

Preached on 11/12/23 at GBC – Ruston

"Every Believer's HOPE, Pt.2"

II Cor.5:5-8

Let me begin today by asking an important question: Do we **BELIEVE** and **HAVE CONFIDENCE** that "**ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose**"? By "**ALL THINGS**", I mean **EVERYTHING**, which includes every minute detail of every event that transpires in this world, as well as in our individual lives. When I think about this glorious promise from our God, I always think back to Joseph and his life, which includes all the sordid details of the evil hatred and betrayal of his brothers when they sold him into slavery and lied to their father about his death. I'm confident that to Joseph as a young man, going through the experience, he wasn't "**whistling while he worked**" when he was betrayed by Potiphar's wife and cast into prison. Yet when it was all over and done, and Joseph had ascended to the place of governor over Egypt and these evil brothers stood before him, fearful Joseph would kill them for their crimes, by God-given faith Joseph said to his brothers – "**Fear not: for [am] I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; [but] God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as [it is] this day, to save much people alive.**"(Gen.50:19,20) Listen to YLT – 'Fear not, for [am] I in the place of God? As for you, ye devised against me evil — God devised it for good, in order to do as [at] this day, to keep alive a numerous people.' How could Joseph so confidently make this statement? How can we have such confidence in the face of what at times appear outwardly to be utter chaos? He had the same **HOPE** we have, the promise of God to his great, great grandfather, Abraham, who the Scriptures call "**the father of us all**", meaning those of the "**faith of Abraham**". Turn to **Rom.4:16-22**. Like Abraham and Joseph, we have a good hope through grace, based on the promise of the true and living God – "**Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.**"(Rom.15:13) It's this **HOPE** which Paul encouraged those at Corinth, as well as every believer in every generation to **LEAN ON** while in this "**present evil world.**" Paul told Timothy – "**For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**"(II Tim.1:12)

Notice Paul's next words – "**Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing [is] God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**" The Greek word translated by the English phrase "**he that hath wrought**" means 'to perform, accomplish, achieve' or 'to work out, i.e. to do that from which something results'. The Greek word translated "**for the selfsame thing**" means '**HIMSELF**'. By these words the Holy Spirit makes it clear that **ALL THE WORK IN SALVATION, i.e., our justification, our sanctification, our resurrection, our glorification, ALL OF IT IS PERFORMED, or ACCOMPLISHED, or WORKED OUT** in His elect **BY GOD HIMSELF** – "**Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.**"(Phil.2:12,13) That's exactly what Paul stated to those at Ephesus – "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.**"(Eph.2:8-10) That word translated "**workmanship**" means 'that

which has been made' or 'the works of God as Creator'. God Himself is the **ALMIGHTY SOURCE** that is the cause of the great change in the state of the elect sinner from a state of nature and unbelief to a state of grace and faith. The guarantee or security that the work is His, **NOT OURS**, is conveyed by Paul's next words – "*who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*" The Greek word translated "*the earnest*" means 'money which in purchases is given as a pledge or downpayment that the full amount will subsequently be paid'. Paul tells us the same God who loved us before time; who gave us to His Son in the everlasting covenant of grace; who redeemed us from all our sin by Christ's obedience unto death, has freely given to us "*the SPIRIT*" – **Turn over to Eph.1:13,14. THIS IS SO IMPORTANT:** Paul told the believers in Rome and us: "*For the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance.*" (Rom.11:29) The word translated "*the gifts*" is the Greek word '**CHARISMA**' which is translated **2 times** "*free gift*", and it means '**a favour which one receives without any merit of his own**'. The word translated "*calling*" means 'a Divine invitation to God's salvation'. **HERE'S AN IMPORTANT QUESTION:** What is the **DIVINE SOURCE** of God's calling His people to true faith and true repentance? **Listen carefully to Paul's words:** "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God his hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" (Gal.4:4-6) God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into the heart of His people, and once the Spirit is in the heart of the child of God, **HE WILL NEVER LEAVE** – "*For the gifts and calling of God [are] WITHOUT REPENTANCE.*" The word translated "*without repentance*" means 'to be repented of or to change one's mind'. Wise Solomon declared – "*I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth [it], that [men] should fear before him.*" (Eccl.3:14) I like Mr.Hawker's comments on this verse – "If GOD the HOLY GHOST hath called us with an holy calling, and by his regenerating influence, hath made us new creatures in CHRIST: let us be always ready to ascribe all the glory to Him; for this is the earnest, and sure pledge of the SPIRIT!" The selfsame Spirit who is the "*earnest*" of our salvation made this absolutely clear by Paul's words to those believers in Rome – "*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" (Rom.8:8-11) This ought to be of great comfort to you and me who feel and know ourselves to be **SINNERS STILL – JUSTIFIED SINNERS**, but still sinners. **Can we grieve the Holy Spirit?** Paul wrote that we can, and sadly we often do – "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God.*" But thank God, Paul didn't stop writing with this admonition – "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" (Eph.4:30)

This assurance given to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit results in "*confidence*" in those "*born of God*" – "*Therefore [we are] always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight).*" (Vss.6,7) This "*confidence*" in the believing sinner (**which Paul speaks of TWICE** – "*always confident*" and "*we are confident*") is an unceasing confidence. The word translated "*always*" means '**at all times**'. The word translated "*confident*" means 'to be of good courage, to be of good cheer' or 'to be bold'. This confidence is founded on a principle that is **UNCHANGABLE**. This confidence doesn't come from an unstable or uncertain cause, but from that which is **FIXED** and **CERTAIN**, namely,

THE COVENANT PROMISES IN CHRIST. All the **OT SAINTS** (Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David) believed, lived, and died by those covenant promises concerning **MESSIAH**. Our Lord told those **JEWS** who claimed Abraham to be their father – “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad.*”(**Jn.8:56**) Those holy men and women trusted in and relied on those covenant promises, walking by faith and **NOT BY SIGHT**. None of them ever saw Christ in the flesh, but like Abraham, they all saw Christ’s day – “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*”(**Heb.11:13**) Like Abraham, **THEY BELIEVED GOD. LISTEN TO ME:** Paul did too, and we do as well. We are “*to be of good courage and good cheer*”, knowing that while we are living in these fleshly tabernacles we are deprived of Christ’s glorious presence and the full enjoyment of it. Let me show you those who enjoy His glorious presence and all the blessings of it – “*And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*”(**Rev.7:13-17**)

Look at **Vs.8** and we’ll close – “*We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*” Paul again says that “**WE (which includes himself and all those Christ redeemed and will glorify) are confident.**” In other words we are to be cheerful in our present state, being assured of our future happiness. To which Paul adds these words: “*and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*” Of the **TWO**, Paul preferred “*to be absent from the body*”, i.e., to depart out of this earthly house or tabernacle. I like what John Gill wrote concerning Paul’s words – “The interval between death, and the resurrection, is a state of absence from the body, during which time the soul is disembodied, and exists in a separate state; not in a state of inactivity and sleep, for that would not be desirable, but of happiness and glory, enjoying the presence of God, and praising of him, believing and waiting for the resurrection of the body, when both will be united together again; and after that there will be no more absence, neither from the body, nor from the Lord.” The reason Paul was “*willing rather to be absent from the body*” was the **PROMISE** it guaranteed him at the end of his earthly journey – “*and be present with the Lord.*” The promise of all those Christ redeemed being “*present*” with Him was the promise made to Christ in the everlasting covenant of grace. **Listen to the writer of Hebrews** – “*For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [are] all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.*”(**Heb.2:10-13**) Christ spoke of this promise in His High Priestly prayer in **Jn.17:24** - “*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*” I think this promise that all His spiritual seed, all those the Father gave Him, all those He redeemed by His obedience unto death, was the

“**JOY**” that was set before Him as he endured the suffering of death for His own – “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for **the joy that was set before him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*”(Heb.12:1-3) What comfort this sweet promise affords all God’s redeemed when they come to that final Jordon they will all pass through unless our blessed Lord returns. Christ told us all – “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also.*”(Jn.14:1-4)

Let’s read this very familiar passage in closing – “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also **which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him**. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*”(I Thess.1:13-18)