

Preached on 11/19/23 at GBC – Ruston

"Every Believer's HOPE, Pt.3"

II Cor.5:9,10

Every believer's HOPE is the same as Paul's – "*Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing [is] God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 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:) We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*" Listen to Paul's words to the saints at Philippi – "*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you.*"(Phil.1:23,24) As we grow older in these earthly tabernacles, and as we continue to grow in grace and knowledge of the truth, this God-given desire shines forth in all of our lives, founded on this gracious HOPE – "*For we walk by faith, NOT BY SIGHT.*" Those Old Testament saints who are now in glory with our Lord never saw Christ with their PHYSICAL EYES, but with the eye of faith they saw Messiah's Day, and they rejoiced in it. Believers today (**you and me including**) walk by the SAME FAITH, and POSSESS THE SAME SPIRIT which enables us to glory or rejoice in Christ our Lord in spite of every trial and temptation that God providentially brings into our lives. Paul had emphasized this at the close of the previous chapter – "*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] TEMPORAL; but the things which are not seen [are] ETERNAL.*" Those "born of God" realize more and more with each passing day that this earth is not our home, and like those written about in Hebrews, share their mindset – "*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. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that [country] from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*"(Heb.11:13-16) As we'll see today, this HOPE is the only true motive for acceptable obedience by those who are indeed what Paul calls a "**NEW CREATURE.**"

Listen to Paul's words – "*Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*" Let me read it to you from YLT – "*Wherefore also we are ambitious, whether at home or away from home, to be well pleasing to Him.*" Having established the fact of how believing, justified saints endure tribulation and suffering "*for His name's sake*", including the death of their mortal bodies (**referring to it all as "*our light affliction*"**), or as he wrote to those at Rome - "*As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*"(Rom.8:36,37), Paul now makes it clear that all who have this hope must by all means make it their main desire to please God in every area of their lives. You just can't deny the reality of what the Scriptures make so plain about all those "*loved of God*" – "*We LOVE Him, BECAUSE He first loved us.*"(I Jn.4:19) Here's the ALL IMPORTANT QUESTION – HOW DID HE LOVE US? "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ*

died for us.”(Rom.5:8) The Apostle John gave us a definition of God’s love – “*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.*” (I Jn.4:10) Eternal life – salvation - is to **KNOW AND POSSESS** the “*love of God*”, freely bestowed upon the sinner according to God’s mercy and grace – “*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*”(Rom.5:5) This “*love of God*” is found only **ONE PLACE** – “**IN CHRIST**” – **Quote Jn.17:2,3. NOW LISTEN TO ME:** Those who have had “*the love of God*” shed abroad in their hearts, **THEY LOVE GOD IN RETURN**. I think about that woman in Simon the Pharisee’s house, weeping at the feet of Jesus, kissing them, washing them with her tears and drying them with her hair. Simon the Pharisee was offended by it, even going so far as to say within himself of our blessed Lord – “*This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman [this is] that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.*”(Lk.7:39) **Go read the story for yourself in Lk.7.** The point of this who encounter with this woman, who was indeed “**A SINNER**”, was that Christ came to “**SEEK AND TO SAVE SINNERS**”, and the effect such forgiveness truly known and understood has on the recipient – “*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, [the same] loveth little.*”(Lk.7:47) **Now take this truth into Paul’s words in our text** – Because of such a blessed hope, the sure forgiveness of our sins, the promise of the deliverance and resurrection of our bodies, “*we labour.*” The word translated “*we labour*” means ‘to be actuated by love of honour’. In other words, out of grace and gratitude for His great love to us, we are motivated by love to honor Him in all that we do. Paul had told these same believers – “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”(I Cor.10:31) Paul wrote: “*We LABOR, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.*” **This is so important:** These words are not teaching us that our salvation is conditioned on our labor, seeing that would be contrary to the entire tenet of the Scriptures concerning salvation by grace alone – “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy HE SAVED US.*”(Tit.3:5); **Quote Eph.2:8-10. What are they teaching us? Let’s consider the meaning of the words.** The word translated “*present*” means ‘to be among one’s own people’. The word translated “*absent*” means ‘emigrate or live abroad’. The word translated “*accepted*” means ‘well-pleasing’. So whether we are “among the people of God”, those who love, support, and encourage us, or whether we are “in the world”, among those who hate the Gospel, Christ, and all who are His, which Paul had stated of himself and other believers – “*For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake*” - “**WE LABOR**”, seeking to glorify Him by our words and activities, made well-pleasing in His sight through Christ Jesus our LORD. The writer of Hebrews used the **SAME WORD** translated “*accepted*” in this verse – “*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is **WELLPLEASING** in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.*”(Heb.13:20,21) It is our privilege and responsibility to glorify God – “**FOR YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.**”(I Cor.6:20)

Paul’s next words have caused much confusion and undue concern in those Christ redeemed, but in reality they should be a great source of comfort to us all – “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad.*” In false religion, they used verses concerning JUDGEMENT as a battering ram in an attempt to keep their followers on what they considered

“*the strait and narrow way*.” In reality, this verse doesn’t teach anything of the sort. Paul’s words here have to be understood and interpreted in light of what he has already said, as well as in light of what he brings forward in the verses after this declaration. The idea that “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” causes apprehension in our minds by nature, because all God’s saints, like Paul, understand, feel, and confess – “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not.*”(Rom.7:18) **ANSWER ME THIS:** Which of us can bring ANYTHING we’ve ever performed, even assisted and enabled by God the Holy Spirit, before “*the judgment seat of Christ*”? I know when Kenny and I were young boys, every year they showed a movie in the church portraying this awful event – **ELABORATE**. I know most religious people think that every, single, solitary person that has ever existed, saved or lost, will stand before this judgment seat, giving an account of everything they have ever thought, said, or done. While I will agree with them that this verse teaches that **ALL MEN AND WOMEN WITHOUT EXCEPTION** “*must appear before the judgment seat of Christ*”, I whole-heartedly disagree with their error concerning how God’s redeemed will appear before this “*judgment seat*”. I’m quite certain Paul’s design in writing these words **WERE NOT** to cause anxiety, fear, or doubt in those who read this epistle. Think back to what the Apostle Paul had told these **SAME BELIEVERS** – “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*”(II Cor.4:6,7); “*Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present [us] with you.*”(II Cor.4:14) Let me show you the meaning of these words Paul wrote. The word translated “*appear*” means ‘to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown’. Here’s the same word: “*When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*”(Col.3:4); “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*”(I Jn.3:1-3) This **APPEARANCE** before the “*judgment seat of Christ*” for those redeemed by His blood is a declarative judgment. For the unregenerate, the reprobate, this judgment seat of Christ is for their condemnation. **Listen to Mr.Hawker’s words on this passage:** “For while all unawakened, unregenerated, and unrenewed men, must stand awfully condemned before GOD; we are expressly told, that there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS: for they are passed from death to life, and are freely justified in the grace which is in CHRIST JESUS, Romans 8:1; 1 John 3:14; Acts 13:39. Sweet thought! GOD’S people are saved now, with an everlasting salvation. Their right, and title, to all Covenant blessings, and mercies, is founded in CHRIST. So that, as they are justified now, they cannot be condemned then. They must all appear indeed before the judgment seat of CHRIST; the righteous as well as the wicked: him that feareth GOD, as well as him that feareth him not. **But with very different views.** The wicked, the Scripture saith, shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget GOD, Psalm 9:17. But the ransomed in Zion are said to return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, Isaiah 35:10. They are to have the whole Covenant transactions laid open to their view, and not only their acquittal from all law charges, all demands of justice, and all claims of obligation, proclaimed before a congregated world of men and angels; but their acceptance in CHRIST, their oneness, and right of union with CHRIST, most fully established, and confirmed for ever.” Do you see the beauty of this glorious manifesting or revealing of the

sons of God? Maybe you're thinking: What about that part of this verse that states: "*that every one may receive the things* [done] *in* [his] *body, according to that he hath done, whether* [it be] *good or bad.*" Do you recall in your former religion singing that song: "Will there be any stars in my crown?" Tragically, I DO. But here's the thing: The reward of good works is a reward of GRACE, not any merit on the part of the one who performed them. If we have any good works, they aren't of our own production – **Eph.2:8-10 again**. Paul understood this completely and gave all the glory to God – "*For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which* [was bestowed] *upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS WITH ME.*"(I Cor.15:9,10) Listen to what the LORD declared to the father of the faithful – "*After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I* [am] *thy shield,* [and] *thy exceeding great reward.*"(Gen.15:1) Christ is **OUR REWARD** – Christ is **OUR CROWN** – His righteousness and obedience unto death **IS OURS BY IMPUTATION**, and **BY GOD'S GRACE**, **CHRIST** alone is the desire and hope of those who know and feel themselves to be **SINNERS**.

I hope I haven't muddied the waters, but have said those things based on God's Word that can grant to all God's redeemed the comfort and encouragement that He alone can give.