

# Taking New Territory in Troubling Times, Pt. 10

Steve Berger

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## Today

We've been going through 1 Thessalonians and talking about taking new territory in troubling times. This book is not just a message for the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church in Thessalonica; it's a template for us today.

**So much of the world and so much of the Church today has taken a posture of retreat, of apathy, of stagnation, of waiting for the storm to pass. This is troubling! The Church—we followers of Jesus—must go *forward*, even in tough times, in the power of Christ!**

Today we pick up in chapter 5, and the message we find there is very applicable to us as *we decide whether we will retreat due to challenges in the world or advance to take new territory.*

### 1 Thessalonians 5:8–11

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

**Notice**—*faith*, *love*, and *hope* must be really important to God if Paul is repeating them here.

- In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul talks about the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope.
- In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about faith, hope, and love and says the greatest of these is love.
- Here in 1 Thessalonians 5:8–11, Paul puts a different spin on the concepts of faith, hope, and love.

**Question**—*Why would Paul use the military imagery and symbolism of a breastplate of faith and love and a helmet of hope?*

**Answer**—Because faith, love, and hope are spiritual weapons available to us for the spiritual battle we find ourselves in. They are offensive *and* defensive in nature.

**We need faith, love, and hope  
to advance offensively  
and to protect us defensively!**

## Faith

There is much we can say about faith—

### Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- Your faith is developed by the Word of God—by hearing it, reading it, knowing it, loving it.

## Luke 17:5

And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”

- It’s okay to look to Jesus and ask Him to increase your faith. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith—its Founder, Perfector, Initiator, Source, and Completer. (Hebrews 12:2)

## Mark 9:23–24

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

- A father came to Jesus and His disciples asking for the healing of his son, who was possessed by an evil spirit. When the disciples were unable to cast it out, Jesus spoke to the father about faith.
- The word for *believe* in the Greek is *pistis*, which is also the Greek word for faith. *Pistis* is a verb, an action word, something we do. Teachers throughout history have taught not just about believing something, but about *faithing* something. If you can *faith* something, ALL things are possible.
- The father responded with a plea to Jesus to increase his faith. Like this man, we can acknowledge the battle and struggle for faith, and ask God to help us in it!

## 1 John 5:4

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

- If we are going to overcome the world and be victorious in battle, we must be people of faith.

## Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

- Faith is the belief that the things we’re hoping for, that aren’t yet seen, will be seen and will happen. Faith is what gives us victory over the world and its ways.

## Matthew 17:20

So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”

- We have the promise that faith in God is overcoming and victorious.
- With faith all things are possible, including **the mountain-moving offensive power to take new territory in troubling times!**

**Application**—Each of these passages of Scripture says the same thing: Faith is radically important, and we need more of it.

**Faith is powerful, offensive, and protective;  
it changes circumstances  
and causes things to be that never were.  
Faith is the breastplate  
because it originates in our hearts and spirits  
and works its way out into visible expression.**

## WARNING—

Precisely because faith is so powerful and so essential, it comes under attack from the enemy of our souls. If you are a follower of Jesus, your faith will come under attack. You must have faith as a defensive breastplate.

## Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons . . .

- Paul could not be clearer or more emphatic that in the latter days—and we are living in latter days—people will depart from THE faith.
- People depart from THE faith because they have departed from their personal faith, which happens because of demonic assault and because they quit wearing the breastplate of faith.

### Luke 18:8

... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

- Jesus understands that the circumstance and situations that surround His return will be so problematic that it will cause many to lose their faith.
- We must use the breastplate of faith to advance offensively *and* protect defensively.

**When we walk in faith,  
there is nothing God can't do  
for us,  
through us,  
in us,  
and with us.**

## Love

### Jeremiah 31:3

The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you.”

- This means God loves us with a love that will never diminish or decay!
- God only ever loves us with the ultimate and fullest expression of love.
- This should give us massive amounts of **peace**.

**Application**—Think of the childhood game of picking a daisy and plucking the petals while saying, “He loves me . . . he loves me not . . . he loves me . . . he loves me not.” With God, that game looks like this:

“**He loves me! He loves me! He loves me! He loves me! He loves me! . . .**” (ad infinitum)

**The eternal, unending, unyielding love of God  
gives us peace and  
help us take new territory in troubling times.**

### Romans 8:38–39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Nothing can separate us from His love, and this gives us **confidence**.
- No matter what trial or tribulation, no matter the toughness of the situation, God’s love is before us, behind us, and on the side of us.
- His love is a strong tower and a bulwark that empowers us to go forth with confidence!

### 1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. . .

- Fear is always torment, and God is not in the business of torment.
  - For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

- When we behold the love of God that is always in front of us, we can live with **fearlessness**.
- When we give into fear, we are not meditating on the love of God. We are not fixed upon God's promises and presence and peace. We see ourselves as abandoned and alone and at the mercy of the devil, and fear grips our hearts.
- Love produces fearlessness in us as we go on the offensive to take new territory in troubling times.

### 1 Corinthians 13:8

Love never fails. . .

- Love is vital. And it never fails. Period.
- This truth creates **assurance** in us.

### WARNING—

Precisely because God's love is so powerful and vital, and because walking in it allows us to take so much spiritual territory, it come under attack.

Consider the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a pagan town, wealthy and popular. Then the Gospel came and transformed the town. People repented and were filled with Spirit. The Kingdom expanded there in the midst of revival fire and zeal. But a mere 60 years later, the people of Ephesus went from revival to receiving rebuke. Why? Their love got attacked, and they allowed it to happen. Here's what Jesus says to the church in Ephesus:

### Revelation 2:4–5

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

- The church had abandoned its red-hot, passionate, zealous love for Jesus.
- They allowed their love to cool by succumbing to the seducing spirit that told them to let up a little bit, take it easy, tone it down, and lighten up.
- The only solution is repentance and a return to their first love and zeal for Jesus.

Another end-times warning from Jesus about our love for Him comes in the context of social upheaval around the world during latter days:

### Matthew 24:12

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

- The love in our hearts gets victimized and attacked by the enemy of our soul, so we grow apathetic, cold, and weary.
- Jesus is saying to the church in America that has been besieged by comfort and convenience: WAKE UP. Pay attention to what's happening, repent, and return to your first love!

### What if we:

*Consider Bible reading as experiencing a love letter from God rather than as a spiritual duty?*

*Consider prayer to be not the repetition of unfelt words but communion with the Lover of our souls*

*Who is Chief among 10,000 (Song of Solomon 5:10)?*

**Love, when we walk in it,  
gives us peace, confidence, fearlessness, and assurance.  
When we lose it,  
we have nothing but cold, stale, dead religion.**

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## Hope

**This is essential—**

**The focus of our hope must be nobody but God Eternal, God Omnipotent, God Omniscient. Our hope must be in God and God alone. When we put our hope in God, we will never be disappointed (Romans 5:5).**

### Psalm 71:5

For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth.

- David was a king who had plenty of riches, power, strength, and charisma he could have hoped in. Instead, he hoped in God alone.
- We would do well to put our hope back in Jesus Christ and not in the affairs and institutions of men. We need those things—governments and law enforcement, etc., are prescribed by God—but **we hope in God alone.**

### Hebrews 6:19

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . .

- When we hope in God we are anchored in His presence, promises, and power. We are not tossed to and fro by the whims of society.

### Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

- White-knuckle your hope. Don't let it go. Don't release it. Don't relent. Don't go back. Hold onto it with everything you've got, and do it without wavering.
- How? Focus on the faithfulness of God, because He who promises to bring our hope to pass is faithful.

**Cover your thought-life with the joyful expectation of God coming through for you!  
Meditate on God, His power, and His promises.  
Get anchored, hold fast, and don't waver.  
He is faithful.**

### Warning—

Precisely because hope is so important, the enemy of our souls will challenge it.

### Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick . . .

- When we are waiting and hoping for something, it's called the "meantime," not the "nicetime." This play on words illustrates a real truth—that hoping and waiting for something can feel mean. Hoping and waiting can inflict anxiety upon us.
- Why? Because the enemy of our souls seizes the opportunity to whisper lies to us about God's goodness, His love, His power, and His care for us.
- If we don't have the helmet of hope to guard our thoughts, we will believe the lies, and our hope deferred will make our hearts sick.

**Personal**—Beloved, I know what it is like to experience attack in these areas. But in my life, with its many God-adventures, I can tell you confidently, if it weren't for the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of hope, I wouldn't have taken the territory I have. Where would I be without faith? Where would I be without love? Where would I be without hope? These three things have empowered me to take new territory in troubling times and have defended/protected me from the enemy!

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## Conclusion

**Question**—*Have your faith, love, and hope increased or decreased in 2020?*

If we don't **deliberately, intentionally** put on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of hope, it's easy to lose or watch decrease our faith, love, and hope.

Trying circumstances surround us, but here's what prevails over all—faith, love, and hope.

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## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the significance of faith, hope, and love in their various usages in Scripture.
2. What are some ways you can develop faith? How do you guard against losing faith?
3. Spend a moment reflecting on the breadth and depth of God's love for you. Why is His love the foundation of peace, confidence, fearlessness, and assurance?
4. Fear is a very real enemy. In what ways do you see fear in your own life and in the world at large? How does love destroy fear?
5. What is your attitude towards spiritual practices like Bible reading and prayer? How do these attitudes reflect your perception of God's love for you?
6. What do you hope in? How easy is it to transfer hope from God alone to someone or something else? How do you restore your hope in God, and why is it so important to do so?

# NOTES