

## Hope

### **Introduction:**

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*“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” (Ps. 20:7)*

We live in interesting times. Never have there been so many opportunities and choices. The world has shrunk and yet, it seems, people have grown further and further apart. We can read about or see, in intimate detail, the lives of Hollywood or sports stars we’ve never met, yet we can be completely oblivious to the concerns of those living under our own roof.

We can communicate, by internet, with people all over the world, yet neglect relationships with people that we really care about. What results is a deepening loneliness for a lot of people, a feeling of being alone in a crowd.

Loneliness is just one of many challenges of the human condition. Many wrestle with fears and phobias of one sort or the other. The fear of failure and the fear of abandonment seem to be almost epidemic. Then there’s the fear of being found out; that everyone will somehow know our secrets and we will be hated.

Aside from these there are the afflictions that have befallen mankind since our first parents were kicked out of the garden: sickness that ravages bodies and minds, addiction that enslaves, sin that destroys.

The condition in the world reminds me of what Isaiah said in chapter 59:9-11 – *“So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.”*

So, where is the hope? What do we do when we’re faced with situations in our lives that knock us to our knees and leave us gasping for air? I see people all the time grasping for help from whatever or whoever they can find. Some buy a lottery ticket, hoping that the numbers will finally fall for

them and the prize cheque will buy their way out of the mess they've made. Some try to ease their pain through substance abuse, numbing the pain of their lives by dulling the senses. Some escape to illicit relationships, wounding the very people they say they care about most. Some escape to their work, losing themselves in the constant pursuit of more. To what, or to whom, do you turn? I think it's a good question.

I wanted to speak this morning about hope. But I want to first clarify what I mean by that. I'm not talking about the hope that is used by popular definition today: the hope that the weather will be good today or the hope that you'll win the lottery. No, what I'm speaking of today is the hope of which the Scriptures speak; a steadfast hope that believes in spite of the odds; that is based on a trustworthy God who has promised.

It's the hope spoken of in Hebrews 11:1, which says: "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" It's an intangible thing. It's hard to wrap your head or your hands around it, but it's real, and it's vitally important.

In 1 Corinthians 13, it makes Paul's short list of the most important qualities. In his famous chapter on love, he concludes it by saying, in verse 13: "*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*" We've heard many sermons on love, and certainly many on faith, but not so often on hope.

So, let's get into it, shall we?

The Bible is full of the stories of people who were just like you and I in many ways. Hebrews 11 provides a long list of them, in what is sometimes known as the faith hall of fame.

There's Abraham, who was called to go to a land he did not know, and who was told he would become a father, though humanly speaking that was impossible.

There's Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his own brothers and then convicted of a crime he did not commit.

There's Moses, the child of a slave, yet raised by a princess of Egypt, running for his life after killing an Egyptian taskmaster.

There's the people of Israel, wandering in the wilderness because of their own disobedience, facing the very human problem of delayed gratification.

Many others are listed, but I think you get the picture. These are people just like us, yet there is a common theme in each of their lives: they placed their hope in the God who is there. Why?

### **God Revealed Himself To Them**

How is it that we can know anything about a God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present? How can we come to know about a God with the power to speak the universe into being, the one from whom the laws of nature flow? We can only know Him as he reveals Himself.

The good news is that God desires to be known. He revealed Himself to Abraham. Romans 4:18 speaks of Abraham and says: "*Hoping in spite of hopeless circumstances, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' just as he had been told: 'This is how many descendants you will have.'*" (Romans 4:18, International Standard Version)

He spoke to the nation of Israel through the prophets who wrote it for us. So, we have the progressive revelation of God's nature through the history of the nation of Israel. We, on this side of the Cross, also have the words and teachings of Jesus and His disciples passed down in the New Testament.

The words of this book resonate relationship. The reason that Abraham trusted that God would do what He said He would do was that they were in relationship. He had learned that this God who spoke to Him would do what He said He would do.

What do we know of God through His Word?

### **He is Faithful.**

That simply means that He will do what He says He will do. It is not possible for Him to lie. What a difference that is from everyone else that we deal with. Many people have a hard time believing that about God because of their experience with people. But we can see through history that His promises are true. He told Abraham that He would make of Him a great nation, and from Abraham came the Jewish nation.

He promised that he would give them a land of their own. It's called Israel. Even though they were disobedient and turned their backs on Him, and were lead away into captivity, God promised that He would bring them back. And He did. He promised through Daniel that He would send a deliverer, and He even said how many years it would be. 483 years later, Jesus entered Jerusalem. You can trust Him. When He says something, He means it. What else do we know.

### **He Loves Us.**

Some of you need to just let that truth soak over you for a long time. God loves you. The whole point to the 66 books that make up the Bible is to show us the lengths to which God would go to bring us back to Himself. He demonstrated why a sacrificial system wouldn't work – nothing that we could do can pay the price to restore our relationship. Yet Jesus came, the expression of God's love for us, and laid down His life for you.

Chris Boyd is the new star running back for the Toronto Argonauts. He came from a really hard background. He was raised by his mother, who was a drug addict and a dealer. When he was 17 she was put in prison, and died 4 years later. At the funeral he met his father, who was also a drug dealer. His girlfriend was killed in a shooting, as was his cousin. He endured a lot of hardship. Yet, his coach says that he's one of the most outstanding human beings he's ever met.

If you'd ask Cory what his secret is, how he could maintain hope through all of the tragedy of his life, he'd likely take off his shirt. Over the right side of his chest there's a tattoo that reads, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16, KJV)

There's one final thing that I want us to understand about God this morning. It's vitally important to know this in a world that at times seems to be rocking and reeling and scaring us to death. Hear this: believe this.

### **God Is In Control**

History is His Story. Not only does the Bible tell us what has happened, it also tells us what will happen. The Old Testament prophets wrote intimate details of Jesus' life for us hundreds of years before His birth, which were fulfilled to the smallest detail. The same Scriptures tell us that Jesus rose from the dead and conquered death, and that He will return to finally make

right everything that the human race has messed up. The Bible tells us that because He lives, we also live.

This book is full of promises to those who love Him and will follow Him. He invites us to join Him in His plan of redemption. We have a part to play. When we come alongside of Him, and walk in relationship with Him, those promises become ours. Like in Romans 8:28 – *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

### **Conclusion:**

So why can I have hope this morning? Why can we have hope this morning? I can have hope because I’m not relying on my bank account to save me. I’m not relying on my doctor’s talents to save me. I’m not counting on the military might of an army, or the best alarm system in the world to keep me safe. My hope is in the One who made the heavens and the earth, and He can be trusted.

Does that mean my life will be easy? Absolutely not. Does that mean I’ll live a long and healthy life and never have my heart broken? No. What it means is this: wherever I am, whatever I go through, God is with me. He loves me and my security is in His hands.

The Apostle Paul understood this. He would travel to a village and preach, and they would beat him and drag him outside of the city to die. He’d eventually crawl off somewhere to recover; then he’d go again. Then they arrested him and threatened to kill him if he didn’t quit. I love what he said in Philippians 1:21 – *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

Paul got it. He understood what it meant to have absolute confidence in the God who is. His hope rested in what God accomplished in the most crucial moment in human history. He said in 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 – *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...”*

My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand. What is your hope in today?