

## Sermon for Jason Friend funeral 3/13/18 11am Deep Creek Baptist

### Hope

You and I live in time and space. We live by clicks on the clock. We live, on most days, not thinking much about **when** or **how** our lives will end. Yet every single one of us has the knowledge, the absolute certainty, that if Christ does not return to end this project while we are living, if something doesn't happen that has never happened before, our lives will end. 1 out of 1 people die.

How are we supposed to live in such a dismal state? How are we supposed to face this fact? How should we process this fact?

There are lots of people who never think about this. They live as if death will never happen to them. They do not prepare for the **one certainty** of life.

There are a whole lot of things we don't know for sure. We don't know if we will live a long life. We don't know if we will accomplish our goals. We don't know if our dreams will come true. But we know one thing for sure. Our lives will end.

Jason Friend is a person who understood this fact. And Jason did something about it. And the thing that he did left him with something that we all need. What is that thing? Hope.

Now, our English word for hope means something different than the Bible word for hope. To us, hope is **wishing that something good will happen while not knowing if it will happen or not**. We hope we will get the job we want or the spouse we want, or whatever. But that is not what the biblical word means. The Greek word for hope means **enthusiastically looking forward to what we are certain is going to happen**. That is the kind of hope Jay had. Let's look at what scripture says about hope.

The apostle Paul wrote this book to the Christians living in Rome. And Rome was not a safe place to live if you were a believer. They understood about living life in the shadow of death. Paul told these Roman Christians this.

### **Romans 8:18-32 (NKJV)**

**18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

Look what Paul says here. He doesn't say, keep your chin up. Good things will happen. You just need to be a positive thinker. He doesn't give a whole lot of optimistic quips to make people feel better. He appeals to **solid thinking**.

No. He says sufferings of this present time **will happen**. And in the environment these Roman Christians lived in, suffering was sure to happen to anyone who claimed to believe in Christ. But the important thing is **how** he told these people **to think about suffering**. They weren't told it wouldn't happen. They weren't told it would not hurt much. Paul knew better. What he told them is that **God would make it worth whatever they suffered**. Isn't this what we need to know? People who expect only good in this life are going to be sorely disappointed. This is not a safe planet to live on. None of us know what might befall us on the way home this afternoon.

But Paul encouraged these believers in Christ with something **that could not be taken away**. What is **guaranteed to happen in the future** will make whatever you face now **worth it**. This applies to everyone this morning who has a relationship with Christ but is suffering the pain of loss. This is for you. If you are in Christ, what you suffer today will **seem like nothing** when you finally reach the end that Christ has for you. That is a truth that nothing can take away. And even if you don't feel that this is true today, that is ok. It is true nonetheless. It doesn't have to **feel true** today for it to **be true**.

Paul goes on.

**19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.**

And skipping down a few verses

**22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.**

**23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.**

You know what this is telling us? Time keeps ticking for one purpose. God allows bad things to happen for one purpose. And the single purpose is this. God wants to fill eternity with His people. People sometimes say that if God is good He would stop all human suffering. But the truth is that God loves His people so much that He is willing to allow suffering to continue until He gets the last person He wants in His kingdom with Him. The only thing that stops God from removing all sin and suffering is His love for His children.

God hates sin way more than we do. And the sinful condition of our world is what set suffering into motion. God wants suffering to end. But when God

ends it, He will end it completely and for eternity. On that day, when God has rescued the last person He intends to rescue, suffering will end forever. On that day there will be no more death. There will be no more diseases. There will be no more broken relationships. There will be no more abandonment. There will be no more exploitation. On that day **the groaning** will end. The **wishing for better** will end. The **mourning for loss** will end. On that day all believers will be united. We will have the party of all parties. It will be a banquet better than the best banquet we can imagine. And this is a **reality**. It is a promise of God. It is not wishful thinking. This has been promised by God and it will happen.

**<sup>24</sup> For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?**

**<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.**

Do any of us look forward to what happened yesterday? No. That might be something. We might fondly remember it. But it is not hope. The nature of hope is that the event we are waiting for **has yet to happen**. Hope understands that **the best is yet to come**. It isn't here and now. That is what helps people like Joy and Sharon and Mary to get through the agony of loss. They don't need to lie to themselves about the loss. It is true. It is real. And it is painful. But **it is not the end**. There is a picture of a time coming when all of God's people will be reunited. And that will be even more real than the loss. Jay's smile is not gone forever. It will exist when we see him again. That is what we hope for. That is what we eagerly expect to happen in the future. Now why do we expect this? There is only one reason. God has promised it. I John tells us that **1 John 5:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*.**

This is not a matter of wishful thinking. In fact, positive thinking has nothing to do with it. It is as simple as believing that a promise that God has given is true. Paul later said...

**Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

**10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

This is what Jason believed. He was no more perfect than any of us are, but he believed that what God said was true. He at one point trusted His life to the promises of Jesus Christ. He understood that he, like all of us, is a sinner. He understood that his sin deserved the eternal death penalty of God. He knew that he had no chance unless God did something to intervene for him. And that is exactly what God did.

**Romans 5:6-9 (NKJV)**

**6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

**7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.**

**8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

Jason called out to God to save him. He trusted that **what Jesus did** satisfied the wrath of God that Jason and all of us deserve. And he believed that Christ would save him, not because of anything that Jason did, but because of **who Christ is**. Jesus paid the sacrifice for all of the sins we ever committed. He paid the debt that we deserved to pay. Jason trusted the promises of salvation that God held out to him.

If you are here this morning and you have no confidence that you are right with God, you can get right with God this morning. All you need to do is believe Christ's promises. The only qualification you need is an awareness that you don't deserve salvation. No one ever brings more to God than their realization that they need God. We have nothing of worth to offer Him. He never gets the better end of the deal. You can approach God like that this morning. You can trust Him with your life this morning. You can know that no matter what happens to you, you are right with God. That is what Christ holds out to you. That is what He offers. His glorious righteousness in exchange for your sinful life.

When we talk about hope, we have to make sure that we are not **hoping on something that does not exist**. Tremendous faith in thin ice will not keep you safe. But little faith in thick ice will. Your faith is only as dependable as

**that which you have faith in.** If you hope that you will be good enough to make it to heaven, that is a false hope. Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death. In other words, what we deserve when we sin is God's eternal judgment. We cannot remove the bad we have done by good works. Scripture also tells us that all of our righteousness is like filthy rags to God. We cannot get right with God by trying to be better. And don't think that God's forgiveness just drifts around on everyone who breathes. That is not true. In order to have hope, you have to base it on what God has said. And Christ said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.

If Jason were here, he would want you to know this. I didn't know Jay real well, but I do know that every time I approached Him with the truth from God's word, He would listen. And later He would ask questions about how he could do the right thing. There are no perfect Christians. But Jay responded to truth. And He would want you to hear this truth. You must believe in Christ if you want to know you are right with God. For your hope to be certain, it must be based on what God has said. Please. Believe in Christ. Get right with Him. This may be your only chance.

Now, with all this hope that Paul had talked about, let's look at one more thing that He says.

**28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

Paul has already told us that even those who believe in Him will suffer. He doesn't promise anything otherwise. Those who love Jay suffer the loss of him right now. That is a truth. But there is something **bigger than that truth.** Jason's family and loved ones have a promise available to them. It is a truth that cannot be undone by any circumstance. God has a plan in this tragedy. He is at work. And He will work out this awful thing that has happened for a good purpose. We don't see it now. It might not be until we are in the presence of Christ that we understand what that purpose is. But we are told there is one. God will work out this tremendous loss for something good. God is working it for good. But who will it work out for the good **for**? Only to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Don't we all want this promise true for ourselves? Don't we all want to know that our lives and the tragedies we experience are working out for good according to the purpose of God?

We can know this. We can be a person that this promise is true for. But we must commit our lives to Christ. We must respond to His **call** on our lives. The older I get, and my granddaughter has assured me that I am very very old, the more I am convinced that **eternity is the only thing that makes a believer's life make sense**. If this life were all there is, it would prove that God is, at best, not caring and, at worst, cruel. But if there is an eternity where we will experience a perfect life forever, if we **will live** in an eternity where there is no suffering and no pain. If we will be with our loved ones who believed in Christ forever, in unbroken fellowship. If we will never again be harmed by human selfishness and cruelty. Then whatever suffering we experience now can be seen as a temporary obstacle that must be overcome. But it will be worth it. Whatever we must overcome **will be worth it**. And on that day, when we are firmly in eternity, we will look back on this life and we will say, it was worth it. Whatever we suffered was only temporary. And for God to accomplish His plan to get us with Him for eternity, our suffering was a small price to pay.

Hope is our connection with eternity. Hope is seeing what is far off and knowing it is worth the wait.

There are a lot of people who claim to speak for God and they tell us about **what God will do for us here and now**. They act like God is some kind of cosmic Santa Claus making this life **as pleasurable as can be** to anyone who will call out to Him. But our experience today shows that these people do not know what they are talking about. Hope has, as its focus, **a point in the future**, not **now**, that will give us everything our heart would desire. Hope counts on a future that God will provide. Hope demands trusting God that in our calamity and chaos, God knows exactly what He is doing and He will give us what our hearts ultimately desire. But it will be in the future. Not now. We certainly experience blessings from God's hands here and now. But the ultimate payoff is never now. It is always then.

Joy and all those who love Jay are experiencing suffering. It is real. There is no need to pretend. And for much of the world, this is all that there is. But that is not true for anyone who truly believes God. Hope converts the painful experience of reality to a wonderful expectation of something better to come. Hope **that is based on the promises of God** will fulfill our wildest expectation. Those who love Jay and love God, don't fear. God has you in the hollow of His hands and He has good things in mind for you. When you

persevere, you will experience it. And in the meantime, just hang on. Hang in there. The goodness of God will prevail. Just wait and you will see.

Paul continues-

**Romans 15:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**