**I AM HOPEFUL ABOUT THE FUTURE**

**Genesis 9:11-17**

**INTRODUCTION:**

          A. [Jeanne Calment is the oldest living human whose age can be verified.

- On her 120th birthday, she was asked to describe her vision for the future. "Very brief," she said.]

- [Another woman was asked the benefits of living to the age of 102.

- After a pause, she answered, "No peer pressure!"]

- [John Fetterman, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, WI, told of an elderly woman who died.

- Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers.

- In her instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, "They wouldn't take me out while I was alive; I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead."]

          B. I guess our perspective on the future does have some correlation to our physical age.

- But as believers in Christ, we are hopeful about the future regardless of our age.

[- The pop rock group, *Timbuk 3* had a smash hit back in 1986 titled,  "The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades."]

- That could be the Christian's theme song, couldn't it?

- We know that no matter what is thrown at us, whether it is family problems, difficulties at work, Y2K, or anything else, our future is bright because our future involves a continual relationship w/Jesus.

[- I agree w/Billy Graham who said, "I've read the last page of the Bible. It's all going to turn out all right."]

          C. Now, if you are not hopeful about the future today, there are two possible reasons: 1) You are not a Christian & you have no basis for hope; 2) You are a Christian but you do not have a grasp on the future God has in mind for you.

- We're going to try to clear up both of these issues this morning.

Transition: Today's Message is designed to give four answers to the question: "Why Should I Be Hopeful About the Future". Let's begin w/answer #1:

**1. BECAUSE I WORSHIP A COVENANT MAKING GOD**

[- Someone said, "Sure, I live in the past. It's about the only thing I have to look forward to!"]

- That person didn't understand what it means to worship a covenant making God.

- Let me stop for a second to explain what the Bible means when it uses the word "Covenant".

- A Biblical Covenant usually involved 3 things: 1) Parties; 2) Terms; 3) Promises.

[- Suppose that you were a painter & I wanted my house painted -- we could make a covenant together.

- You & I would be the two parties involved - the terms would include what areas were to be painted, what color, & when the job should be completed.

- The promise I made to you would be in the amount of money I was going to pay you when the job was finished -- your promise to me would be that the job would be completed as originally agreed.

- The agreement that we make concerning these elements -- Parties, Terms, & Promises, would be the covenant that we made w/each other.]

- When God makes a Covenant w/ us, it normally involves these 3 elements.

- The difference is that God alone determines the terms of the agreement, & that God always comes through on His end of the deal.

- In Genesis 6 God told Noah that He was going to destroy the earth because of depth of evil that He found among mankind.

- But God gave Noah a promise: (Gen. 6:18) "I will establish my covenant w/you."

- And as promised, the flood came, & for over a year Noah, his family, & the animals were trapped inside that ark.

- When they got out of the Ark God was waiting for them w/words of covenant:

- READ 9:11-17.

- I want you to notice something very important in vs. 16 - READ.

- Notice that the rainbow was not so much for Noah & for us as it was for God.

- It was God's sign to Himself that He was bound by the covenant He had made.

- Now we're going to look at the most important covenant God has made w/us in a minute, but I want you to consider something very carefully:

-- If God is willing to make a covenant w/us, & He is willing to bind Himself to that covenant no matter what -- what does that say about the relationship God wants to have w/us?

- It says that we can be hopeful about the future, because we worship a God that not only desires our companionship, but who is willing to take the steps necessary to obligate Himself to that relationship.

Transition: Answer #2 - I Am Hopeful About the Future..

**2. BECAUSE I HAVE ACCEPTED THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT**

          A. There are a number of covenants that God has made w/ His people.

- He made the covenant w/Noah & his family, & w/all of mankind.

- The Three major Covenants of the Old Testament were made w/Abraham, w/Moses, & w/David.

- But the covenant we are most concerned w/ today is known as the *New Covenant* that God has made w/us through His Son Jesus Christ.

          B. The New Covenant is our Covenant

- The prophet Jeremiah prophesied of this covenant that was to come: (Jer 31:31)  "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant w/the house of Israel & w/the house of Judah."

- This is the same covenant Jesus spoke of at the Last Supper where we read (Luke 22:20) "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

- In Matt. 26:28 Jesus added, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

- Jesus was speaking of His sacrifice on the cross that would make it possible for us to enter into an eternal covenant w/God.

- (Heb 9:15)  "Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance…"

          C. If we are to comprehend the new covenant, we must understand a few basics truths:

   1) Jesus death on the cross & resurrection from the dead paid for every sin that I have ever committed against God.

- (1 John 2:2)  He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, & not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

   2) If I accept the terms of the covenant I am promised several things:

          a. Forgiveness of sin & the gift of the Holy Spirit - Acts 2:38

          b. Eternal life - John 3:16

          c. Jesus will intercede for me in prayer - 1 John 2:1

          d. A resurrection body - 1 Cor. 15:20ff

          e. A home in heaven - John 14:1-4

          f. Every Spiritual Blessing - Eph. 1:3

          g. Many, many, more…

  3) The terms of the New Covenant are as follows:

a. We must have faith in the Christ of the Bible - we must believe in Him to the point that we are willing to turn our lives over to His control.

          b. We must enter into covenant through baptism:

- Turn w/me to Galatians 3:26-27 - READ TEXT

- Our belief in Christ brings us into covenant, our baptism into Christ is our pledge to God, the place where we sign on the dotted line.

- 1 Peter 3:21 describes our baptism as "a pledge of a good conscience toward God."

- It is in the baptismal act that we demonstrate our belief in Christ, & He blesses us w/ the covenant promise.

- (Rom 6:3-4)  "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*{4}*We were therefore buried w/ him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

          C. Have you been accepted the terms of Christ's Covenant?

- Have you placed your faith in Him, have you been baptized into His name?

- If so, you can have hope for the future, for you are in Christ.

- (John 5:24)  "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word & believes him who sent me *has* eternal life & will not be condemned; he *has* crossed over from death to life."

Transition: Answer #3, I am Hopeful About the Future…

**3. BECAUSE I KNOW GOD WILL FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO ME**

[- A young paratrooper was learning to jump.

- He was given the following instructions: "1st, jump when you are told; 2nd, count to ten & pull the ripcord; 3rd, in the unlikely event that it doesn't open, pull the second chute open, & 4th, when you get down a truck will take you to the base."

- The plane ascended to the proper height, the men started jumping off, & the young paratrooper jumped when he was told.

- He counted to ten & pulled the cord, but the chute failed to open.

- He proceeded to the back up plan & pulled the cord of the second chute.

- It too, failed to open.

- "And I suppose, he complained to himself, "the truck won't be there when I get down either."]

- There are a lot of let downs in life, aren't there?

- But the One who will never let us down is God.

- God has never made a promise He did not keep.

- (1 Cor 1:8-9)  "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*{9}*God, who has called you into fellowship w/ his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

- (2 Tim 2:13)  "if we are faithless, he will remain faithful"

- Everything that God has promised us will come true.

- God promised us eternal life & we have it.

- God has promised us every spiritual blessing in Christ & it is ours.

- God has promised us that we will receive new bodies & He will give them to us.

[- Joni Eareckson Tada, the great devotional writer who happens to be quadriplegic understands that God's promises are true. She said, "I have hope in the future. The Bible speaks about bodies being glorified. I know the meaning of that now. It's the time after my death here when I, the quadriplegic, will be on my feet dancing."

- We are hopeful about the future, because what has promised He will fulfill.

Transition: Answer #4 - I Am Hopeful About the Future…

**4. BECAUSE I WILL FULFILL MY PROMISE TO GOD**

- Now, this might sound a little presumptuous to some of you.

- How can we state that we know we will fulfill our promises to God?

- I will tell you how we can do it -- we can do it because we are truly committed to God.

- If you hesitate to join w/me in pledging yourself to fulfill the promises you made to God, you really need to go back & examine your relationship w/Him.

- I'm not saying that in a judgmental, or superior way.

- I am saying it because, if you cannot state categorically, that you plan to spend the rest of your life fulfilling your promise to God, then I am concerned about you.

- Jesus said, (Luke 9:62)  "No one who puts his hand to the plow & looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

- (Luke 9:23-26) "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself & take up his cross daily & follow me.*{24}*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*{25}*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, & yet lose or forfeit his very self?*{26}*If anyone is ashamed of me & my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory & in the glory of the Father & of the holy angels."

- What Jesus was emphasizing here is not that we are saved by good deeds, or by being perfect people -- Jesus is well aware of our shortcomings.

- What He is saying is that He expects total commitment from us.

- When we come into covenant w/God it is not a temporary agreement.

- We come to Christ for the long haul, in fact, it is for the longest haul imaginable.

- When we pledge ourselves to the Messiah, it is not for a moment in front of the church, it is for eternity.

- And we can be hopeful about the future, because we know w/o a doubt, that we will fulfill the promise that we have made to God.

- And we know that He will see us through.

**CONCLUSION:**

[- Imagine a colony of grubs living on the bottom of a swamp.

- And every once in a while, one of these grubs is inclined to climb a leaf stem to the surface.

- Then he disappears above the surface & never returns.

- All the grubs wonder why this is so & what it must be like up there, so they counsel among themselves & agree that the next one who goes up will come back & tell the others.

- Not long after that, one of the grubs feels that urge & climbs that leaf stem & goes out above the surface onto a lily pad.

- And there in the warmth of the sun, he falls asleep.

- While he sleeps, the carapace of the tiny creature breaks open, & out of the inside of the grub comes a magnificent dragonfly w/beautiful, wide, rainbow-hued, iridescent wings.

- And he spreads those wings & flies, soaring out over those waters.

- But then he remembers the commitment he has made to those behind, yet now he knows he cannot return.

- They would not recognize him in the first place, & beyond that, he could not live again in such a place.

- But one thought is his that takes away all the distress: they, too, shall climb the stem, & they, too, shall know the glory. ]

- We who are in Christ are hopeful about the future, because we have discovered a covenant relationship w/God.

- We are able to soar into the realm of glory because we are experiencing the blessings of God.

- And our prayer is for those who have not yet taken the step of commitment that will allow them to join us in living out our hope about the future.