

*Made to Hope*  
*CrossRoads Christian Fellowship August 5, 2007*  
**Romans 8:22-25**  
*some thoughts from The Slumber of Christianity by Ted Dekker*

Many of you know I ran cross country in High School and for a while in college. Why do you think a person would train every day to run distance races like cross country or marathons or for that matter train to be a sprinter, long jumper, high jumper, pole vaulter or throw a javelin? Why do people continue to work hard and train in athletic events and activities when they know they will never be the best?

Why does a person like 7 time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong endure the thousands of miles training rides each year, dozens of individual races, and then the three week long Tour that includes daily races of 100 to 170 miles?

Why does a person study for years to set out on a career that will define their life?

Why do so many people seek lasting and meaningful relationships and why do we continually seek to restore broken relationships?

Why do people work to learn an instrument, buy a house in a particular town, go into debt, own a boat, re-build a boat?

Why do people keep going when it seems the odds and circumstances are against them?

Why do we all believe in Jesus...

All of these situations are very different and there are many different answers to the question "why" but, there is one thing common to all...and is a universal human experience...

The common answer to the why question is - HOPE

As humans we are driven by hope. Hope for or hope that...fill in the blank...as the central motivator for just about everything we do and are.  
 We are made this way

Think about it...who rides, runs or jumps, or throws without thinking of victory...even if victory is for the team, or a new personal best, or the prize of better health?

Who becomes proficient in any field or instrument or any endeavor without thinking of what it will mean for their life and purpose...who seeks a relationship, a

place to live, or a way to live - like on a boat - without hoping for what it will bring to them and to those involved. Who endures hardship and struggle without hoping living will be different sometime soon...who believes in Jesus without coming face to face with the hope of heaven.

At our deepest levels and at the core of every endeavor there is a hope pulling us forward...

God made humans as creatures who hope and who must have hope in order to continue living. Without a vision and the hope that underlies it, that is to say, when we are hopeless we humans find it very difficult to keep going. We need to have hope

What do you hope for?

Lets take a closer look at hope...what is it?

So often we make hope an object in and of itself to be aquired. Like something we go out and get a bushell of and plop it an account so we can make strategic withdrals when we are feeling less than hopeful. We expect we will have more hope when...a relationship gets better, or our job is more secure, or we start feeling better. As if hope is OUT THERE and we go get it.

**Hope** is a **belief** based on some desire, understanding or information. It's a belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life. Hope implies a certain amount of perseverance — i.e., believing that a certain outcome is possible even when there is some evidence to the contrary.

Hope as an **emotion** produces a **motivation to act**. For example, if one has hope a bus driver will wait for them, that person may be motivated to run towards it; but if the bus begins to pull away and the person loses hope they can catch that bus, they lose motivation and stop running. Similarly, if standing at a bus stop hopeful a bus is soon forthcoming, one may be motivated to remain at the stop. If that one loses hope that a bus will come shortly, that person might lose motivation to stay waiting and might try to hail a taxi or just walk.

As believers in and followers of Jesus our faith gives us a hope that can not be found in, defined or bound by this world nor any experience this life brings. Our future is heaven. We were made for heaven not this world so...Our hope is in the life to come not this life. Our bright horizon is the eternal inheritance as children of God not the fleeting pleasures this world offers and we so often seek as the foundation for our hope.

**Colossians 3:1-4** Since you were raised from the dead with Christ, aim at what is in heaven, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Think only about the things in heaven, not the things on earth. **3** Your old sinful self has died, and your new life is kept with Christ in God. **4** Christ is our life, and when he comes again, you will share in his glory.

Ted Dekker writes in *The Slumber of Christianity* “Nothing can invigorate faith like an informed hope, and nothing will inform hope but a deliberate setting of the mind [aimed at the things above].

Once your focus has shifted from the concerns and benefits of this life and toward the bliss that awaits in heaven you will finally find the true liberation that Christ intended for his disciples. Then we can take the pleasures of this life and enjoy them as foretastes of the life to come (Dekker, Page 159).

I mentioned in my last message that the writers of the Bible had something it seems we have lost...a driving, consuming passion for heaven. A longing to be with Christ and enter the blessings of their inheritance as children of God.

### **Romans 8:22-25**

**22** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. **23** Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. **24** For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? **25** But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

The world says that heaven is a useless figment of the imagination that can not bring happiness on earth. But they have it backward. True happiness on Earth is the figment of our imaginations. Heaven, on the other hand, not only exists – but is our only true source of happiness – and hope is our window into that source (Dekker, 171-172).

We must dump the loads of expectations for nirvana in this life along with the burden of finding ultimate happiness. That happiness simply isn't available in our allotted eighty-odd years. The bliss [true joy and happiness] we seek awaits us in the next life. Our faith is being sure of this hope (Hebrews 11:1). The pleasures God gives us serve as a reminder of far greater pleasures to come. (IBID, 81)

Let me tie this together.

We were made for heaven not this earth. That's what our faith is all about. We have learned to seek our pleasure in this life as that which defines our hope - forgetting all about heaven. But the pleasures of this earth fail to provide anything that is deeply and truly satisfying – in fact disappointing - so we become hopeless in the struggle.

When we awaken our hope for heaven the things we seek and experience in this life begin to change – not in themselves but in what they mean to us. For they are no longer ends in themselves but foretastes of heaven – we begin to see them as given to us by our loving God to remind us of our future of God’s promises. What awaits us is unimaginably more filling and satisfying.

If I might go back to the image of the race –

**Hebrews 12:1-3** **1 Do you see what this means - all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running - and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. 2 Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed - that exhilarating finish in and with God - he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. 3 When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!**

You and I live this life, we run this race for what lies ahead – for what awaits us at the hand of God.

You’ve seen Olympic marathons, soccer matches, and maybe cyclists – who among them train for months or years and competes without thoughts of finishing well if not winning – surrounded by a cloud of witnesses cheering.

Who in any such race train and strain for anything less than the prize at the finish line...who runs for the little cups of water along the way?

Yet...in the church we seem often more enamored by the water on our way to the finish line than by the great finish itself – surrounded by all of heaven – cheering

We must never take our eyes off the joy set before us...fixing our eyes on that great prize – Christ in eternity. This race, this life and our hope is not for the little cups along the way, but the prize at the end.

There are difficult consequences to forgetting about heaven and focusing on the things of this earth rather than Christ, living for this life and looking for the completeness and fulness we need in what can not provide it...The consequence is that eventually we realize the hope based on this life is empty. Its not what we, as believers were made for and hopelessness sets in – leads us to all kinds of brokenness where one readily follows their own way – we think that God has left us because we can not find hope where God has not intended us to and we often leave the race altogether. Don’t get me wrong, God definitely uses the things of

this life to point us where true hope lies – with him and in heaven and I am not saying we should separate ourselves and become a hidden light...if we have this great and true hope – God reminds us of all those who have none and are slowly withering inside.

Finally, Why is hope so important? Because life is not all pleasure. There's a lot of struggle to make it to the finish and hope pulls us toward the finish with Christ and a great cloud of witnesses

***Romans 5:1*** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ***2*** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ***3*** Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ***4*** perseverance, character; and character, hope. ***5*** And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

**Titus 1: 2** My aim is to raise hopes by pointing the way to life without end. This is the life God promised long ago - and he doesn't break promises!

Where is your hope? I hope - it is in heaven - inspired by the daily foretastes of what is to come.

If this has caused you to think and consider what God has promised you in Jesus – and desire all God has in store for you don't wait - join the race! Talk to any of us today.