

Hope Keeps You Going

Psalm 27:1-14

Halifax: 16 July 2017

Introduction:

Today we are beginning a new sermon series in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians.

- For the next few months, we will be digging into these wonderful letters.

But why Thessalonians?

- I chose these letters because here we have a letter to a model church!
 - Paul says that many were helped by their example.
 - We ought to aspire to be like them.
- What was so exemplary about them?
 - The thing that stood out was their hope in God.
 - They were so sure of Him that they served Him, even though the Jews who did not receive the gospel came raging against them with all kinds of accusations and assaults.
 - The persecution was so strong that the brothers had to smuggle Paul away to Berea for his safety, and even then, the Jews at Thessalonica went after him so that he had to be smuggled away again.
 - Now you might think that the new believers at Thessalonica would have drawn back in fear...
 - But not them!
 - Despite all of this, they kept on for Jesus, turning from their idols to serve the living God...
 - Everyone was talking about it, and it brought great encouragement to believers everywhere.
- Throughout these letters, Paul speaks of their hope.
 - It was their hope in God that kept them going when affliction came.
 - They believed that their lives were in God's hands and that meant that nobody could ultimately harm them.
 - Paul not only commends them for their hope, but he also seeks to strengthen their hope even more. He writes things to help them maintain a proper hope.
 - So the letters to them that we are studying not only show us what hope does, but also provide instruction that will help us strengthen and maintain our hope.
- We need that, don't you think?
 - We live in a society that is increasingly hostile to Christ and His church.
 - There is more and more opposition.
 - Where once we were thought a bit odd for following Christ, but respected, now we are looked on as complete fools—and even worse than that, as wicked and dangerous.
 - Pressure is on us to conform to the world—as so many Christians are doing.
 - Just this week, the announcement came out that Eugene Peterson had changed his views on same sex marriage.
 - That makes those who maintain the truth all the more marginalised.
 - Without hope in God, you will not be able to go on for the Lord, but will wilt away.

- And it is not just that—there is also the lure of the world...
- Without hope in God, you lose sight of the riches that you have in Jesus Christ and when that happens, the things that world offers will start to look more and more attractive—
 - success, riches, honours, popularity, pleasures, sexual indulgence, immodest clothing—the list is endless.
 - If you lose sight of what you have in Christ, you will turn to other things and your witness as a Christian will fail.
 - You will substitute being a nice person who is thought well of for being a testimony to Jesus and His kingdom.
 - You need to maintain your hope in God or you will wilt away!

Today, I want to kick off this series in the way I usually kick off a new series...

- By presenting to you a Psalm of Focus that is related to our new sermon series...
 - a Psalm that we will sing every week that is related to Thessalonians.
 - And because Thessalonians emphasises hope, it is a Psalm in which the hope of God's people is richly expressed.
- In the Psalms, God has given us sacred songs that belong to us as His people...
 - songs that He inspired by His Spirit that are filled with yearnings and desires and sentiments that we ought to cultivate...
 - yearnings and sentiments that belong to our glorious King, Jesus Christ, the head and Saviour of the whole church.
 - They are His songs, and we are to learn to sing them with Him—not just learn to sing the words, but to make the desires and sentiments in them our own desires and sentiments as we serve God in a world that opposes us.

The Psalm I have chosen is Psalm 27.

- Please listen as I read it to you now—this is the holy Word of God.

Psalm 27:1-14: «A *Psalm* of David.» The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. ³ Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I *will be* confident. ⁴ One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. ⁵ For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. ⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the

LORD. ⁷ Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. ⁸ *When You said*, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.” ⁹ Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. ¹⁰ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me. ¹¹ Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. ¹² Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. ¹³ *I would have lost heart*, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!

May the Lord bless the reading and now the preaching of His Word.

I. Let's begin with an overview of the entire Psalm.

A. Notice how the whole Psalm is an expression of David's hope...

1. In verses 1-6, he testifies that his hope is set firmly in God despite all troubles.
 - God is his light and salvation and that is his hope—that is what he lives for.
 - He is sure that whatever comes against him, no matter what it is, will fail.
2. Then in verses 7-12, David moves from assertion to prayer...from declaring how God is his sure hope to pleading with God as his only hope!
 - He prays as one who realises that he has no other resource to turn to in a world that is full of bitter enemies would like nothing better than to draw him away from God.
3. And then at the end of the Psalm in verses 13 and 14, he shows us how important hope is to keep him going on for the Lord.
 - a. Verse 13 is very interesting because in the original, it does not include the words at the beginning of the verse that are in italics.
 - They are added as words that are implied, but in the original Hebrew the sentence is left incomplete for effect...
 - He simply says:
 - **Unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living...** and breaks off right there!
 - It is a very effective way of showing that everything would have been lost if he had not had hope...
 - if he had not believed that he would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living...that God would come through for Him.
 - It is sort of like saying,
 - “Unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living—...— I can't even describe what would have become of me!”
 - I should now be ruined—I would have collapsed—I would have given up all!
 - Hope in God is the key to keeping on!
 - b. So in vs. 14, David urges himself to keep on waiting for God—setting his hope in God.
 - Look at it—he says,
 - **Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!**
 - When I first read this verse, I thought perhaps he turned here to encourage the congregation to keep on waiting for the Lord...
 - But when I studied it further, I learned that it is not plural but singular.
 - This indicates that he is speaking to his own soul as he sometimes does in other Psalms.

- Realising how ruined he would be if he had not believed that he would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,
 - He is exhorting himself to wait on the Lord—to wait for Him, knowing that He will come through in the end.
 - He is calling himself to be courageous, because God will strengthen his heart—God will give him the courage of hope!
 - So he says again, a second time—**Wait, I say, on the LORD!**

TRANS> As the king of God's people, David had tremendous pressure on him...

- because God judges His people as a nation on the basis of what their king does.
 - That is why it was so very important for David to keep his hope in God—so that he would not plunge the kingdom of God into ruin and bring them under God's displeasure as many of Israel's kings did.

B. But my brothers and sisters, as you sing this Psalm, I want you to know that you have an even better king than David!

1. David was but a type of the true king of God's people—

- He was the Lord's anointed one (His Christ) only in his generation, but now we have Jesus who is God's anointed King forever!
- David was a forerunner of Him, and represented Him, but Jesus is the king who lives forever and who never fails.
 - With Him as our king, the kingdom will never fall under God's displeasure again because Jesus pleases the Father for all of us!
 - He has come in our flesh, though He was the Son of God, and He has not only led us in perfect righteousness,
 - but He has also made satisfaction for all our sins.

2. And I tell you that when we sing this Psalm, we need to see more than David as the one whose song this is!

- Jesus Christ Himself was and is sustain by this same hope!
 - It was because of hope in God that He stood up against the opposition of all His enemies and all they threw at Him—
 - Not only was He severely rejected and opposed, but He was also offered fame and all the kingdoms of the world by the Devil.
 - He could not have endured the cross if He had not believed that He would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!
 - It was because of the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame.
 - All the while, He knew that He would be raised up again—that God would accept His sacrifice for the church—
 - And that not only He Himself, but He and all His people would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!
 - If He had for a moment thought that the cross would be the end, He would never have been able to endure it!
 - But like His forerunner David—yea, much more than David...
 - He encouraged Himself to wait and the LORD until His hope was fulfilled...

- And even now He continues to wait for His church to be filled with all for whom He died, knowing that His kingdom will come.
 - From heaven, He speaks this Psalm of hope,
 - both asserting that God will fulfill all things for Him as in vv 1-6,
 - and also praying fervently that He will fulfil all things as in vv 7-12!
3. And my brothers and sisters, it is for you to join with Jesus in singing this Psalm of hope.
- The Psalms are the songs that God has given us to sing.
 - Here in this Psalm, we have a perfect expression of the hope that belongs to everyone who has come to Jesus for salvation.
 - This hope is your hope in Christ...
 - God is your light and your salvation so that there is no cause for fear...
 - Aspire to make the words of this Psalm and the hope with which they are filled your own hope—that you might be sustained by hope in hard times.

C. Do you see how much you need this hope?

1. Life is hard!
 - Do I need to tell you that we are not in heaven yet?
 - You know how strong the temptation can be to make the Lord something a little bit less than the very reason you live.
 - To find fulfillment in something else—to be eased from the ridicule and hatred that comes when you earnestly follow Christ.
2. You need to hold on to Jesus and believe with Him that the Lord will not fail you.
 - You need to confess your hope and you need to pray earnestly for your hope.
 - Only then will you be able to stand against the pressure and not wilt away.

II. So let us sing with King Jesus in verse 1-6 of how our hope is entirely in God!

A. Sing with Him that God is your light and our salvation as it says in verse 1.

1. With Him as your light—
 - You know with certainty what life is all about.
 - There is no aimless wandering about for you.
 - There are no empty pursuits.
 - You know where you are going and you know the way.
 - You know the way of forgiveness and justification.
 - You know that you are sinner and that Jesus died to atone for sin and will pardon all who trust in Him.
 - You know the commandments.
 - You know what God has said about abortion and about marriage and fornication.
 - You know the truth about lying and gossip and lust.
 - You know that you are to love your neighbour as yourself.
 - God is your light and you are not in the darkness any more.
2. And not only is He your light, He is also your salvation—
 - You have complete deliverance through Him.
 - He has set you free from bondage to sin, to death, to hell, to Satan, to selfishness, to the flesh, to the world.

- You have grace by His Spirit to believe and to follow Him.
 - You could not do it if He were not your saviour and your salvation.
 - But He is your salvation—Jesus Himself has come to save you, and He has not failed and He will not fail.
 - You are kept by faith through the power of God for salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last day.
 - That is your glorious hope with God as your salvation.
- 3. Yes indeed, He is (as verse 1 says) the strength of your life (v. 1).
 - He is the one who holds you up and keeps you going, even as the Father held Jesus up and kept Him going when He was here.
- B. So sing with King Jesus of how sure you are that God will bless you despite all your enemies!
 1. How powerful are the words at the end of verse 1, **“Of whom shall I be afraid?”**
 - If God is for you, there is no enemy that is able to keep Him from blessing you.
 - No enemy is even in the same league with God—not even close...
 - They are mere creatures, but He is their creator in whom they live and move and have their being.
 - He can shut them off more easily than you can switch off a light.
 2. There is no reason to fear what others might do when God is on your side.
 - What can separate you from His love?
 - What can keep you from your hope?
 - Can poverty, sickness, persecution, failure at school or work, being unpopular, barrenness, lack of success, the collapse of our society?
 - Why should you look to things like your own success, beauty, popularity, security, riches, and such things for your happiness when you have God?
 3. You can say as in verse 2, that even when your enemies come to eat up your flesh—like ravenous beasts...
 - a. They end up stumbling and falling!
 - Since the world began, they have been trying to destroy God’s people...
 - They tried to destroy Christ—they put forth all their power...
 - But they stumbled and fell.
 - That is the hope of which you sing!
 - The kingdom of Christ can never be destroyed by them.
 - It can be purged of false sons.
 - Its true sons can be chastened for sin, but that is only for our good.
 - How happy they were when they arose against Christ and had Him crucified—but it was only to have Him rise in victory over them!
 - They will all stumble and fall, but the kingdom is forever.
 - b. You can sing as in verse 3 that even if a whole army should encamp against you...literally if an encampment should encamp against you...
 - if a whole war should be raised against you as it was against Christ...
 - your heart shall not fear because in this you are confident—that God is your light and your salvation!
 - You are invincible because of Him.

- C. There is but one desire of which our David (King Jesus) speaks—
- It is expressed in verse 4: **“One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.”**
 - Once you see that that is everything, you won’t be afraid of anything!
 - You can lose all that you have in this world.
 - Your body can be torn to pieces, but no one can take you away from God... He is our dwelling place in all generations!
1. To dwell in God’s house and behold His beauty is the ultimate in happiness!
 - As Augustine once said, “to seek God is to seek happiness—to find Him is happiness itself.”
 - How true that is!
 - There is nothing greater to seek—nothing more fulfilling, nothing more satisfying...that is our hope!
 - Seeing His glory fills you to the fullest—beyond your capacity no matter how large it grows!
 - Now we see through a glass darkly, but soon we will see face to face...
 - But even now, we are able to see the glory of God in our sufferings more clearly and more to our satisfaction than ever before.
 - In the New Testament, joy is often spoken of—and almost every time it is, it is spoken of in the midst of the greatest troubles!
 - That is the time that we are especially able to draw near to God.
 2. He keeps you by drawing you into His dwelling place in the day of trouble so that you are able to see His beauty like never before as your light and salvation!
 - In verse 5 we express our certainty that He will receive us in the way.
 - **For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion (or lair, like a lion’s den); in the secret place of His tabernacle (or tent) He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.**
 - Verse 6 explains that we will be raised above all the trouble that is being thrown at us so that it will not harm us...
 - **6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me...**
 - You may not see His glory when the temptation first comes, but wait for Him and you will be glad you did.
 3. And what will you do after this—after He has shown you His glory?
 - You will worship Him!
 - You will pour out yourself in grateful worship to Him!
 - Verse 6 continues: **Therefore [because He has been my dwelling place in time of trouble] I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.”**
 - We will be so overcome with gratitude and with delight in seeing His glory that we will joyfully give our lives to Him...
 - not reluctantly, but as one who can think of nothing you’d rather do!
 - As one who is full of songs of praise to Him for His love and grace and power that you cannot keep it in!

- Now you will say to me, but pastor, I am not there—I do not have such joy.
 - No, not yet...
 - But when trouble comes and you trust in Him as your light and your salvation, that will be the outcome when you have gone through it.
 - Jesus was overwhelmed by the cross, but with what joy did He come forth from the grave and ascend to His Father in glory!
 - Paul lived in this joy of one who loved to pour out his life for God...
 - and it was fuelled by seeing the glory of God in suffering...
 - And this is the same joy that the Thessalonians came to experience through their sufferings—because God was their light and salvation.

TRANS> And having sung of how all your hope is in God...

III. Then join with Jesus in fervent prayer to God that He would be all to you that He has promised to be.

- You know that as our king, Jesus makes intercession for us as His church—
 - And He also intercedes for each of us individually—
 - In singing this Psalm, you are to join Him in His earnest prayers for you and for the church as a whole.

A. He begins by pleading with God to hear Him.

1. See how earnest the plea is in v. 7.

- **Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.**
- He prays as if everything depends on God hearing...because everything *does* depend on God hearing!
 - Pray to Him knowing that He must hear and answer because nothing else will do—you have no other place to turn—He is all you have and truly there is nothing else worth having.

2. And indeed, He expects God to hear because it is God who has told Him to seek His face.

- As vs. 8 says, He said, seek my face, and my heart said: “your face I will seek!”
 - What a marvellous thing it is to have the holy God against whose glory and majesty we have sinned tell us to seek His face!
 - You have heard His call mediated through Jesus who is His face!
 - He has said, “Come to Me, and I will give you rest!”
 - He has said, “Look to me, and be saved!”
 - Who could hear such a call and refuse it?
 - He has invited you, and you have responded!
 - How could He now turn you away?
 - It is He who called you—it is He who invited you—it is He who rejoiced when you came.

3. Oh yes, He might be angry with you (v. 9)—and with good reason!

- In verse 9, we plead with Him with these words: **Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.”**
 - His anger is justly aroused because of our sin...
 - David provoked God to anger on a couple of occasions—and there were consequences—very dire consequences.
 - David’s descendants provoked God even more with idols and the result was that the whole nation was cast out and brought to Babylon.
 - Yes, and even Jesus was cut off out of the land of the living, not because of His own sins, but because of ours...
 - He was forsaken on the cross on account of our transgressions, but only that He might be raised again for our justification.
 - And now the kingdom itself will never be forsaken again because now Jesus has been established as our king of perfect righteousness forever!
 - That means that even though we as individuals or as churches and or nations may be chastened and cut off...
 - our King will never fail to have God’s favour—the whole kingdom will never be cast out again.
 - And that means that we will always be able to return to our King where there is grace and blessing and favour.
4. Yes, you are more secure than you are with your own father and mother.
- As we sing in verse 10, **When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.**
 - There are times when even our loving parents will let us down—even Jesus’ mother came with his brothers when they thought He had gone mad...
 - Parents fail, parents have their limits...
 - But the Lord is always there for us once we come to Him.
 - We are part of His household...
- B. So plead with God to establish you (and us) in His beautiful ways!
1. That is the request in verse 11 and 12:
 - **Ps 27:11-12: Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. 12 Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.**
 - a. The LORD is perfecting us for glory—to dwell in His house forever...
 - even while our enemies are raging against us,
 - accusing us and trying to destroy us...
 - He is perfecting us and sanctifying us for glory.
 - b. We are here asking Him to teach us His way...
 - to lead us in a smooth path—not so much an easy one, but a straight path—an upright path is the meaning here...
 - We want to learn to live in the all the ways of God’s commandments, even while these enemies are trying to keep us from doing that...
 - We ask for God’s help *because* of them.
 2. There are two kinds of enemies spoken of here that we face in this world...

- a. The word translated *enemy* in verse 11 refers to first kind—the kind that watches you closely so that they can accuse you of wrongdoing.
 - What this enemy does is described in verse 12 as bearing false witness.
 - You know how some of the Jews did that to Jesus—they watched Him so that they could find fault with Him...
 - They wanted Him to break the law so that they could accuse Him, but all He ever did was break their traditions that they had added to the law.
 - Yet, they were so zealous to accuse Him that they came up with reasons to crucify Him—because He said that He was the Son of God.
 - This is the kind of enemy we face to today that accuses us of being evil because we say that it is wrong to have sex with someone that is the same gender as you, or with anyone you are not married to.
 - Or that teaching children about God is child abuse.
 - Or one that accuses us of wrong for teaching that Jesus is the only way to be delivered from hell.
- b. The other kind of enemy is the one called an adversary in verse 12.
 - This is the one that attacks God's people—assaults them, imprisons them, tortures them, and even tries to kill them.
 - They are described in verse 12 as those who **breathe out violence**.
 - Violence is the very air they breathe—they cannot live without it.
 - They have a deep, deep, hatred to God and to His people, an irrational hatred—and they want to wipe them out if they can.
- c. Our prayer is that these enemies will not keep us from walking in the will of God—from keeping His commandments.
 - Our hope is not in ourselves, and that is why we cry out to God.
 - We cannot stand against them, and we would give up if we did not trust in God to help us.

Conclusion:

So you see in this Psalm how Jesus maintained His hope even though Satan and all his hosts and the world and all its people stood in opposition to Him.

- You can see how even Jesus can say, as in verse 13, **unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living...**
 - If He had not believed that in the end, He would overcome His enemies and deliver up the people He came to save to God...
 - If He had not continued in hope—He would have surely given up.
- But as our king, He had hope that sustained Him all the way through the suffering of the cross.
 - And now He invites you, dear child of God, to share with Him in that hope.
 - That hope will sustain you—it will keep you going for God in this world just like it kept the Thessalonians going.

Over the next few weeks, it is my desire that our hope will be deepened as we study the book of Thessalonians together.

- So let us be continually exhorting ourselves with the words of verse 14:
 - **Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!**