

– “Our Sure Hope” – Stewardship 3: HOPE – October 19, 2008 –
– 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3 – Pastor Scott Hirssig –

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (ESV)

¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God

and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hope in ESV appears 168 times in 158 verses, in the New Testament 82 times in 74 verses, and the Old Testament 86 times in 86 verses. Faith appears 334 times in 297 verses, and love 606 times in 551 verses

I greet you with, grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit who lives within us as believers, empowering us.

We are continuing our stewardship theme – “Maturing as stewards through Faith, Love and Hope” that theme is taken from 1st Thessalonians 1 verse 3, where Paul says, ³ **remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.** (1 Thessalonians 1:3 ESV) We are focusing on growing in Faith, Love and Hope. Today we speak of Hope.

HOPE: Biblical & Worldly Hope

Hope in a Biblical sense is an understanding that what God has done in the past, and is doing right now, guarantees the future since as God, He is according to His character, keeping His promises, where as worldly hope is a feeling of a particular outcome, like wishful thinking, both effect how we think and act. So hope can become a driving force in change, either for the better, as we are diligent about living our sure hope, or the reverse, giving up, since we see the situation as hopeless, no chance of anything ever changing, so we give up. The Bible reveals the only true God who loves you, died for you, has a plan for you, wants hope for you, as opposed to the Devil, who hates you, always lies, and desires your ruin and destruction. The scriptures bring us wisdom and power to deal with what life brings and what our future will be like which is a sure hope.

The word hope appears some 168 times in the Bible, faith about twice that, and love about four times that. So each of our theme words are spoken of quite often in the Bible, love the most, followed by faith, and then hope. Now if we also include related concepts to hope, like trust, rely, expect, await, endure, hope and related words occur quite often in the Bible. Sometimes hope is about a person or group of persons desiring an outcome. What we are concerned about is hope that is given by God that changes our lives for the better.

HOPE: FROM GOD & TO BE – Living – Abounding – Known

Hope for the Christian, is central in their understanding of who they are and how they live. In fact Peter, identifies hope, as a living hope given at salvation, saying, ³ **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through**

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3 ESV) That living hope is given at salvation, the time when you first believed, which for most of us is at the time we were baptized as infants. We are given a living hope as the Holy Spirit grants faith. This living hope is from God and is to be overflowing in your life or abounding. Paul tells the Romans, ¹³ **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.** (Romans 15:13 ESV) This idea of hope is to abound in our lives, another words to be part of every aspect of life, living in the hope we have from God. This hope while given to us at our salvation, is over time, to be growing, as we know, or grow in our relationship and understanding of our God. Listen to Paul's prayer through the Holy Spirit for the Ephesians believers, and of course us as well, as he prays, ¹⁷ **that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,** ¹⁸ **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,** (Ephesians 1:17-18 ESV) Paul prays that the believers at Ephesus would know what is the hope to which he has called you. Understanding our hope changes everything since it effects how we look at what is happening either living in the hope God provides or sinking into the depth of despair, living hopeless lives, living without the riches of glory.

HOPE: What Hope does.

In our lesson from 1st Thessalonians these believers are encouraged and commended as Paul identifies their **"steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Thessalonians 1:3 ESV) Other translations indicate, **"your endurance inspired by hope in the Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV), and also, **"patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..."** (1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) Steadfastness, endurance, patience, hope in our lives. Hope just like love and faith involves action. Jesus changes how you think and act. Since our hope rests in the character of God, who He is, and that does not change, our hope rests in the objective reality of God and what He promises, rather than feeling or being subjective. You know that you have eternal life. You know that He has plans for you. You know that God Delivers. You know He is with you and you are resting in God. How do we know that? He word tells us and we can trust Him, He will not lie, and has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Cor 5:5) . It says in Titus, ² **in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.** (Titus 1:1-2 ESV) You have an eternal future that is also a future right now. God spoke through Jeremiah, ¹¹ **For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.** (Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV) We can be bold and confident since our confidence is in our God and who He is. Paul told the Corinthians, ¹² **Since we have such a hope, we are very bold** (2 Corinthians 3:12-13 ESV) This hope brings us to care and share. Paul told Timothy, ¹⁰ **For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe** (1 Timothy 4:10 ESV)

We keep living and telling the message. It is God who is faithful; He keeps us and works through us. God spoke to Jeremiah in the midst of his sorrow, his lament in Lamentations he also recalls, ²¹ **But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:** ²² **The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;** ²³ **they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** (Lamentations 3:21-23 ESV) Sure hope in the faithful God, in Hebrews it says, ²³ **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.** (Hebrews 10:23 ESV) He will deliver and even if that deliverance is at our death, we continue to endure resting in our God. Paul the missionary declares, ⁸ **For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.** ⁹ **Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.** ¹⁰ **He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.** (2 Corinthians 1:8-10 ESV) Paul knew God delivers, he saw it in the past, and continued to live in hope in the present. Peter understood that, he writes, ¹³ **Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** (1 Peter 1:13 ESV) Hopefully you too, rest in the true God knowing He is with you and faithful. We care and share, praying for each other, encouraging, visiting, listening, sending a card, and countless other ways the Holy Spirit works through you.

In the town of Port Hope in Canada there is a monument erected remembering the work of Joseph Scriven a devote Christian who worked with the poor and underprivileged. He was born in Dublin Ireland in 1820, and just before his death at age 60, a friend during a visit to his dying friend, discovered a poem that he had written for his mother during a time of sorrow. Joseph had never intended the poem for anyone else. After his death, the poem was set to music and is much loved song with the words:

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief's to bear!

What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit; Oh, what needless pain we bear-

All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer! [LSB 770]

Those words from the Holy Spirit still minister today. May your hope rest in Jesus, a sure hope, provided by the Faithful True God as you abide in Him growing is this living hope he provides as you live in sure hope.

In His name we pray, AMEN. May the peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN.