

SEVEN MARKS OF A GOOD HOPE

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16 • TV130B

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I have two texts for the message today. One is found in **2 Thessalonians chapter 2:16** and the others are found in **1 Peter 1:3**.

Now, I think you will be interested in this subject, I am. There are “**SEVEN MARKS OF A GOOD HOPE.**” Here are “**SEVEN MARKS OF A GOOD HOPE.**”

In **2 Thessalonians 2:16** Paul says: *“Now; our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, even our Father, which hath loved us hath given us everlasting consolation and a good hope through grace.”*

Then, Peter writes in **1 Peter 1:3**: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (these are tremendous themes, we are not playing games here) which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Now, let’s see if we can drive a few nails; let me see if I can really get your attention today. Most everyone I know is religious to some extent and that’s true, most everyone you know is religious to some extent. And most everyone you know has some kind of hope concerning the future. Most everyone you know has some kind of hope concerning life beyond the grave. For example:

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In the days of our Lord the old Israelites said: *“We are Abraham’s seed. We have Moses.”* They were depending on their heritage. They were depending upon their family ties.

Our Lord gave us an example of the Pharisee, *“One of them went down to the temple one day and said, I thank you Lord I’m not like other men.”* He was most sincere in this; he wasn’t like other men.

He said, *“I tithe and I fast and I give alms to the poor and I do all these things. I’m not like other men.”* He was resting in his own self-righteousness. He was resting in his religious deeds and works.

The Pharisee was not justified. We have God’s Word for that. *“He went home not justified but the publican went home justified.”*

Then the moralist, the rich, young ruler, a very moral young man, but a very selfish young man, when he was confronted with the law of Christ, why he said: *“all of these I’ve kept from my youth up. (That’s my foundation; that’s my hope). I’ve kept these laws all my life.”*

And the fundamentalist of our day and everyday would say: *“I’ve made a decision. I’m religious. I have a hope; I’ve made my decision for Jesus and don’t anybody question it; I’m fixed up, it happened a long, long, time ago; I’ve been saved.”*

Then the profane person, even the profane, even the blasphemer has some kind of religion and some kind of hope. What is his hope? He says, *“God’s too good to send a man to hell.”* And that’s his hope. He believes that somehow he’s going to get by, somehow, you see; God’s too good.

One day, when I was pastoring down in Tennessee, years ago, there was a man who came to do some work for me in the back yard. We were digging some kind of waterline and I went out in the backyard and was talking to him and I asked him, I said: *“What is your hope for eternal life?”*

Well, he didn’t answer. He only reached in his pocket and took out his wallet. I thought what’s he going to do? As he went through his wallet, he pulled out a card, a beautiful card, with all kind of figures and everything on it and he handed it to me and he said: *“that’s my hope.”*

I looked at it and it was his lodge membership card. That was his hope for eternal life. I will tell you: most everybody you know is religious and most everybody you know has some kind of hope concerning this thing of life beyond the grave.

In fact, they will go a long way. Our Lord said: *“They cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.”* These false hopes, even though they are false, give them some kind of peace, some kind of rest.

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They say, like in **Isaiah chapter 28**: “We’re not afraid to die; we’re not afraid to die. We are in agreement with hell. When the overflowing scourge of God’s wrath, when judgment falls upon all nations and upon all men, it won’t come nigh us.”

“We’ve got a refuge, a false refuge, yes, but a refuge: We are hiding in lies but we are hiding. Yes, we’ve got a hope, we’ve got a refuge, and they cry;” *“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”*

And you know, the amazing thing about it is, that men hold on to these false refuges all the way to the judgment. Our Lord said: *“Many will say unto me, in that day.”* They said it all their lives, they said: *“Lord; I preached and I witnessed, and I testified and I have done many wonderful works and cast out devils.”*

He said: *“Many will say unto me, even in that day, (even in the day of judgment, even in the day of reckoning, even in the day of accounting, even in the day when men shall stand before God, they will say: even in that day), Lord, we preached in your name and did many wonderful works and cast out devils.”*

Well, my friends; I’m not interested in a hope; I’m interested in a good hope. I’m not interested in a religious hope; I’m interested in a living hope. That’s what I’m interested in and I hope you are too.

I hope you are interested, not just in a hope; everybody has got some kind of hope. You see, where there is no hope, there is really no cause for living. Most everybody has some kind of hope about everything, especially about religion.

When a doctor comes out of a hospital room and someone is dying and he shakes his head and says: “there’s no hope;” everybody goes to pieces.

But, no matter how serious the condition the person is in, no matter how sick they are, or how close to death they are, as long as the doctor says: “there’s some hope, there’s some hope,” well, they hold together. But, when he comes out and says: “no hope;” everybody breaks down.

So, that’s the reason people have to have some kind of hope to keep their sanity because they do have some kind of hope.

But, I’m not interested in a hope; I want a good hope. The Scripture talks about a *“good hope.”* I’m not interested in a religious refuge or a religious hope; I want a *“living hope,”* don’t you? The Bible talks about a *“living hope.”*

A good hope is God given. That’s what our text says: *“He hath given us a good hope.”* It’s God given. God is the author of a good hope. I’m not the author of it.

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Somebody said one time: “A hope is only as good as the power and intent of its author.” Think about that: a hope is only as good as the power and intent of its author. “*God hath given us a good hope; he hath begotten us again unto a living hope.*”

Then, a good hope is in, not in the law, in works, religion, in a denomination, or in a church, but in Christ: “*He hath given us a good hope in Christ.*” That’s where the hope is.

The hope is not in what we’ve done but what He’s done, not in whom we are but who He is. It’s not in our relationship with God, but in His relationship with God. Do you see that? Christ said, “*I in them and thou in me.*”

Then, a good hope is through grace, not through works, not merit, not what we have earned, not wages for services rendered, but it is grace alone.

Now then, what are the marks, what are the evidences, what are the results of a good hope? Let’s look at seven of them. I can give them to you in the time we have today. I wouldn’t care if you wrote them down; I wouldn’t be offended at all if you jotted down these seven marks of a good hope:

First of all: We have to start at the beginning; we are born in sin!

I know that’s repulsive to some people; they get real upset when you talk about being born in sin, and you talk about children being born in sin, but that’s what God’s Word says.

Would you take the Word of God for it? We are born in sin. Let David speak: “*the man after God’s own heart, the sweet Psalmist of Israel.*” Let David speak: He says in **Psalm 51:5**; “*I was shapen in iniquity; in sin my mother did conceive me.*” That is what David said. In **Psalm 58:3**; listen: “*The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born speaking lies.*”

You see in **Romans 5:12**: let Paul speak, “*whereby one man, sin entered the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men for that all sinned.*”

Let Christ speak: “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” That’s all it is and that’s all it will ever be: “*In the flesh no man can please God. In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit:*”

“*Marvel not; (don’t be amazed, then), that I say to you: you must be born again.*” So, being born in sin, to have a good hope, you would have to be “*born again.*” Do you see that, “*to be born again?*”

Very few people know much about the new birth. I don’t claim to know a great deal about the new birth. I know that you don’t get born yourself a second time any more than you can born yourself the first time.

I know three things about the new birth from the Word of God.

The new birth is a mystery, I know it is, but I know three things about the new birth; I know:

First: It is of God. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ said: *“He came unto his own and his own received him not: but as many as received him, to them gave he the privilege to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, (that is of fleshly inheritance), not of the will of man, not of the will of the flesh, but they were born of God, (born from above).”*

This new birth; I know that there is a lot of talk about it today and everybody is talking about they are born again Christians. I think what they are calling the new birth is simply a decision, a religious decision, or a religious commitment, or a religious association, or a religious set of rules.

Adopting a new birth is not something you join; it is someone who joins you. It is supernatural; it's of God. God is its author. Just like my father in the flesh begetting me physically, my heavenly Father begat His children spiritually. We are born of God.

Second: I know the Holy Spirit is the agent in the new birth; we are born of the Spirit of God. Our Lord said in describing the work of the Holy Spirit and the new birth; He said: *“it is like the wind; the wind blows where it pleases. You hear the sound. You can't tell from whence it cometh or whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

The Spirit of God is the agent in the new birth. It's not a preacher or an evangelist or a soul-winner; it's the Spirit of God.

Third: the means in the new birth; it is the Word of God: *“of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth.”* You are born again *“not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.”*

So, here's the first mark of a good hope, the first results of a good hope and evidence is to be born again.

Secondly: We have sinned!

Mr. Spurgeon preached a sermon one time on “We Have Sinned.” He went all the way through the Bible. He took Adam and he took Akan and he took Esau and he took Saul and he took Judas and he took all of these people and this is what they say: “we have sinned.”

Can you say that; “I have sinned?” You would just be telling the truth; “I have sinned.” *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All we like sheep have gone astray.”*

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I have sinned in will, in practice, in word and deed, imagination, in motive, and in attitude; I have sinned with my lips, with my hands, with my feet, with my eyes, with my ears, and with my tongue; “I have sinned.”

Can you say that? It’s not too hard to say is it? Pretty hard and mean though, isn’t it, “I have sinned?” Well, I have sinned. David said: *“My sins are ever before me. Against God have I sinned.”*

All right, a good hope then would be to be pardoned, forgiven of all my sins. Wouldn’t that be a great hope? That would be a good hope wouldn’t it? That would be a living hope.

Paul said: *“All have sinned.”* Isaiah said: *“All we like sheep have gone astray.”* My question to them is: “Is there pardon then for the guilty? Is there mercy for the sinner? Is there? The Bible says yes!

It says in **Romans 4:7 and 8**: *“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.”* God is not like man. When God forgives, He said: *“I remember your sins no more. I cast them behind my back into the depths of the sea I remember them no more:*

“Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom God will not charge sin.” That is a blessing isn’t it? That would be a good hope.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: *“He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin”* (Christ knew no sin, had no sin and did no sin) *that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ;”* forgiven, and pardoned.

Somebody said:

**“Nearer so nearer to God
Nearer I cannot be
In the person of his Son
I’m as near as He.”**

We are pardoned, cleansed, and forgiven; my sins are blotted out through Christ’s blood. The blood of Christ is so powerful, so effectual, that even God the Father cannot see my sins when they are under the blood.

Thirdly: We don’t have any righteousness before the law! Having a good hope would be to have a perfect standing, a perfect holiness before God’s law. What does the law say? Paul said, *“You that would be under the law; do you not hear the law?”* Do you know what the law says?

Do you know what the law of God requires? I hear people talk about the law of God, and the law of God being the rule for the life of the believer and so-forth and so-on. Do you know what the law says; do you know what it requires?

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The law says this: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength; (now you think that over a little bit), and thy neighbor as thyself.”* It will suffer no compromise. It will suffer no whittling down. That’s what the law says and that’s what the law has always said.

The law of God requires perfection. It can accept no less. It can be satisfied with no less and it can demand no more: *“thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength and thy neighbor as thyself.”*

My soul my friend; that’s the reason *“whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty, before God.”*

But that law has not been repealed; it’s still on the books, it’s still a summary of God’s holiness and that law is going to be satisfied; some way it’s going to be honored.

God’s not going to throw it in the waste can; He’s not going to repeal it and there’s not going to be a constitutional change in glory; you are going to meet that law and you are going to honor it or you are going to be cast out of God’s presence.

You say that “it’s impossible.” Well, it’s not in Christ. It is with men: *“With men it’s impossible, (but not with Christ) with Christ all things are possible.”*

You see; that’s why He became a man; the law made its demands upon men and in order for men to be saved and to honor the law; men have got to obey it. But, we can’t; we don’t have the ability, we don’t have the righteousness, so Christ did that for us.

You see, the justice of God has got to be obeyed and satisfied. I’ve got to have a perfect standing before the law of God and in Christ I have it; in Christ I have that perfect standing. *“He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”*

Now, are you with me, being born in sin, a good hope would be to be born again. Having sinned before God, a good hope would be to have sin forgiven.

Having no righteousness, no standing before the law, no covering; a good hope would be to have such a righteousness. With His spotless righteousness on, I’m as righteous as God’s own Son.

Fourthly: I’m still in the flesh! I still am a man. I still know that I am frail flesh subject to temptations, subject to trial, subject to fall, and so are you. I’m not in heaven yet. I’m still here on this earth and I’m still in the flesh.

A good hope, a living hope would be to continue in that faith and to hold fast the confidence of my profession firm unto the end. In other words; let me tell you this, a good hope would be to

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continue in Christ until I die, until the end of the journey. *“He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.”* That is what the Bible says.

Now, some old fellow writing years ago says: “the believer is hedged about on one side with the promises of God, lest he despair. We are hedged about on one side with the promises of God, lest we despair and on the other side with warnings, lest we presume.”

Now, the Bible teaches preservation; Christ will keep us: *“we are kept by the power of God through faith.”* God keeps us. He said, *“My sheep will never perish; I give them eternal life, they will never perish. All that the Father giveth me will come to me.”*

The Bible also preaches perseverance. Not only will Christ hold us but we shall hold to Him. Listen to **Hebrews 3:6**: *“Christ is a Son over his own house whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence firm unto the end.”* Don’t be afraid of “if” in the Word of God. Our Lord said: *“If you can believe, all things are possible to them that believe, if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled.”*

In other words, if you believe, if you believe now, you will always believe. If you have repented and you are now repenting and you shall repent. Belief and repentance; they are a continual condition. Repentance is a state of being. Faith is a state of being. It’s not an isolated act.

Then, **Hebrews 3:14** says: *“We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.”* Paul said, *“The just shall live by faith but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”*

So, we need to learn something about two things here: preservation by the power of God and perseverance by faith; we shall continue. That would be a good hope wouldn’t it, to continue in love with Christ, to continue in love with the Word, to continue in faith, resting in Him, walking with the Saviour?

Just like Enoch of old, just walked with God and walked right on into heaven, walking with God. He walked with God and one day he was not because God took him; he just walked right on into heaven.

Now, let me warn you. I warn you solemnly and I warn you sincerely: a little isolated profession of faith that took place years ago is a mighty poor hope if it’s not growing in grace, if it’s not growing in the fruit of the Spirit, if it’s not continuing in Christ Jesus.

A fellow said to a friend of mine one time: “Do you believe I’m saved?” He said: “You wait and see me in 30 years and I will tell you because saved people continue to walk with Christ.”

Fifthly: A mark of a good hope is we are dying men!

Richard Baxter said one time: “I preach as one who may never preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men.” A good hope would be to find dying grace in that day.

You know; the Bible talks about the Old Testament believers, and it says: *“these all died,”* and they did, every one of them died, that is, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah. They all died; all men die: *“it is appointed unto men once to die,”* but they died in faith.

That’s what I want. That would be a living hope. That would be a good hope to die in faith, to be able to come to the end of the journey like the apostle Paul and say: *“I fought a good fight. I’ve kept the faith. I finished my course, henceforth, there’s laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day, and not to be only, but all of them that love his appearing.”*

How you start the race is mighty important but equally important is how you finish. I say that to you very solemnly: *“For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.”*

A good hope, a good hope, is one day to close my eyes in faith and open them to see Christ. Men generally die like they live; that’s generally true, they generally die like they live. If they live in love with Christ and lived by faith in Christ, and lived and walked with Christ, they usually die that way.

But, I hear people say: “He’s gone to be with the Lord.” A lot of times I think; well, he never cared anything about being with the Lord while he was here. Wonder why he wants to be with him now?

He was a fellow who never worshipped, who never read the Word, never fellowshiped with God’s people and he dies and somebody says: “he’s gone to be with the Lord.”

I want to say, he didn’t care anything about being with the Lord when I knew him. I wonder what pleasure he finds now being with the Lord?” I don’t believe he’s with the Lord, to be honest with you.

I believe that men die like they live. I believe that if they live in unbelief, they die in unbelief. If they live in rebellion, they die in rebellion. If they live in sin, they die in sin. If a man lives in Christ he will die in Christ. That’s just so! That’s not only Bible, that’s common sense.

Sixth: Our corrupt body one day it will be buried; they are going to put it in the ground. You can put it in a sliding drawer in a mausoleum or in the ground or in a cement vault or wherever you want to, but this body is going back to the dust.

You see; the decay is from within and it’s going back to the dust: *“to the dust thou art to dust shalt thou return.”* And one day it’s going to go back to the dust.

What’s a good hope? The good hope would be to rise again: *“when this corruption shall put on incorruption and this mortal, immortality, this weakness shall put on glory and strength, (and this shame shall put on God’s very image).”* David said: *“I’ll be satisfied when I wake with his likeness.”*

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You know; one time Job said: *“I wish you would write this in a rock with a pen of a diamond, a diamond point. Here’s my testimony; write this in the rock: I know my redeemer liveth and he’s going to stand on this earth: And though worms destroy this body; in my flesh I’m going to see the Lord.”*

I want to be raised from the grave. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”* I want to rise with Christ in that first resurrection, don’t you? Well; God will have to do it. I can’t bring forth life, either here or then; He’s going to have to raise me.

Seventh: In the last place there is going to be an eternity some day and Christ will have the preeminence throughout all eternity: *“God’s given him a name above every name that in the name of Christ every knee shall bow.”*

Christ is going to have preeminence. All things are going to be as they are related to Him. I want to be in the image of Christ. He said: *“When we see him we are going to be like him and he that hath this hope, (what hope, yes that Christ is coming), when Christ comes we are going to be like him.”* That’s my hope; that is the ultimate hope.

You can go back to this thing being born in sin and having sins committed and having no righteousness and being frail flesh and needing pardon and forgiveness and needing resurrection; it all comes down to this: my hope is to be like Christ!

“I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness.” That hope is through grace, God-given, in Christ!