

# What You Hope In Is What You Will Live For

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Date: 20 August 2023

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. My name is T.J. Odom, and it is a pleasure to be here with you this morning.
- I am one of the elders at Deniston Baptist, and it is a joy to be here, to share God's Word. When Cal asked, I was honored that he asked me to do that.
- I was here with you earlier this spring, and I'm so glad to be back to visit this Sunday. Okay, but I love this time of year. I don't know about you, but I love this time of year. We're on the cusp of autumn.
- You know, the craziness of summer is drawing to a close. I don't know about your summer, but mine has been kind of wild. You know, it's kind of up and down. The routine is hard to carry through summer. School is returning, which one of my children are very excited about, and the other was not so keen on.
- But it feels like there's this shift in life as the seasons kind of change, as you emerge from summer and enter back into the autumn routine. And in many ways, there's a lot of hope at this time of year, a lot of hope.
- [ 1 : 08 ] It's early enough in the season that for you football fans, you've forgotten last year, and this is the year. I don't care what happened last time around or the last 10 years, this is the year.
- It's still early enough in the year. You're full of hope. Parents are hopeful as their children return to school. Some are more hopeful than others, depending on how your summer went. But many children are hopeful of what a new school year will bring.
- My oldest son started secondary school this last week, and there was a bit of anticipation, but also a bit of nervousness. And he was fairly nervous about that first day, but he came home really excited.
- Oh, it went so much better, Dad, than I thought it was going to go. I'm really, really hopeful, excited for the year. This time of year causes us to be naturally hopeful. But for the follower of Jesus, this is a regular pattern.
- This is just one moment in a lifetime of moments throughout a whole lifetime of following Jesus. We begin a year with hope as we turn the calendar, the page of the calendar, from one year to the next.
- [ 2 : 12 ] We walk through spring and emerging out of winter, and we celebrate what the Lord has done in the newness of the season. We have Easter time, and the victory that Jesus is no longer in the grave, but he's risen from the dead.
- He's conquered sin in the grave, and we're hopeful. We just talked about summer. We walk through autumn, and we end the year being hopeful as we celebrate the incarnation, the birth of Jesus, that he actually took on flesh and became one of us, lived among us.
- We are a people of hope. That's the idea of hope that I really want to focus on this today, if you haven't already picked up on that as many times as I just said that word. But here's our main thought. Here's where we're headed. That what you and I hope in is what you and I will live for.

What you hope in is what you will live for. The thing you most value, the thing that your life revolves around, that is what you're hoping in.

And let's look at God's word this morning, because it is the source that explains what our hope is all about. Our passage is 1 Peter, Peter's first epistle, chapter 1.

[ 3 : 23 ] We're going to really focus on verses 13 to 16, but let's back up to verse 3 and read a large portion of this chapter together. Let's dive into all that the Lord has for us today.

So 1 Peter, chapter 1, beginning in verse 3. It says, 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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that we just sang about, that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Now concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[ 4 : 57 ] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, and the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. And here's what we're going to emphasize this morning. 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.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. And praise be to God for the reading of his word this morning. It is living.

It is active. It is powerful today. What you and I hope in is what you and I will live for. Our passage tells us that this focal point, that this is the sun that the planets of our lives revolve around, that that should be the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

[ 6 : 08 ] Not in the things of this world that we're so tempted so often to hope in. Not in ourselves, not in others, but in Christ Jesus. And it's not just in a vague sense, but in the reality that we serve a Savior that has already secured this hope that we have through the resurrection from the dead.

Verse 3 literally tells us that the hope in Jesus is not a dead hope, but it's a living hope. And our hope isn't just rooted in the past, but it also looks firmly forward to what's to come.

That we have a Savior who not only came to the earth to conquer sin and to purchase the debt that we owed, but he is also not going to leave things as they are.

He is coming to make all things new, to redeem the world. And we're going to see him face to face with no veil, no separation, but we will behold him in all of his splendor.

And that moment in our future is what I'm talking about. That moment of that revelation, when we see him, that's the hope that Peter's writing about here in this passage. So let's dig into it just a bit.

- [ 7 : 22 ]     Let's see all the implications for us today. Let's start with those final three verses that I said we're going to emphasize in verse 13. It says, Therefore, preparing your minds for action, be sober-minded.
- Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Last Christmas, a friend of mine gave me a fantastic gift.
- It was a box set of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, the books. I love that series of books. I love the films. I love all things kind of Lord of the Rings. And so it was a fantastic gift.
- And if you've seen the films, in the final film, there's this moment where they face off in the final, the battle of the film. And the king rides out and he recognizes that his army has lost hope.
- They see the enemy. They've become fearful. And he gives this amazing rallying speech that rallies the hearts of the men. It turns and they end up being victorious.
- [ 8 : 23 ]     I hope that's not a spoiler. The books have been around a long time. But they end up being victorious. But I love this passage in 1 Peter 1. In a lot of ways, it feels like that's exactly what Peter's doing.
- He's giving this rallying cry to the people of God to say, Don't fear. Don't lose hope. Regardless of what you see, regardless of what your circumstances tell you, there is something to be hopeful about.
- And that battle cry that he gives is to steady the hearts of God's people as they live out their lives in this temporary world, looking forward to the world that's to come.
- But as we see from that very first word in verse 13, it's not an empty rah-rah speech. Instead, it's one that's rooted in a firm hope and the truth of what we read and the rest of that passage that came before it.
- The fact that Peter uses that word, therefore, tells us that it's rooted in the rest of the passage there. That we can't really proceed unless we grasp what's come before.
- [ 9 : 27 ]     We can't fully feel the weight of what the hope he's talking about unless we understand all that he's just talked about. Verse 3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- According to his mercy, his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.
- Last Sunday in Deniston, we looked at John chapter 11 and the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave and how often we like to focus on that last happy moment, the powerful moment, the victorious moment of Jesus calling Lazarus, who's been dead for four days, out of this tomb and unwrapping the burial cloth.
- But we begin to marvel at the fact that we skip over often the moments that come before that, the moments of tension and friction, that this family was dealing with incredible loss.
- Jesus himself feeling the weight of that loss. Him actually being the cause of their loss by delaying and not going and healing Lazarus. And we marveled at the fact that, you know, a lot of times we understand in our minds that Jesus was real and he lived a life, but we don't actually connect our heart and our mind.
- [ 10 : 51 ]     And Jesus was normal in the way that you and I are normal in that he had friends, he had a life, he had relationships, and he felt the weight of living out life in this broken world.
- Pardon me, like we do. He felt what we feel and he lived through brokenness and loss like us. He experienced pain and suffering. And like Peter tells us here, Jesus proved that he was victorious over sin in the grave.
- He proves not only did he conquer death, but in doing that, he undid the curse of this broken world. The brokenness that we all feel, he actually undid that.

So the hope that we have isn't just in a future outcome, but it's in a person. It isn't just in a truth, but it's in a person. The object of our hope is living.

It's Christ Jesus. He is our hope. No other person has ever defeated death. Jesus conquered death and has offered the same victory now to us in him.

[ 11 : 53 ] Even more, verse 4 told us that our salvation isn't something that can be done. It's not perishable. It doesn't grow weaker based on our circumstances. It doesn't grow weaker just because you or I have a bad day.

We fall into temptation. We stumble or we doubt or we fail in some way. Failure or struggling with sin doesn't affect the quality of the salvation. It's the surest thing ever because of the one who has ensured it.

Amen? Verse 5 tells us that because it's God himself who's guarding this hope, there's absolutely no chance that our hope in the future won't come true. We enter in relationship with God when we put faith in Jesus, trusting our whole life to him.

That he died for the rebellion that you and I have committed in our lives. That our hearts, they are rebellious. That he died for our very nature. And when we turn away from our way and toward God's way, repenting of that rebellion, that we no longer have anything to fear.

Nothing to be ashamed of. Nothing to feel guilty about. We are no longer under the wrath of God. Instead, God sees the work of Jesus applied to our life.

[ 13 : 11 ] He sees his victory applied to our life. And we're being guarded by God through his spirit. So if you've put faith in Jesus today, if you've committed your life to him, we cannot lose that.

We walk in faithfulness beforehand. We walk committed to him. And we trust that he holds us fast. Therefore, we have nothing to fear. He continues in verses 6 and 7 and says, And in this you rejoice, though now for just a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Let's not make the mistake this morning in believing that just because we've found freedom in Christ, that the trials of this life are over. We see that today. And across Christianity, across the world, that kind of pop culture Christianity says, well, if you just put your faith in Jesus, it takes care of all the problems of this world.

Or if you just believe hard enough, you just claim it enough times, then all the trials are gone. You can have monetary wealth. You can have possessions. You can have all these things. But God doesn't promise that just because you become a follower of Jesus, that everything instantly becomes easy.

Everything instantly becomes pain free. Trials in this life are inevitable. But God does use those trials to refine us, like we just sang about, to make us more and more dependent upon Him, to make us more and more like Him, to develop that character of Christ within our hearts.

[ 14 : 53 ] And in the end, we endure those trials because we look forward to the day that is to come. It's the ultimate example of delayed gratification. That's not something we like anymore. It used to be something we valued as a people in our culture.

But today, if Amazon won't send it to me with one day shipping, I get a little frustrated. If I can't instantly download something on my phone, I get a little frustrated.

What do you mean I have to wait till next week to receive that in the post? That's not okay. I need it today. I need it tomorrow. In some places, Amazon will actually ship the same day. So we've come to expect instant gratification instead of delayed gratification.

But the hope that we have in Christ is not about the right now. It's not about the instantaneous acquisition of this. We look forward to what's to come in the future.

That looking forward becomes this fixed point in our future that anchors our very souls. It anchors everything else. Have you ever had a catch up with a longtime friend that you've not seen for many years?

[16:00] Living, I don't know if you can tell by my accent, but I didn't grow up in the East End of Glasgow. I grew up in the States. And so every few years we get back and we visit and we catch up with friends. And I try to connect with friends from school or university.

And the same thing always happens when I get together with this certain group of friends. We talk about the same stories. We recount the same adventures that we had 25 years ago.

We talk about the same things over and over again. Our lives have moved on. We've had other things happen in our lives. But collectively, the similarities that we have are in the past.

They're what we have in common. Well, there's so much that we hold to as Christians that we look backward to that root us. But being a follower of Jesus isn't just about what happened in the past.

It's also about what's going to happen in the future. We have a future hope ahead of us because of what happened in the past. It's the fact that we'll see Jesus again that actually enables us to endure those trials.

[17:06] To walk through pain and suffering. Even though we don't know the time of the day, we know that He is coming again. And we look forward to that coming. And that really propels us on to what we see in the next verse.

In verse 8. It says, Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him. And rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Obtaining the outcome of your faith. The salvation of your souls. Following Jesus is the sweetest experience that there is in this life.

Because there is simply nothing better than knowing Jesus. There is no one else like Him. Never has been. Never will be. The more we grow to know Him, the more we understand the wealth and the riches and the gloriousness of knowing Him.

The satisfaction of knowing Him. These verses are describing the Jesus we long to see. And this is the one our hearts long for as we worship Him. As we sing songs about Him.

[18:10] As we share stories in our life with one another about His goodness and His faithfulness. And all of that amazing truth is the backdrop and the context for what we see in those final three verses. That rally speech that Peter gives in verses 13 to 16.

It's rooted in the truths that we just covered there in 3 through 10 or so. So can we read that one more time? Verses 13 to 16. Indulge me one time. Can we do that? Could we read that aloud together?

Could we do that? Starting in verse 13. It says, 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.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. What you and I hope in is what you and I will live for. The object of our hope affects how much we desire to follow Jesus.

[19:19] It affects how obedient we long to be in this life. It will affect how passionate and devoted we are for Christ. Where we anchor our hope influences whether or not we'll follow through in sharing this truth with other people.

Whether or not we'll actually follow through in being obedient with our life action. Not just keep this truth to ourselves, but to grow as a disciple. To invest in others and make other disciples.

There's so much here that helps us as we wrap our hearts around this truth. Peter writes, preparing your minds for action. Be sober minded. In the Greek, the language that this was originally written in, Peter uses a word analogy here for the phrase ready for action.

Or preparing your minds for action. And it's the picture of a man in Peter's day. Taking the traditional garment, that robe. And gathering it up and cinching it into a belt.

Getting ready for some kind of strenuous activity. Running or working. Something that was really physical. And what he's saying here is in your minds. In your thoughts.

[ 20 : 31 ] In your attitudes. In all that is up here. Going on up here. In the way you view the world around you. There must be an intentionality to follow after Jesus.

It can't be this passivity. It's not just going to happen. There must be an intentionality. To be sober minded. As the next phrase tells us. Meaning, not having any illusions about the reality of the situation around us.

Not having any illusions. We take on this mindset as we continually look to that hope that's before us. That moment that either Jesus returns. Or we breathe our last breath. And we're standing before him in his presence.

Beholding his glory. The point of this verse is that this kind of thinking and this perspective. It doesn't just happen to us. We don't just trip and stumble. And oh, I tripped and stumbled into being sober minded.

I don't just magically come across it one day. No, this is something that we cultivate in our hearts. There's a discipline associated with it. Author and theologian John Piper says this about how we apply this verse.

[ 21 : 40 ] We use our minds to stoke the fire of this full hope that Peter writes about it. We use our minds to stoke the fire of this full hope. What does that look like?

That sounds amazing. I love that quote. But what in the world does that mean? How do I use my mind to stoke the fire of the hope that I have of seeing Christ? How do you develop that? It's just like anything else.

You take it day by day, working one step at a time, reminding your heart, situation by situation, that there is hope. When I get the phone call that I wasn't expecting with the news I wasn't expecting, I remind my heart of truth.

When I have a conversation that goes away that I didn't expect for it to go, I remind my heart of what is actually true and the hope that I have. When I am sitting in traffic and the person cuts me off in front of me, I don't lash out in anger, although I may be tempted to.

I remind myself of the hope that I have in Christ. And this life is not the end. In his book, On the Blood of Jesus, Charles Spurgeon, he writes this.

[ 22 : 47 ] Remember Jesus till you feel that he is with you. Till his joy gets in your soul and your joy is full. Remember him till you begin to forget yourself, your temptations, and your cares.

Remember him till you begin to think of the time when he will remember you and come in his glory for you. Remember him till you begin to be like him. We must remember him actively.

Spending time meditating on who he is. Not in a passive way, but replacing the thoughts that dwell on the things of this world. The situations that you and I want to put ourselves in is either the martyr or the hero.

We all do that. We think of those situations. We run them over and over in our mind. We can so easily. But replacing those with the victorious truth of who Christ is.

A significant way in which we remember Jesus and stoke this flame in our hearts and our minds. Is being committed to being disciplined to actually being in his word.

[ 23 : 52 ] And when I say that, I don't mean like every week or every month. I go back to my verse that is so familiar and comfortable. I'm actually referring to regular, everyday pattern of spending time with the Lord in his word and in prayer.

And as I say that, I'm fully aware that this isn't a process that's always easy. Our lives are busy. They're complicated. It's hard to carve out time in the day to do that. But that's why I say it takes discipline to do that.

And it takes going about this not in isolation, but in community with your faith family. People like Cal started the beginning of the service with. That we are family as the people of God. Doing that together.

This year, I've begun to do a Bible reading plan with others in my church. And it's the same plan I've done on my own before in years past. But reading the Bible through the year. But there's been something different this year.

And doing it with others. We use an app where we all kind of read this plan together. And at the end, there's a short section where you can. It's on our phone. And we can type in, what's one thought you took away from today?

[ 25 : 00 ] Or what's one verse that really stood out to you? And so I started off the year with doing this. And it was kind of cool. I would put in my little thought. And I'm like, oh, there's my friend's thought. Or there's my brother's thought right there.

And that's so good. And each day, I began to see not just my own comments, but comments of others. And it caused me to actually, throughout the day, I'd get the little notification on my phone. Well, this person has highlighted this verse.

Or this person has commented. And I'd actually go back to that verse. And I'd reread what I read. And it's caused me to go back throughout the day. And doing it in community. You actually have to do the reading on your own.

But doing it in community, there was something different about it. Other people saw things in the Word that I didn't see. Other people were challenged by things that I wasn't challenged by.

And it caused, it stoked the flame in my heart, in my mind, of the truth of God's Word. Being in the Word and in prayer is meant to be a communal work. But when you do that communally, it makes it sweeter.

[ 25 : 58 ] And let me just say this one thing before I move on. I've served in churches, believe this or not. I've served in churches and been in pastoral ministry for the better part of 25 years now. And in that time, I've heard a lot of excuses for why people don't have time or can't do it or just not able to do it.

But I'll say this. Spending time in God's Word is something that when we prioritize it, we find room in our schedule, in our diaries for it. Whether it's getting up early. Whether it's staying up a little late.

Whether it's being creative. Most apps now, the Word will read it to you. So on your commute to work, while you're doing your washing, laundry, dishes, whatever it may be. There's time to do that.

There's creative ways. But it takes discipline to figure it out. Okay. Stepping off the soapbox now. Moving on. What helps us in this is another phrase that Peter uses in verse 13 about looking to Christ.

Is that phrase, set your hope completely. Not just a little bit, but set your hope completely. What he's referring to here is this act of waiting.

[ 27 : 04 ] Not this wishful thinking that I hope Jesus may come back. It might happen. But this act of waiting. This expectation that this is reality. It's going to happen.

Jesus actually is coming back. Set your hope fully. That's this total unified wholeness where there's no lacking in my expectation. And as you look forward to seeing Christ in your heart and your mind, you set your mindset and your worldview.

There's this totality that your every expectation is, I will see Jesus again. Therefore, it affects my every decision. My interactions.

The way I parent. The way I'm a husband to my wife. The way I'm a son to my parents. The way I'm a friend. A church member. However, Christ promised this to us that he would come again.

And if we have that kind of hope, the hope of the promise of seeing Christ as the absolute center of our focus, we will determine to build up that hope in our hearts by spending time with God in his word and prayer.

[ 28 : 10 ] Let's move on to verse 14. It says, Here is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to keeping that amazing hope at the center of our focus.

Do not go back to the way things used to be. I say that as someone who struggles like anybody else, who's tempted like anybody else. So I say that to my own heart today.

Do not go back to the way things used to be. See, Christ purchased you. He set you free. You are not a slave anymore to the things you used to be enslaved to.

See, before we didn't know. It says we were in our ignorance. We didn't know the truth. We didn't know what freedom was. But now we've tasted what freedom is in Christ. So don't go back to it.

Enjoy the freedom. Bask in the freedom. Delight your heart in the freedom. And the one who brings it. Don't continue to act like someone who's ignorant of the truth.

[ 29 : 14 ] Peter writes here that we should be like children. And the gist of what he's saying is that we should be like absolute dependence upon the Lord. Yes, we're part of God's family. We're children of God.

That we are brothers and sisters in God's family. We are His children. But there's more to that phrase there. There's a weight to this phrase that I want us to see. The word children here is not just a family member.

Yes, there are many passages that talk about us being adopted into God's family. But right here, it's referring to someone who's totally, completely dependent upon someone else.

If you're a parent, or if you've been around small children, you will have recognized that infants can't really do much of anything. They can sleep, and they can accept things from other people.

The parent is responsible for taking care of infants in those early years. The infant really can't do anything. The baby can't provide anything for himself.

[ 30 : 16 ] She can't feed herself. All that infant can do is wait for one of his parents to provide the care for him. This is what it should be like for us. We should be obedient to God.

Totally in submission to Him. Not because we choose to let Him work instead of us working. But because we realize the truth that we actually can't do anything on our own.

We have to be dependent upon Him. We realize that truth. And that brings a total sense of freedom today. Today, this passage isn't suggesting that you work harder, that you do more, that if you just kind of grit it out in your own strength to be like Christ.

No, this isn't meant to be a burden to your life. Christian, that's not at all what Christ wants for you today. Instead, His message for you today is what we see in Matthew 11, 28 to 30.



Come to me. Come to me, all who are weary, who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Learn of me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.

- [ 31 : 25 ] You'll find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. I once heard someone say that when oxen were paired together, I'm not an expert on oxen, so I couldn't claim this for myself, so I'll take their word for it.

But when oxen were paired together to carry a heavy load, they always put a more experienced ox beside one who's less experienced so that they could share the load more evenly.

So Christ isn't asking you to work harder. He's simply inviting you to let Him lead you in a way that's better, to come under His strength that's doing the work for you. And the way that's better is to realize the truth of the Christian life is about surrender, not control.

Well, this verse is about realizing on a deeper and deeper level that there's nothing we can do apart from the work of God to be like Christ. So, I should not and I cannot view my spending time with God as more work that I have to do, more effort on my part.

Instead, the truth about God means that my spending time with Him is because of how reliant I am upon Him. Whether we like it or not, we need the Spirit of God to do this work in our lives.

- [ 32 : 41 ] Let's look at the final two verses in our passage this morning. Verse 15 says, Man, it's a really good thing we had verse 14 before we got to 15 and 16.

Otherwise, we'd read that and think, Well, I've just got to try harder to be holy. I've just got to work harder to be holy. You can't truly understand 15 and 16 without 14, though.

This is about releasing control. The word holy means to be separate. God is totally separate. He's other. He's unique in all that He is, in His grandeur, in His majesty, in His righteousness, in His understanding of justice.

He is absolutely loving and He's so, so much more. All the qualities that make God who He is require that we use that word holy. It's the only thing we have to describe all that He is.

And what God is calling us to is to be separate for Him. That's because He wants us to make us more and more like Him, which is mind-blowing that God would do that to us, falling creatures.

- [ 33 : 52 ] And here's what these two verses don't mean this morning. The striving toward holiness is not about being good enough to stay in favor with God. Follower of Jesus Christ purchased that position for you.

It's not something you can earn more of or that can be diminished. It was a perfect purchase on your behalf. This is not about performing. I say that to the Christian and non-Christian alike.

If you're here and not a follower of Jesus, I say that to you that you cannot earn the favor of God. You can't be good enough. You can't do enough good things. You can't give enough money to enough good causes.

God doesn't love you more or less based on how many good works you demonstrate in your life. God has an infinite amount of love for you, Father Jesus.

He proved it by sending Christ the Son to this earth to live and die for us on our behalf. And then to be raised in victory. Christ already purchased God's favor for you.

- [ 34 : 56 ] So Christian, don't fall into the trap that I so often and so easily can fall into of thinking, I have to continually earn God's love. I may say it, I may know it, but my actions sometimes say differently.

Let us remind our hearts of the truth today that we cannot earn God's love. And that's what this whole passage is about. You will become like the things or the people that you value most.

Being holy like God is holy comes about by letting your life revolve around your relationship with God. Your conduct is permanently changed by being holy because God enables that in you.

So here's my closing question for us this morning. Are you hoping in Christ? Is Christ the hope of your life? Have you ever put faith in Him?

Maybe you're here and you've never actually trusted in Jesus to be the Lord of your life as the way to be made right with God. The Bible tells us that every single one of us, not just some of us on the earth, but every single one of us has turned from God's way to our way.

[ 35 : 59 ] We're all guilty of this. We continually choose to go our own way. I recently read through Psalm 14 and it was a great reminder of this truth today. Psalm 14 3 says, All have turned away.

Not some. All have turned away. All alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one. That's not the most cheery of verses this morning, is it?

But the good news is, in our hopelessness, Christ offers another way. He offers Himself to us. And if that's not something you've ever explored or talked about or entered into, I would strongly encourage you to talk to us this morning.

I'd love to talk to you cows here. There are others here who would love to talk with you and pray with you about that. Are you Christian? Are you spending time in God's Word? Is Christ the actual hope of your life?

The Puritan preacher John Bunyan wrote some very powerful words about this subject. He was no stranger to extreme hardship. He spent time in prison for preaching the gospel.

[ 37 : 05 ] He wrote this, As your faith is, such your hope will be. Hope is never ill when faith is well, nor strong if faith be weak. So how do you cultivate hope?

Well, you continually remind your heart. Continually remind yourself of the truth by going to the source, God's Word. Are you cultivating your faith by spending time with Him?

This will cause you to have a hope that's well and strong, like Bunyan talks about. What you and I hope in is what you and I will live for. May it be that Bells Hill Baptist church family finds itself continually hoping in the surety of Christ.

Continually living out this reality. Let's pray. Father, I pray today that your Word would fill the bottom of our heart.

That it would fill the recesses of our heart. That our hope in you would not be momentary. Our hope in you would not be forgotten. But that we would cultivate this deep, abiding sense of hope.

[ 38 : 12 ] The hope that this world is not the end. But we live because of a Savior and for a Savior. Help us to do that effectively this week. In Jesus' name.

Amen.