



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 9

January 15, 2023

No. 3

HOPE'S ENDURANCE

Florence Chadwick and Me

~ Rick Lanning

I can't tell you how many times in my life I have thought of the story of Florence Chadwick. If you've never heard her story I will tell it to you now in hopes that it will help you as much as it has me. But first let me read you a scripture that explains why I love this story. Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 1:3,

*"We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith; your labor motivated by love; and your **endurance** inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Christian Standard Bible)

Other translations said of this trinity of *faith, hope* and *love* that Paul remembered *"your work of faith, labor of love, and **steadfastness** of hope"* (ESV); or *"your work of faith, labor of love, and **patience** of hope"* (NKJV).

This tells us three things. Faith produces works. Love produces labors. Hope produces endurance. Fruit is borne by our faith, our love, and our hope. That fruit is work, labor and hope. They are the three links of the Christian's chain that are interconnected and absolutely critical to our making it to heaven.

Did you notice the three translations of the Greek word *HUPOMONE*? Patience. Steadfastness. Endurance. It is more than just not getting upset and biding our time. It includes a vision of "seeing" the outcome ahead of time and therefore giving you the ability to wait for God to bring you through the trials and achieve the goal. It clearly involves a "vision" of seeing God controlling the circumstances and leading you through the trials to victory.

Paul seemed to really appreciate this word to describe the Christian's vision of his future. After telling the Roman saints that we *"rejoice in hope of the glory of God,"* he then says we *"glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (HUPOMONE – "endurance, steadfastness"), and perseverance (produces) character; and character (produces) hope."* (Rom. 5:3-4). In other words, holding up under great stress, under severe trials, builds character, which in turn gives us hope. So again we learn this truth: Endurance is connected to Hope.

Allow me to build on this one more time, again using Paul's words to make my point. Romans 8:23-25 so beautifully describes how many of us feel right now. Listen as Paul gives words to our feelings and emotions:

²³ *Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.* ²⁴ *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?* ²⁵ *But if we **hope** for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with **perseverance**.*"

I don't know about you but I suspect most of you are like me, *"eagerly waiting"* for the *"redemption of our body."* Going to heaven drives us forward. Our faith in this future event motivates us to hang on with dogged determination. But notice that our HOPE for future glory is what drives our perseverance, our endurance. Something called hope makes us keep putting one foot in front of the other and keep pushing our way through this evil world as we journey onward and upward to the Land of the Rising Son.

But if we don't keep our vision focused, our hope alive and real, then we will grow weary in well doing and quit. Satan will discourage us with fog. What do I mean by that? Let me now tell you the story of Florence Chadwick.

In 1952, the year I was born, a young 32 year old woman named Florence Chadwick set out to become the first female to swim the treacherous Pacific Ocean route between Catalina Island and the coast of California at Palos Verde. It is a 21-mile life-threatening swim across very frigid waters that are shark infested. On July 4th she plunged into the water to make this historic swim. A heavy fog moved in making her vision virtually blind to where she was going. A boat followed her, which included her mother, with several men with rifles to shoot away the sharks. She swam on and on and on for 15 hours and 55 minutes. That totals over 60,000 strokes. Finally, overcome with exhaustion, she asked to be taken out of the water. When she learned moments later that she was only a half-mile from the California coast, she was devastated. She later said, "If only I could have seen the coastline I could have made it."

Just so you know who this woman was, she had already set many long-distance open-water swim records, including the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions! That's 23 miles each way! But what has always impressed me is her statement, "If only I could have seen the coastline..."

Can you relate to those words? We live our lives in a fog of trouble, worry, doubt, depression, financial uncertainty, strained relationships, the death of loved ones, etc, etc. etc. Satan blinds our vision and whispers for us to just give up. We see the fog and lose sight of the goal (heaven).

Instead, hope produces endurance. Hope "sees" the coastline (Jesus coming for us) and motivates us to push on and on and on. Like Paul, with our eyes focused on Christ, we grit our teeth and cry out in resolution: *"one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13-14).

Next time you are tempted to throw in the towel and quit, think of Florence Chadwick's words. "If only I could have seen the coastline I could have made it." IF ONLY. How many on the day of Judgment will cry those words? Don't be one of them. May God see your *"work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope"* as you live your life for Him.

Keep swimming.

Worshiping God by Singing Spiritual Songs

The church at Ephesus and in Colosse were taught to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs while assembled together. While doing so each individual is to be making melody in his or her heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) The spiritual songs we sing rise to the ear of God as we praise Him, thank Him and honor Him. This must come from our heart.

The songs we sing also "speak to one another" and "teach and admonish" one another. We are built up the comradery when we realize we are not alone in our march to the promise land.

While we begin again our learning of new songs and the practicing again of older songs to improve, let us see the purpose of our singing together in our assembly. Let us each give our very best if we are the song leader. Let us give our very best if we are in the pew lifting up our voice in song. STACY