

Our Hope

Hope Supports Our Faith

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We will begin this sermon in I Timothy 1.

I Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.

It is the “our hope” part that we are concentrating on today. This verse very much regards our life since our calling. Jesus is the very foundation of our confident expectation, our earnest yearning, and patient persevering as we wait for the completion of our salvation.

We have a living hope because *He* is alive. The emphasis is on the word *He*. I have had more time to think on some aspects of my previous sermon on hope [“Hope to the End”], enough that I felt that I wanted to speak on it again so that we have a more rounded picture of how much hope means to our persevering strongly through the build up of tribulation that is going to begin before Christ returns. In our situation, in our time, there are three absolute realities that are clear.

First, Christ *is* going to return. Of course we know what it says in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13, regarding the events of that statement. Christ is going to return, that is a surety.

Second, Satan will continue to build up his preparations for that same event.

Third, as a result of those two, the pressures of day to day living will also intensify and become more numerous.

The long and short of our life is that we need to continue to prepare. This does not mean that we have to feel any sense of desperation regarding our preparations, but rather to steadily keep at it, purposefully motivated by the three realities that we have to deal with that I just gave you. We cannot allow ourselves to be comfortable, like a Laodicean, with our present growth and slip into that Laodicean complacency.

What we are looking at here is the lesson of the tortoise and the hare—slower but steady, will almost always beat the fast but spasmodic intermittent stop and go

personality of a person that has such pride in his abilities that he deceives himself into thinking, "I can always catch up; I'll make up for it later." We have all done some of that.

Even as faith can be simply defined as a confident trust in God, and love can be defined as the keeping of the commandments, hope is a firm expectation combined with a desire regarding an outcome. Faith and hope will both be needed and, at times, strongly be tested during this period.

We saw in the previous sermon that the solid expectancy regarding spiritual matters must be in Jesus Christ. I want to have you turn to Romans 5:10. It confirms that Jesus Christ is our hope.

Romans 5:10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

We have a living Savior and it is His responsibility to the Father to prepare us to be in the Kingdom of God. In Romans 8:32, this is confirmed.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

If the Father and the Son both are on our side working together—but the Son more directly with us than the Father, and the Father has already charged Him with making sure that we make it—we can make it! What lies before us, though it may be difficult from time to time, there also are going to be intermittent periods in which there is no particular pressure upon us because God gives us rest, peace. He is not so hard against us that He keeps at us, on our backs all the time. He gives us time to get adjusted to what we have just gone through and then He will come back with another test that He wants to provide us with what we need for His Kingdom.

In I Timothy 1:1, hope is used as a noun, thus indicating why and who our hope is in. We have hope because He is alive and for all of the other reasons that I just gave you. It is He who opens this way of life, He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, the perfecter of our faith. He has already run the course and succeeded, and He is alive to assist.

This is why I feel that we need to keep steadily at our responsibility, but we do not have

to allow ourselves to drift into a period of despondency and desperation regarding the situation, just keep at it little by little, every day.

We must look to Him for salvation without distractions and even though we will have times of discouragement during this period, I purposely mentioned spiritual matters because the absolute assurance regarding hope that is given in the Bible pertains only to spiritual matters directly connected to God's purpose.

This is important to us because we can always wish for other things. So as long as our desires are for those things that pertain to God's purpose that He is working out in our life that we might be in the image of His Son and Himself, God will absolutely follow through. He is faithful to everything that He said.

I gave a sermonette on the 5th of this month ["Why is Hope Delayed?"] where I showed that even those trials in which God is clearly involved in our life and the converted person has a justifiable reason for hope in God, there are times that the trial goes on long enough that the converted person complains that God has forsaken them.

I read to you verses that were contained within Psalm 22, 42, and 43—every one of them are a psalm of David. David talked to God often and he wrote his thoughts down on sheepskin or whatever it was that he wrote on, and we can read those things today.

David had times of sorrow, times of complaint, and David is certainly going to be in God's Kingdom. So do not get overly discouraged because you get discouraged and you complain to God. He expects those things will occur but He does not expect that we will stay in those positions.

Why does the converted person complain? Because the converted person's judgment is simply wrong. God is the Creator. God knows where He is headed with this person's life, and God knows what He wants to be created in that person's mind—character—and the converted person has simply misjudged God.

God understands that we do not understand everything and so we complain, but He patiently goes on and helps us to understand that we need to change our mind, grit our teeth, and go on. There are going to be times that we do have to grit our teeth, therefore the time period that we are within the trial is simply part of the shaping, forming, and perfecting process needed to properly finish up to fulfill the responsibility that God wants us to fill in His Kingdom.

In this sermon, we will look more closely at some of the elements that are involved in

the creative process we have been called to do so that we can examine ourselves within God's work and better understand the working of this great hope that we have been given.

A number of years ago, back in the 70s, I was given a copy of a very fine book. I lost it in all the moves while we were in the Worldwide Church of God. Believe it or not I found it on Amazon—they had some copies of it. It was written in the early 1950s. The title of it is, *The True Believer*, written by Eric Hoffer. He was very much a self-educated man. He learned through many long hours of reading coupled with penetrating observations of human nature that he learned along the way.

Much of the time he was educating himself while he spent a great deal of that time wandering from place to place and from job to job across the United States. He lived to be 81 years old, spending the final 25 years of his laboring life as a stevedore on the docks of San Francisco. The subject material of *The True Believer* is the beginning and development of mass movements, regardless of whether that mass movement is a religion, social movement, or something of political nature. He was primarily interested in what drew people to them, from which social strata did they come, and what kind of traits the people who are attracted sufficiently to join them, possessed.

Religion has been a fertile ground for many mass movements, but he did not primarily focus on religion. A primary example is the mass movement to Protestantism which began several hundred years ago. However, all of those movements were not of religions that were in any way directly connected to God's true purpose, but they still occurred nonetheless. Every single one of those religious mass movements was undoubtedly sincere but worldly.

There is no doubt that most people attracted to those movements believed that the mass movement they joined were of the true religion. However, though many people might be quick to volunteer themselves to a developing religious mass movement, the development and growth of God's true church is strictly controlled by the fact that everyone who comes to Christ has been hand-picked by the Father.

The sovereignty of the Creator God can never be pushed aside by the desires of men who desire to create a mass movement in religion. God retains absolute control of what men think and thus God's true church increases or decreases according to His purpose. *Always remember that: God is running the show.*

God's true church is not and never has been subject to a mass movement even though it exists within them, and attracts people, including perhaps many people who are

neither called nor converted and yet assemble and fellowship with the true church, and that comes right out of the Bible—the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. God can be moving His church, and people that He did not call will be attracted to the true church and be very nice people, we might say moral—generally good but not converted. However, this does not mean that some of the findings of Mr. Hoffer will not be useful to our understanding of ourselves—those who are really called—in relation to God's calling.

Some of the spirit of Hoffer's analyses applies to us and they play a part in motivating us to become a part of God's purpose. On page 11 of Mr. Hoffer's book, he lists three major elements that draw people to join a mass movement. I will paraphrase them because he does not list these elements in a condensed one, two, three, order within his writing.

Always remember that what God does in His calling of us overrides and dominates our response. If God is calling us, we are going to come because God will put the pressure on our minds to do so. But our response to God is not totally dependent on what Mr. Hoffer determines, but we may share some aspect of these elements in our traits.

(1) The potential member of a mass movement must be intensely discontented with his life and yet not economically destitute. You always get the idea that when mass movements begin it is always the poor people. No it is not. College students have started more mass movements than the poor people by far.

I will explain this thing about not being economically destitute. This is why people who are economically fairly well off generally do not join mass movements. To be able to live comfortably tends to produce conservatism and thus resistance to the changes the mass movement demands of its members. We want to hang on to what we already have. Why risk it? Remember nonetheless this first point applies to us to some degree.

(2) I believe that this is the most important of the three. For the potential member to get himself into the movement, he must believe that by possession of some potent doctrine, infallible leader, or some new technique the mass movement offers, they will have access to a source of irresistible power to produce change in themselves and the culture.

Does the church of God have potent doctrine? You better believe it does. Truth is always potent. Does the church of God have an infallible leader? Is there anyone more infallible than Jesus Christ? For "some new technique that a mass movement offers, they will have access to a source of irresistible power to produce change in themselves

and the culture." What did Simon Magus want? He wanted the Holy Spirit. The second point is the one that probably plays a greater role in our becoming part of the true church than any other thing. We see an infallible Leader, we see doctrine that makes sense and is able to produce change. And the third point we become aware of the potent power of the Holy Spirit that God willingly gives to us that will enable us to produce change. People who join mass movements always want to change their life.

(3) They must also have an extravagant conception of the prospects and potentialities of the future, but at the same time they must be wholly ignorant of the difficulties involved in their vast undertaking because historical experience has shown that experience in such undertaking is a handicap.

Ask and answer this question for yourselves: Every time that we baptize somebody, almost without ever missing it, we go through Luke 14:26-28 where Jesus Christ says, "are you willing to give up your entire life for Me?" "I come first, not father, mother, sister, brother, and in fact I come first before you." That is a tall order. One of the things that makes us decide in the other direction is that we also carry with us an extravagant conception of prospects and potentialities of the future.

The wonderful world tomorrow, being God, sharing God life with God. What are you willing to pay for that? He also warned that we really do not know how much this is going to cost us. If we did, we might hesitate and not go along with the program.

These three points play a major role in our part in the church of God.

This third point also has meaningful influence on those who are truly called. Mr. Hoffer was not a Christian; in fact, he considered himself an atheist. He was not somebody who was really antagonistic in any way; he just felt that he could not prove to his own satisfaction that there is a God. However, he captured the essence of the major factors that parallel the producing of hope within a Christian, a hope strong enough that it enables a Christian to persevere the tribulation of this way of life.

Please turn to I Peter 1. I want you to recall what I said at the conclusion of my sermon there three weeks ago. My comment was primarily drawn from here, where it says,

I Peter 1:13-15 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Hope is that power, that characteristic that enables a Christian to set his mind to persevere through the trials that Christianity imposes on one's life. Recall also how I mentioned that faith and hope, though they are specifically different in use and definitions, are very closely linked in order to work together to produce the fruit of love. Separately they are not quite complete, but together they make the Christian exceedingly stronger. In fact, I now believe that without true faith in the Creator God and His purpose, one cannot have hope as it is shown in the Bible.

I want you to consider this: When Israel was progressing through the wilderness journey, they had eyeball witnesses virtually every day that God was with them. You would think that having these witnesses every day would strengthen a person's faith. The cloud and the pillar of fire were in the heavens above and a witness against them. The manna appeared on the ground every day, water flowed from the rock, not every day but when it was really needed.

Those witnesses to their faith should have reassured them daily. However, the apostle Paul clearly states in Hebrews 2 that their faith failed as their journey continued. Does that sound to you as though they had saving faith? Because they did not make it despite all those witnesses that God was with them.

We do not receive physical witnesses like that in a sense every day, like they did. We have God's Spirit and we do have saving faith but they did not have it. I am sure that they did not. The only ones who did, made it. The Bible and human experience shows that faith regarding reaching a goal in one's life is not sufficient. They had that witness every day and they did not make it.

Faith must be supported by the hope that the goal can be reached. Never forget that. This is why I have begun this sermon in the way I have. I want to prove to you at the very beginning that we can make it, not on our own, but we have to be assured that God will spare nothing to enable us to make it. God says He will take care of us through Jesus Christ. Israel did not make it. What really failed? It was not that they did not believe that God existed. Rather, they had faith in which there was no hope to support it because they began to believe, as this trial that they were facing went on and on for forty years and one by one they died, they had no hope that they were going to make it.

This is why what Peter says there in I Peter 1 is so important to you and me—that we have to rest our hope on Jesus Christ, that He is going to get us there and **never give up**, because Christ is there with us (and I will keep proving that to you as we go along). That is where our hope rests, and if our hope really rests that He is going to get us

there, we keep giving ourselves over to Him to work with and through and in, and the hope will never leave us. When our hope does not leave us, our faith will remain strong.

Hope and faith have to be worked together, because people who have faith and no hope that they will ever get there, they are going to fail even though they have the vision, a wonderful vision of what is coming. But if they do not also hope, the buffer can make that space strong, that they are not going to give themselves over to what is going to be required of them to get there.

Exodus 16:1-2 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

We talked about converted people complaining to God. David complained. "Why have You forsaken me?" he says. God really had not; David's judgment of the situation was wrong and he was giving into his feelings, but he did not completely give in because he recovered himself.

Exodus 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! [Does that sound like people with very much hope?] For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

This kind of people went another forty years and they fell by the wayside, one after another, as their hope evaporated and the only ones who made it were those who had faith and hope in one package.

As time went on after this one month, it got longer and longer, any hope they had of reaching the Promised Land evaporated in the desert heat. This so weakened their faith in their God-given vision that one by one they gave up. They had no saving spiritual faith, and therefore could not have biblical hope in Christ, and therefore no perseverance for something that was spiritual.

Understanding what I have just told you became a concern for me because we can only *speculate* as to when Christ is going to return. You already know that what we see

happening in this nation is getting more and more frustrating. We are losing our liberties, we are losing our place in the world as a nation, we are looking forward to the collapse of the dollar and who knows how that is going to affect us? And how long is it going to take? It is already wearing on us; it is a burden.

Waiting this out and hearing the news makes us here feel so sad for our nation. It makes us feel so sad for the people who live here and seemingly have no idea and in fact maybe do not even care what is going on. I know what it makes me feel like because I love this country, and I love the kind of life it gave me the opportunity to live. It is going down the drain, little by little every day.

This became a concern for me because the date for Christ's return, though it is set in God's mind, it is not given to us and so God has ordained that we must live not knowing when we are going to cross the border into the Promised Land. In a way, He set up this same kind of test that He gave the Israelites so that we would understand that as the time went on and on and they became wearier and wearier with what was going on, it wore away and their hope was gone. They had nothing to help them persevere through the difficulties that were actually only in their mind.

That is why I gave the series of sermons that I gave at the Feast of Tabernacles ["Who Deserves Our Loyalties?"; "Being Alert to our Enemy"]. To whom do we owe our loyalty? We owe our loyalty to the Kingdom of God and to Jesus Christ. Who is our enemy? Our enemy is Satan. Do we know our enemy? Do we know the way that he works on people's minds to get them to follow him? Do you really understand that he is the ruler of the kingdoms of this world—he is the ruler of the world, and he has a huge government under him that is operating in harmony with him, and causing this weariness to approach us and to get us discouraged?

I decided to give sermons at the Feast that follow this particular line because we cannot let up on preparing for the Kingdom of God. It does not have to be a desperation activity, it just has to be kept going one step at a time every day, towards the Kingdom of God and not giving ourselves up into the tiredness and the weariness that we feel that is coming upon us psychologically. It is something that affects our minds more than anything else.

Acts 14:19-22 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city, and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and

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made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Our tribulations are not of the physical nature that those people were having at that time, but there still are trials and they are impacting on us.

II Timothy 3:10-14 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.

What you carry in your mind, you have learned from the church of God that has God's guidance and direction through Jesus Christ for the good of His people that He is shaping into the image of Jesus Christ. He is making it very clear that as we approach the end, the persecution will intensify. As I said, right now the problems are mostly psychological, but eventually they are going to get to the place where they will be physical as well as psychological. The psychological ones will never end.

Those of us living here in the United States, and other nations of Israel, as in Western Europe and other lands that God has given the Israelitish people, have been greatly insulated from the worst of what the rest of the world may have to endure virtually every day. God has greatly blessed us—because of His faithfulness to His promises to Abraham—with political, economic, agricultural, and military powers. He has blessed the Israelitish people that way, in addition to governments that supplied us with liberties and opportunities that other nations do not even begin to have.

Those beneficial circumstances are the ones that are changing, and those liberties and opportunities will never return until sometime after Christ returns and restores order. The pressures of this world are beginning to exercise on us and they will continue to increase. How rapidly and how intense I do not know. I only know that God is giving us fair warning so that we can adjust our thinking and make sure that we take care of those things that are of the highest priority to us.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

He is stating His power, His ability to overcome problems and trials that come into our lives. The circumstances surrounding Jesus' remarks here apply to us because we are within a critical period that does not involve Jesus and His earthly life as it does here in John 16:33, but it does involve Jesus' spiritual life and His spiritual body, and therefore it concerns us, His church.

Pay attention to what Jesus says—excellent instruction here. He says, "These things I have spoken to you, in order that in Me you may have peace." Peace is a characteristic of those who have confident hope in spite of the pressures that may have come into their life. He does not mean here that we will have no anxiety whatsoever, as we will see here in the context. But it will be greatly lessened compared to what it would be if He was not part of our life.

He is speaking directly to us as the pressures begin to build in our time. What did He say to them? In order to really pick up the entire context we would have to go all the way back to the Passover meal that they had there in John 13, and begin to enumerate and maybe list all the things that He spoke about, beginning about two-thirds of the way through John 13, after the meal was over and then He began talking to them.

What He did in that period of time is, He gave them a quick overview of many of the things that they had experienced with Him after He called them and made them a part of the experiences that He was going through. This is counsel to you and me: When were you called? What kind of experiences have you had with Jesus Christ since you were baptized, since you received God's Holy Spirit, since you began living this way of life? Whether you realize it or not, what He is explaining here in the book of John is a guide to you and me to give us the kind of mind that we will be able to endure the persecutions that are coming upon us.

He was setting them up so that they would be in able to endure what was coming. What was coming? His crucifixion. What is coming for us? It is not His crucifixion, it is His return, but His return is going to create some of exactly the same scenarios for you and me that these people had to go through when He was crucified.

The first thing He did, He said, "I have overcome the world." What He was saying was, this is My enemy—the world, and of course encompassed within that , He was alluding

to the fact that Satan was ruler of the world, and Satan was guiding, directing, and inspiring the world, moving the world to put Him to death, to get Him out of the way.

Things are a little reversed, but remember what I said at the beginning of those three absolutes, the middle one, Satan is going to continue to prepare for Christ's return, and as he prepares, what element is he going to use to attack you and me? He is going to use the world. He is going to use those that are already under his dominion. What is he going to do? He is going to do things that will break our faith. He is going to do things that remove from us the *hope* that we have that we are going to be in God's Kingdom. If he can remove the hope, he will break our faith and we will compromise with Jesus Christ.

We have to have something that can make up for this, and that something is Jesus Christ. In John 16:33, He was telling them the world is My enemy and because the world is My enemy, it is also your enemy.

This is going to be the source of the problems that we have building up against us. They are psychological right now in an attempt to break our faith, to wear away our hopes that we have, but when Satan begins to realize he is not getting through to us, he is not overcoming us, it will become more violent. This does not mean everybody will turn into a martyr, but it is going to get more violent, as well, in his attempts to break us. We can learn a lot from this.

What happened when He was crucified—what happened to them? This was going to be a potentially crushing event that would cause them much anxiety and discouragement. In fact, what did they do? *Every single one of them abandoned Him*. Hang on to that thought because we have that same opportunity to abandon Him. What we have to look for is, what did Christ do to help them out?

What we are looking at here in John 16:33 is clearly a lesson to you and me and that is the 'disciple is not above his master' principle. What happens to the master will also happen to his followers as well. He is warning us that the world, the enemy, always tries to crowd out the true believer and therefore they (the apostles), and us too, can expect pressure from the world because of our relationship with Christ. So what happens to Christ happens to His disciples. That principle will come through in our time as well.

How could this possibly give them and us any peace? At first it did not, because they immediately abandoned Him. I think there was no doubt about their faith. They believed in Jesus Christ, they believed in His gospel, and that faith received a damaging blow. I think the bottom line reason was not just that they had fear for their own life. That was a

possibility; they scattered for a while. But I think what was really shattered was their hope.

The One that they put their hope in was dead, and if He was dead, what did they have to give them hope? If the world could take away His life, what hope had they? Peter said, "I go fishing."

Luke 24:13-17 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

Luke 24:19-21 And He said to them, "What things?" and they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.

The hope was gone, and without hope there is nothing to bulk up the faith and keep them headed toward the goal because now the goal was beyond them. Their hope was in Jesus Christ, and He was dead. "We were hoping [past tense] that it was He who was going to redeem Israel, and indeed besides all this today is the third day since these things happened."

I am sure that it took a while for the gracious import of what He said to them in John 16:33 to be more fully understood. When the cock crowed three times, some of the import impacted on Peter very quickly when it hit him as to what he had done in his abandonment and denial of Jesus Christ. But they *all* abandoned Him, and had come to the same extreme sense of guilt as to what they had done, but more needed to be experienced.

I am sure it was not at least until the events that took place on the Galilean seashore, after His resurrection as recorded in John 20, that they began to really come to their senses. It was not until then and afterward that understanding and a fuller peace began to come, because what He did there showed them by His gentle acceptance of

them—eleven of them, those who were so disloyal—that He understood their weaknesses and that their abandonment was not a surprise to Him, and yet He did not turn from them the way they turned from Him. It began to hit them. He still loved them, and He was so intensely loyal to those who were disloyal to Him, He still believed in them, that they would rally and reform to His side. Even though what they did was so shameful, He accepted them and would never leave their side as they had done to Him.

That is why He said to them, “I have overcome the world.” The world did not overcome Him. He *gave* His life, they did not take it, He *gave* it for the payment of sin. Despite the world’s enmity, Jesus is showing them that, “I will always be loyal to you.” They actually lived and experienced Hebrews 13:5, they did it personally.

Hebrews 13:5 For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

This expresses why Paul said that Jesus Christ is our hope. We cannot hope in another human being. We cannot hope in ourselves. We have to hope in somebody who experienced these things Himself and overcame them, proved that He overcame them, and proved that He still loved them even though they did what they did in despicably leaving His side and abandoning Him.

We think we have not done things just as rotten as the apostle did? Of course we have! But He still accepts us, to give us another opportunity to overcome what it was that caused us to abandon Him. He does not give up on us. He does not give up on His Father, He knows His Father’s mind, He knows His Father’s will, and He knows that His responsibility is to save us. It is going to be His life’s responsibility fulfilled by getting us into Jesus’ Kingdom.

This is why Paul wrote that we have to base our hope in Him. How many times are we going to abandon Him and He has to come back to us to show us that He has not abandoned us? He knew their weaknesses. He knew before it happened that they were going to abandon Him. You know why —because it says in the Book, in the Old Testament, the sheep are scattered. So He knew their weaknesses and still He came back to give them help.

It is quite possible for us to forgive someone of their sins against us, and yet at the same time to make it clear that we would never trust them again. We can thank God that Jesus Christ is not like that! How many times did Jesus say to Peter when Peter asked Him, “How often should I forgive my brother?” Do you think that He is not going to

follow the same instruction that He gave Peter? Seventy times seven.

This is why our hope must be in Him. He has already proven to the Father that He did not lose His hope. He did not sin; He died for our sins, and yet He recognizes our weaknesses, that we are not up to Him in terms of the character, the mind, the heart, the love of God, and so, knowing our weaknesses, He still supports us and gives us the strength to keep overcoming.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.

There is no doubt that we have been given a revelation from God and that revelation is largely given within the gospel of Jesus Christ. If the proverb here is re-worded slightly, it is telling us that the revelation from God is guidance given to keep us on track. This is where we are headed. For instance, Abraham waited for a city whose builder and maker is God. That revelation set the course for Abraham's life. The gospel set the course of our life, so we find in Romans 10:17 that the gospel has captured our imagination and we have believed it. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

This has led us to commit ourselves to it, that is, to the revelation God has given us through repentance and acceptance of the blood of Jesus Christ, and we became a purchased possession of His, and given over our lives to achieve the goals that He sets for us. But we are finding that just believing is not enough because we have the responsibilities we must work through in order to submit and to grow. There must also be hope that the revelation's goal can be achieved, or will we like the Israelites grow weary in well doing and actually give up?

Here is the question for this sermon: Do you have hope that the goal that God has set before us can be reached? With Jesus Christ as the foundation for our hope—our hope is in Him—it can be done. Despite our failures, as long as we do not abandon Him, we can make it, because He says—and He does not break His Word—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." We are the only ones that can break the relationship that He has established for us with His Father and Himself. If He will never leave us nor forsake us, it makes our fulfillment, being in the Kingdom of God, virtually assured— unless we turn our back on Him.

I Peter 1:1-9 Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you

and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

I want you to think about the fact of the word "election." We are elected according to the foreknowledge of God. People generally want other people to know that they know some well-known person, some famous person, like a president, famous entertainer, or an athlete, because our vanity makes us love to drop names. But the word "election" means 'those sought out.'

You can write down in your notes Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:15-18. What these things show is that God knew Jeremiah and David from the time that they were in the womb. God knows the end from the beginning. Are we any different than David and Jeremiah? Do you think that God has not planned from the beginning who is going to be in the 144,000? Who is going to be in His church? It is those who He has been following from the time that they were conceived in the womb. How do I know this? It is the word "foreknow." He is talking about foreknowing our election. God knew us before we were born. Just like He knew Jeremiah, just like He knew David.

If you want to drop an important name in all of the universe, *God knows you*, and He knows you thoroughly. He knows that His Son Jesus Christ can save us. He is confident that we can be there, and this is why I said earlier that the only one that can break that relationship is us, if we just give up like the Israelites in the wilderness. They lost their hope, their faith crumbled, and they quit.

You have a Savior who says He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that is why He is our hope. Because even though we are encompassed with all this weakness, He is aware of that weakness and He is willing to work with it. He gave His life for us whom He foreknew before we were even born. He has been following us and dealing with us,

and He wants you to be in His family.

John 17:9-11 “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine [we have both the Father and Son fighting for us], and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name [that means "preserve; guard"] those whom You have given Me, that they may be one [there is our goal] as We are”.

John 17:20-24 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [that is us.]; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. [God will say, "Look what I did—what a success!"] And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one, just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

In the mind of God, to one degree, it is already done. It is already accomplished. He is confident that He and His Son can carry through with what They began before the foundation of the world. They are that confident that you and I can be in the Kingdom of God because They are with us.