

## Qualities of Love – Hopeful

1 Corinthians

By Richard Caldwell Jr.

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 13:7

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 6, 2010

### Founders Baptist Church

24724 Aldine Westfield

Spring, TX 77373

**Website:** [www.foundersbaptist.org](http://www.foundersbaptist.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/smbconline](http://www.sermonaudio.com/smbconline)

1 Corinthians 13 and we begin reading with the first verse. 1 Corinthians 13:1,

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Let's pray together.

*Father in heaven, we ask now that you would strengthen us to be able to declare your word clearly, accurately, in a way, Lord, that is fitting, with boldness and confidence in you. We ask, Lord, that you would be at work in our hearing so that this morning our hearts would be hungry and eager to receive the truth and ready to walk in the things that we learn. Lord, you can bring your word home to our hearts in a way that changes us forever and we ask you for this. Lord, we think back to the day even as we have just sung about when like a quickening ray, the light of truth broke into our hearts. Lord, you unlocked the prison doors and we walked out free men and women. We who belong to you, Lord, we have known what it is to hear your word in a way that it is alive to our souls and we ask you, Lord, for that this morning, that you would teach us and instruct us. Lord, again we ask on behalf of those who are in our midst who are lost, that even today, Lord, your saving power would be put on display and we ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:7 that, "love hopes all things." Love hopes all things. What does that mean? What does the apostle have in mind? That's what we're always after. I want to keep reminding us as we do often that what we are after when we study the word of God is not something that we come up with and then lay it on top of God's

word and say, "Well, now, that's what it means." We've always got to be afraid and careful not to sort of naturalize the text, take what we see here and make it say what we naturally think it says. No, what we're after is what God has in mind, what the apostle had in mind when he penned that statement, "love hopes all things." What does he have in mind?

I want to remind you that in the 7th verse, you have a chiasm. You have 2 qualities, one at the beginning, one at the end, that are very close to one another. Then you have 2 qualities in the middle that are both very much alike. "Love bears all things," he says at the beginning of verse 7 and "love endures all things." Those 2 qualities are very much alike and then in the middle, he says "love believes all things, love hopes all things." Those 2 qualities are very much alike. So if you want to understand what he has in mind by hoping concerning all things, you'll get a taste of it in the first statement, "love believes all things." These 2 qualities are very much alike. They are in the middle and emphasized in that way because they are necessary to what is at the beginning and what is at the end. If I'm going to bear all things, if I'm going to endure all things, it has to be because I believe all things and I hope all things. The first and the last are impossible apart from these 2 that we see in the middle.

Again I ask: what does he mean when he says that love hopes all things? Well, one of the things you recognize when you study the subject of hope in the New Testament is that there are multiple meanings associated with the word "hope," and even when you have similarity in meaning, you can have some differences in terms of nuance of application; some different emphases that are associated with this word "hope." For example, the word "hope" can speak of the object of our faith. To say, "I hope in God," is to say that my faith is set on God. I hope in the Lord so the word "hope" can speak of the object of my faith. The word "hope" can also be used to speak of the source of my faith. In fact, sometimes the Lord can direct my attention to something else but the reason why my attention is set on that something else is because he has told me to do so. So the Lord tells me, for example, that my hope can be set on heaven. In some sense, heaven is the object of my faith, but the reason why my faith is set on heaven is because God has told me that heaven is my future. So my hope is in the Lord and in heaven because my faith finds its source in God. God has told me about this. I believe God, therefore, heaven becomes an object of my attention.

So hope can speak of the object of my faith, my hope is in the Lord, and hope can speak of the source of my faith, my hope is in heaven but it's because God has told me. My hope is in the Lord, therefore, my hope is in heaven. The source of my faith. The word "hope" can also be used to speak of the sureness or the certainty of my faith. We live our lives in hope of the coming of Jesus Christ. It doesn't mean he may come. It doesn't mean we just wish that perhaps one day he will come. No, we are absolutely convinced. We are absolutely certain that Jesus Christ is coming again because God has told us that he is and therefore we are living our lives in light of the sure return of Jesus. My hope is in the return of Christ. That means his return is my sure expectation. I am certain that he's coming again.

Just some examples of how the word "hope" can be used differently in the New Testament. When you look at this particular verse, I don't think that any of those meanings is what he has primarily in mind. I mean, what he's going to say to us flows out of those things. What we read in verse 7, "love hopes all things," it's because God is the object of my faith. It's because everything that he has told me I believe to be true; he is the source of my faith. It's because I know that what he promises certainly comes to pass so it flows out of a certainty of faith. But I still think that what he's saying here carries with it a different emphasis and I believe what he has in mind when he says "love hopes all things" is this: he is describing a holy, supernatural optimism when it comes to our view of other people. What he's talking about in verse 7, all of it has to do with our relationships with other people. Love, God's love, bears all things, that is, remember we saw, it's protective. Love covers. Well, covers toward whom? Toward other people. If I'm loving you with the love of Jesus Christ, then I will display toward you that protectiveness, that holy kind of protectiveness that God has even demonstrated toward us so love bears all things with respect to people.

The last quality we're going to talk about this one tonight: love endures all things or perseveres. What does it have to do with? Relationships with people. Love believes all things. In what realm? In our relationships with people. And in the same way, love hopes all things in the realm of our relationships with one another. This has to do with living toward other people in the love of God. So the principal then is this: where God's love is being walked in, where we're walking in the love of Christ, the love of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father, where God's love is being walked in, there will be a desire to and a decision to hope for the very best with respect to other people. I desire to hope for the best in you and I decide to hope for the best in you when I'm walking in the love of God. God's love is optimistic. God's love is stubborn in its desire to hope for good things, hope for righteous things in the lives of others.

Now, how does this manifest itself practically? I mean, how does this demonstrate itself? I want to give you 2 ways. The second one I'm going to mention is the primary way but the first one I'm going to mention is the reality you see in Scripture and so I want to point it out. The first thing we can say is this: this kind of love manifests itself in hope, first of all, in that it is hopeful about what is true of other people. When we walk in the love of God as I said earlier, this is very closely associated with believing all things, when we walk in the love of God, we hope with respect to what is true of other people, we hope for the very best. If I'm thinking about what motivates you, what your ambitions are, what your motives are, why you're doing what you're doing and I have a choice of believing that what you're doing has an evil intent or what you're doing has a righteous intent, if I'm walking in the love of God, not only do I choose to believe the best about you, I hope for the best about you. I hope that your ambitions are pure. I hope that your motives are godly. I hope that there is a righteous intent that stands behind what I see in your life.

What motivates other people? Love hopes for the best. In terms of what characterizes people when I look at your life and I think about your character, I think about what kind of person you are. I think about whether you are a righteous individual or a wicked individual. Of course, I'm speaking in the realm of the Christian faith. I'm talking about

brothers and sisters in the Lord. If I have a choice to believe that you are a godly, righteous individual or you are a wicked and destructive kind of individual, not only do I choose and desire to believe the best about you but I hope for the best about you.

What characterizes you as an individual? What kind of character you have. If I'm faced with a decision about what is true concerning you or false concerning you. Maybe we are presented with rumors about you. Maybe we're presented with a case that has been brought about you. Someone is saying something about you and I have the choice of believing that it's true or it's false and I'm talking about something now that would destroy you, attack you, tear you down, I have a choice to make.

Well, love not only believes the best, love hopes for the best. In fact, if you are comparing the 2 qualities, I think we can say this: hope picks up where belief would leave off. Hope operates where even belief might be lost. We could express it this way trying to help you just get a hold of it, we could say this: belief will operate where there is good evidence. All these things that we're talking about, what motivates you, what characterizes you, what is true or false about you, well, now there's some evidence and the evidence is good. I mean, it's favorable toward you. Well, if you're walking in love, you will not take the most negative view you could take of that. You will believe the best in the face of good evidence. You take hold of that good evidence because you want to believe the best about a person.

Belief operates where there is no evidence so now we don't have evidence positive or negative and I just have a choice to make without evidence of what I'm going to think about you, believe about you, treat you. Well, love believes all things so where there is no evidence, I want to believe the best about you.

Belief operates where there is conflicting evidence. I mean, there is some evidence if I want to take hold of it, that would be favorable toward you, there would be some evidence that would be negative toward you. Well, if I'm walking in the love of God, let me take hold of the good evidence because that's what I desire, you see. That's what I desire. This is why all of this is important. I'm going to talk about it more in a moment but this has to do with where our hearts' desires are at toward one another.

So in the face of good evidence, love believes of the best. In the face of no evidence, love believes the best. In the face of conflicting evidence, love believes the best. But here's where hope picks up: hope will operate even where there is condemning evidence. I mean, when you couldn't believe the best given the evidence, you hope for the best.

Now, how many of us have lived long enough to see a situation where if you had made a decision based simply on the evidence you would have condemned a person in your mind and in your heart? I mean, all the evidence looked like it was pointing in a certain direction. How many have you lived long enough to see all the evidence point in a certain direction and yet at the end of the day you find out that the best was really true of that person? Has anybody ever seen a situation like that? I mean, all the evidence is rolling in a certain direction? I'm talking about how we think about someone and if you had

wanted, you could have perhaps even justly said, "Well, this is what I believe given the evidence," only at the end of the day to find out that all of that evidence just was misunderstood, looked at from the wrong angle. The person turned out to be telling the truth or the person turned out to be in truth what was the most favorable thing we could have believed about them. Listen, love wants to hope for the very best because we would rather believe and hope for the best in a person and be found wrong having hoped for the best and believed in the best than to have believed the worst or sadly in sin, maybe even hoped for the worst, and found out that in fact we were wrong.

Love not only believes all things, love hopes all things. I say, again, this is significant because it points to our desires. Have you ever noticed how our beliefs and our hopes follow the course of our desires? When we desire the best for someone then we hope for the best. When we have evil, destructive desires toward a person, how easy it is for us to seize hold of that which would reflect negatively upon them. It's interesting, if you've ever had this experience you know this is true: if you have ever allowed a root of bitterness to develop in your heart toward another person, it's amazing when the bitterness has taken hold, it's amazing how you begin to interpret then all of the evidence surrounding that person. If you allow a root of bitterness to exist in your heart, it's going to be amazing how now everything that could be bad or good, right or wrong, true or false, how your heart will begin to lean toward everything that is most negative toward that person. This is why we are warned about allowing a root of bitterness to develop in our soul. This is why we must keep our accounts short. This is why we must forgive from our hearts. This is why we must walk before the Lord with thoughts and attitudes and intentions that are pure in his sight lest we stop walking in the love of God. The love of God believes all things. The love of God holds for all things. And what that means is: love is hopeful about what is true of others.

But I don't think that's the primary meaning of the statement. That's there, we don't want to ignore it, it's there but I think the primary meaning of the statement would be this or the primary application of it: love is hopeful about God's ability in the lives of others. Love is hopeful about God's ability in the lives of others. Love is far more than just natural optimism. Love is not naïve. Just like we said, love believes all things. It doesn't mean you believe everything someone says and to say that love hopes all things is not to say that love is hopeful in a way that what is true and accurate and right, we just ignore it. No, in fact, what makes this quality the love of God, what makes this quality supernatural, what makes this quality something that it could not exist apart from faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that God's love is optimistic in this way: we can look right into the face of shattering realities and continue to hope in God for a righteous outcome. That is, now we know a person has failed. Now we know that the worst is true. Now we know there has been a great failure. But we believed the best and we hoped for the best but now we have discovered that the worst is the case. Now what does love do? Now love continues to hope in God for a righteous outcome in the life of this person that we care about with the love of God. Love continues to hope in God's ability to do what only God can do in the life of the person who is the object of our love as we walk in his love. Love continues to hope.

John MacArthur put it well when he said this, "Even when belief in a loved one's goodness or repentance is shattered, love still hopes. When it runs out of faith, it holds onto hope. 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 Corinthian's failure as final. There are more than enough promises in the Bible to make love hopeful." Isn't that good? And that's right.

Now, I want to ask you this morning: is there a situation where you have lost hope? Is there a situation in your life right now where you are losing hope or you have lost hope? What kinds of situations do the people of God face where the love of God would have us walk in hope but if we are being honest with our struggles, perhaps we are losing hope or we have lost hope? What kind of situations do we face like that? One area is when we know people we care about who are unbelievers, maybe even in the nearest relationship of your life, I'm talking about an unbelieving spouse. Don't raise your hand but is there someone here today, you're married to someone who is not a believer and perhaps you have prayed for them for years and lived a Christian witness before them for years and shared the Gospel with them for years and all you have seen to this point is a cold, hard, rejecting heart and perhaps you have come to the point where you have said to yourself, "I don't believe they will ever come to Christ"? Have you lost hope?

Or maybe it's not a spouse, maybe it's your child. Again, don't raise your hand but is there someone here today that you have unbelieving children and you have witnessed to them, you have prayed for them, you have lived a Christian, not a perfect one because no one does but you have lived a sincere Christian witness before your children and there they are with an unbelieving heart? And perhaps even they have closed the door at this point on your witness to them? They have basically said to you, "I have chosen my path. I have chosen my way and I really don't want to hear from you anymore"?

Maybe it's a brother or sister or some other family member. Maybe it's a dear friend from your past and you've been converted and they are still in unbelief. This is where we need hope, isn't it? This is where we must know, be convinced of the fact, that there is no one beyond God's saving power. No one. No matter how long they have persisted in unbelief. No matter how hardened they have become to the Gospel. Is there reason for genuine concern? Yes. Is there reason for genuine fear concerning their soul? Yes. Is there any guarantee that they will be converted and be saved? No, but is there reason to hope? Yes.

Or maybe it's not in the realm of outright unbelief, maybe right now there is a loved one of yours who knows the Lord, I mean, you have seen some good fruit in their life but right now they are not where they need to be with Christ? A backslidden loved one who knows the Lord or at least as much as we can tell, it seems that they know the Lord but right now they are not in a good place, they're not doing well? Maybe even their heart has gotten cold toward the Lord and cold toward his truth. Maybe even they have shut those doors to you. A fellow believer even in your own family and they just don't want to hear from you right now and it has caused you to become discouraged.

Or in the realm of the church, we're going to deal with people who turn a wrong direction and go down a wrong path. Hearts are in the wrong place and we reach out to them and call out to them with the truth and strive to love them but they will not let us. I always remember what Paul said to the Corinthians when he said that, "You have closed your heart to me." He said, "My heart is wide open. Will you open your heart to me?" And in the way of ministry, we're going to meet with people that we love with the love of God, we care about the condition of their soul, we want to have a ministry in their life, they turn a wrong path and despite all of our pleas and all of our prayers and all of our desires for the moment, that door seems closed and it can cause us to feel great discouragement.

Is there someone here today that you have a relationship that seems like it's ruined? I mean, there was a time when you had sweet fellowship with someone? There was a time when there was a friendship there in Jesus and right now that relationship seems like it could never be repaired? Do you know what God's love does? It does not surrender. It does not surrender the hope of God changing those situations. Why does it not surrender the hope of God changing those situations? I think we could mention 2 reasons: 1. Because of confidence in his Almighty power; but the second is and it is explained by love, it's because we love them too fiercely. You see, when we lose hope, what has really happened is we have lost love. Love hopes all things. Love keeps on hoping. It's because I love them too fiercely to let them go that I continue to cry out to God and seek the face of God, asking God to do in their life, in their soul, what I know I can't do. And asking God to do in their life, in their soul, what they desperately need, asking God to do in their life and in their soul, what from a human point of view seems like is not possible because I love them. Because I love them with God's love, I don't lose faith.

Now, that all might be well and good but it would just be empty words if it was just natural optimism. Do we have a lot of natural optimism in the world today? Do we have a lot of people talking about optimism from a purely human, carnal, sinful point of view? We went through a whole political campaign of hope and change, didn't we? Hope and change and I always wanted to ask, "Hope in what? And what kind of change are we talking about?" We're talking about hope in the Lord this morning, aren't we? And we're not talking about some kind of false hope, we're talking about real hope so if we're right, if this is a holy kind of optimism that exists where there is love, we ought to be able to see examples of it in Scripture. Can we see examples of this kind of hope, a hope that holds on? A hope that is found because of love for God and in love for others? Do we see that in Scripture? And I believe we do in many places though I just want to mention 2, 2 example this morning.

Look over to the book of 1 Samuel 24 and I believe we see an Old Testament example of a continuing hope that exists because there is love for God and love for people in the case of Jonathan and David concerning Saul. Now, when God raised up David, you know, Saul through his disobedience, God took the kingdom from him but God pronounced taking the kingdom from him before he actually lost it through the loss of his life. When Saul begin to recognize what he had forfeited through his disobedience and what God planned to do with David, what kind of a guy did Saul turn into? Was he a good guy? Was he an insanely jealous, murderous man? And how did he display that? He began to

threaten the life of David, didn't he? In fact, there are places you can see in 1 Samuel, he threatened the life of his own son, Jonathan. Jonathan, Saul's son, becomes a friend to David and it's a covenant kind of friendship. It's a friendship that is formed in a common love for God. It was Jonathan's love for God that tied his heart to David and yet you see in Jonathan the love of a son for his father. It's an amazing thing. We don't have time to read it this morning but if you read 1 Samuel 20 and David comes to Jonathan to tell him, "Your dad is trying to kill me," and Saul has already demonstrated this prior to 1 Samuel 20 but when you come to 1 Samuel 20, it's amazing to read how Jonathan is still wanting to believe the best about Saul. Jonathan is still wanting to say, "David, this can't be true. If this were true, my dad would have told me. He would have told me." And David basically convinces Jonathan that this is reality. I mean, to seek Jonathan's attitude toward Saul is amazing.

But now you come to 1 Samuel 24, David is on the run, Saul is seeking his life and notice what you read, verse 1, "When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.' Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks. And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave." In the Providence of God, this king chooses the cave where David and his men are at to relieve himself, alright? "And the men of David said to him," verse 4, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.'" David's men see this as Providence but they see it as an opportunity for him to get rid of Saul. "Here's the day, David. Take it." "Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe." He doesn't kill him, he just cuts off a corner of his robe.

Do you want to see David's sensitivity to God? Look at verse 5, "And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe. He said to his men, 'The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed.' So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, 'My lord the king!' And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. And David said to Saul, 'Why do you listen to the words of men who say, "Behold, David seeks your harm"? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, "I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed."' You see, I mean, David is viewing Saul in light of God's relationship to Saul, in light of what God has done with Saul, not in light of what Saul has become.

Verse 11, "My father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it." This is not a denial of reality. This is not some natural optimism. David knows



exactly what Saul has become. Saul is seeking his life but David is not looking at this situation in a natural way. He is not saying, "You're seeking my life therefore I'm justified to take your life." No, he's viewing this situation in light of God's Providence, God's sovereignty. His confidence is in God.

Verse 12, "May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea!" David says, "This is me. I'm nothing." "May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand." As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, 'You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now, behold, I know that you shall surely,'" these are amazing words, "I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house.' And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold." Amazing what God does in Saul's heart through David's godly loyalty. Here's a man who doesn't view Saul as an enemy. He views him as the Lord's anointed and he does it because of his faith in God's ability to avenge him. Now, I'm saying to you that I believe that David still had a love for Saul, still had a hope in God regarding Saul, even when Saul was at his worst.

Let me give you another example of it. Go to 2 Samuel 1. Now Saul has been killed. He is dead and David is getting the report of it from an Amalekite and we don't have time to read it all but I just want you to hear David's heart after he learns of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Jonathan and Saul are both dead now and listen to what he says, verse 17, 2 Samuel 1, "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son." Just stop there and let me say to you: after all that Saul has done toward David by this point, you could understand David expressing loving thoughts toward Jonathan but it is supernatural that he could express loving thoughts towards Saul.

Listen to what he says, verse 18, "and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar. He said: 'Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult. You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor fields of offerings! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.'" Listen, "Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were

swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions. You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet." I mean, David is looking back over the reign of Saul and he is seeing the most positive things he can see. He is saying the most positive things he can say. Give thanks to God for Saul because he, "clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain on your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women. How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

David who spares this king's life because he is the Lord's anointed, David who now hears that a man who truly had lived like his enemy has perished in battle but there is no rejoicing. There is lamenting and as he pours out his lamentation, what do you hear? You hear love. You hear admiration. You hear a man who is recognizing what was the most positive thing he could recognize in this man who has sought his life. That's supernatural. That's love believing all things and hoping all things and though this is an Old Testament passage, this is the love of God operating in one who truly is a man after his own heart. That's love's optimism.

Let me give you a New Testament example very quickly, Luke 15. This is not in an historical account, this is in a parable but the parable teaches something about our own attitudes. It's a parable that has to do with salvation but in the midst of it, we can also make an application regarding our own attitudes. Luke 15:11, you know this very well. "And he said, There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living." Verse 14, "And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said." By the way, beloved, how does he come to himself? The Lord brings a man to himself, doesn't he? He didn't come to himself on his own. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.''" And he rightly perceived that based upon his behavior, that is what he deserved. He deserved not to be called a son of his father anymore. He desired to be treated like the lowest of his father's hired servants and that would have been better for him than what he had gotten in his sin.

Verse 20, "And he arose and came to his father," notice, "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." Where is the bitterness of the father? Where is the anger of the father? Where is, "I told you"? Where is that? It's not there. There is compassion. There is rejoicing. Why? Because this is the fulfillment of a father's hope, the return of his son, repentant, broken.

Verse 21, "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate." Well, this is a father who is rejoicing because hope has been realized. What he so wanted for his son has come to pass. He saw him a far distance away. We have to wonder in the context of this parable: does that in some way indicate this father has been watching? He's been hoping. He's been looking. Regardless, we know that his hopeful desire was fulfilled.

Love hopes all things. It has to do with hoping for the best regarding what's true of another person but it chiefly has to do with hoping in God's ability in the life of another person, viewing this person in the most positive way we could, that's David and Saul, but also hoping in God's ability to take a prodigal son or husband or friend or whomever and bring them to themselves so that they can recognize what they could not recognize in their sinful insanity, a return of reason so that they return to God and to all those who love God and love them.

How do we apply this this morning? How do we apply it? Well, we apply this in prayer. When hope is lost, prayer stops or it becomes weak. Is there someone you have stopped praying for? Or is there someone in your life that your prayers for them have become just formal? You do it because you know you should and because in there somewhere is still the desire for God to change them but the Bible says it's the effectual, it's the fervent prayer of a righteous man that avails much. Who have you lost hope over and it is being revealed in your prayer life?

We apply this not only in prayer, we apply this in ministry efforts. If God grants open doors, are you sensitive to the opportunity and ready to walk through it? I wonder sometimes if we have so lost hope in God's ability to change a person's life that even now when they present us an open door to share the word of God, we're not even sensitive to it anymore. We're not even watching for it anymore. We're not even ready to walk through it anymore because we're not hoping as we should be hoping, believing as we should be believing. As long as they are alive and God's grace is operative, there is the opportunity for God to do what only God can do in their soul. Are you ready? Are you watching? Are you alert? Are you desiring? Are you prepared?

This is reflected in prayer, this is reflected in ministry efforts. This is also applied by just opening your heart in a fresh way in the direction of hope. Is there someone here this morning, you just need to open your heart again? You prayed, you witnessed, you've lived, you've asked but time passed and though you should know of all people, right, we whose hearts the sovereign God opened and transformed, if anyone should know that God can save sinners, it's us because he saved me. How could I ever stop believing that God has the ability to save someone else? Maybe today the need is simply to open your heart in a repentant way because you have underestimated the power of God by losing

hope. You have not been loving them because you have stopped hoping for them by hoping in God's ability to change their life. As long as they are alive, hope is alive for no one is beyond the saving arm of the true and living God. The true God. The living God. Who is able to save.

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Father in heaven, I trust you have done your work in our hearts this morning and I pray wherever we are in need of repentance because we have not been walking in your love by hoping all things, I pray that we would turn even now from that hopeless, despairing attitude that would say that you are not able to embrace afresh and anew the truth that you are able. I pray, Lord, that it would be reflected in our prayer life and that it would be reflected in our ministry efforts and it would be reflected, Lord, in a holy optimism, not a natural optimism but, God, an optimism that is based on trusting you that, Lord, that would be seen in our lives. We ask you this in Jesus' name. Amen.*