

HOPE'S FOUNDATION

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. ⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Introduction

1. Hope is under assault. The world is on fire. Whole societies are falling apart. People don't know what to believe or how to behave. For many, hope is lost. (Challenging circumstances often do not help either!) And that's not just true of those outside of Christ! One writer captured the loss of hope this way, ***“How do you keep on going in a path of obedience to Christ — say, in some relationship or some ministry — how do you keep going month after month for years or even decades when there are emotional and relational and spiritual and financial obstacles, and when the normal human encouragements evaporate and you feel forgotten”*** (Piper)? How do we keep hope alive?
2. We got a good start last week in an overview look at this letter. Certainly Paul's ministry life was in constant danger. He speaks about that in **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**. But he made the case to the Corinthians that he and his co-workers were able to keep their perspective and not lose heart – or hope (**2 Corinthians 4:1, 16**). How was that possible for him? How is that possible for us? We learn something of hope's foundation in the first few verses of this letter.

3. Kids, we continue to talk about hope today. All of the answers you need to find this morning come directly out of **1 Thessalonians 1:1-7**. What two words does Paul use in His greeting to the church (**grace** and **truth**)? Paul was glad about the things the Thessalonians were doing. He was remembering their work of _____ (**faith**) and their labor of _____ (love) and their steadfastness of _____ (**hope**). What word means to act like or be like someone else (**imitators**)? I hope you do well!
4. I really only want to make **two points** this morning. The first has to do with **enduring hope** and the second **expanding hope**. When our hope is in the Lord, it can and should and will endure. When our hope is in the Lord it will expand in our life and in the lives of others. That happened in Thessalonica and that can happen here.

I. ENDURING HOPE – TRUE HOPE REMAINS

A. What hope is – ***To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.***

1. Hope is confident assurance that rests in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ! Think about this. Whatever you are enduring, if you belong to Christ, your position is described here. You are in God the Father and in Christ Jesus. As believers, we are in a sort of “Trinitarian bubble” if you will! To be in God and in Christ is to be surrounded and protected in and by Him, engulfed in Him! That suggests that whatever happens to us is designed by God for His glory and our good – and it is all headed for a good conclusion. We have every reason to remain hopeful in Him because we are in Him! Everywhere we go He is with us! When life is great or horrible or something in between, we have hope. Why? Because we are in Him and there is no better place to be!
2. ***“Twenty years before Paul got to Thessalonica these people were pagan polytheists and now they’re worshiping the one, true God. They’ve embraced the Gospel! And Paul says, ‘Let me tell you who you are. You’re not a bunch of Greeks from Thessalonica who are pagan polytheists. You are in God the Father***

and in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are under His grace and He has as His purpose your peace. That is who you are.’ Does that hit you every once in a while? I mean this is true of us! Most of us here are Gentiles just like those Thessalonians, and here this Jewish apostle Paul...is saying, ‘You... are fellow worshipers of the living God. That’s who you are’” (Ligon Duncan). Do you belong to Jesus? Then, that’s who you are – in God the Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ!

3. Ninety times the NT speaks of what we have in Christ. Among those, we are alive in Christ, have eternal life in Christ, have no condemnation in Christ, possess the love of God in Christ, grace is given to us in Christ, we hope in Christ, we have freedom in Christ, are justified in Christ, included in Christ, created in Christ, seated in Christ, brought near in Christ, forgiven in Christ, have joy in Christ, peace in Christ, guarded hearts and minds in Christ, called to eternal glory in Christ – just to name a few! That’s what hope is – a confident assurance that we are in God the Father and in Christ Jesus!

B. What hope looks like – Hope comes from the **grace** of God (v. 1). It’s a gift from Him. It is accompanied by the **peace** of God (v. 1). There is a connection between peace and hope. Peace and hope are in the same family. When I have peace, hope is in the neighborhood. When I have hope, peace is present. Hope rises out of **love**. When we realize we are “loved by God” (v. 4), we begin to fill up with hope! How great is it to know that He loves us! **“Grace to you and peace”** was way more than a Pauline greeting – though it was that. It’s what we have in Christ. We are the recipients of His grace and because of that saving grace we have peace with God and that leads to the peace of God that provides for us hope! **“Paul is not describing general psychological principles; he is describing particular spiritual effects of being in relation to a particular living Person, Jesus Christ. Faith and love and hope, which are “in our Lord Jesus Christ”, give rise to a particular kind of work and labor and endurance that count for eternity because they come from Christ and honor**

Christ...they are profound theological realities. They come from a relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ. They are the result and evidence of being chosen by God the Father. And they are the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of a particular message called the gospel” (Piper). That’s what hope looked like in Thessalonica, a confident assurance that rises out of grace and peace and love!

C. How we get this hope

1. Our hope comes from being chosen - ***For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you.*** This is not an easy concept to grasp and frankly it makes some believers angry to talk of such theological matters like predestination or election or divine choice. But stop and think for a moment – You are “loved by God”; He has chosen you! Isn’t that great news! The OT precedent of divine choosing is found in the selection of Israel as God’s chosen people. God determined to set His love on a particular group of people. His choice had nothing to do with how significant they were or how good they were or anything else about them. If anything, they were a despised people, but He chose them. Why? He chose them because He chose them and he didn’t choose others because He didn’t choose them. To be chosen by God should be humbling and it should lead us to extreme gratefulness. Now if God, who knows everything about the past and the future, chose us, to redeem us, and to be in us, and to ultimately present us complete in Him, shouldn’t we be grateful? Shouldn’t that fill us with hope! It caused Paul to be grateful for God’s salvation for him and for everyone else whom God called to Himself! Our hope comes from being chosen by God.
2. Our hope comes from the power of the Gospel - ***because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power.*** The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. When the Gospel is proclaimed and received, a whole lot of power things happen. Sin is washed away. Then penalty of sin is removed forever. The

filthy rags of human righteousness are stripped off, and in their place the glorious righteous coverings of God are given. It is a powerful transformation.

3. Our hope comes from the convincing work of the Holy Spirit - ***and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction***. I think you know how this works. People who have trusted Christ proclaim the Gospel, which is God's Word – but it is more than just an ideology. As it is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit takes the truth and opens the heart and mind of the hearer and brings about a conviction that this is the truth that only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ can one be saved from sin and God's wrath and granted eternal life. If you belong to Christ, that happened to you one way or another. And because it is a work of God nothing can take that away from you! Nothing can separate you from Him, from His love. If He loves me and has chosen me and has saved me that should fill my soul with hope! I will never truly lose hope that originates in Him! That is the content of enduring hope! Not only does hope endure, but it also expands. It grows.

II. EXPANDING HOPE – TRUE HOPE GROWS (In what ways does hope grow? – in two ways)

A. A contagious hope

1. Imitation of our spiritual mentors (v. 6) ***And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit***. When Paul came to Thessalonica, persecution quickly followed. The enemy does not want the Gospel to spread and will do everything to squelch its effect! Part of the reason for this letter was due to the sudden departure of the messengers and their great concern that those who had seemingly received the message of salvation. Would they continue in the faith? Timothy brought the report that in fact the Thessalonians didn't sputter in their faith or their love or their hope! What they saw in Paul, they imitated. The hope Paul expressed in the Lord and in those who belonged to the Lord was contagious. And it wasn't just an imitation of Paul. It was also...

2. Imitation of the Lord Jesus (v. 6) – What does that mean? It could mean many things. Jesus proclaimed the truth. He lived out the truth. He called others to the truth. He suffered for the truth and gave His life for the truth. And throughout His earthly ministry, He was fixed on the hope and joy of the finished work in the truth. (Hebrews 12:2 – **looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God**”). For joy the Thessalonians endured the trials, knowing what they had in Christ. Their hope in the Lord kept them going!

3. Examples to others (v. 7) **so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia**. Look what happened. The hope shared by Paul infected the Thessalonians and their hope infected the churches around them. Hope, when it is properly placed in the Lord, is contagious. It’s catching. Don’t ever forget that. Don’t forget, however, hope is not insulated from difficulty. Hope often operates in the place of adversity and trial. Such hope is...

B. A courageous hope (It is best demonstrated...)

1. Through hard work (v. 3) **remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**. I have not said much about verse 3 though that is a signature verse in this section. It includes the triad of **faith** and **love** and **hope** found elsewhere in the NT. Paul spoke of their “work of faith” and their “labor of love”, and their “steadfastness of hope.” **“Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future”** (Lightfoot). **“Faith looks back to a Crucified Savior; love looks up to a Crowned Savior; Hope looks on to a Coming Savior”** (Wood in Hiebert). Those whom God chooses, He changes. The Thessalonians’ work of faith showed them to be an *elect* people as they turned to God from idols; their labor of love showed them to be an *exemplary* and *enthusiastic* people as they faithfully lived out the

Word of God and shared the Gospel; their steadfastness of hope showed them to be an *expectant* people as they looked for their Savior's return). One commentator said it this way: ***"We give thanks for your faith and love and hope for (by this) we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you. We know that you are among the elect of God because of the fruitfulness of your faith and love and hope."*** A hope-filled people are an exemplary, enthusiastic, expectant people! And we can only be that if we know whose we are, if we know that we are loved and chosen by God! And if that is true we will have a courageous hope regardless of what comes our way. So what will come our way?

2. Through much affliction - ***for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.*** Martin Luther once said, ***"Christ was crowned with thorns. Were you expecting roses?"*** Affliction comes to us because the world hates Christ. They can't get to Him so they turn on us. However, even in affliction there is the joy of the Holy Spirit! How can that be? It is because of hope! We know where this is going. It is leading home. It's leading to heaven. It's leading to a face-to-face meeting with Jesus!

Conclusion

1. These Thessalonian believers hoped in Jesus Christ. They hoped in His return. They hoped in the resurrection. And that hope endured. Paul was saying, "I see those qualities in you. I've heard the reports of your faith and your love and your hope. The Gospel has changed your lives. Christ Jesus has changed your lives. I see it in you. Thinking about your life leads me to give thanks to God for you and my hope expands, as does the hope of believers everywhere that hear of your faith and love and hope!
2. If we belong to Jesus our hope will endure. There is no reason for doubt. There is really no reason for discouragement. There is every reason to have a strong, confident hope in Christ. And when that is true that hope expands in the lives of

those around us. For some that means evangelism. People who have no hope will be introduced to the God of hope. And when that happens our hope will increase.

3. For others that will mean encouragement. One of the best remedies for weak hope is the work of God in the Gospel as He uses us to make Him known. When we speak the Gospel and people believe, our hope will grow! Believe me, it will grow! Keep sharing the Gospel. God will increase your hope!