

## Evotional

**Sermon title: “Hope unswervingly.”**

**Speaker: Neil Durling.**

**Bible passage: 1 Corinthians 13:13.**

**Date: 10.11.13.**

### **Message:**

The reality of life is that sometimes our situation seems hopeless. In The Message version of today’s verse we are encouraged by Paul to **hope unswervingly**.

**What does hope mean?** It isn’t a vague “I hope it doesn’t rain...” The Greek word, *elpis* means: *Desire of some good with expectation of obtaining it. The object of hope, the thing hoped for. The foundation or ground of hope. Confidence. Security.* Basically, instead of some vague hope in something that we aren’t sure about, the Bible encourages us to place concrete hope in God. Interestingly though, there is no logical reason for this hope in God. Look at the life of Abram, for example. A God he didn’t know called him to follow to a land he hadn’t told him about!

**But this word hope is mentioned 180 times in the Bible.**

Below are a few observations:

**Hope in other things is hopeless:** The book of Proverbs is a collection of pithy sayings for young adults written by King Solomon. He encourages us to seek wisdom, and one way we do that is to place our hope in God. He is quite blunt and tells the reader ten times that placing their hope in anyone or anything other than God is hopeless. Interestingly, in Paul’s era the majority of secular thinkers didn’t see hope as a virtue, rather as a delusion. Paul believed this was because they were without God.

**Hope is more vital in tough times:** Job is arguably the darkest, bleakest book in the Bible but is saturated with the talk of hope (it’s alluded to eighteen times). The interesting thing is that there isn’t a clear line about this hope, although it is central in Job’s thoughts (Compare: “Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for...” [6:8] with: “What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient?” [6:11]. Or: “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.” [7:6] with: “You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.” [11:18] ). I believe that those of us who are going through tough times have much to teach the rest who are living in sunshine and happiness at the current time. It is sad that often we only hear the “happily ever after” stories in churches...

**Hope in God swerves:** The Psalms mention hope thirty-four times. And this hope, contrary to Eugene Peterson, does in fact swerve. In some Psalms hope in God is rock solid, whilst in others it is like blancmange. Just like Job, hope fluctuates - as it does at times in some of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah. There is a questioning of God, whilst at the same time offering hope to captive Israel.

Interestingly, Psalm 119, which focuses on God’s word, mentions hope the most - seven times. Could it be that the Bible should be a source of hope for us?

**Hope is in the resurrected Jesus:** Matthew 12:21 says: “In his name the nations will put their hope.” Whilst the religious leaders hoped to catch him out (Luke 20:20), Herod hoped he’d perform a trick (Luke 23:8) and some lost hope (Luke 24:21), the early Christians placed their hope in Jesus.

The early church placed their hope in the resurrection of the dead, which Jesus led. Why? Jesus’ resurrection proved forgiveness of sins and that Jesus was indeed who he said he was. Paul launched a hope offensive in the book of Romans, mentioning it fourteen times, when he tried to unite Jews and Gentiles under Jesus. He understood the Christian hope as a fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. Paul continues this theme in 1 and 2 Corinthians, mentioning hope another fourteen times. In fact, all Paul’s letters mention hope!

For example: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” (Hebrews 6:19) “Jesus is our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1). Interestingly, Revelation doesn’t mention hope. I guess this is because we will then be face-to-face with the eternal answer to our searching for hope – Jesus. For he is the heart of our hope, however un/swervingly we place our hope in him.

### **Questions:**

1. Where am I placing my hope: In God or in other people/things?
2. How have I placed my hope in God in the tough times?
3. Think of a tough time when hope in God has unexpectedly come to me and share it with the group.
4. If hope swerves where is mine, when it comes to God, at the current time?
5. If Psalm 119 guides us to the Bible to help us find hope in God, which Bible passages have provided me with hope over the years?
6. Do I go to the Bible when faced with hopeless situations?
7. How do I practically place my hope in the resurrected Jesus?

### **Prayer:**

Father God, thank you that although my hope in you is tested, and sometimes swerves, you never leave me. Amen.