

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

HOPE SERIES: WHAT IS HOPE?

Romans 5:1-5

September 18, 2022

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Today's sermon comes in the form of three questions:

- 1-What is hope?
- 2-What is the connection between suffering and hope?
- 3-How does hope affect the way we live?

Today I'll be speaking on the topic of hope. I realize I am speaking to people who have suffered profound losses beyond anything I can imagine.

All around us, more and more, there seems to be profound hopelessness. Chronic illness, financial despair, natural disasters, and the list goes on. I spoke with a man a week ago who said that he recently told his wife that his typical day seems to be going out to a car with a flat tire, and as soon as he gets that fixed, he will run over a nail. Then when that gets fixed, the car battery goes out.

I understand. We all have our points of despair, some more than others, but we all have those places that aren't what we like. All people have a family situation they would like to change. Nearly everyone has hopes for things in the future.

But in a world that seems to be hopeless at times, with overwhelming problems, how do we function without giving up hope for better days? I **hope** that today's message will give you hope.

1-WHAT IS HOPE?

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into

this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

EXPLANATION: Based on these two verses, we can outline 4 benefits that God has extended to believers. The first three, we readily recognize.

- We have been justified through faith. That means it's as if we've never sinned.
- We have peace with God. We are no longer on the side of Satan; we are members of God's family.
- We have gained access into grace. We are benefactors of the many good things that come with knowing Jesus.

But what about the fourth? We boast in the hope of the glory of God. In order to understand this benefit, we have to understand what hope really means.

A simple dictionary definition of the word hope is “to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true; to expect with confidence, to trust.”

Often, we use the words hope and wish interchangeably, but from a Biblical perspective, there is more to hope than wishful thinking. Hope is more than having an optimistic attitude.

In Romans 5, the original word for hope is *elpizó* which can also be translated as *expectation*. The Bible tells us that when we hope in Christ, we have an expectation that what we are hoping for will come true. When we look at the entire phrase “hope of the glory of God,” we can see that our expectation is based on God's intrinsic worth. In other words, we can hope because of who God is.

ILLUSTRATION:

- God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation, but Abraham died before he saw the fulfillment of that promise. Yet, we read in the Bible how Abraham “in hope believed” that it would be so.
- God told David that he would be king, but before he was crowned, he spent years trying to evade death by Saul's hand. Still, the Psalms tell us that David hoped in the Lord.

- Christians in the New Testament and throughout history have buried their dead and not grieved the way the world grieves because they have hope of a future resurrection.

APPLICATION: Biblical hope is based on the assurance that what God says is true, that who God is never changes, and that what God promises will come to pass. Because of our relationship with Christ, we have the hope of salvation and the hope of eternal life with Christ. We have the hope that whatever circumstances come our way, God will use them to draw us closer to him.

2-WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SUFFERING AND HOPE?

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:3-4

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.

EXPLANATION: In our culture, we do everything possible to avoid suffering. No one wants to experience pain, but as Americans, we have taken this one step further. Not only do we avoid pain, we avoid anything remotely uncomfortable. And this seems to be the normal thing in civilized societies. Because of this, many of us are woefully unprepared when life throws a curveball.

Bad things will come because we live in a sinful, fallen world, but when they come, sometimes we react with animosity toward God. We question why he allowed the tragedy. Why he did not fix the problem or save us from the pain.

The Bible tells again and again that God sees suffering in a different light. Satan is the liar and thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He is the one who brings pain and hardship into our lives, but when he does, God has a plan to redeem it. If we allow him, he will use our pain for a greater purpose. He will use it to make us more like Christ and to draw us closer to himself.

Paul wrote here that our suffering can produce in us perseverance—the ability to endure. As we endure, who we are as Christians should become more evident to the world. Perseverance in hardship should help to refine our character and make us

more Christlike. Suffering leads to perseverance; perseverance helps us to become more Christlike, and as we become more like Christ, hope should abound.

ILLUSTRATION: God did not save Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. He walked with them through it. God allowed Job to suffer much hardship and used that hardship to draw Job into a greater understanding of his power, strength, and majesty. God allowed Stephen to be martyred but Jesus personally welcomed him home.

I can hear your thoughts right now. How you don't want to hear it. This is one of those messages where you might want to stick your fingers in your ears and yell blah, blah, blah, like you did when you were a child.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul wrote about his thorn in the flesh. He does not tell us what his thorn was, but he says that he asked God three times to take it away, and God did not. In verses 9 and 10 Paul wrote, *“But he (God) said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

APPLICATION: If a religion promises you a life without suffering, that religion is lying. Suffering is inevitable in this life, but God does not waste our tears.

Romans 8:28 says, *“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.”*

Because our hope is in Christ, we can be confident that God will use our suffering to draw us closer to him and to accomplish a greater purpose for his glory.

1. What is hope?
2. What is the connection between suffering and hope?

3-HOW DOES HOPE AFFECT THE WAY WE LIVE?

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:5

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

EXPLANATION: The primary difference between hoping and wishing is that wishing does not require effort. Think about it. We make a wish when we blow out the birthday candles, cross our fingers, throw a penny in a well or pull apart a wishbone. None of those things requires much in the way of action. On the other hand, experts say that hope is a mental process that includes intentionally setting and working towards goals. The Greek word for hope that I mentioned earlier, *elpizó*, carries with it the idea of actively waiting.

From a Christian's standpoint, hope is not some pie in the sky, kids-on-Christmas-morning type of wishful thinking. It is a confident expectation that is based on the work of Christ and the truth of God's Word. We have hope because God poured his love into us and gave us the Holy Spirit, and because of the Holy Spirit we can demonstrate hope in our lives. Biblical hope is lived out.

ILLUSTRATION: Salvation carries with it the ultimate hope of an eternity in Heaven, a place where we will not face pain and suffering anymore. Author C.S. Lewis wrote, "If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the *present* world were just those who thought *most* of the next."

God gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we would have everything we need to live out hope on this earth. What does that mean?

In Mark 2, a group of friends took their paralyzed friend to see Jesus. When they could not get through the crowd, they carried him to the rooftop, cut a hole in the ceiling, and lowered the man onto the floor at the feet of Jesus. Did these friends simply wish for his well-being? No, they hoped for it, and then they got up and did something about it. They brought him to Jesus and expected him to be healed.

In Luke, Jesus told the lepers to go show themselves to the priest. They hoped that they would be healed, and, in fact, they were. But they were healed as they went. Their hope led them to obey Jesus's command.

APPLICATION: Hope is active. We prove to the world that our hope in Jesus is real, that we believe in God’s promises and the truth of his Word by how we respond to events in our lives, especially negative events. After all, it’s easy enough to be hopeful when everything is going well. It’s when the hard times come, that hope is harder to muster.

Scripture tells us how to put hope into action in our lives, and we are going to talk more about that next week. But for today, I want you to think on this. This verse tells us that God’s love has been poured into us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to produce the fruits of the Spirit, the first of which is love.

1 Corinthians 13 connects faith, hope, and love.

In Colossians 1:3-5, Paul wrote, *“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel.”*

And in 1 Thessalonians, the author writes about labors of love and endurance that resulted from hope.

The point is this; the basic way that we demonstrate hope in our lives is through loving other people. That seems like a contradiction. After all, we think of being hopeful as something that benefits us. It is, but that’s the way things work in God’s economy. In order to get the benefit of hope for ourselves, we must start by showing love for others.

1. I’ve answered: What is hope?
2. I’ve answered: What is the connection between suffering and hope?
3. I’ve answered: How does hope affect the way we live?

CONCLUSION: Hope is an expectation that results in actively waiting. It propels us to live in a way that honors God and blesses others. It helps us not become dull and indifferent, but to have a greater faith and endurance. This hope is why we can live in a troubled world and still rejoice. It’s why we can experience hardship and heartache and not wither away. It is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.

Come what may, we have a God who loves us, who cares for us, who accepts us and will provide for us. Because of what Christ has done for us, we can live in a broken world with hope and share that hope with others.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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