

Love Hopes All Things

The Characteristics of Love

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-4

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One of the qualities that has often characterized our church family has been the desire and the willingness to participate in ministry dreaming. When Chris and I came here nearly 27 years ago now, the church family had just moved to this location and had just finished our first building settling in on this site which, at that time, was comprised of just 12 acres of ground. But even during that time when we were being interviewed, we were impressed and impacted by a group of men and women who were thinking about additional ways that they could serve and glorify God and serve the people who lived around us here. There was certainly no resting on one's laurels or the belief that it was now time to take a break. The church family then and now, in many ways, was a congregation of hope. That's what it was, a congregation of hope.

Something that makes that especially noteworthy is our corresponding view of eschatology and I realize you might say, "Eska who?" Eschatology, that's the theological term that describes your view of the end times and we understand the Scripture to teach that our culture is going to get progressively worse. Did you know that? That doesn't mean that we're not thankful for things like medical advancements or occasion improvements in some societal trends. We're not going to overstate the case but Paul said in places like 1 Timothy 3, "In the last days," not better times will come but "perilous times will come." That's why we don't spend a whole lot of time on politics here and I realize that honks some folks off from time-to-time but that's not where our hope lies. Yes, we're going to pray for our elected officials, we did that today. Yes, we're going to submit ourselves to their leadership as imperfect as it may be. We're going to try to stay appropriately informed so that we can take full benefit of living in a participatory democracy by voting intelligently and participating in the political process when appropriate and called upon to do so as individuals. But our hope theologically is not a better world through political advancement. We're expecting the return of the perfect King, the Lord Jesus Christ who establish his millennial kingdom on this earth in complete fulfillment of all of the Old Testament promises and prophecies that have yet to come to pass.

Well, you might expect a church family who has that view of eschatology to be pessimistic or to be negative or to be cynical toward the perceived failures of people around us. You could see how if that view had been taken to its extreme, a church family

could become very aloof and inappropriately separated from those around us, to be prideful, to be focused on the sins of others in ways that would give those around us the impression that we had deemed them as being hopeless, unworthy of our love or unworthy of our time or unworthy of our attention or our resources. Certainly, had that kind of hopelessness and that hopeless perspective been what we had chosen to adopt, it would not have been biblically balanced because even though the Scripture is clear that the world is getting worse morally and spiritually and would anybody in this room want to make a serious case that that's not happening? By the way, I have been out of town this week and I'm not real happy about what you allowed to have happen in this state while I was gone. I went to clean up California for crying out loud...

So even though the Scripture is clear that the world is getting worse morally and spiritually, the Bible is equally clear that God is sovereignly working out his redemptive plan and program each and every day including these days. Including these days. So, 27 years ago we found a church family that was hopefully looking for ways to participate in God's redemptive work on this earth. Part of that because it is, I think, a very interesting balance that this church family has been able to achieve on that point, part of that hopefulness in the midst of ongoing and expected decay may have been because of the biblical counseling ministry that had been started here by our former pastor, Bill G., and Dr. Bob Smith. They and the faithful laymen and women who were working alongside them were seeing the brokenness of this lost and dying world as a marvelous opportunity, there it is, as a ministry opportunity to sit down with people from our town and talk about their challenges and talk about their hurts and talk about their problems and talk about their frustrations in a Christ-centered, gospel-focused, biblically-based fashion and there were great victories. Men and women were coming to Christ and lives and families were being transformed so in addition to all of the biblical reasons, to still be hopeful there was evidential ones as well and even though the church family had just sacrificed to build a new church building and relocate all the ministries to this campus, there was still a sense of excitement about how God might want to use us next, as a congregation of hope.

One of the potential ministries that began being batted around was some kind of residential facility for girls in need. In counseling, we were becoming more and more aware of childhood sexual abuse and other forms of spousal and child verbal and emotional abuse and the toll it was taking on children, especially young girls. So we were seeing the effects of that in counseling and, true to form, people around here began dreaming. We also had more and more people talking to us about that as we traveled to speak in other places around the country and around the world, the need for a residential treatment facility where young women could be rescued from their abusive environment and brought to a place that was safe, that was gospel-centered, to find help and healing in Christ.

We were also becoming more involved in the local judicial system and making more contacts in the social service world and the more we heard and the more we learned, the more we dreamed. Yes, we're talking about persons who in some cases were abusing alcohol and drugs or who were carrying a child out of wedlock or who may be struggling with eating disorders or self-harm. But we refused to believe and conclude that such

persons and situations were hopeless and so we started dreaming more and more about having a facility where we could have that kind of a residential ministry.

On this Sunday, we're especially celebrating all the freedoms we have in our country to do ministry in practically any way we can imagine and for all the men and women who have and are sacrificing to make those freedoms possible. I'm also thankful for a church family that's chosen to respond to the challenges of our culture with biblical hope and that approach is right for hundreds and hundreds of reasons and one of them is that it's the logical perspective of those who choose to practice biblical love.

With that in mind, I want to invite you to open your Bible this morning to 1 Corinthians 13 and if you read your newspaper this morning you might say, "Hey, the editorial. I already talked about 1 Corinthians 13." Yes, God bless them, they did. I guess you have to decide if you're going to get your theology from the church house or the local newspaper but since we were already in a series on that topic, I thought we might just go ahead and continue it anyway. 1 Corinthians 13, page 137 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

We're in the process of landing the plane on this series "The Characteristics of Love" from 1 Corinthians 13. This is part of our church's annual them of "Loving Our Neighbors." I think if we're really going to take a serious attempt at that, we certainly needed to spend some time here so the last couple of weeks, we've been in one verse. Weeks on one verse, verse 7, looking at these short staccato phrases all of which end with the words "all things." So, two weeks ago we say that love bears all things, then last Sunday that love believes all things. The plan this morning is to look at the last "all things" statement and then Pastor Folden is going to bring all of this to a soft and effective landing, Lord willing, next Sunday. By the way, just in case you're wondering, the plan then is to do a five week study on the Old Testament prophet Hosea which, for sure, has to be the most unusual love story ever told. So, if we're going to study love this year, let's talk about some real love, let's talk about Hosea. Then, Lord willing, in the fall, we're going to begin a verse-by-verse study of the epistle of 1 John which, if you know your Bible, was written by the apostle of love.

This morning, we're talking about how love hopes all things and I think the Bible is breathtakingly relevant, don't you? My, oh my, oh my, oh my. I can't think of anything I'd rather talk about in light of everything that has gone on in this dear state of ours this week than how love believes and then hopes all things. 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 1,

"1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not

arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

We're talking this morning about how love hopes all things and let's organize our thoughts like this: let's talk about the meaning of hope for a while and then the source of our hope and then, lastly, the extent of our hope. So the meaning and the source and then the extent of our hope.

First of all, the meaning of hope. Lexically, we're talking about the Greek word *elpizo*. It means “to look forward to something with implication of confidence about something coming to pass; to hope; to hope for but with a sense of confidence; or to look forward to something in view of the measures one takes to insure fulfillment.” So you're expecting this. What that means is *elpizo*, biblical hope, is not wishful thinking. It's not, “Well, I hope so but it's probably not.” This isn't wishful thinking, it's not a fantasy nor is it demanding of expecting that God do things your way on your time schedule. Leon Morris said it like this, “Always hopes is the forward look. This is not an unreasoning optimism which fails to take account of reality, it's rather a refusal to take failure as final. It's the confidence that looks to ultimate triumph by the grace of God.” *Elpizo*, love hopes all things.

It's also especially important for us this morning to think about this in light of its context. That's where our dear newspaper failed miserably today. They took 1 Corinthians 13 out of its context to justify their unbiblical opinion. It was an epic fail. An epic fail, but God bless them, love hopes all things so I'm going to be kind about it. It's just my way, especially on a picnic Sunday. I wouldn't get all worked up on a picnic Sunday, would I?

Think about the context of what we're studying this morning. We're going to talk about the ultimate source of hope in a minute but here's what you need to see, I think, contextually. The focus here is on our hope for those around us and that argument has been building throughout this verse. We bear all things regarding the people around us who may be failing or disappointing us in some way. We believe all things in terms of refusing to become harshly cynical or judgmental regarding other people in our lives. Well, the same is true here: love hopes all things about other people. That's what the context is driving toward. Commentator Lensky said it like this, “Love hopes all things. This is, however, not the hope which is directed to God in expectation of all good gifts

from him, although that's true. That's not the point here but the hope that is directed toward our brethren and our fellow men which expects what is best from them. Paul hoped in the case of the obdurate Jews and ceased not his prayers and his labors. Hope knows no pessimism yet the basis for this hope of love is not mere natural optimism but the effective grace of Jesus Christ. Love always expects that grace to conquer and to win its way.”

This quote makes a similar point, “It means that this hope is directed toward others. That's what we want to see and expects the best of them. It means a refusal to take failure as defeat and trust in the ultimate success of God's plan. A key feature of hope is confidence. Here confidence in God in the hopes that God will show mercy.” We need some of that, huh? “In hopes that God will show mercy on a person's behalf. Hope is the conviction that there is God's purpose in life and that his purposes will be realized no matter,” what? “No matter how grim things look.” You see, that's what love does and it still does, right? It hopes all things.

Now, just like we've tried to balance the previous phrases, we need to do that here. It doesn't mean that we ignore the facts. It doesn't mean that we excuse sin. It doesn't mean that we look the other way. Sometimes a hopeful parent has to enact discipline with his or her child because of the choices that have been made and that doesn't mean the parent is being unloving at that point. It doesn't mean that the parent has given up hope, in fact, it may mean exactly the opposite, that parent is looking forward to the potential that his child repents and enjoys the peaceable fruit of righteousness that comes from being in proper relationship with God and men. Love hopes all things.

As our church family was dreaming about the possibility of having some sort of faith-based residential treatment center for girls in need, we were actually approached by a Christian foundation who suggested that we ought to be the ones who start it on our State Road 26 campus. That was at the time when we were actually building our Community Center. We were also simultaneously starting our free church-based seminary and so we were in the middle of a capital campaign and we explained to this foundation that our people were already giving in incredibly sacrificial ways to launch those two new ministries, the Community Center and the seminary. But they came back and said, “Well, we think that Faith is the ideal place for a ministry like this to function. You have the church, you have the Counseling Center, you have the Christian school, you're soon going to have the Community Center.” At that time, God had blessed us then with 46 acres of property so they said, “Would you at least take the time to evaluate what it would cost?” We said, “Okay, fine,” and a team of us went down to Mercy Ministry in Nashville, Tennessee which is a very similar ministry to what we were envisioning. They were kind enough to open their books and show us the cost for everything they were doing and we came back and wrote a feasibility study which explained to this foundation that it would cost 1 ¼ million dollars to build a residential treatment facility for girls in need if we were going to try to serve 24 of them at a time in a residential setting. But even if we had 1 ¼ million dollars just stacked up in the corner somewhere that we didn't need, we said we still did not think it would be prudent to begin a ministry like that that was going to be provided free-of-charge to these young ladies unless we also had half of

the operating budget for the first ten years committed in advance which was another 1 ¼ million dollars. So we said, as graciously as we could to this foundation, “Well, there is 2 ½ million reasons why we're not going to be doing that anytime soon.” Well, the larger question, though, was: did we believe that young ladies struggling with such significant challenges could change? See, was our love strong enough to hope that? Because, after all, love does what? Love hopes all things.

Can I just ask you to stop and think about the way you tend to relate to others around you? Can you do that? Do you hope all things? That doesn't mean that you don't take appropriate steps when and if a person is failing but are those steps punitive in nature? Are you responding the way you are because they hurt you and you are going to hurt them back because you have decided they are hopeless? Or are you saying what you're saying and doing what you're doing looking forward to the possibility of their repentance and restoration? Do you really believe there's hope for the imperfect men and women in your life and do you carry yourself in a way that obviously, compassionately, lovingly communicates that to them?

Now, I realize you might say, “Pastor Viars, here's my problem: my hope tank is empty. If you knew so-and-so, you wouldn't be asking me to hope all things. My hope tank is empty.” Well, that means we need to be sure to think about the source of our hope. Think about all these different characteristics of love that we've been studying throughout this series, are any of them the kind of things that you can conjure up on your own? No, no, no, no. Who is the source of our hope? Well, it's our God's faithful character. Here's some good news and, by the way, don't you love the fact that we can freely open the word of God and study it this morning without fear of persecution at all? I could preach all day long and not be arrested. Wouldn't that be something? I got one little “Amen” out of that. I'm sure all the dear folks over at Faith West Amen-ed in chorus over there. They really love Jesus over there but anyway...I realize I'd be preaching by myself as soon as the food arrived.

Here's a great verse. Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope,” aren't you glad for that? “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and all peace in believing,” here it is, “so that you will,” what? “Abound in hope.” Even this week, even when you let happen what happened while I was in California, so that “you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Don't you love the fact that this is one of the ways God chooses to describe himself in the word? As the God of hope? That means we have an unlimited supply of hope available in the person and work of our God and one of the take-aways – you did come here for some possible applications, huh? Are you just thinking about take-outs from the food line? I'm talking about take-aways from the Bible study line right now. One of the take-aways from this message for many of us would be to spend less time criticizing the world and less time looking down on the world or less time concluding that the people around us are hopeless, with all of the attendant sinful habits that would flow out of that false and unloving core belief and instead spend time where? On our knees before the God of hope, asking him to fill us with all joy and all peace and believing so that we would then abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

I realize that some may be here today and would say, “Well, I’m not sure I have a personal relationship with that kind of God.” Well, everything that we're talking about today assumes that you have and the beauty is that we can also freely proclaim the gospel, the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and you understand, that is our central message. Not what might be happening in our culture that we might be wound up about. Our central message is the gospel. That's what we're here to live. That's what we're here to proclaim and if you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, if you've never admitted your sin and placed your faith and trust in his death, burial and resurrection as your only hope of eternity, the only means of securing a personal relationship with him, the only means of securing a home in heaven when you die, we would invite you, we would urge you to do that right now while you have the freedom to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

The Scripture also tells us that this matter of hope, I love this part of it, this isn't some stale commodity that we take off the spiritual shelf and it's all dry, it's all dusty, it's practically dead, that we somehow have to, by human effort alone, make us hopeful. No, no, no, no. Here's what Peter said about that. He said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born-again to,” what? “To a living hope.” And how powerful is that? “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Ultimately, of course, in that text Peter is speaking about our hope and what God will do in and through us now and in eternity but that's the source from which loving hope for and toward others flows. A living hope from our God.

John MacArthur summed all of this up well when he said, “Even when belief in a loved one's goodness or repentance is shattered, love still hopes.” Amen, huh? “When it runs out of faith, it holds on to hope.” Amen again. “As long as God's grace is operative, human failure is never final. God would not take Israel's failure as final. Jesus would not take Peter's failure as final. Paul would not take the Corinthians' failure as final. There are more than enough premises in the Bible to make love hopeful. The parents of backslidden children, the spouse of an unbelieving marriage partner, the church that has disciplined members who do not repent. All hope in love that the child, the spouse or the erring brother or sister will be saved or restored. Love refuses to take failure as final. The rope of love's hope has no end.” Don't you love that? The rope of love's hope has no end. “As long as there is life, love does not loose hope. When our hope becomes weak, we know our love has become weak.”

You might say, “Okay, fine, how does the Lord give that to us? If God is the God of hope, how do I receive that?” Well, one of the big answers is his sufficient word. Here's a great verse in that same text from which I quoted earlier about God being the God of hope, he had said previously, Romans 15:4, “Whatever was written in earlier times,” the Bible, “was written for our instruction so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” What that means is: there is a direct relationship between men and women who are immersing themselves in the Scriptures. Did you do that this week? Who are immersing themselves in the Scripture and our ability to love others in our lives by choosing to relate to them with hope.

I think that's one of the reasons this congregation has been so hopeful. Pastor G. carried on a very faithful Bible teaching ministry. That was the hallmark of he and the other faithful men and women who ministered alongside him. It was the consistent exposition of Scripture, not the latest fad and, man, were there plenty of them to get all wound up about. The latest trend in church life, no, the consistent exposition of Scripture that builds week-after-week, reason-after-reason, for us to have hope because of the way we see our powerful God at work in the lives of the characters in his word.

We explained to this Christian foundation that because we were already investing in the launch of our Community Center, the launch of our seminary simultaneously, we just didn't have 2 ½ million dollars to put into a faith-based residential treatment center at that time. So what did the Christian foundation say back to us? Well, fine, we're giving you 2 ½ million dollars and that's exactly what they did. They gave us 1 ¼ million dollars in cash which allowed us to build that beautiful building named, what was it again? Vision of Hope, debt free and then they signed an MOU a memorandum of understanding to give us \$125,000 annually for the next ten years, a promise they have kept every year without fail for seven years in a row. You see, when you have hope – think about it, I hope we don't miss the lesson – when you have hope that God can help others change, you never know how God might bless and honor that kind of love. And it's been delightful to see some of the fruit of that ministry. Love hopes all things. The fruit of the ministry of Vision of Hope.

I'd like you to hear now from one of our graduates and as you hear a bit of her story, I want you to think in the back of your mind how true the Bible is. Love does what again? It hopes. It hopes all things.

“My entire life has been defined by competing interests. From the age of seven, I was trained as a dancer. I loved the music. I loved the complex routines. I loved the physical control but the thing I loved the most was how beautiful I felt. I was also trained in self-defense. My Dad started teaching me how to fight when I was a little girl and, again, I loved it. Loved the discipline; loved the sweat; loved the way I felt after working out.

“So at a relatively young age, I learned how to stay on my feet and I had learned how to fight. The problem was, I hadn't learned how to kneel and I hadn't learned who I really should have been fighting.

“I came to Vision of Hope February 3, 2010 which was actually four years ago from today and I came as a slave to my brokenness. When I first heard of Vision of Hope, I had no desire to be a part of the program. My life was totally consumed in creating and maintaining the perfect body so I swung back and forth between anorexia and bulimia. The consequences of my sin were drowning me and so I drank deeply of various forms of substance abuse to numb the anxiety, depression and loneliness that comes with habitual sin.

“I used self-harm to try and control this chaos that was equally painful and numbing that raged inside of me and to punish myself for eating. My world was small, self-absorbed and futile.

“The Lord placed me with a faithful loving counselor who lived out God's character to me. She fought hard to show me the truth not only about God but about myself. What I loved and worshiped the most was myself and the person who I was I didn't even see. I wanted to be an inspiration to other women but all I was was a girl who was never pretty enough, never skinny enough, never spiritual enough, never strong enough, always striving towards my definition of perfection. I finally reached a breaking point. It's not necessary to go into the details but I was on very thin ice with Vision of Hope. My deceptive, drastic, self-destructive methods to avoid the intimate war of fighting my most cherished idols landed me in probation for dismissal. My counselor spoke words to me that I will remember for the rest of my life. She said, 'Alexandra, your view on life is so futile, so small. You have got to view this as a war. This is the fight of your life. It's like you're coming into a boxing match with ballerina slippers on, far more concerned with how you look and how you sparkle. You have got to take off the ballerina slippers, put on the boxing gloves and fight this fight, the fight for your soul.'

“For the first time in my life, I realized that I couldn't obey God without his help. Although I had been saved from hell, I realized that I needed a Savior to save me from myself. The devil wasn't my biggest enemy, the heart of Alexandra was my foe and when God opened my eyes to this, I saw my great need of Jesus Christ and I finally started to pray, 'Jesus, save me from what I want.

“For almost two months, I cried out in sheer desperation for him to hear my cry. It took time and I had to work hard to merely have faith for him to keep his promises that he would change me and in his perfect timing he did. God has blessed me tremendously since then. I graduated from Vision of Hope. God restored my relationship with my loving parents who carried the burden of watching their only daughter destroy precious life for years and years. I married an amazing man named Stefan who loves Jesus more than he loves me. We are living missionally and are so excited for the ministry God has for us one day. I am so blessed.

“So what happens when you graduate from Vision of Hope? I think to answer that question I need to define what victory and freedom looks like. It's easy to think that freedom from an eating disorder is freedom from the desire to do destructive things to my body but the reality is that freedom from an eating disorder means that I'm not enslaved to making a bad decision. I now have the decision to bow down to King Jesus or king sin.

It's easy to think that victory is to just overcome, to never want that destruction again but victory is not lack of temptation, it is choosing Jesus as my King in the middle of the most sparkly, glittery temptation and there can be no victory where there is no war.

“My boxing gloves are on and I fight. I fight for my joy in the gospel.

“Blessed be the Lord, my Rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle. He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my Deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge.

“My name is Alexandra N. and I have hope.”

You know, if you say, “I've seen Alexandra around here,” that's because Stefan is one of our seminary students. Alexandra and Stefan are training for ministry. What does love do? It hopes all things. John MacArthur said it this way in his “Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith,” “Even when faith falters, hope comes to the rescue. It's that long rope that keeps us linked to the sovereignty and the power of God.”

Can I ask you this morning how do you think you're doing on this particular characteristic of love? Is it obvious to the people around you especially when they may be failing that you love them? That you're thinking beyond their sins to the possibility of their repentance and their restoration and their change because your love hopes all things? I wonder if for many of us, if we focused on receiving that more from our God of hope that it would change the way we speak to people? And I wonder if it would change the way we speak about people?

When you start considering this from other places in the Bible, it's instructive to see how frequently the Lord emphasizes the importance, the extent of our hope. Here are just a few reasons both positively and negatively from other places in the word. Friends, hope apart from God is false. “The hope of the godless will perish. Material possessions bring no hope.” The reason some followers of Christ are so hopeless is because they're so materialistic and their material things are letting them down. “A horse is a false hope for victory.” Paul told Timothy, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” The sinful treatment of others brings no hope. Psalms says, “Don't trust in oppression. Don't vainly hope in robbery. If riches increase, don't set your heart upon them.” So many people live for revenge, no hope in that. “Forgetting even with other,” God says there's no hope there. Jeremiah summarized it, “The worship of idols brings no hope. Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not thou, O Lord, our God? Therefore, we hope in thee.” Do we? “Therefore we hope in thee for thou art the one who has done all these things.”

From a positive side, you say, “What happens if I work on what we're studying this morning?” Well, biblical hope will help us develop patience. “I wait for the Lord. My soul does wait and in his word do I hope.” Not in getting my way in the latest cultural

battle. No, my soul does wait and in his word do I hope. Biblical hope will impact the rate of your growth. "Everyone who has this hope fixed on him" purifies everybody else? No, "purifies himself just as he is pure." Biblical hope will enhance your ability to share Christ. Think about the outreach implications of this, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the," anger that's in you? No, the disgust? "The hope that is in you yet with gentleness and reverence. Having therefore such a hope," Paul says, "we use great boldness in our speech." Biblical hope will balance the way you view death both for yourself and others around you. Paul said, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep that you sorrow not even as others who have no hope." Lastly, biblical hope will motivate your service for Christ. "For it is for this we labor and strive because we have fixed our hope."

People who have hope are willing and desirous of serving their God. It's amazing how infectious hope can be. If you choose to be a person of hope and if we want to be a congregation of hope, that will be infectious. Over the past several years, we've developed a growing friendship with a church in the Dominican Republic. I've had the privilege of traveling there several times and others from our church and our school have as well. One of our seminary interns, Newton P. and his wife S. here in this service on the east side are part of our seminary right now. They're from the Dominican Republic. A senior pastor of their church is a good friend of mine, Oscar A.. Pastor A.'s wife leads a ministry to orphans and abused girls in their city. A couple of years ago, they asked the board of our Vision of Hope to establish an official consulting and sister relationship with their ministry. Their ministry has been housed in rental facilities in their city but the church has been praying about a piece of land where they could build a ministry similar to Vision of Hope. Guess what they just learned? Their city is giving them the land for this project. Love does what again? It hopes all things. Now, our sister ministry in the Dominican Republic is advancing this next phase of their adventure of hope for abused girls, for orphan children in their town. Friends, that's what love looks like. That's what love looks like because love hopes all things.

May the God of hope, the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let's stand together for prayer, shall we?

Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to consider this particular characteristic of love and, Lord, I pray for any who would be in our services today who don't know you personally. I pray that they would run to the cross. I pray that they would repent and believe. I pray that they would be connected to the God of hope. And Father, would you forgive us for our pessimism? Would you forgive us for our negativity? Would you forgive us for our lack of faith? Lord, help us to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit of God. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.