

HOPE: ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

"...who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast..." (Heb. 6:18b-19a)

anchor - any device that holds something else secure; anything that gives or seems to give stability or security; to keep from drifting.

I. NEED FOR ANCHOR IN TROUBLED WATERS.

II. WHEN MAN DOESN'T FIND ANSWERS IN ONE PLACE, HE'LL LOOK IN ANOTHER.

- A. The Age of Reasoning denied existence of the spiritual; the duality of man.
 - 1. Gave rise to greater emphasis on the scientific.
 - 2. Probably a reaction against such things as alchemy, which was a mixture of science and mysticism.
- B. If answers can't be found in the physical, search must be made in the spiritual.

III. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE IN DEC. 3, 1994 EDITION OF ATLANTA JOURNAL AND CONSTITUTION.

- A. Confusing times.
 - 1. Angst breeds spiritual searching.
 - 2. Angst - A gloomy, often neurotic feeling of generalized anxiety and depression.
 - 3. Anxiety
 - a. A State of being uneasy, apprehensive, or worried about what may happen.
 - b. Concern about what may happen; concern about a possible future event.
 - 4. Americans are inexplicably sullen, despite relatively good economic times, which usually lift spirits.
- B. Because people lack optimism, they are turning to astrology; sightings of ghosts; apparitions; angels.
 - 1. Optimism.
 - a. The existing world is the best possible.
 - b. The doctrine or belief that good ultimately prevails over evil.
 - c. The tendency to take the most hopeful or cheerful view of matters or to expect the best outcome.
 - d. The practice of looking on the bright side of things.
 - 2. Pessimism.
 - a. The doctrine or belief that the existing world is the worst possible.
 - b. The doctrine or belief that the evil in life outweighs the good.
 - c. The tendency to expect misfortune or the worst outcome in any circumstances.

- d. The practice of looking on the dark side of things.
- C. Some signs of American distress.
 1. 56% of public believes the economy is in recession, though the slump ended in March 1991.
 2. Another poll - 41% of Americans fear they might be laid off.
 3. Social scientists say its not just money--the Republican sweep in Nov. 8 elections reflected public anger, confusion, and fear of the future.
- D. Crime is causing a loss of faith in traditional institutions, breeding cynicism.
- E. Cynicism - The belief that people are motivated in all their actions by selfishness, denying the sincerity of people's motives or actions; denying the value of living.
- F. A survey found increasing angst, especially among baby-boomers who are desperate "for a meaning in life."

IV. THE POSITIVE SIDE.

- A. Life Magazine had a cover story on prayer.
- B. Best-selling books on angels and faith healing.
- C. Rising interest in spirituality, including voodoo, meditation, New Age beliefs; even UFO's.
- D. Millions are turning to mainstream religions to fill a "deep, innate, basic human need" to calm rising fears of an uncertain future.
- E. Scientists are starting to look at faith in scientific terms.
 1. California study in which a group of patients that was prayed for by volunteers for 10 months recovered "significantly better" than another group that wasn't. It was a valid study because the people who got better didn't know they were prayed for.
 2. Other studies show that devoutly religious people have lower suicide rates, fewer psychiatric problems, and seem to suffer less when sick.
- F. Evangelist Billy Graham says a world religious revival is under way.
 1. Polls show 90% of the public believe in a deity.
 2. Last week's Newsweek poll said 13% of Americans claim they've seen an angel.
 3. 20% have had a "revelation from God."
 4. Graham says 50 years from now people will look back at this period as being a time of spiritual awakening.
- G. Scientists say in times of turmoil, adults tend to suspend disbelief and cling to faith-based ideas.

V. IN TROUBLED WATERS, HOPE BECOMES AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

- A. *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." (Heb. 6:17-19).*
 1. An anchor keeps you from wandering or drifting out to sea.

2. Keeps you in the right port.
 3. Offers surety, steadfastness, refuge.
- B. What is hope?
1. Purpose; goal; vision; something expected.
 2. Hope is yet futuristic; not yet seen.
- C. We are not as those who have no hope.
- D. Hope is believing things can be better; faith believes things will be better.
- E. Hope is looking on the brighter side, which takes faith.
- F. If hope is found anywhere, it should be found in our churches.
1. If there is one place you should find settledness and certainty, it should be in the churches, which should be a reflection of the kingdom of God.
 2. Should be able to find optimism; uplifting; encouragement; will to go on; a vision for the future.
 3. Unfortunately, too many churches have a dim hope for the future.

VI. FAITH.

- A. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb. 11:1).
- B. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God*
- C. *Must believe that he is, and*
- D. *That he is rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
- E. *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."* (Heb. 10:35).
- F. *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."* (Heb. 10:36).
- G. *"And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."* (Heb. 6:11-15).