

Romans 15:13

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- [0 : 0 0] There is something profoundly powerful about hope. A man or woman overflowing with hope views life and lives life very differently to a man or woman in compatible circumstances who is devoid of hope.
- Hope can make all the difference. Hope emboldens and protects in the face of trial and affliction. Hope invigorates in the face of challenge and difficulty.
- Hope inspires and consoles and refreshes others. I think we've all known something of that experience of meeting somebody who's very hopeful, who's full of hope, and it's refreshing even to converse with them as maybe others are looking at matters and it all seems very gloomy and dark and it's not going to work and what's the point and then somebody with hope.
- And it's altogether different. There is a real sense of refreshment even as we perhaps are witnesses to others who live their lives in that way, who are overflowing with hope.
- hope. It is a blessed thing to live a life full of hope. And it is such a life that Paul desires for the believers in Rome, a desire that finds expression in the second benediction or blessing that we find in the 15th chapter of his letter to the Romans.
- [1 : 4 0] Romans, we have read and we will read again verse 13 of this chapter, 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.
- And we read these words and even if we have a measure of sensitivity to what it is that is being said in these words, the wish that is being expressed, the prayer that is being lifted up to God, it's stirring, it's exciting, it's heartwarming, these words of Paul.
- Who wouldn't want to experience this blessing in union with other believers? And it rather leads us to the question that we can pose to ourselves.
- Is this our experience? Is this your experience as a believer? Do you know what it is to overflow with hope? Can you say, here this evening, can you say in your own mind and with honesty and sincerity, I am full of hope, I am full to overflowing with hope?
- Can we, as a fellowship of believers, can that be our corporate testimony? We are full of hope as we look at what is before us and what is ahead of us.
- [3 : 1 1] In considering this blessing, we need to begin by understanding why Paul expresses this blessing at this point in his letter.
- We've already noticed this morning, I hope, how helpful it is to have an understanding of where it is that Paul expresses a benediction.
- And we noticed that in reference to the benediction in verses 5 and 6. But we're going to see now that that's also true of this benediction in verse 13.
- To understand why the blessing is what it is, we need to, I think, have two things. We need to have, first of all, a sense of the shape of the whole letter, but also a grasp of what has come immediately before in this letter, in the preceding verses or a couple of chapters, perhaps.

First of all, in terms of the whole letter, this blessing ought to be seen, ought to be understood as Paul's, we might call it, closing statement.

[4 : 21] It seals all that has gone before with a golden seal. And you might say, well, hang on a minute, it's not at the end of the letter, so why is it reasonable or why would you suggest that we could consider these words, this benediction, as that which closes the letter?

Well, I think it's reasonable to think of it in those terms because what follows in the letter, inspired though it is and greatly helpful though it is in the rest of the chapter and indeed into chapter 16, I think it's reasonable to say that what follows doesn't constitute the main body of the letter.

We don't have time now to go through it, but even as you look at the headings, you'll see that what follows in the letter has to do with personal matters concerning Paul going to Rome and why he didn't go and when he's going to go or hoping to go.

And then we have personal greetings, all of which is very useful and helpful. And of course you would expect to find in a letter, but in terms of the main body of the letter, in terms of what Paul has been seeking to communicate to the believers in Rome and indeed for us, this is where matters draw to a close.

And so this benediction really serves to close the main body of the letter. That in itself, I think, gives it a prominence that it merits.

[5 : 50] That's one thing to notice. But also, if we could just notice that it follows on from and is connected to what has immediately come before.

Chapters 14 and chapter 15 through to the point of the benediction. Well, how so? In chapter 14 and through into chapter 15, as we were noticing this morning, Paul was dealing with the thorny, but we might call mundane matter, of food that was deemed clean or unclean and how different believers within the fellowship, those denominated as the strong, those called the weak, were dealing with that matter and not dealing with it very well.

And Paul has to attend to this, in some ways, irritating and mundane matter. It was important that he did so. But nonetheless, in the grand scheme of things, it wasn't a matter of huge significance.

The consequences of it potentially were, but the matter itself was not a matter of huge significance. But Paul has to deal with it, and he does deal with it.

And having dealt with it, of course, the onus was still on the believers in Rome to take on board the instruction that he gives, but Paul has done what he can do.

[7 : 14] He's dealt with the matter. He is now able to move on. As he draws his epistle to a close, he is able to move on to matters more glorious.

He's cleared the way, as it were, to allow him and indeed invite his readers to look up, to look up in awestruck wonder at what God has in store for them as believers.

Maybe I could just illustrate what I'm suggesting Paul is doing here in these two chapters, how he's clearing the way, dealing with an important matter in order that he can now focus on this great theme of hope.

In the manse this week, there's going to be a beautiful new wooden floor laid in one of the small living room and in the entrance area.

And it is going to be a thing of beauty. Now, for the purpose of this illustration, I have to get excited about this. Now, those of you who will know me will know that I find it difficult to get too excited about such matters, but my illustration requires me to get excited, okay?

[8 : 22] So I'm going to do my best. This beautiful wooden floor is going to be laid in part of the Mass, and that hopefully will begin tomorrow. But in order for that to happen, the carpet, the rather dirty carpet, not because we don't Hoover, but just because it's been there for a long time, had to be removed, okay?

And that was my job. Very much an unskilled labor which just fitted perfectly for me. So pulling up the carpet, it's amazing how much dirt gets underneath carpets.

I didn't realize that. But anyway, Friday evening, that was my job. And that was necessary. It was necessary to clear that away in order for this new, beautiful wooden floor to be laid in the course of this week by, be assured, skilled labor.

I will take no part in the next stage in the process. But the point is this. In order for this beautiful floor to be laid, we had to clear up the stuff that was there.

And there's a sense in which Paul has had to do this. There's this matter in Rome. In some ways, it's just, I don't know how Paul would have viewed it, almost as irritating.

[9 : 34] Why is it that the believers are just being dragged down by these matters, but we need to deal with it? And we need to deal with it because if we don't deal with it, when we move on to matters of greater moment, they won't be listening.

You know, they're so consumed by these things that they just won't be paying attention. So we'll deal with this, and then we can move on to the finale of this letter as we lift up their sight to this great theme of the hope that is the believer's inheritance.

So he's done that. And now he and those who read are invited to soar with him. And what is the big theme with which he seals his epistle with a golden seal?

Well, we've already made the point and stated what it is numerous times, even in the short time that has passed. It's hope. 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.

So let's now consider this blessing, recognizing that hope is the governing and dominant theme. In the blessing, we can identify the following, let's call them aspects of hope.

[10 : 53] First of all, we'll notice the source and object of our hope. The source and object of our hope. Then also the fruit of hope, the overflowing nature of hope, and then finally the dynamic character of hope.

First of all, then, the source and object of our hope. As with all benedictions or blessings, Paul begins by identifying the one who blesses his people.

It is God who blesses. And the nature of the blessing that is in particular view is seen in the name or description given to God.

Paul here identifies God as the God of hope. May the God of hope fill you. This is the God who will bless his people, the God of hope.

Even the language is very beautiful, but what does it mean? What does it mean to describe God or to identify God as the God of hope? When God is described as the God of mercy or as the God of grace, we understand that to mean that God is merciful or gracious.

[12 : 08] How then are we to understand this description or identification of God as the God of hope? Are we to imagine that the God of hope is a hopeful God?

Well, I don't think that is what Paul is stressing or stating. What it means rather is that God is two things in respect of the believer.

Two things in respect of you and me. He is both the source and the object of our hope. He is the God of hope. He is the source of our hope and he is the object of our hope.

It is God who grants us hope and it is in God that our hope rests. We hope in God. Now, it's helpful in this regard to note that the very wording of the benediction pronounced by Paul, did in verse 13, follows on from, and we might say is conceived in what he has just been expounding.

In the previous verses, Paul has been demonstrating that the work of Christ has as its purpose to save without distinction or favor both Jews and Gentiles.

[13 : 22] And in doing that, he has directed his readers to a number of Old Testament passages that confirm this divine purpose concerning the work of Christ. Now, the final of these passages that he directs his readers' attention to is from Isaiah chapter 11 that we read a few moments ago.

And in that passage or in the verse that he draws from it, we have identified the one in whom the Gentiles will put their hope.

Notice there in verse 12, and again Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations. The Gentiles will hope in him. So in this previous verse, we were already introduced to this theme of hope.

As Paul declares from the scriptures that the Gentiles will hope in the root of Jesse. And that, in a sense, is a springboard for him to then pronounce this benediction where the theme, the grand theme, is also hope.

In fact, as we identify that link between the benediction and the Old Testament reference to identify Jesus as the root of Jesse that precedes it.

[14 : 41] And then, as we note, as we'll do more carefully in a moment, the role played by the Holy Spirit in filling us with hope, we discover that the God in whom we hope is the triune God.

The source and object of our hope is the Father, the God of hope. It is the Son, the root of Jesse, and it is the Holy Spirit in whose power we are filled with hope.

So the source and the object of our hope is God Himself, the God of hope. But then also, in the benediction, we have what we could call the fruit of our hope.

And what I'm going to contend is that the fruit of hope is the joy and the peace that Paul speaks of in the benediction. Now, if we simply read the benediction at first sight, it might appear that it's the other way around.

Because if we read the benediction, we'll do it again with this in mind, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope.

[15 : 48] So, at first reading, it seems that the order of events, as it were, is being granted, being filled with joy and peace, which in turn contributes to us overflowing with hope.

And I'm sure that that is true in one sense. But let me just explain why I'm suggesting that in terms of fundamentally, the order of events, if indeed events is the right word, hope is foundational from which spring joy and peace.

Let's notice, again, that previous verse that we've already touched on, verse 12. And we've already suggested that this benediction is to be understood in the light of this verse, and particularly in the light of what that verse has to say about hope, and about the Gentiles hoping in Jesus in the root of Jesse.

Notice there that the word hope is used really almost as a near equivalent term to trust or to believe. The Gentiles will hope in Him.

And I think we would understand what has been said there. It would have the same import if there we read the Gentiles will trust in Him, or the Gentiles will believe in Him.

[17 : 12] The Gentiles will hope in Him. So, with that in mind, Paul then goes on to pronounce this benediction. And when he speaks of being filled with joy and peace, he identifies what will be necessary on the part of the believers for this to happen.

Notice what he says. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him. It's not unlike what we were seeing in the morning in terms of the benediction in verses 5.

Notice there we had seen that God is the one who would give them a spirit of unity among themselves as they follow Christ.

So, the gift that they would receive, they would receive as they follow Christ. Well, here, the joy and the peace that they will experience, that they will be given, will be as they trust in Him.

But notice that the way in which Paul has been using the word hope in the previous verse is as a near equivalent to trust. So, we might say that what Paul is saying is that the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you hope in Him, as you trust in Him, as you hope in Him, as you believe in Him.

[18 : 30] The joy and the peace are the fruit of hoping in the Messiah, of hoping in the root of Jesse, as the Gentiles will do and have been prophesied as doing and has been fulfilled even in ourselves.

Now, that saying, that identifying the fruit of hope as being joy and peace, it is clear, it's very clear in the benediction that there is a sense in which that joy and peace in its turn cultivates or produces a further hope.

There is, we might almost say, a circular aspect to this. Hope in God or trusting in Him produces peace and joy, but this peace and joy in turn serve to deepen and enrich our hope in God.

One commentator, Professor John Murray, a good Sutherland man and fine men come from Sutherland. He expresses the matter with his customary precision in this way, commenting on this very benediction and this matter we're trying to deal with.

He says this, joy and peace emanate from hope, which is my main contention at this point. But then what does he go on to say? Joy and peace emanate from hope and they contribute to the abounding of the same.

[19 : 59] So they're the fruit of hope, but then in turn they contribute to the abounding of the same, that is, of hope. So the fruit of hope is joy and peace.

But what is the joy and peace that Paul is speaking about? Now, time doesn't allow us to do justice to answering that question, but in a very fleeting, almost grotesquely fleeting way, let me just say this, that this joy and peace that Paul speaks of, it is, of course, the joy of the Lord, joy unspeakable and full of glory, to use the language of Peter in his first letter.

It is the peace of God, a peace that passes all understanding. Again, to use the language of Scripture and of Paul as he writes to the Philippians, it is the peace of God that is given to us.

It's to be distinguished from peace with God. Now, if we don't have peace with God, then we certainly won't experience the peace of God, but they are to be distinguished. This is peace that God gives.

It is peace that flows from heaven itself and is given to God's people. This peace, this joy, is what we are filled with as we trust in Him, as we hope in Him, as we rest in Him.

[21 : 18] Before moving on to look at the next aspect that we've identified, the overflowing and nature of hope, we should highlight the way in which, as with the blessing in verses 5 and 6, and we've mentioned this just in the passing a moment ago, but let me just emphasize this.

Paul here in this benediction recognizes both the priority of divine initiative in blessing. It is the God of hope who will fill us with joy and peace.

These are gifts from God for His people. But how that divine initiative is to go together with the active participation of the believer in being blessed.

It is God who fills with joy and peace, but He does so as the believer exercises his God-given faith, trusting in Him, as the benediction states.

But moving on to this next aspect, the overflowing nature of our hope. Paul's desire is that the believers in Rome would overflow with hope. Now, what does that mean?

[22 : 28] What does it mean? Again, it sounds wonderful, but what does it mean to overflow with hope? I think we can understand, certainly referring back to the way the word hope is used in verse 12, the Gentiles will hope in Him.

We understand what that means. We can almost visualize it, or we can relate it to our own experience. It means hoping in Christ, resting in Christ, trusting in Christ as our Lord and as our Savior.

And certainly we would wish to overflow with that hope, that the quality of that hope and the depth of that hope would be ever greater in our experience. We can understand that.

But what more ought we to understand by this expression of overflowing in hope? I think we can better understand what this means in the measure that we understand the place of the root of Jesse, the promised Messiah who has been mentioned in the previous verse, as the one in whom the hope of Israel rests, the hope of God's people rests.

Every promise of God, and let's get this very clear, every promise of God to His people rests in and revolves around the person of Messiah, Jesus.

[23 : 49] And so our hope will overflow as we grasp and lay hold of and look forward to the fulfillment of every promise in Jesus.

And that gives you some idea of the scope of this and how the language of overflowing with hope is altogether appropriate. When we think of the multiplicity of promises that we have that are fulfilled in Jesus, and as we lay hold of them and grasp them and look forward to their fulfillment, those that have yet to be fulfilled, in that measure we will overflow with hope.

Let's just think about that for a moment. And some of these promises that we have and how they will impact on and produce this overflowing with hope. We overflow with hope as we rest ever more securely in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

We overflow with hope as we discover that in Jesus we will be transformed and glorified on His return. We overflow with hope as we appreciate that there is a day coming when we will be finally and definitively freed from sin and all its consequences, no more suffering or pain or frustration or sadness.

And as we contemplate this reality and this promise in Jesus, in the root of Jesse, then we overflow with hope even in the contemplation of it.

[25 : 19] Indeed, the passage that we read there in Isaiah from which Paul is drawing his thoughts gives us ample material to consider what is involved in overflowing with hope.

Indeed, one aspect of that hope that we maybe don't often think about. But in this sin-sick world where we see so much injustice and so much that seems to never be redressed in terms of injustice, that is also part of our hope.

In Isaiah chapter 11, it speaks of the root of Jesse coming and doing justice. And that is part of our hope to know that what we see today is not the end of the story.

If we see jihadists massacring Christians in Mosul, that's not the end of the story. There is a day coming, and that is part of our hope, when Jesus the judge will return and He will do justice.

And we overflow with hope in the assurance that that is so. We overflow with hope as we look forward ourselves as believers to being with Jesus, to seeing Him face to face.

[26 : 26] We overflow with hope as we ponder on a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. Again, a theme that we find in Isaiah chapter 11.

But I think there's one further aspect to this overflowing hope that Paul has very explicitly in mind. And that is the ingathering of the Gentiles, of God's people from all over the world.

The benediction, as we've seen, follows on from Paul expounding on this very matter. And the very theme of hope in the benediction springs from the reference in verse 12 to the Gentiles.

The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations. The Gentiles will hope in Him. Of course, the wonderful thing for us to realize in regard to this aspect of the believer's hope is that increasingly this is a realized hope.

We live in an age where the gospel hope in this regard is being fulfilled. God is gathering His people to use the language of Isaiah from the four corners of the earth. The root of Jesse, our Savior, has been lifted up and continues to be lifted up as a banner for the peoples and the nations rally to Him.

[27 : 43] And this is something that we can see and witness today. Indeed, even in our small fellowship, it's not unusual on a given Lord's Day to have believers from every continent gather together.

Just a small illustration of how this great aspect of the believer's hope is being realized. This, too, is part of overflowing with hope.

Our hope is an overflowing hope. It is broad and deep and rich and glorious, and it is secure in Jesus, the root of Jesse. But then very briefly, let's just close by noticing the dynamic character of our hope.

Our hope is not static. It's not a spiritual resource that we're given on being welcomed into God's family, and then we simply cling on to it for dear life, not wanting to lose it.

Our hope is ever being replenished. It is a cup that is ever and presently flowing over. And this is so because of the present and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

[28 : 53] So that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who powerfully and presently opens our eyes to appreciate all the promises that are ours in Christ Jesus.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to taste something of the wonder of all that awaits us in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us a sense of thrill and excitement at being involved in God's ingathering of His people from the four corners of the earth.

We overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope, then, is a beautiful part of our inheritance as believers.

We are called to be a hope-filled people in the midst of good times and bad, in the midst of evident blessing and of drought, in the midst of whatever life may throw at us, whatever circumstances may seek to bury us with or under.

In the midst of any and every of these circumstances may the spark of hope be fanned and become a flame, a flame that shines and indeed sustains us as God's people as we seek to serve Him always in hope, overflowing with hope.

[30 : 22] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You that You are indeed the God of hope, the God who is the source of our hope, the God who is the object of our hope.

We thank You that You are the God who generously and graciously fills us with joy and peace as we are enabled to trust in You. We thank You for Your Son.

We thank You for Jesus, the Messiah, the root of Jesse, the great Davidic King, the one who has come, that we might appreciate and understand the scope of our hope.

We pray that we would ever better appreciate all the promises that are fulfilled in Him, and as we do, so that our hope would indeed overflow. We thank You for Your Spirit.

We thank You that He is the one who lives in us and who works in us, and we pray that He would indeed be the one who powerfully enables us to overflow with hope.

[31 : 24] And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now let's close our service by singing Psalm 117. This is one of the psalms that Paul makes reference to in the chapter that we've been just giving some thought to.

Psalm 117 in this, in sing psalms, and we will sing the whole of the psalm. It's not a big ask to sing the whole of the psalm, but we will indeed sing the whole of the psalm.

Psalm 117, and we'll sing this to the tune, Praise My Soul. Now, I think, I suspect that what will happen, I hope what will happen is that having sung it once, we'll think, I'd really like to sing this again, so let's sing it twice, okay?

So we'll sing this psalm twice. Let's stand to sing Psalm 117. Praise the Lord, O all the nations, All you people sing His praise, For His love is great towards us, His storm hath lost always, He is faithful now and ever, Alleluia, praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, O all you nations, All you people sing His praise, For His love is great towards us, His commitment lasts always, He is faithful now and ever, Alleluia, praise the Lord.

[33 : 36] 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. Amen.

Amen.