

[Faith, Hope & Love_Part27](#)

Psalm 131:3: “O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.”

1 Timothy 4:10: “For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

Hope! God wants us to live in hope. After all, it is a building block of the Kingdom of God. But take note that He speaks of a hope that is fixed or anchored upon Him—upon the Lord—instead of anything else to which we have otherwise fixed our hope. When you hope that your Mom or your Dad is going to do it right for you and desire to help heal the wounds they have created, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope that this world will take care of you and finally recognize you for how amazing you know you are, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope that your man or your woman will take care of you and satisfy your wants, desires, passions, and dreams, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope that your finances or your work talent will get you safely through this life, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope your boss will look out for you as a reward for all your hard work, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope so badly that your friends and your family members will want Jesus and will come to Him, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. When you hope that having kids will give you someone to love and to love you in return, you will most likely be disappointed and that hope will not fulfill. We could go on and on. But the

hope that we have in this world's kingdom is misplaced; it is nothing more than a wish, an aspiration, and a desire over which we have little to no control over.

Biblical hope, however, is so completely different. It is based on a certainty, with the only problematic factor being our own fixation on time. I say that because Biblical hope is directed towards the unchanging character and nature of our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore (**Hebrews 13:8; Psalm 102:27**), with whom there is no variation or shifting of shadows (**James 1:17**). Hence, we can be confident that He is always sure, steady, stable, consistent, and will fulfill every single word He has ever uttered; it is just a matter of time. But if you are willing, in hope, to wait on the Lord to fulfill His word, then you will **NOT** be disappointed. Let's turn to our key passage on hope in **Psalm 33**.

Psalm 33:18-22

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You.

Last week we studied the line: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, *to deliver their soul from death.*" We approached our study from the perspective that the Lord's promise of salvation, the true "deliverance of our soul," comes by way of freedom from the

flesh which causes death. This is accomplished through the complete circumcision of the heart. During their time on this earth, the Lord desires His chosen **beloved** to experience the power and victory that comes from the Spirit of God and not the weakness and defeat that comes at the hand of the *flesh*. And the Lord made a promise to everyone who chooses to fear Him, who chooses to walk by faith, and that is that He will give them opportunity after opportunity for them to allow Him to burn away the things within their being that tend to cause them to reach back to their *flesh* to guide their life instead of to the Spirit.

The passage we studied in **1 Peter 1:6-9** made it clear that He will bring you through various distressing trials (the fire), but He also made the point that it would be only for a little while, if necessary. So I would encourage you to make it as “not” necessary as possible. Willingly let Him have His way with you then a “little while” will truly be a little while. By faith, choose to hate the things of your flesh, despise them, and turn from the ways you have chosen, in your body, to cope; no longer go there. Stop worshiping those idols, cut down those Asherah poles, and smash those foreign altars and give Him an opportunity to give you His life. Choose to fear the Lord; for, if you do, He will deliver your soul from death.

Now in terms of God putting you through fire because “it is necessary,” I want you to consider that there are places so deep in your soul that have been so corrupted by your goodness and your love for religion (the woman who rides the beast that dwells in each of us) that you would have no idea how to go after it and attack it. Besides, you should know by now that the plague over all of mankind is self-love. We love ourselves too much to ever cut as deep and as much as we need to deal with our disease and corruption. And even if we could, don’t assume we

could see and understand with clarity what parts of our soul need to be cut off. As we discussed last week, **Jeremiah 17:9** makes it clear that none of us understands the depths of the corruption in our hearts. Accordingly, we cannot and will not make those cuts, we have neither the courage nor the clarity.

Further, we have wounds that have been festering so deep in our soul, and for so long, that we have no idea what coping methods have been produced from these places. This is where our loving Abba, our daddy, who knows all and sees all, can effectively do what we would never have the courage or understanding to do; hence, the fire. And in His mercy and desire for our freedom, He will do whatever is necessary to reach those places we cannot and will not reach. But understand this, the fire merely brings the dross—the rubbish—to the surface, but you still have to make the choice to reject it and have nothing further to do with it. You have to let Him scrape it away and purify you. He won't do it unless you want it; He never forces Himself on you. Therefore, if you have already agreed that the fire is good and it will bring you more of Him, and you truly want more of Him, you can make the decision to let Him scrape away. And if you do, the fire will last for just a little while. But if you love yourself and all the ways you have chosen to protect yourself, this will take more than a little while.

Why do you think we spent so much time studying the names of God? It was so you can know Him and understand His character and nature such that you would willingly say, "Here I am; burn it off—all of it—and give me more of you." That is what He wants; He wants you to know Him, to want Him, and to hate all that is not Him—He wants you to fear Him. And remember, despite popular opinion, according to **Romans 8:12-13**, you are under no obligation to the *flesh*—you owe it

nothing; you are no longer its debtor. This means you do not have to do what it says; therefore, if you have found yourself besieged by the *flesh* it means you have willfully chosen to do what it says. The Spirit says, "If after the *flesh* you live (*present active indicative*), you shall (*present active indicative*) die (*present active infinitive*). Death will be the result of your choice and your decision to choose the *flesh*. But if, by the Spirit, the deeds of the *flesh* you put to death (*present active indicative*) you will live (*future middle indicative*). You will literally know His life deep in your soul and that will be a statement of fact.

Think about all of this in terms of those the Lord has asked to recant. I bring this up because I want you to understand the depth of the Lord's lovingkindness towards us; and I don't want anyone here to be confused on this point. The Lord is being so gracious and merciful to us. Some of you actually think that because of the demonic involvement in your life you are enslaved to your *flesh*; and, as a result, you cannot have victory no matter how hard you try. But that is a lie of the devil and is not the truth. The Word of God is clear, you have no obligation to do what the *flesh* says regardless of the amount of demonic activity that surrounds you. This recanting we are doing is God's merciful way to induce you who have struggled to realize and accept the futility of your self-love and choose to release, in true repentance, all the things you have placed before Him. He has seen you struggle, He has told you the time is short, and in His lovingkindness He reaches out His daddy arms to help you before it's too late.

You see, the demons that afflict us as believers and attach to our *flesh* do so because we have chosen them to be our ally, friend, comforter, lover, and even our god; for some inane reason we trust them more than we do our God. So the Lord

is giving you the personal invitation to come before Him, to come to His Assembly, and renege on that decision to trust those demons and to take it all back, so to speak. It is His way of helping you choose to take responsibility for the choice you have made to live after the *flesh*.

Some of us are, by the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the *flesh*, regardless of the demonic involvement around our lives. We have learned about our God and have dug down deep into our soul and chosen to believe in His name, trusting that we can walk through the flames and not be consumed (*Isaiah 43:2*). We actually hate the things within us that are not Him—I mean hate in the way of rejecting what we think we can get from it, not just loathing the fact that it is in us. This pathway of death has not been easy, but we have tread this path by the Spirit. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that our battle is finished, but many of us have experienced great victory, freedom, and release without going to the Assembly and recanting. Thus, what the Lord says about our not being obligated to do what the *flesh* says is the truth; and it is possible, by the Spirit, to live. Then why the recanting and the Assembly you might ask? Because our God is an amazing daddy, filled with mercy, gentleness, and compassion; after all, His lovingkindness endures forever. Don't miss this reality; it is to be to us a **Rock of Remembrance**.

The Lord is serving up on a platter the opportunity for you to make the same type of decisions that we have made. And mark my word, once the demonic “deals” and “agreements” you have made have been recanted, then comes the fire which will allow you to do the work, by the Spirit, of putting to death or mortifying the deeds of the body. The *flesh* must be killed in order for you to live; you must walk the pathway of death to know His life. He is just helping you get started down a

path you have been reluctant to take. He is so merciful. Choose to fear Him and hope in His lovingkindness to deliver your soul from death.

We are going to move now to the next phrase in ***Psalm 33:19*** “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death *and to keep them alive in famine.*” In this part of the passage, the Lord is making a promise of physical provision during times of want to those who fear Him and hope for His lovingkindness. When God brings judgment upon a land, upon a people group, He will ensure the provision for His godly ones for, as we have learned, His eye is upon those who fear Him to show Himself strong on their behalf. This is a very powerful promise and something in which the Lord wants us to hope or to have a firm confidence and conviction. This is to be our Boulder, a rock upon which we stand.

With that said, I want to make a very specific point. This is a contingent promise in that it is not directed in general to everyone who says they are a Christian and says “Lord, Lord.” Rather, this is a very specific promise for the one who fears the Lord and chooses to hate all that is not Him, as in rejecting what they get from the *flesh* and from this world. This is the same truth for the promise to deliver our souls from death. If, when it is all said and done, you live for this world, you love yourself, you love your fear and control, you love your religion, you love your coping mechanisms, and you have essentially settled with a life of death, then you will find that this promise is **NOT** something in which you can hope, regardless of how much you profess the name of Christ and “do” for Christ.

We see this truth all throughout the Old Testament. It is clearly seen in the destruction of Israel, Judah, and even Jerusalem. It was not enough to be a Jew, it

was not enough to be a descendent of Abraham, it was not enough to go to the Temple, it was not enough to fast and offer up sacrifices, it was not enough to celebrate the seven feasts of the Lord, it was not enough to sing songs and to worship the Lord, it was not enough to be a priest or a Levite, and it was not enough to proclaim His name and to wear symbols of His ownership of your life. *It was not enough!* You see, when it was all said and done, the Lord's very own people, His precious possession, those He chose out from amongst the nations, simply refused to fear the Lord. Oh sure they had plenty of religious undertakings; after all, religion was the central fabric of their lives. But it was worthless because they did not fear His name. The first part of ***Isaiah 58*** captures this perfectly.

Isaiah 58:1-3

Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don't be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why!" I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves."

This is why Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, quoting ***Isaiah 29:13***:

Matthew 15:7-9

You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

Sadly, not much changed from the days of Isaiah through to Jesus' day. Those who called on the name of the Lord, His very own people, still did not choose to fear the Lord, even though they actively engaged in the religion and the worship of God. Sadly, that is the same reality we see today not just with the apostate church, but with so many of the chosen **beloved** who have resigned themselves to a life overcome by their *flesh*. As Solomon said in ***Ecclesiastes 1:9***, there is nothing new under the sun. And I am more than afraid that today the story can be written exactly the same way. After all, the Lord has spoken a truth about His people, in ***Isaiah 42:18-25***, which I believe crosses all time.

Isaiah 42:18-25

"Listen, you who are deaf! Look and see, you blind! Who is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messenger? Who is as blind as my chosen people, the servant of the Lord? You see and recognize what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear with your ears, but you don't really listen." Because he is righteous, the Lord has exalted his glorious law. But his own people have been robbed and plundered, enslaved, imprisoned, and trapped. They are fair game for anyone and have no one to protect them, no one to take them back

home. Who will hear these lessons from the past and see the ruin that awaits you in the future? Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? It was the Lord, against whom we sinned, for the people would not walk in his path, nor would they obey his law. Therefore, he poured out his fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were enveloped in flames, but they still refused to understand. They were consumed by fire, but they did not learn their lesson.

Before you think I am getting all carried away and that these scriptures do not apply to our generation and to modern-day-believers who have called upon the name of the Lord, but speak only of the dark and rebellious heart of the Israelites and Judeans; once again, remember what Solomon said about there being nothing new under the sun and consider these words: To the church in Ephesus He said, in ***Revelation 2:5***, “Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.” This lampstand has since been removed. To the church in Pergamum He said, in ***Revelation 2:16***, “Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” He came, He fought, and this church is no more. To the church in Thyatira He said, in ***Revelation 2:20-23***, “But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. I will strike her children dead. Then all

the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.” That was a promise He made to believers—to the churches; wrap your mind around that reality.

To the church in Sardis He said, in **Revelation 3:1-3**, “I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.” To the church in Philadelphia He said, in **Revelation 3:11**, “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.” And to the church in Laodicea He said, in **Revelation 3:15-19**, “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, *I will spit you out of my mouth!* You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!’ And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.” These believers were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; how is that for a reality check. You see nothing is new under the sun; “that which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done” (**Ecclesiastes 1:9**).

And with each admonition to the churches, the Lord said: "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches." Are you listening? Do you get it? Nothing is new. It is not enough to have said the sinner's prayer. It is not enough to serve God and to have a well-known reputation in the community for godliness and charity. It is not enough to worship God; it is not even enough to be the one who leads others in worship. It is not enough to teach the Word, pastor a church, have Bible studies in your home, or anything like it. If you do not truly fear the Lord, if you do not know the true salvation of our God, you cannot count on the promise of God to keep you alive in famine—or through any time of great want and need in this life—you simply can't! But if you fear the Lord that is a precious promise to which you can cling.

I want to take a moment to read through **Psalm 37**. You will see that this principle is so clear throughout the passage that we won't even have to tear it apart and dissect the language. If you are willing to walk the pathway of death, you will be blessed. If you hate the evil in your soul, if you go to war against the *flesh*, you will be provided for during times of want and famine. I will add some comment along the way to point out how this passage incorporates all that we have learned about the Spirit, the *flesh*, and the circumcision of our hearts.

Psalm 37:1-40

Don't worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong [even those who call on the name of the Lord]. For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither. Trust in the Lord [walk by faith] and do good [let Jesus live in and through your life]. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take

delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act [**hope in His lovingkindness, it will come it is always just a matter of time**]. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm [**In other words, circumcise the *flesh* of your heart**]. For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land. Soon the wicked will disappear. Though you look for them, they will be gone. The lowly will possess the land and will live in peace and prosperity. The wicked plot against the godly; they snarl at them in defiance. But the Lord just laughs, for he sees their day of judgment coming. [**Remember the words of *John 16:2*, “An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.” The “wicked” who come against those who fear the Lord are from the ranks of the religion of Christianity.**] The wicked draw their swords and string their bows to kill the poor and the oppressed, to slaughter those who do right. But their swords will stab their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.

Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord sustains the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever. *They will not be ashamed in the time of evil, and in the days of famine they will have abundance.* But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the Lord will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish — like smoke they vanish away. The wicked

borrowed and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives. For those blessed by Him will inherit the land, but those cursed by Him will be cut off.

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand. I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread. All day long he is gracious and lends, and his descendants are a blessing. Depart from evil and do good, so you will abide forever. **[In other words, fear the Lord and let Him take possession of you so He can do good in and through you]**

For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip. The wicked spies upon the righteous and seeks to kill him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand or let him be condemned when he is judged. Wait for the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

I have seen a wicked, violent man spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil. Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more; I sought for him, but he could not be found. Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright; for the man of peace will have a posterity. But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked will be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; *He is their strength in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,*

because they take refuge in Him.

What a powerful reality. This is a promise that is repeated in ***Job 5:20, 22; Psalm 33:18-19;*** and ***Proverbs 10:3.*** This is a commitment from our God. We see this played out in so many Biblical narratives. God provided for Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, David, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, during times when He brought judgment on the land. Others starved and died—even though they claimed to call on the name of the Lord; yet, those who feared the Lord lived. I believe this promise to provide during famine was also given in ***Revelation 6:5-6*** to those who fear the Lord and will be alive during the opening of the seals during the first half of the tribulation. The Lord said:

Revelation 6:5-6

When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The imagery of this vision speaks of global famine. But the Lord specifically instructs the black horse and his rider to not harm the oil and the wine, which I have asserted in our studies in ***Revelation*** is a picture of the Spirit of God as He was presented to the Jews (the oil) and Gentile believers (the wine). Thus, I believe the

Lord is giving the instruction for this creature to not harm those, whether Jew or Gentile, in which the Spirit flows. In the last days, many will die by the sword and the aggression of the religious; the blood will run deep, but it will not be because they were not provided for. Those who fear the Lord can count on the Lord's lovingkindness to keep them alive during famine. Listen to the apocalyptic passage from ***Isaiah 65:11-15***, and keep in mind He is talking to those who belong to Him—to those who professed His name.

Isaiah 65:11-15

"But because the rest of you have forsaken the Lord and have forgotten his Temple, and because you have prepared feasts to honor the god of Fate and have offered mixed wine to the god of Destiny, now I will 'destine' you for the sword. All of you will bow down before the executioner. For when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise." Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "My servants will eat, but you will starve. My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. My servants will rejoice, but you will be sad and ashamed. My servants will sing for joy, but you will cry in sorrow and despair. Your name will be a curse word among my people, for the Sovereign Lord will destroy you *and will call his true servants by another name.*

A similar promise of a new name was given by Jesus not to those in the churches who said they were believers, but to His true servants within the churches who

overcome (**Revelation 2:17**). Are you getting the picture? It is not enough to say a sinner's prayer. It is not enough to go to church. It is not enough to serve and do ministry. It is not enough to be good for God. It is not enough to worship and praise Him and sing songs to His glory. It is not enough! **You must fear the Lord!** You must be willing to bet your life on His name and trust in Him, you must be willing to let Him deliver your soul from death, then you can hope—or be confident—that His lovingkindness will keep you alive in famine and times of want.

If you have been wrestling with the choice of pursuing the fire and letting God skim off the dross, this promise is intended to tilt the scale toward the pathway of death. It is worth it. You will come to know and experience another wonderful aspect of His lovingkindness as He breathes into your life hope: hope for freedom and hope for provision.

We are going to stop here tonight, but we will pick this promise and commitment up again next week with a cautionary instruction.

Let's Pray