

The Real Audacity to Hope

Father, we dare stand here in Your presence, invoking Your name because of Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord. You have shown us great mercy and kindness, that we can sing to the depths of our heart, "Oh this blissful thought, that our sin, not in part but the whole was nailed to the cross and I bear it no more..." Father we thank you that in Jesus Christ that is true for us. If that is true, it makes all the difference. And I ask this morning Father for the sake of Your love for Your people, because You love them, because You are desirous of them having this good hope, I pray that You will bless the ministry of Your Word this morning. Bless it in ways that I'll never know. Bless it for Your glory, for the encouragement of your blood-bought saints. Father we face a new year with many uncertainties but we do have this; we have hope, hope in You. And so as we open up Your Word this morning, attend it with the blessing of Your Spirit that we may as Paul said, "By the power of the Spirit," abound in hope this morning. For it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

Well, if this keeps up and you guys keep coming out in numbers like this even in the snow, we'll never cancel services! That's what we might have to do. It's kind of nice having one service, isn't it? It is so nice that we can all meet together in one service. The fit is a little tight, but praise the Lord for that. It's quite a winter that we are experiencing with all this supposed "global warming" isn't it?

We are on the threshold of a new year, the first few days of 2010. As Christians, it is customary at this time of year to take a spiritual inventory. We look at our lives; we make changes; make resolutions; give ourselves goals and new attitudes. I was going to take a brief survey – how many of you here this morning have made New Year's resolutions, would you raise your hands? Not very many; that's interesting.

I was going to ask how many of you have already broken your New Year's resolution, but it looks like not many of you even made resolutions! You know, I think it's interesting, I don't know if there's any statistical proof for this or not, but I kind of think that the older you get, the less inclined you are to make resolutions. You get entrenched in the *status quo*. The zeal, you don't have all that youthful zeal and the world is less and less ideal. And you begin to realize that you've broken enough resolutions already. You're pretty discouraged and tired, so you just don't bother to make them anymore. I think that there's got to be some statistical evidence that the older you get, the more you experience life and its disappointments and your discouragements and your failures, the less and less you make resolutions. Since not very many of you raised your hands, I guess we must deduce that we are an older congregation!

I think, though, in this New Year, as we do think about new goals and new attitudes, it would be fitting for us to focus upon what I believe to be one of the very important attitudes of the Christian life. As a matter of fact, I would say this particular attitude is one of the Christian's most treasured possessions. If you have this, you may not have anything else but you would have everything. And you may have everything, but if you don't have this, you really have nothing. And I'm speaking of course of the word, hope. Hope. If you have hope and you don't have anything else, you literally have all you need, right? Because you have hope, life can change. There is a future. There's a hope. But if you even had everything, if you had everything this world had to offer—health and wealth and the whole thing, but you didn't have hope, you really have nothing. Nothing at all.

As we face 2010 with all its uncertainties we have, and this is the title of my message, "The Real Audacity to Hope." Now some of you will perceive an illusion here to a similar title. The title of a book our President wrote and published just a few months before he announced his candidacy to the presidency of the United States. I'm speaking of President Obama's book, The Audacity of Hope. I don't know if it's an unwritten prerequisite that candidates have to be authors before they can become President, but it seems to be that candidates feel compelled to become authors first. I have to say that I haven't read President Obama's book in its entirety; I've only read excerpts. But I'm not sure those kind of political books are meant to really be read. I think they're only for sound bites and excerpting. There's rarely real policy and substance in books of these sorts. In any case, I don't believe my message and President Obama's book will have much in common. I don't think I'm going to have to worry about plagiarism, because we're really coming from two very different perspectives. The Audacity of Hope is written by a politician for political purposes. The "Real Audacity to Hope" is written by a pastor for theological purposes for the edification of God's people.

But I have to admit, I am indebted to President Obama. I love the title, The Audacity of Hope. I love the word "audacity." That's one of those words that I think when you hear it you kind of know what it means, but you have a little trouble actually defining it. Well, it's audacity. You're not suppose to define a word by a word, right? Audacity is a boldness. One person described it as an almost disregard for normal restraints or restrictions. It is a boldness. And this morning I'm not talking about the boldness of hope, as our President did in his book. I'm talking about the real audacity to hope. That we as believers, as Christians, as sons of the living God, have a real audacity, a boldness, an almost arrogant disregard for normal restraints to have hope in 2010. Every day, in every circumstance, no matter what happens, we as Christians have hope.

I think this is so important. There is a lot of uncertainties in 2010. Not just politically, but personally, family, job situations—in all these things we have the real audacity to hope. I wanted to do, or I hoped to do, a "hope-ology". I love to make up words, but I didn't make that one up, hope-ology. I don't even know if it is a word; I heard someone else make it up. But I wanted to do a kind of study of hope, but it was so big...I mean I

was even up late last night trying to put it all together, but it was so much material, it was futile. There's no way, I gave up, there's no hope to do a hope-ology in one sermon! So the best I could do is just give you a run through of some key thoughts about the hope that we have as Christians. And I realized, as I was trying to work through all this material to collate it all together, that this is not going to be a "sermon" sermon. This is a kind of sermon that if you scrutinize it in a homiletical lab, it's going to fail. It's not going to get any stars of checks. But I'm not worried this morning about a homiletical outline. Some of you may be taking notes, hopefully there will be things for you to take notes of, but I'm not concerned about form or structure. I am primarily concerned about you getting the message that as a Christian, you have hope! I want you to have that. It is so important for us as believers to have hope.

Jesus Christ has won for us the right and the privilege to have hope in God. That is a precious privilege that the believer has: we can have hope in the living God! Peter says (1 Peter 1:21), "Through Christ we are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God." To hope in God is the right, the privilege, that is exclusive to the follower of Jesus Christ. This hope that we have is not a generic hope, it's not a wishful thinking. It is a confident expectation of good, of our ultimate good, of hope of a future. And it is ours. It is our privilege. It is our blessing that we have because Jesus Christ has won it for us—that we can hope in God.

Now if you have your Bibles I would like for you want to turn - I'm going to be going all over the place so you may not want to try to follow each time – but I want you to turn to Ephesians 2—listen to what Paul says about this hope. "Remember," as he speaks to the Christians, "that you were at the same time as a Gentile, you were separated from Christ. You were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. You were strangers to the covenants of promise *having no hope and without God in the world.*" You are not born with hope. You are born without hope. The world does not have hope. Hope is the exclusive property of a believer in Jesus Christ—hope. And Paul even uses the description of the unbeliever as those who have no hope in the world. The deepest misery - as a matter of fact if you wanted to describe misery - the definition of misery would be, "no hope." If you have hope you can get through anything, but if you have no hope, it is the deepest, darkest misery. No hope. But if you have hope, hope is the light in the deepest darkness. It is a comfort in the most wretched of affliction. It is an encouragement, a strength in the severest of trial, if you have hope.

In 1 Timothy 1:1 Paul says, Christ Jesus is our hope. This hope that we have as believers is so pronounced, so predominant, that it is one of the triumvirates of the Christian faith. Triumvirates—that's a great word, a Latin word. I didn't know exactly where it came from, but "triumvirate" is a Latin phrase literally meaning, "Of three men." And it refers to a political regime that is controlled by three men. It was used of the Roman Republic when Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and Marcus Crassus aligned themselves together against the Romans Senate. They were the three leaders that agreed to come together and form this ruling partnership. Hope is one of the triumvirates, one of the

three “rulers” of the Christian faith. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “Faith, hope and love.” You may say, “Well, if you go on quoting that verse, Tim, Paul says the greatest of these three is love. So hope isn’t that great. But do you know why love is the greatest? Because love remains forever! Hope will not, and neither will faith. There is coming a day when we won’t hope any longer. There’s coming a day when we won’t need to believe any longer because we will have sight. Our hope will one day be realized, but there will still be love. We will still love one another and Jesus through all eternity!

But hope is one the pillars of the Christian faith. As a matter of fact, Easton’s Bible Dictionary says, “Hope is an essential and fundamental element of the Christian life. So essential indeed that, like faith and love, it can itself designate the essence of Christianity.” Hope designates the essence the Christian. Let me just run through some of the verses that speak of hope.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul is speaking of the Thessalonians as he remembers them in his prayers. He said, “I remember your (and here’s this triumvirate) your work of faith, your love for all the saints, and the steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ.” In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays for the Ephesians, and what does he pray for? He said, “That the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, *that you may know what is the hope* to which you were called.” Which tells me as believers we’re often going to be blinded to this hope. We’re going to be distracted from this hope. And Paul prays, “I want the eyes of your heart to be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope to which you are called.”

In 1 Peter 1:3 Peter says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy,” what did He do? “He caused us to be born again *to a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The Christian life is defined, characterized by hope. You have been born dead in your trespasses and sins without God, having no hope in the world—but as a Christian you were born again to a living hope! That means that your life as a Christian is defined by a hope-filled life. Is that not amazing?

As a matter of fact, if you follow Peter and you go to chapter 3 verse 15, what does he say? “Be ready to give a defense for everyone who asks for the *reason of the hope* that is in you.” Now we look at that verse often as a verse for apologetics—yeah we need to be able to defend our faith. Now that is certainly legitimate to use the verse in that way, but it means more than that. It’s more than just—well you need to know verses and chapters and creeds of theology. Peter is saying, “You Christians are going to be so filled with hope, people are going to look at you and they’re going to say, ‘Why are you so hopeful? Why are you so encouraged? Why are you so happy? What’s the reason,’” - because they’re not going to see reasons why. Therefore, be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you.

In Romans 15 when Paul described Christ’ great work to include us as Gentiles into the promises of God, he says in this great benediction, verse 13, “May the God of hope fill

you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit *you may abound in hope.*" Thus, it is God's desire and intention through the work of Jesus Christ that His Spirit cause His people to have excessive hope. That's what abound means—to have more than you need, to have abundant hope. This hope is so important that it is inextricably linked to the other predominant Christian virtues. Think about how hope is tied to these other facets of our faith. Namely faith—can you really have faith without hope? No. When your hope wanes guess what else wanes. Your faith wanes, doesn't it? How about joy? Can you really have joy without hope? No, there is no joy without hope. You could say that sorrow is ultimately the absence of hope, because if there is no hope, there can be no joy. And strength—can you really have strength without hope? Do you know the way you break someone down? You give them requirements or responsibilities without any hope of ever being able to accomplish or fulfill it. You just wear out. You cannot have strength if you don't have hope.

That is why in Hebrews the whole matter of perseverance is really framed in the parameters of having hope. Hebrews 3:6 says, "But Christ was faithful as a son over His house, whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope, firm until the end." Holding onto our confidence and our boast of our hope. Chapter 6, verse 11, speaking about those who fall away in verse 4, the author of Hebrews says, "We desire that each one of you should show the same earnestness so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end." And then speaking about the impossibility of God lying, chapter 6, verse 18 says, "We have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope that is set before us." And verse 19 says that, "hope is an anchor of our soul." It is what keeps our soul from despairing, from giving way, from being discouraged. Hope is the anchor of our soul. And in chapter 7, verse 19, speaking about the limitations of the Law, the author of Hebrews says, "On the other hand, there is bringing in of a *better hope*, namely Jesus Christ, through which we draw near to God." Again Jesus Christ is our hope. And it is through the hope of Jesus Christ that we are able to draw near to God. The Law, by keeping the Law, you cannot get close to God on the basis of works, on the basis of deeds, on doing righteous things, but there is a better hope. It is the hope of the crucified Savior who shed His blood so that you can have hope to draw near to God.

In chapter 10, speaking of the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ who paid for the penalty of sins, that we may have the confidence to enter into the high places, the author says, "Let us hold fast the *confession of our hope* without wavering." Jesus Christ has secured for us our hope in God. Because of His death and His resurrection we can hope in God. The author of Hebrews says, "Because of what Jesus Christ has done, draw near to Him. Come to Him. You have God on your side. God is for you. And if God is for you, you have hope, no matter what is going on." And that hope has been secured by Jesus Christ. It is a gift. 2 Thessalonians 2:16 refers to this hope as something that God gives us. You don't earn hope. It's like our salvation. Think about that...because we do things, we struggle with things, and we feel like we have no hope. But hope isn't something we earn. Hope is a gift that has been won for us by Jesus Christ. Through

Jesus Christ we have hope. We have hope that we can draw near to God; that we can enter into His presence; that we can come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in the time of need. Hold onto your hope, the author of Hebrews says.

When you consider how important hope is for the Christian, should we be surprised that our hope is constantly under attack? If you are surprised, then you are not understanding of the enemy of your soul who's out to destroy you. There is a battle going on, and it is a battle to take away our hope. It is a battle that takes place in families, in marriages, in churches, in jobs, in children, in parents. There is a battle going on to take away the believers' hope. The Christian will often be found in situations when he feels hopeless. That's one of the reasons why Psalm 42 is so precious to so many people, because it speaks to our heart, it speaks to our condition. The Psalmist is struggling with despair. There is in Psalm 42 a battle between despair and hope. You cannot despair and hope at the same time. The psalmist is in a place of despair, and yet he wants to hope. He is in a battle for hope, and that is where many of us will find ourselves in 2010. There will be a battle for hope. You will be discouraged, which is the opposite, the antonym of hope. You will be weak, you will be depressed.

Do you think it's a coincidence that Christians struggle with depression on a regular basis? Some of the greatest Christians of the past, some of the mightiest men of God deeply struggled with depression. That's not a coincidence; it's not a physiological problem. It is a spiritual reality of the believer because hope is under attack. Hope is under attack in your life. If it's not now, it will be very soon. You get in a relationship and you just feel there's no hope. It will never change. No hope for your job. No hope for your finances. No hope for your health, for your migraines. There's no hope. How about in your fight against sin—how about that one? “Na, there's no hope. I'm the same person I've always been.” If you study “hope” in the New Testament you find something that is very peculiar about our hope. It's a little disconcerting to me as a matter of fact. When you study “hope” in the New Testament, you just go through verse after verse after verse—it's such a prominent theme. There's no way I can do a hope-ology in one sermon. But you go through the subject of hope, especially in the New Testament and you find something decidedly prominent about hope. You don't have to be a rocket scientist: Hope is decidedly futuristic. It's futuristic.

As a matter of fact, if you want to look at Romans 8:24 you will find that futuristic phenomenon of hope is the very nature of our salvation. It is futuristic. If you have hope realized, then it's no longer hope. So to have hope means you don't have what you want. Romans 8 verse 24 says, “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” The hope that we have is decidedly futuristic. A large portion of our salvation has yet to be realized. There are significant elements of our salvation that we have not yet received the fulfillment of the promise. We're still waiting for it.

Galatians 5:5 says - listen to this one, "For we through the Spirit by faith are awaiting for the hope of righteousness." Isn't that amazing? We want righteousness. We've received some transformation to some degree, but we, by the Holy Spirit, are still awaiting for the hope of righteousness, a day when we can put off sin, when we won't sin anymore. We're still waiting for that.

Colossians 1:5 says our hope is laid up in heaven. It's not here on earth. It's laid up for us in heaven. It's in a future world.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul says to put on our helmet and he calls the helmet the "hope of salvation," the hope of deliverance.

In Titus 1:2 we find that we have the hope of eternal life.

In Titus 2:13 we are looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Again, all of this is futuristic. The hope laid in heaven. The hope of righteousness. The hope of our salvation. It's all laid before us. The hope of Jesus Christ appearing, when we will see Jesus Christ.

Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13, "Prepare your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit. Fix your hope completely on the grace *to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" That is how future our hope is. This is the instruction we have. Keep your hope fixed completely on now? No, on the grace that will come at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's the Christian hope. It's futuristic.

This is where I struggled long and hard, because what kind of help does that provide for someone in a bad marriage right now? Or for someone in a dead-end job; or someone in a difficult situation. Where's the practicality of this hope? This hope that you see in the New Testament seems to be so other-worldly. That was really the burden of my heart. What kind of hope is this? Scholars would call this an "eschatological" hope. Clearly, that is the emphasis in the New Testament; the hope that someday Jesus will come, the hope that someday He will right every wrong, the hope that we will receive the righteousness that we want. It's future. But I'm struggling with those that are in broken relationships, have loved ones who are lost, excruciating job situations, etc; what is their hope? Car breaks down, a thousand dollars again, and turn around and it's another five hundred and you just wonder—what in the world? And yet we're to be a people of hope.

So I'm struggling with this, how this kind of eschatological hope really has any practical relevance for us today - when what to my amazement comes in the mail? My Voice of the Martyrs magazine. Sometimes I don't open that up for awhile because I know what I'm going to read. I know I'm going to be rebuked for my careless, shabby, faithless,

materialistic Christianity. So here I am struggling, “Lord, how can this message on hope help all the hurting people in my congregation?” What kind of hope is it when it’s just all about Jesus coming again? Of course I want Jesus to come, but what about now? Reluctantly, I began to read my Voice of the Martyrs and I read about this one Arab young man who converted to Christ. Having found Christ, he began sharing the gospel with other Muslims. And one person he shared Christ with was a woman who happened to be the wife of a radical imam. This woman came to Christ, she converted, and the husband went ballistic. He sent the word out, “I’m going to kill you; I’m going to get you.” Knowing his life was in danger, he left his village, but the radical imam came to his home, took his two boys out of the home, bound them, and then cut their heads off for “the sins of the father”. What in the world? What kind of life is this? How does a guy like that make it? This isn’t made up, this just happened.

Then there was this man in India, I think it was Carissa. Radical Hindus came to destroy this Christian village, to burn down their churches and homes. Most of the Christians were able to flee, but this particular man was too old and too lame to leave. He instructed his family to leave, but he himself would stay and face his persecutors. He told his family, “Leave, I’ll stay here. I will not deny Jesus Christ.” The radical Hindus came and found him. They beat him up and tortured him and threw him in a ditch. They made him watch as they burned his house down with what little he had. And yet, in the midst of all this, he was full of joy the whole time. He told his enemies, “You cannot make me deny Jesus Christ.”

Both these individuals had hope. A hope that allowed them to endure the deepest and darkest of despair. Who could imagine the pain of enduring the execution of your sons because of your faithfulness? It is one thing to suffer martyrdom for yourself, but for your children!! In all of these situations, you would have to ask, “What is the reason for the hope that is in you? Why wouldn’t you just curse God and die?”

Beloved, we have a blessed hope. It is an eschatological hope. And I want to tell you this as we face our new year, as we face 2010 and all its struggles. Do you know what our trials, our discouragements are going to remind us of? That our hope is eschatological. Our hope is not in this life. That’s the only way the Christian life will ever make any sense. The only way the destruction of your home or the murder of your children could possibly make sense is in the realization that our hope is not in this life. Our hope is in a coming hope when Jesus Christ will come and there will be unimaginable grace revealed. There will be unimaginable glory and goodness.

When we look at our life, I’m convinced that so much of our despair is the result of misplaced hope. Instead of hoping in God, we hope in things in this life. And the Bible is crystal clear—there is no hope in this life. There is no hope in this world. This world is without hope, and I’ll tell you, our trials remind us that this place is not our home. As a matter of fact, our trials, I believe, purify and strengthen our hope, and they remind us - I’m just passing through this place. I’m not here forever. This is not the end of all. I

posses a greater hope. Our trials strengthen and purify our hope. When we despair, usually it is because of misplaced hope.

Our hope is not in a new President. Our hope is not in a new congress. Our hope is not in a job. It's not even in a relationship. Our hope is in God Himself. Psalm 42—that's the battle that the psalmist is struggling with. "Why are you in despair, oh my soul?" He's looking around because of the oppression of the enemies, because of the discouragement all around him. He is getting very discouraged but the antidote to the despair is the hope in God! That's the antidote in whatever situation we are. Yes, it is an eschatological hope, but it doesn't leave us barren in our trials and struggles. It gives us hope. We can hope in God. Our trials strengthen and ultimately purify our hope.

In 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul says, "Instruct the rich not to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly provides us everything to enjoy." In Romans chapter 5 Paul actually says, "We rejoice in suffering knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. God actually uses trials, suffering, in our life to produce hope. A deep seated, pure hope. Hope in the living God.

Do you know what the trials did for the psalmist as he experienced his despair and his despondency? Those trials created in the psalmist a thirst for God. "As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" He uses the analogy of a deer because a deer is a hunted animal. The life of a deer is a miserable existence, isn't it? You're always being chased by something, by barking dogs, or whatever. You're just always running. There's always something after you. And as the deer runs, the psalmist puts himself in the place of the deer—I am being chased by oppressors, I am being chased by troubles, and as a deer on the run I am panting for YOU, O God. That's what our troubles should do to us. Our hope is not necessarily even in the immediate relief of our distress, but our hope is in God.

It's interesting how this works. What I think is so key in Psalm 42 is this fight for hope, this fight to have hope even in the deepest and darkest of despairs. You know how you have to fight for hope? You have to preach to yourself. You really have to preach to yourself - Why are you in despair, Oh my soul? Why? Hope in God! I have a Savior that has thoroughly reconciled me to God, and this God has invited me, He has told me to come boldly into His presence to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. So why are you in despair, Oh my soul? I cannot conceive of being a Christian without preaching to yourself. Now to some people that may seem strange, but it is a practice you must cultivate. When is the last time you preached to yourself? You need to take the Scriptures and preach them to yourself. It was Martin Lloyd Jones that really stressed that idea. Quit listening to yourself, he said, and start *talking* to yourself. That is the key. It really is the key. You listen to yourself and you're listening to your moanings and your groanings on how bad it is. Quit listening to yourself and start

preaching to yourself. Oh my soul, why are you in despair? Hope in God! I shall again praise Him. Jesus Christ has secured my right to hope in God. I will not despair! Hope in God.

Let me just close by reading from another man who I think you could say preached to himself. Lamentations 3. The prophet Jeremiah no doubt struggled with despair. If you struggle with discouragement and despair you are in very good company. You're not weird. You're not psychologically challenged. You are normal, especially if you're a believer. The lamentations of Jeremiah were the result of his witnessing the greatest devastation that Judah had ever seen. There seemed to be no hope. Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:18, "So I say my endurance has perished. So has my hope from the Lord. Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall. My soul continually remembers it and it is bowed down within me, but this I call to mind" – Look, that's preaching right there! "I call to my mind." I call it to attention, I start talking to myself. This is what I call mind, and therefore I have hope. Here it is. Here is the basis of our hope, that we can have hope every day, 2010, in any and every situation: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him."

As you face 2010 this year, I hope you will remember that as a child of God, your life is to be characterized by hope. Hope. And it's not just an eschatological hope, but it is a hope now that Jesus Christ has secured for you, that there is light in the midst of darkness, there is comfort in the midst of sorrow, there is strength in the midst of the deepest of affliction. Because you are a believer in Jesus Christ you can hope in God.

Paul says in Romans 12:13, "Rejoice in your hope." I trust you will do that this year. I trust you will make a decided effort to battle for hope this year. Fight for hope; fight for hope even in your personal walk with the Lord and your struggle with sin. I tell you what, there's nothing more discouraging or more despairing than when you sin as a Christian. Our struggle with sin is a life and death battle, and you must fight for hope in Jesus Christ. In other circumstances it may be a marriage. You know, your marriage may be strained right now. Satan would love for you to say, "There's no hope." But whom do you serve? You serve the living God, and there is always hope! It may be a job situation. You may feel like you are at the end—you have been looking for work, but feel there is no hope. Satan wants you to believe there's no hope. Preach to yourself, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? Hope thou in God!" Will you stand with me so that we can close in prayer?

Father we just briefly touched this whole subject of hope. Hope is fine when everything is going well, but it is the lifeblood of a believer when things go difficult. I pray that we will be a people characterized by hope. I need hope! I need hope of righteousness. I need to keep on my head the helmet, the hope of salvation. We need to battle our souls—why are in you despair Oh soul. Hope in God for you will again praise Him. He

will deliver you. There will be acts of salvation. Hope in God. Father I thank You for these encouraging words. I pray that it will be used to strengthen, encourage, give joy and light to Your people because of what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. We pray this in His name. Amen.

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