt, it's not a voice from God. What we see with Israel is that their primary downfall was complaining.

It is how the enemy magnifies the negative to build discontent. Why? "Discontent is the foundational breeding ground for all acts of sin and disobedience." It is why Eve ate the apple and the children of Israel went back to a life of disobedience in the wilderness.

Any thought that leads you to thanksgiving, hope and anticipation of good is Holy Spirit and will take you into your *promise land*.

Can I share with you some examples of foundational beliefs that the Holy Spirit may very well want to give you to replace lies that have kept you stuck and taken you back?

5 KEY CORE BELIEFS TO BUILD A FOUNDATION OF OVERCOMING HOPE

One of the core ways you move from fear and discontent to positive hope is by going from complaining about your circumstances to confessing the truth about your life in Christ.

1. God and I are a majority in any situation I face.
If God is for me who can be against me. (Romans 8:31)
2. Even when I don't know the future, God is guiding me through the unknown. I will know what God's will is for my life. I can hear the voice of the Lord every day.
I will lead you by ways that you have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide you; I will turn darkness into light before you and make rough places smooth. These are things I will do; I will not forsake you. (Isaiah 42:16)
3. I am absolutely loved by my Father God and His presence will be the defining difference in my favor no matter what happens.

God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6)

4. There is always a solution. No matter what happens it will turn out for an opportunity for my advantage.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all.
(Ps.34:19)

Everything that happens to me will actually serve as an opportunity to advance the gospel. (Phil. 1:12)

5. I am completely ready to be victorious in whatever challenge I face.

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)

He always leads us to triumph in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

No temptation has taken me but that which is common to man. God is faithful who will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I am able but will with the temptation make the way of escape so I can endure it. (I Cor. 10:13)

Ministry.

Today, I wonder if you would allow the Lord to help you identify some thoughts, He wants you to nail to the cross: a message, a bad report that has intercepted your hope. You don't have to be held captive by that any more. You can say that thought is not my thought; it is from the enemy. I refuse it. I take it and nail it to the cross and I choose this thought instead. If you will ask God, listen and look to His word he will give you thoughts to replace it.

Finally, all of this is because God wants you and I to cross over into a new place, a new normal, a place better than we have known before. That begins with accepting Christ's salvation and forgiveness, crossing over to salvation.

Can I ask you something? Do you have assurance of your salvation? If you are not absolutely certain, that in a very real sense you would know that your last day on earth is your best day because you are going to enter into the presence of Jesus, I want you to pray with me and text me at this number. If you will give me your address, I will send you a packet.