



November 2008

“

*We live in hope, we live by hope
and we live for hope! When hope does
not come we have
not been defeated.*

”

Ever hoped and longed for something that just didn't happen? Ever needed to have deliverance and it didn't come? Ever wanted to achieve a certain goal and you missed it? These situations and circumstances can certainly bring about a lot of frustration. They tend to puncture the human spirit in such a way that we feel overwhelmed and defeated. They can sap all of our energy and leave us immobile and destabilized, at least for a while.

Speaking of immobile and destabilized, I wonder how Moses must have felt to have weathered all the storms and faced all the obstacles that came his way while leading the children of Israel through the wilderness. They threatened him with stoning. They cursed him. They argued with him. They accused him of being an

Butler Street C.M.E. Church
23 Jesse Hill, Jr., Drive, SE
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone 404.659.8745
FAX 404.581.0145
www.butlerstreetcmechurch.org

PASTOR'S *Perspective*

imposter. They also accused him of not knowing what he was doing. Moses knew that the goal had nothing to do with any of the accusations, frustrations and anxieties. The goal was to get these recalcitrant, stiff necked people to the Promised Land. Moses kept this goal and this hope ever before him. Finally, God told him that he would not step foot in the Promised Land but that he would show the land to him. Atop Mt. Nebo Moses saw the land with all of its beauty and promise but he never set foot in the land. For him the promise, the hope was seen but never fully seized. He must have felt pretty empty after this. Maybe that is why he died. For the promise was so great that not being able to seize it was so devastating for him that there was nothing left to live for! Then there were three Hebrew boys who were placed in a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship and pray at his altars. They told the king that they would be willing to risk his punishment, which in this case was death in a fiery furnace, rather than bow down and worship his god. In the midst of the fiery furnace which had been heated seven times hotter than normal, they raised a banner of hope and promise. They declared to the king that while they did not know if their God would deliver them from the furnace, they knew that their God was able to deliver them! This was a sure sign and symbol of hope. In the face of certain death their hope in their God was so great that death had no consequence. Instead death offered a benefit. It would allow them at long last to see their God who was in fact the arbiter of hope.

Hope is desire or want with expectation of fulfillment. When we hope we never expect that our hope will not come through for us. We always expect that hope will show up. The reality is however, that sometimes it appears that hope disappoints us. Sometimes all of our

energy and all of our best effort does not conclude in our positive expectation of fulfillment, at least not at that time. Hope unrealized on our terms does not mean that hope has been denied forever. It simply means that the arbiter of hope who is God, has seen what we cannot see. Perhaps in His all seeing and knowing providence He has not, at that moment, seen what we have been hoping for as the best thing for that time and station in our life or that of another. After all isn't that what hope is? Hope is not launched in what we see instead hope is seated in what we cannot see but expect to soon or at least one day be able to see. Hope, like it was for the Hebrew boys, is wrapped in just knowing that God is able to deliver. When hope does not come, at least on our terms, it does not mean that our hope has been based in empty possibilities, it only means that our hope has been constructed in yet unrealized fulfillment. It can still come but not now! Viewed in this way all of us are really products of hope. We live in hope, we live by hope and we live for hope! When hope does not come we have not been defeated. We have simply become stronger in our hope and the glimmers of our current hope keep the flames of future hopes alive. This is what the Apostle Paul means in Romans 5:5 when he says ". . . and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Thus, with the love of God in our hearts and the Holy Spirit mitigating for us, hope does not ever die. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger and more abundant in us. As believers we must always let hope abound in us even when it appears that hope has not come.

Anthony M. Alford, Sr., Pastor