

I Thessalonians 2:19-20

There is a Bible verse “you are my hope, joy and crown ...”, written from a Christian to a group of Christians. Does that sound really good? Do you want others to see you as their hope, joy and crown? Do you like to view others as your hope, joy and crown? I really like that, however, we need to study what does it mean. First, here is some background.

The book of I Thessalonians was written by Paul along with Silas and Timothy to church members in Thessalonica. Paul wrote this letter approximately A.D. 50 to 51 at Corinth (Acts 18:1 & 18:5). Thessalonica was a seaport city on the Aegean Sea (southern Greece). It was an important communication and trade center, and it was the largest city in Macedonia. Paul wrote this letter to encourage the Christians there and at the same time to give them Godly advices. Paul also explained that both the living and the dead will share Christ’s resurrection at the time of His second coming.

Paul had a very deep feeling toward this group of Christians. Several months before Paul wrote this letter, Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica from Philippi on Paul’s second missionary journey and preached the Good News there (Acts 17). Some accepted the Good News and the church was formed. Later, Paul sent Timothy to check on the Christians there, and Timothy returned to Paul with good news about the growth of the church. Paul then wrote this letter to the Christians there. However, what does it mean when Paul said “you are my hope...”?

1) My Hope

First, let’s look at the two “not”:

- a) Is the eternal hope for Paul - the Thessalonians? No, the hope is Paul’s eternal life when he meets Jesus again as he stated in Titus 2:13.
- b) Is the source of Paul’s hope - the Thessalonians? No, it is Jesus’ blood, His sacrificial death and resurrection. (I Peter 1:3-6)

Paul’s hope described in these verses are: 1) the Thessalonians will continue to have strong faith in Christ and keep it up, 2) the Thessalonians can spread the Good News effectively in the area, and 3) in the 2nd coming of Christ, Paul’s can see all the Thessalonians in Heaven.

2) My Joy

There are three aspects of Paul's joy:

- a) Paul led some Thessalonians to Christ, and the number grew in the area as his original fruits multiplied. It is a great joy for one person to repent (Luke 15:10) , and there were many had repented in Thessalonica.
- b) The Thessalonians held their faith and thus encouraged Paul and gave him joy (I Thes. 3:7-9)
- c) In the 2nd coming of Christ, Paul's hard work resulted in many joined God's family. That brought him joy whenever he thinks of that.

3) My Crown

The original Bible words in verse 19 are crown of rejoicing or glorying. It is mainly about the time in the second coming. Therefore, it only has "glory and joy" in verse 20. Very similar statement is in Phil. 4:1 "Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved". Led people to Christ would be Paul's "crown of rejoicing" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The word "crown" is a victor's crown. It is the crown of introducing someone to Christ. For us, we rejoice when we see people have been saved because of our faithful witness, individually and as a group of Christians. It is important to remember that we brothers and sisters at Church work as a team to witness Christ. Paul, Silas, Timothy, etc. worked as a team also.

"Hope, joy and crown" were what Paul said to the Thessalonians based on what Paul saw in the lives of the Thessalonians. You can be steadfast in your faith and continue to grow spiritually so that other Christians can see you as their hope, joy and crown. In the same way, you also can regard other Christians as your hope, joy and crown when you pray, encourage, teach and serve them. Best of all, God is in our midst when we love and encourage brothers and sisters in Christ.