

## The Word of God and Hope

Not only is it true that “Where there’s life there’s hope,”  
but where there’s hope there is life.

Vance Havner writes,

“The New Testament is filled with hope and it centers in Jesus Christ within us, the hope of glory. Having this hope, we purify ourselves and, when trouble comes, we sorrow not as those who have no hope. It is hope in that which is to come that carries us through that which is now. Our redemption draws nigh and God will perfect that which concerns us. This hope makes us not ashamed. If you have grounds for hope you have grounds for living!”<sup>1</sup>

Paul wrote these final words to Timothy from prison. He was waiting for his execution as he exhorted Timothy to greater commitment to his ministry:

<sup>5</sup>But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. <sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; <sup>8</sup>in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

(2 Timothy 4:5-8)

Though Paul’s days were numbered he was positive in negative circumstances; he encouraged others to greater levels of Christian service; and he was ready to face death because he was filled with hope.

I want us to see four things in this text that speak of Paul’s hope:

- Paul’s advice to Timothy,
- his attitude towards imminent death,
- his assessment of his life’s ministry,
- and his anticipation of meeting the Lord.

All these things give us an understanding of Paul’s deepest motivation: **‘hope’**.  
**My goal is** for us to discover how we can be filled with hope as well?

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<sup>1</sup> Vance Havner, *All the Days*, (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), p. 134.

A missionary was sitting at her second-story window when she was handed a letter from home. As she opened the letter, a crisp, new, ten-dollar bill fell out. She was pleasantly surprised, but as she read the letter her eyes were distracted by the movement of a shabbily dressed stranger down below, leaning against a post in front of the building. She couldn't get him off her mind. Thinking that he might be in greater financial stress than she, she slipped the bill into an envelope on which she quickly penned "Don't despair." She threw it out the window. Then stranger below picked it up, read it, looked up, and smiled as he tipped his hat and went his way.

The next day she was about to leave the house when a knock came at the door. She found the same shabbily dressed man smiling as he handed her roll of bills. When she asked what they were for, he replied:

*"That's the sixty bucks you won, lady. 'Don't Despair' paid five to one."*

*(Chuck Swindoll, Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life)*

G. K. Chesterton wrote,

"Hope means expectancy when things are otherwise hopeless."

The writer to the Hebrews in defining faith, included hope:

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

Paul connected Christ with hope in his letter to the Colossians:

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26).

Today I want us to transition from '*hope-less*' to '*hope-full*.'

David often wrote from circumstances of extreme peril,

(not unlike Paul, who was expecting an executioner to soon call his name).

The Psalmist lamented with these words,

"Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the Help of my countenance and my God." (Ps. 43:5).

In this Psalm David prayed for deliverance.

Though in a state of mourning he looked to God as his only hope.

In a book entitled, *Adrift*, a story is told of a man who built a vessel that was to sail him through the whole of the Atlantic, sort of a large loop. He hit bad weather and his vessel went down. He existed on a raft for almost eighty days. The thing that kept the man alive was hope. His lowest days were the days when he could see no hope and he could not see the possibility of being rescued or making it to the islands or coming into the shipping lanes and being found by one of these vast vessels on its way on the trade routes. His hope kept him alive.

Someone has said,

“We can live forty days without food, eight days without water, four minutes without air, but only a few seconds without hope.”

Last week I talk with a friend who admitted experiencing serious depression. Having lost his daughter about a year ago, along with a number of other great difficulties, I told him that there was nothing I could say to comfort him, since I hadn't gone through the difficulties he had, but I did speak of hope and how God will make everything right. I referred to the verse,

“We do not grieve as those who have not hope...” (1 Thess. 4:13f).

*Summer and winter, Springtime and harvest;  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Great is Thy Faithfulness...Lord unto me.*

Taken from Jeremiah's Lamentations, in the midst of ultimate tragedy he proclaimed God's faithfulness.

Hope will get us through anything in this life, because resurrection conquers death. That gives us hope for today.

When the exiles were in Babylon, they were in despair. The words of the prophet declared their exile to be for 70 years, outlasting their lives. However, he also encouraged them to live in hope:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,  
“plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.”  
(Jeremiah 29:11).

Scripture gives us hope.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom. 15:4).

Col. 1:3-5 “the hope laid up for you in heaven”

Col. 1:23 “the hope of the gospel...”

Eph. 1:18, “The hope of His calling...”

Gal. 5:5 - “The hope of righteousness”

Titus 3:9 - “The hope of eternal life”

1 Pet. 1:3 - “a living hope”

1 Thess. 1:2-4

“**steadfastness of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you...”

This morning I want us to look at the secret of Paul’s hope.

## I. Advice

<sup>5</sup>But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Paul’s pointed advice to young Timothy encourage him in several ways:

Be sober in all things. – have a healthy perspective

Endure hardship. – expect trials and endure them patiently.

Do the work of an evangelist. A pastor should have a burden for souls.

Fulfill your ministry.

Timothy was Paul’s prodigy, his student, his disciple, the one to whom he would pass the baton of ministry when he was gone. Timothy was Paul’s hope that his ministry would continue.

In a sense Paul’s second letter to Timothy was Paul’s final work of ministry, which God had sovereignly overseen and would carry on beyond Paul’s life.

Timothy would follow in his footsteps received these urgent instructions in the imperative tense. Paul cared little about himself, but much concerning Timothy and the work of ministry.

Next Paul addresses his own situation: in prison, awaiting execution.

## II. Attitude

Paul's attitude was selfless as he was willing to be sacrificed for the sake of Christ.

<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering,  
and the time of my departure has come.

**“poured out”** – in Paul's world this term referred to a libation, an offering in which wine, which represented the blood of the lamb given as a sacrifice was poured out on the altar. It also represented a situation in which a person was emptied of strength to the point of death. To be poured out was to be drained of one's life energy.<sup>2</sup>

He wrote earlier to the Philippians,

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (1:21).

Later in the text,

“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.” (2:17).

Paul considered his life of little consequence for the sake of their salvation and spiritual growth in grace.

Departure – From the Greek term, *analysis*-- (lit. *untying again*)

1. *Unbraiding a rope* – dividing the complex unit into its individual strands  
Paul anticipates that his death will result in his life and accomplishments being unraveled, laid bare for all to see.
2. Release from bondage – term used of unyoking a beast from its burden.  
Death means freedom
3. Moving one's residence – term used of undoing a tent in order to relocate. “We're pulling up stakes” - Going to a better place!
4. Idea of a voyage – sailors used analysis in the sense of departure.  
They untied their ship from its moorings in order to launch the vessel. Paul used it to show that his death would release him from

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<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 234.

his earthly moorings to make the voyage to the realm of his Heavenly Father.<sup>3</sup>

Next Paul looks at his life's work:

### III. Assessment

<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course,  
I have kept the faith;

For a moment Paul glances backwards to see a fight, a course and a faith. He deliberately shifts the normal word order to emphasize the subject of each verb.

The good fight I have fought, the course I have finished, the faith I have kept.”

**Fight** – agon – “A striving for victory.”

Agony – concept of giving all of oneself to win a contest or to reach a goal.

Paul was on a 30-year marathon. He had given his all and held nothing back!

In 2 Cor. 11 Paul reviewed his many battles: labors, imprisonments, beatings without number, dangers from death, robbers, elements, shipwrecks, and many dangers and difficulties.

**Finished** – tetelestai – “it is finished” (from Jesus’ words on the cross)

Paul completed many missionary journeys where he evangelized, established, and planted churches throughout the Roman empire.

Kept the faith –

1. Paul continues to trust in the Lord
2. Paul has guarded the treasure entrusted to him.

### IV. Anticipation

Paul’s Positive Future: One day we will see what we have hoped for.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

“<sup>8</sup>in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

**Crown** – a victorious athlete received a laurel wreath, symbolizing all he was to receive. Upon returning home he would receive the royal treatment.

His name on a brass plaque on the city wall

All debts were canceled

Tax-free status for the rest of his life

Merchants would guarantee him and his family a lifetime supply of food

Retirement for the rest of his life.

Swindoll writes,

Paul’s self-analysis and his ability to face death with no regrets are especially poignant considering the circumstances in which he is writing. The irony highlights the vastly different ways that heaven and earth judge the content of a person’s life. Paul is writing his letter from prison, awaiting the day he will stand before Nero or one of his delegates to be judged. In a worldly sense, a person who has failed will stand before the very definition of earthly success. That is, in terms of wealth, no one could rival the emperor of Rome; but Paul owned nothing more than the filthy clothes on his back. In terms of power, Nero ruled the entire Mediterranean world; Paul probably couldn’t even stand erect in his cell. In terms of human laws Nero was the law; Paul full expected to be guilty and then beheaded as a criminal.

But the realm of eternity judges differently. Where are these two now?<sup>4</sup>

Key in Paul’s thoughts: The Lord, the Righteous Judge him, with a much different outcome. Paul anticipated his hopes to be realized.

The final phrase is for us: “...but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Will you live your life today in light of the eternal tomorrow?

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<sup>4</sup> Swindoll, p. 237.