

## 079 How Can I Find Hope?

### Romans 15:13

Message by Dr R Bruce Montgomery ~ Grace Church ~ 8/20/17

#### Introduction – Does anyone here need hope?

There's not much we can count on for sure in today's world. Things can seem so hopeless that it's easy for us to despair of things ever getting any better.

We live in what has been described as “*a culture of broken promises, broken relationships, shallow friendships, and flawed leaders.*”<sup>1</sup>

After a number of stabbing disappointments, we can come to the place where we expect little else than disappointment in life. And so we choose to hope for nothing in hopes that we won't be disappointed.

Some of you may be there today – life is so stressful, things seem so hopeless, that you've feel yourself sliding into despair – what John Bunyan called “*the slough of despondency.*”

Maybe you've lost a job, or are worried about having enough money to pay your bills, or you're sick, or a friend is sick. Maybe someone close to you just died, or moved away, or left you, and everything seems in turmoil.

Or you just moved into a new place, or started a new job, or started attending a new school. Everything is new – you don't know your way around. You don't now who you can trust.

Join the club! You're not alone. Even King David, called “*a man after God's own heart*” had periods of hopelessness when he felt all his friends, and even God had abandoned him.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Stiles

<sup>2</sup> As did the prophet Jeremiah, who laments his situation, feeling afflicted and abandoned by God, feeling all hope is gone. In the midst of his depression he writes, **Lamentations 3:21-25** “*Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope; because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. . . Lamentations 3:25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.*”

Usually those feelings arose when his mind became overwhelmed by what was happening around him. He mourned the loss of people who had been close. He felt surrounded by wicked and deceitful people who were all plotting against him. Even some of his own sons turned against him.

At such times he would turn his attention to the Lord, crying out to him for help. E.g. **Psalm 43:3** *Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.*

And then- I love it - he would sit down and have a little heart to heart talk with his soul.

**Psalm 43:5** *Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*

“Put your hope in God. . . .” Sounds so easy, but it doesn't just come automatically. There's a process involved. There are some things you should understand and do if you want to generate hope.

E.g. **Connie – new recipe books.** Runs to store to get needed ingredients, a stickler for following the process to a T.

In **Romans 15** Paul gives us a recipe for hope: ingredients and process.

We've already been told what cookbook we should be looking in. **Romans 15:4** *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

So immerse yourself in the Word of God. His promises will drown out the negative messages you are receiving from the world and from your own mind. Scripture answers the question, “*Is God trustworthy?*”

Godly hope comes as we read the stories in the Bible (such as Daniel in the Lions' Den) and realize that what seems hopeless, ultimately doesn't matter when God is for us, because nobody can stand against God. In moments of great pain, God's enduring

Word offers us a strong anchor<sup>3</sup> of the soul: truth that we cling to in a sea of swirling emotions.

Now in **verse 13** he returns to the subject of hope, filling in additional details on the ingredients and process

**Romans 15:13** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>4</sup>

Notice several things:

### **1. The Source and Object of Hope is God**

The first thing we notice is that Paul links hope to God.

“**The God of hope**” can be understood two ways: as the source of hope, or as the object of hope.<sup>5</sup> Both are true.

God is the source of hope because he is the source of all good things.

But he also is the object of hope, since we have hope in him and not in the counterfeit weaker things offered as objects of hope by our secular sinful world. Won’t find hope by “shopping” elsewhere.

If you put your hope in stocks and bonds or bank accounts you will find that they can disappear overnight.

Health will fail.

Houses can burn.

Jobs can be lost.

If you put your hope in other people, they will let you down, even those who love us. They’ll hurt us, they’ll cause us grief, they’ll disappoint us.

But the one who places his or her hope in God and trusts God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ can stand firm in anything. As Edward Motz expressed it in the well-known hymn:

***My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,***

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<sup>3</sup> The author of Hebrews calls our hope *an anchor for the soul, firm and secure* **Hebrews 6:19**

<sup>4</sup> This is a benediction prayer closing the first fifteen chapters of Romans. What follows is essentially personal matters and future plans.

<sup>5</sup> Grammatically speaking either as a subjective genitive or objective genitive.

***But wholly lean on Jesus’ name. . . .***

***When all around my soul gives way,***

***He then is all my Hope and Stay.***

***On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;***

***All other ground is sinking sand,***

***All other ground is sinking sand.***

**2. Hope is appropriated through trust.** There is a condition to receive hope – must trust. As you become more and more familiar with God’s ways, his character, and are filled with the Holy Spirit of God, then you will be able to trust him in your situation.

***Trust in him, ye saints, forever;***

***He is faithful, changing never;***

***Neither force nor guile can sever***

***Those he loves from him.***<sup>6</sup>

**3. Trust awakens joy and peace in our hearts – fill you with much joy and peace**

Notice God is the one who fills us with joy and peace, our only responsibility is to believe. As you trust in him he gives joy and peace. Before his departure from earth, Jesus spoke of peace and joy as parting gifts to his disciples. **John 14:27** ***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.***

**John 15:11** ***“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”***

In his high priestly prayer he prayed John 17:13 ***that we might have the full measure of his joy within us.***<sup>7</sup>

Joy and peace are listed as two of the fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23.**

Christian joy is not a matter of having a particular temperament. It isn’t a question of being an extrovert or an introvert. Some people are by nature more gloomy and morose than others. Even the normally cheerful people are sometimes

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<sup>6</sup> (Originally the third of five verses in Praise the Savior, this verse, unfortunately is omitted in some recent hymnbooks).

<sup>7</sup> John 17:13

plunged into deep despair when something goes contrary to their expectations.

And some who are naturally pessimistic are filled with a deep and steadfast joy as they learn to set their feet on the Solid Rock.

Joy is supernatural in its origin, and also in the way it expresses itself despite the circumstances.

**Romans 5:3-4** *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope.*

Becoming a Christian doesn't mean all your difficulties are over and you'll enjoy a trouble free life from then on (if anyone tries to give you a guarantee, run the other way!)

Bad breaks will come and we'll be confused by them. Death will come to someone we love and we will be agitated. Disappointments will shake us to the core of our being.

Non-believers react to trials and tribulations with despair, anger, resentment.

But, as strange as it may seem, the Christian can experience peace and even joy in the midst of bad things.

The reason we can rejoice instead of despair in the midst of our trials is we understand that, far from being harmful to us, suffering is a beneficial experience! God uses it to teach us and to transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

Much more could be said about joy, but let's talk a little bit about peace. First thing we need to understand is the difference between peace with God and the peace of God. The little prepositions must not be overlooked. They give a whole different meaning to sentences. **PEACE with GOD**

**Romans 5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*

*"At peace with God"* is a military metaphor. The idea here is that we have been at war with God, and he with us. Our sins separated us from him and we were at enmity with him, objects of his wrath. But if we have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ God is not mad at you anymore. The hostilities are over, we are no longer at war but at peace!

This peace has been provided from God's side through removing the cause of our enmity – our sins- through Jesus' death on the cross.

On our end peace is received when we believe God and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to us.

For those of you who are struggling with life, please allow me to ask a personal question. *"Are you still at war with God?"* If you are, then I cannot extend to you the promise that you can have the peace of God. First you must quit fighting against God! Lay down your arms (i.e. your sins), make an unconditional surrender and end the warfare!

Once you've make peace with God, then – and only then – the door is opened for you to be at peace with others and to experience personal inner peace of heart and mind. **PEACE WITH GOD**

Paul writes about the **peace of God** in **Philippians 4:6-7** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In stressful times we need personal peace in our lives, and that is what Philippians 4 is talking about. God truly loves and cares for us, and he will give us a peace that is beyond our human comprehension in the midst of our emotional turmoil.

In 1978 our daughter Beth, who had just turned nine months, came down with bacterial spinal meningitis. Connie checked with her in the middle of the night and was running an extremely high temperature, non-responsive. We rushed her forty-five minutes to hospital in small rural town of Pratt, Kansas. Just that week a pediatric doctor had moved in. Took blood cultures, started two antibiotics, hoping one would work (then would discontinue the other when got back results). Dr. explained that was one of the worse things that a child could have, warning us that she could die, and that if she survived might suffer severe brain damage (temp was up to 106 degrees).

We were up all that night and all the next day and into the next night. Many people stopped by to pray with us. Exhausted, we finally went across the street to get some sleep.

Well meaning folks had given us all sorts of spiritual advice, such as “did you plead the blood of Jesus?” “Are you standing in faith?” etc. When we go the motel, Connie asked me, “*is it okay of we just trust?*”

And the Lord brought to her mind a Scripture reference. Looked it up, and this is what it said.

**Mark 5:36** “*Don’t be afraid, just believe.*” From the story of Jairus, a local synagogue ruler, who had come to Jesus and pleaded for him to come to his house. “*My little daughter is dying,*” he said. *Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.*” While they were in route some men came from his house and said, “*Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?*”

*Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*

Amazingly, we were able to both fall into a much needed restful sleep for several hours. End of story: Beth was in hospital over a week. There was NO brain damage, she has her Master’s Degree and is a teacher in the Twin Cities.

*Peace! Peace! Wonderful peace,  
Coming down from the Father above;  
Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray,  
In fathomless billows of love.*

#### **4. Enablement of hope - the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Need one more thing: if baking a cake, need a mixer. Preferably an electric mixer. Our power is the Holy Spirit. **Power** here is not *exousia* (which means *authority* – as in the Great Commission when Jesus said, “*All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.*”)

Here it is *dunamis* – a power that gets things done.

This phrase reminds us that nothing of any spiritual value is possible in and of itself. Jesus is clear (though we often forget it as we make our own plans): **John 15:5** “*Apart from me you can do nothing.*”

Faith, peace, joy, hope are impossible to achieve by ourselves. But everything is possible for God who makes them possible for us and in us by his Spirit’s power.

The Holy Spirit enables hope, facilitates hope, releases hope in us.

#### **5. The measure of hope - overflowing.**

My wife is very precise in measuring ingredients. Takes a knife to level off the teaspoon or cup. But when we add together the ingredients of hope, empowered by the Spirit, we will be **abounding in hope**. Overflowing. Not just bringing you from discouragement and despair, but spilling over and affecting those around you.

“*So that*” is a conjunction that indicates a cause and effect relationship.

Paul desires that this process of believing and receiving will result in believers brimming over with hope, overflowing onto the world around them, bringing change.

#### **Recipe for hope:**

Grounded on the firm counter of **God’s Word**, into the mixing bowl of your life start with **trust/faith** plus **joy** plus **peace** stirred together by the **power of the Holy Spirit** yields **overflowing hope!** All the ingredients necessary.

#### **Hope for what and hope in what?**

We’ve only looked at hope from the ground level. Hope for our current situation. But let’s not forget the bird’s eye view. Paul gives three answers in Romans to the question of “hope for what in what?”

##### **1. Glory of God**

**Romans 5:2b** *And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

In the Old Testament we read that on Mt. Sinai Moses asked God to show him his glory. God answered, “*You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.*” Then he directed Moses to a rock and said, “*When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Exodus 33:19-33

I take it from this and other passages that seeing the glory of God and seeing the face of God are one and the same thing. Those who are justified will see God in all his glory!

**I Corinthians 13:12** *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.”*

It brings believers great joy when we look forward to that day when we shall see God in all of his splendor. When I start to feel down, if I will just step back a bit and ponder on our future hope, the most amazing thing happens! As I look forward with joy to seeing the face of God in the future, I find my attitude towards the difficulties I’m facing in the present changes! My spirits are lifted.

**2. Hope for a new heaven and new earth.** The earth itself we’re told in **Romans 8:22** groans and longs to be set free from its bondage to decay. Someday the creation will no longer be plagued by earthquakes and floods and hurricanes and the threat of pandemic disease.

**3. Hope for new bodies that are free from pain and death.**

**Romans 8:23** *we wait eagerly for . . . the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.*

Not only a new heaven and a new earth, but a new body - when **Revelation 21:4** *he (God) will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

Until that day we wait, we hope, and we sing:  
(Another verse by Thomas Kelly in *Praise the Savior*)

***Keep us Lord, O keep us cleaving  
To thyself and still believing,  
Till the hour of our receiving  
Promised joys from thee.***