

# Heavenly Hope

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in to this radio broadcast of the preaching of God's Word today. Our heart here at First Christian Church Greensburg is simply to get into the Word, but most of all, let that Word get into us and transform these hearts.

Now, today's message is number six in our series called Rejoice. We are walking through the book of Philippians. We'll be in chapter three today. And the message is called Heavenly Hope.

Now, in the year 1488, a Portuguese explorer, Bartholomew Diaz, was the first European to sail around the southern tip of Africa.

gigantic accomplishment. But as he did, they had terrible storms on the sea. They were afraid that their boat would be torn to pieces. Thankfully, they survived the intense squalls, but they ended up naming the southern tip the Cape of Storms.

[ 1 : 16 ] About a decade later, another Portuguese explorer named Vasco de Gama also went around the southern tip of Africa. But he ended up changing the name to the Cape of Good Hope because he could see past the temporary struggles to the jewels and treasures of India that awaited them.

You know, sometimes in life, it really is a matter of perspective. And one reason God blessed me with my wife, Bethany, is because the Lord, in His perfect wisdom, He knew that she's an eternal optimist.

And I tend to be a little on the pessimistic side, or as us pessimists prefer to be called, we are realists, right? And while we probably balance each other out a little bit, she has been such a blessing in my life to help me see the hope on the horizon when we're going through the storms of life.

And today, as we pick back up here in the sixth week of our series called Rejoice, feel free to turn to Philippians chapter 3 with me as we see Paul encourage us to keep our eyes on the heavenly hope that awaits us as followers of Jesus.

Now, for those who've not been in this series, we've been looking in one sense at a spiritual soup of joy, the ingredients in Christ to live in a life of rejoicing regardless of my circumstances.

[ 2 : 38 ] And if you were here last week, we learned that none of those other ingredients that we've talked about, like thankfulness, partnership, prayer, discipleship, love, unity, perseverance, humility, faith, none of those are possible without the secret sauce, without the main ingredient of knowing Christ, having a relationship with the God of the universe.

And yet, how much of a temptation is it to replace the main thing with the secondary that only happens because of the main thing? And how easy is it to also become these modern-day Pharisees who check all the religious boxes?

We go to church? Check. We serve? Check. Put money in the plate? Check. Talk the Christianese vocabulary? Check. And yet, we can easily miss what it's really all about.

Knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. Walking in His joy, no matter what life throws my way. And that's what Paul understood well as a former Pharisee who had everything the world says will make you successful, and yet he was empty with no hope.

But when he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, everything changed for Saul, who then would become Paul. And by the power of our risen Savior, with the explosion of grace in his life, he left all the worldly treasures behind to know and follow Jesus.

[ 4 : 14 ] And here he is writing this letter to a church he cared for deeply in Philippi. He's chained up in Rome, awaiting trial with the possibility to be put to death.

And it's all because of his faith in Jesus. And listen, he's not stressed, not fretting, not slandering his accusers or the guards. He's changed who? Paul is like a kid in a candy store because he gets to share the heavenly hope that he has in Christ with those who are lost and walking in darkness. Paul is rejoicing. So let's dive into this passage today. And if you're one who likes to take notes, just a reminder, you can always go to the YOU, the YouVersion Bible app, under Events, under First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and you can see our outline that way.

But one thing I love about the craft of preaching is that there are moments that are a little more sensitive where we let the truth of God's word speak into the world's lies that maybe we've believed. There are other moments where we need a good kick in the hind parts because we've gotten complacent and we've wandered off the straight and narrow. And still there are other instances where we come before the word of God and let's just be honest, we're beaten up by life.

[ 5 : 37 ] We're weary by all the stresses, all the pains of this journey, maybe even by our own mistakes we've made. And we just need lifted up by real hope that is found in knowing Jesus.

Church, I am so thankful that God's word does all those things. And while I'm a fan of preaching on all three of them, today is gonna be more on the hope side.

And while Paul has been bringing the heat and we've kind of been focusing on that the first several weeks of this series, it feels like he kind of slows down a touch here. And he wants to remind us of the hope that we have in Christ.

And I like how the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon put this. He said, hope sees a crown in reserve, mansions in readiness, and Jesus himself preparing a place for us.

And by the rapturous sight, hope sustains the soul under the sorrows of the hour. Or as Paul put it in Philippians 3.14, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

[ 6 : 48 ] So fill this in. Hope comes with maturity. Hope comes as we grow to spiritual maturity.

I once heard somebody say, hey, you can come to Christ just as you are, but he loves you too much to leave you there. In other words, you weren't saved by the grace of God through faith just to remain in your filth, but instead to be transformed into the image of Christ more each day.

And here's how the Holy Spirit guided Paul to write this in Philippians 3.15 and 16. He says, all of us then who are mature should take such a view of things.

And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Now the word translated as mature in the original Greek is the word teleos.

And that means to be full grown spiritually rather than to have a childlike state spiritually. It's not necessarily saying you've reached perfection, that you've arrived, you have no more need for growth.

[ 7 : 59 ] Instead, it's a state of maturity in your faith. And it's not just about age either. Listen, I've met plenty of 80 year olds who are incredibly mature in their faith in Jesus.

And I've also met some in their faith who make it all about other things that it was never meant to be, who are not spiritually mature. So while age can help with spiritual maturity for sure, it's not the deciding factor.

What matters is a pursuit of holiness in Christ. A heart of sincerity in knowing him intimately while forsaking the things of this world.

A deep desire to grow in the word of God by choosing a life of obedience and surrender to Jesus.

You know, one of my favorite things about our eldership here at the church, and if you're not as familiar with the Christian church or even church in general, our elders are our leaders.

And that's not just their age calling them elders, but that's what the biblical term is for biblical leadership. That's eldership, okay? So here at FCC, I love the fact that we have a diversity of age in our eldership.

[ 9 : 09 ] We have seven elders total, and they are from the age of 36 to the age of 83. And they span four different generations. We have the silent generation, baby boomers, Gen X, and millennials.

We even have some in Gen Z between 13 and 28 who will be fantastic elders in the future. And while our differences are a blessing that help us as a team to better connect with all different kinds

of people, we are united by one common pursuit.

We are seeking maturity to know Christ more. And one way that we find ourselves do that is we press on heavenward in Christ by growing in spiritual maturity.

Not just seeing salvation in Christ as my get out of hell free card, but instead forgiveness and salvation are the greatest joy in my life that caused me to want to honor Jesus by striving to be set apart, to be different from this world.

John Newton, the famous author of Amazing Grace, in his early years, he called himself an absolute wretch. He was a part of the slave trade.

[10:23] He did some despicable things. And yet when he encountered Jesus, when he encountered grace, everything changed in his heart. He repented of his sins.

He surrendered his life to Jesus. He even went on to preach the gospel for 42 years, during which he wrote these words. He said, I am not what I might be.

I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be. And I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God that I am not what I once was. And I can say with the great apostle, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

The pursuit of maturity. Now go back to verse 16, but this time let's read from the New American Standard Bible, or the NASB.

God's word says this, however, let's keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. You can also translate keep living as following in line.

[11:28] So Paul, after roughly 30 years of following Jesus, seeking maturity, makes it clear that this is a daily journey of following God's righteous standards one step at a time.

Church, let me ask you this. How do you eat an elephant? You've all heard this, right? One bite at a time, of course. Well, how do you grow to spiritual maturity walking in hope?

One faithful step at a time. So, what does that look like? It means I'm going to get into the word of God that is alive, that is active, that is changing hearts and lives because the Holy Spirit has inspired it and moves through it.

And I'm going to let that word get into me. And honestly, 1 Peter 2 describes this process of maturity well. It says, like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, the word of God, so that by it, you may grow up in your salvation now that you've tasted that the Lord is good.

See, it's not just about going to three different Bible studies a week. It's an intentional surrender to the word, letting it transform how we see this world, choosing obedience to the truth that will set me free.

[12:40] Also, prayer is a vital part of growing in spiritual maturity. 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18 sounds a lot like what we've been talking about here in the book of Philippians when it says, Rejoice always.

Pray continually. All that is is communication with God. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Church, we can walk in heavenly hope when we pursue spiritual maturity in Christ.

And then second, hope comes by good examples. Now, this next part of our passage at first glance may seem kind of strong. It might even sound like arrogance from Paul if we didn't have context to know his heart just like the church in Philippi knew his humility well.

So, we know it's not uppityness as Paul has just told us a few verses earlier that he doesn't have it all together and yet he is forgetting what's behind and he's straining, he's pressing on towards what is ahead by the grace of God.

Now, let's pick up where we left off in Philippians 3.17. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, says, join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

[14:04] For as I have told you before and now tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.

Their mind is set on earthly things. You know, for close to two decades now, about probably every four years, I will have lunch with a man named Dr. David Roadcup.

He is deeply respected in our movement of churches, having been in ministry for over 55 years, still going strong at 78 years old with a schedule that I don't even know that I can handle at 42, okay?

He's working for TCM. He travels to Austria to teach spiritual formation classes. He's been a professor, a pastor, church growth coach, author of several Christian books, speaker at many Christian events, helped to start a ministry to churches called E2, Effective Elders, that we benefit personally from in a big way.

He even was on the board years ago that started Promise Keepers, a powerful ministry to men, just a deeply respected, humble man of God. Well, he lives in the Florence, Kentucky area and every time I reach out to him for lunch, he makes it happen as busy as he is and he'll ask me some questions, just get to know what's changed in the last few years, what's going on and then he always helps me to discern where God is leading in some different areas of my life.

[ 15 : 40 ] But the reason I bring him up is because he's been an incredible example for me to follow. To simply watch how this man pours into me, he doesn't get a penny for it by the way, he usually buys my lunch, so reaching out and mentoring me has cost him money probably over the years, but his humble walk with Jesus and his encouraging spirit always has me walking away from our meetings feeling like a million bucks.

It gives me hope when I start to get tired and weary that I can continue this race staying faithful to Jesus each step. And that's what Paul is saying here.

Not that he's perfect because he's not, just as you and I aren't, but he's been walking with Jesus for three decades at this point. The fruit that comes out of his life has been incredible.

Starting several church, church, he started several churches here, leading hundreds to Christ, maybe even more to saving faith, the passion to see lost people know the forgiveness and change that Christ brings when we come all in, faithful perseverance when others would have quit, and a contagious joy.

And here he is with the spiritual confidence to say, hey, follow my example as I follow Christ. He loves Jesus that much. He's that real in his faith.

[ 17 : 05 ] So I will say again what I try to impress on our church family at least a couple times a year, make sure you have spiritual mentors in your life that you meet with who love Jesus, who've walked the Christian walk, and who are willing to pour into you that accountability, that encouragement.

That can be a tremendous blessing helping us to grow deeper in our walk with him. I've even met people in their retirement years who still have mentors who are just a step ahead of them.

Church, there is nothing like seeing a great example lived out before you. And as the Englishman John Dunn said way back in 1627, of all the commentaries on the scriptures, good examples are the best.

And for those of us who've been walking with Jesus for many years now, let's make up our minds that we're going to pour into those generations behind us. And I just want to challenge you this morning, if you love Jesus with all your heart, if you've been walking with him for a while, start praying and asking God to bring someone into your life that you can pour into.

It doesn't have to be a 40-hour-a-week job, okay? Consistent care that builds them up into the person that God calls them to be. You have plenty to offer because you are connected to the true vine.

[ 18 : 28 ] And then the last thing I want you to see today, hope keeps my eyes on heaven. So let's just be honest here. Some of us today are tired.

Life is busy. Life can be burdensome. And life can absolutely be brutal at times. And yet we as children of God can walk in hope in the midst of all of it, keeping our eyes on the prize.

I had the privilege of officiating a wedding for a sweet young couple last weekend. And I have to tell you that there were a couple, there were a couple things in their service that were just absolute tearjerkers.

The bride had a surprise for the groom. And when he thought the doors were getting ready to open for her to come down the aisle, which is really one of the most amazing moments anyways, first, she had a recorded audio play over the sound system that had all of us wiping our eyes.

And then after she made her way down the aisle, there was another surprise. See, her grandfather, who loves Jesus, he had been in the hospital recently, had just come home, sadly, on hospice care, so not expected to last very long.

[ 19 : 38 ] And they really didn't think he'd be able to be at the ceremony, but he made it. And when dad and daughter got to the end of the aisle, they rolled him in his wheelchair to greet her with a hug.

And it was an incredibly powerful moment. And as of the time of this recording, he is still with us, but soon, he will be going to see Jesus.

His body will no longer be bound by the aches of time, and he'll be in the presence of his Savior, worshiping the only one who is worthy. And church, I'm so grateful for that promise that isn't dependent on my good deeds that are like filthy rags.

It's not determined by how many hours I serve or the dollars that I put in the plate. It all comes down to what you and I do with Jesus. See, he's already paid the price by his innocent life being given for my guilty one on the cross.

The most amazing selfless act of humility and love, but that's not the end of the story. On the third day, he rose from the grave to validate what happened on the cross, offering us life everlasting. [ 20 : 47 ] That's the hope that we have the privilege to walk in today. And here's how the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say this in Philippians 3, 20 and 21. He says, but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Now, let's head back to Paul in that first century after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He left all those worldly treasures behind because they did not satisfy and now as a follower of Jesus who's had incredible victories like winning others to Christ, planting churches in all these different cities, seeing these believers grow and mature, making even more disciples for Jesus, even witnessing God perform miracles in his life and through him all the while walking intimately with the Lord.

But it wasn't all sunshine and butterflies for Paul. Everywhere he went there was opposition, mistreated, lied about, mocked, ridiculed, beaten many times, shipwrecked, and more, eventually would give his life for his faith, would be killed for it.

This guy stood faithful through so much persecution while also having his own physical ailments that most scholars think that he battled. And yet, hope shines through because it has nothing to do with our circumstances.

Let me repeat that for the stubborn preacher with the thick skull that's talking right now, okay? Hope has nothing to do with our circumstances. It has everything to do with our identity in Christ and our perspective that comes from knowing him.

[ 22 : 35 ] I am a citizen of heaven and no one can snatch me out of his hands. Now, let me bring this home. And the reason we can be set apart from the world is because our eyes are fixed heavenward.

And whether Jesus comes back first to get his bride or maybe our last breath comes before that, it's all in his perfect timing. But in the meantime, while I still do have breath in my lungs, I get to be the hands and feet of Jesus here on this earth.

I get to have hope because of this amazing promise. And I can walk in his joy as I keep my eyes heavenward, realizing I have dual citizenship.

Yes, I am a proud American, but even more important than that, I am a citizen of heaven. Jesus put it this way in John 14. He said, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in me. My father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? Now, watch this.

[ 23 : 35 ] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am. Or, in the famous words of Albert E. Brumley, some glad morning, when this life is over, I'll fly away.

To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away. Church, there's hope in knowing Christ. There's hope in the promise that we have in the perfection of heaven with Jesus.

Joy comes when our eyes are on our heavenly hope. Amen? Amen. Pray with me. Father, thank you so much for these words of hope, these words of life that you have just spoken through your word today.

I pray, Lord, that you will just quiet our hearts. Maybe there's someone listening right now who's just so troubled, so anxious, so frustrated over something that's happened.

Lord, will you just quiet our hearts, draw us closer to you, and show us that when our faith is in you, Jesus, that our citizenship is in heaven.

[ 24 : 50 ] We have nothing to worry and fret about. We can keep our eyes heavenward, and we can keep our focus on the glory to come, and that will be our hope, that will be our joy, that will be

our strength that helps us to make it through the hard times that this life often throws our way.

So, Father, I thank you for just your word speaking truth into us today, and may we not only hear that word, but may we do what your word says and be doers of the word.

I thank you, Father, for all the blessings that you have given us, and I pray that you will just stir this message in our hearts that we may look more like Jesus, that we may seek his heart and know him deeper.

And we pray all these things in his precious and holy name, and God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And if you have any questions about your faith, questions about just the Bible, questions about our church, questions about giving your life to Jesus, we would love to come alongside you and help you with that.

[ 26 : 11 ] So here's how you can reach out to us. You can call us in the church office, 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488.

Or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Hey, and for those of you who listen to this often, I would love to just be able to connect with you a little bit.

If you're able, would you please just email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com and just let me know that you're listening and how God is using this in your life because we want you to know that you are not alone, that we are here to support you, and that we're so thankful that you're getting into the Word of God.

So thank you for doing that. Hey, have a great week, and God bless you. Let's put it in.