

The Proof of Love

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[0 : 00] Why don't we pray as we come to hear God's word spoken to us. Lord, we do thank you so much that when we open up the Bible and we read it, that you speak into our lives.

Lord, we thank you for your spirit that you give us. Lord, we thank you for the way that it reveals who you are to us. And Lord, I pray that as we look at Romans 5 tonight, that you would help us to learn more of who you are and what that means for our life.

Lord, we thank you for the series of Romans thus far in the way that you've been teaching and challenging us. We pray that, Lord, tonight would be no exception. Lord, we pray that you'll forgive us for the times that we come to church and we have a bit of, I've heard it all before, it is, and we don't actually have hearts that are willing to receive from you.

Lord, I pray tonight, if that's any of us, that you would give us hearts that are eager and full of anticipation of you transforming us.

Lord, so we thank you now for this word and we pray that you would speak powerfully to us tonight. In Jesus' name. Amen. We've come to a very exciting part in the book of Romans, chapter 5.

[1 : 15] Tonight, what we're going to do with this passage is we're going to answer one simple question. It's going to come up on the data projector. It is, what does it mean to boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of God?

What does it mean to boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of God? See, as I was reading through this passage, I kind of stumbled on that. And I was like, what does that actually mean? What does it mean to boast in something? And what is this hope that we have? And what is it to share the glory of God? So as we look through this passage, it's going to explain to us clearly what that is and why that is just such an encouraging thing for Christians.

Because in verse 2, it actually says that we can boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God.

Well, so far, we've seen in Romans that Jesus has come on a bit of a rescue mission, that we are people who have fallen short from glory.

And we are people who are sinners before God. And Jesus has come. And because of him, we are justified through faith. Now, it's a bit of a complex word. But basically, justify means that we are right with God, that he's put aside our sins and we're in a right relationship with him through just believing.

[2 : 35] And that's all because of what Jesus has done. So back to this question, what does it mean? We're going to break it down. And first of all, I want to look at this word hope. What is it that we're hoping in? I want to suggest that there's a couple of different ways you can use the word hope.

And one is quite familiar to what the world thinks of hope, which is just kind of, I really hope that my teacher forgets that I have a mass test tomorrow or that, you know, I really just hope that, you know, one day I might be able to get an interscore that might, you know, possibly get me into something that I might want to do.

It's kind of a hope that there's really no certainty that that thing is going to actually happen. But you're just hoping for it. You're just wishing that it will happen. I'm sure you can think of your own examples. You know, you just hope and wish that the girl or guy that you like at youth group will turn up this Friday.

Eh. Eh. Anyway, there's a different kind of hope. And this is the hope that's spoken about in this passage. There's a different kind of hope, which is more a looking forward to, of something that you know is going to happen.

Okay, so I am hoping for or looking forward to getting married. It's coming up really soon. But I'm hoping and looking forward to that because that's something that's going to take place.

[3 : 54] I'm looking forward to my birthday. That happens before June. That happens in May. You might be looking forward to watching Rove tonight or next week or whenever he comes back.

Hoping for or looking forward to something that you know is going to happen. And this is the kind of hope that is spoken about in this passage. It's not a wishful, wishy-washy thinking, hoping that, you know, something might happen.

It's being confident. We actually hope and we know that this is going to happen. We're looking forward to something. So what is it that we can have hope in? What are we hoping in from this passage?

Well, sharing in the glory of God. This is quite a complicated term in some ways. I think more specifically, it might mean that we actually become like God, become like Jesus.

When we're with him and see him face to face, we will be like him. But I think this image of sharing in the glory of God is much broader than that.

[4 : 54] It actually is looking forward to that time where we will be in heaven, on that day of judgment where Jesus says, No, God's wrath can pass over you. You are already in and you are set free from that.

You don't have to be punished. At that time when, yeah, we're going to be in heaven. And there's a couple of really, really good things that are going to happen on that day. You know, first of all, we're going to get eternal life.

You know, we're not actually going to die. We're going to live forever. And another thing is, we'll never ever sin again. We'll be absolutely perfect.

That is a really exciting thing to look forward to. Another thing we can look forward to is having perfect bodies. Yes!

That's something we can look forward to in heaven. Maybe not specifically that image, but we can look forward to having bodies that don't get sick and that don't break and bodies that don't get sad even.

[5 : 53] Bodies that are perfect. And we can look forward to being with God forever. That's going to be fantastic, isn't it? You know, I always get excited when I'm singing with a bunch of Christians at church or, you know, larger scale things, big youth events.

Because I think, you know, this is awesome. This is going to be like heaven. We get to hang out with all the believers and be in God's presence all the time. And that is so exciting.

It's really, if you think about heaven, Paul was describing to us in staff meeting the other day that heaven is going to be like this megalopolis, like this massive city.

This is kind of the image that's in Revelation. And he sort of told us the dimensions of how big this city will be. And I can't remember exactly, but it was huge. Like, imagine the dimensions of Australia.

And that's the whole city. And I'm thinking, I'm moving to Chadston, right? Media. And they've got a big shopping centre. I don't know how big it is. Yeah, there's level one.

[6 : 51] There's also another level. There's a lot of little shops in there. It's huge. You know, you can get lost if you don't know your way around. But I'm getting to know it quite well. So, it's good. Yeah, but heaven is going to be like this massive city.

Imagine how big a shopping centre. They will be there. You'll be able to go for ages and have every shop that you ever want, potentially. That might be my kind of heaven, but others might really not like that.

But this massive city of being with God and with his people forever. So, these are the things we have to look forward to. This is the stuff that we're hoping in. Sharing in the glory of God is looking forward to that end time when we will get to be with God and be in heaven and be completely forgiven.

Sharing in the glory. Sharing in the glory. Being like Jesus. And that is something that is so worth hoping for. But if I ask each of you or, you know, generally Christians, you know, if you think that you're going to go to heaven, I think the answer would be, yeah, I think that's going to happen.

We're going to be going to heaven. But the question I want to ask is, do we therefore boast in that hope? Or boast in the fact that we're going to be in heaven and we're going to share in God's glory?

[8 : 08] Do we boast about that? This is the next part of that little question I'm asking. We're going to look at what boasting means. Now, boasting is not a negative word like we use it usually.

You know, if someone's boasting about something, we think, oh, they're just a bit of a show-off, aren't they? They're bragging about something. And it's not about us running around going, hey, hey, I'm going to heaven and do not.

Woo-hoo-hoo, eternal life's coming to me. No, it's not that kind of boasting or bragging. It's not a negative sense. It's not walking around like you're better than anyone else.

But it's this kind of sense of being proud, proud of or rejoicing in. That's what the NIV says here. Being so proud of something that you not only want to talk about it, but it actually changes the way you live.

The boasting here is such a powerful word. We don't really use it much in our, you know, day-to-day language. But it's a really positive word of being proud or rejoicing in the hope that we have.

[9 : 15] Well, I want to give you a couple of examples of what boasting might look like. There's this guy, May 2. He's from Indonesia, and he's a Christian there.

And I don't know exactly when this was, but a few years ago, he was captured. His family was captured by a bunch of jihad soldiers who were Muslim and were very anti-Christian and anti-Jesus. And they took his wife and his daughter away. Now, he doesn't know what happened to them. In the process, his parents and his brother were killed. So he doesn't know whether his wife and his daughter are going to be okay, whether they're still alive or not.

So he tries desperately to find them, praying all the time, God, please keep them safe, trying to find, you know, where they could be. And eventually, one of his cousins finds out that they're being kept in a different part of the island.

So he goes over there, and the men who are holding his wife, one of whom has married her again, says, We will only give your wife and child back if you say that you renounce Christ and that you will no longer be a Christian.

[10 : 33] And he said he wouldn't. And he had to walk away without his wife and his child. Now, how could you do that?

How could you leave your wife who you love and your only girl there with the jihad soldiers, not knowing whether next time you come back they will be alive or not?

What was this guy doing? Well, I think he was boasting in the hope that he had. He was boasting knowing that he had something better in store for him.

Knowing that what's happening, this current situation, this suffering that was taking place in his life, was not the end. There was actually something else better to come.

And finally, this guy was reunited with his family, and they were safe. Or Pastor Florescu in Romania. He was tortured, a pastor of a church, he was tortured and put in prison for being a Christian.

[11 : 30] And they kept torturing him, saying, Who are the other fellow Christians? Who are the Christians in your church? We want to find them.

Give us their names. And he wouldn't. He wouldn't give the names in. So they kept torturing him. And they put him in a cell with rats, lots of rats.

And if he fell asleep at any point, the rats would start attacking him. So he had to stay awake. And he was in that cell, like that, standing up for two weeks and three days.

So you think by this point, he was absolutely exhausted, just couldn't have rested, and beyond thinking. And they kept asking him that he would say no, until they brought in his 14-year-old boy. And in front of him, they started beating his son. And they said, Tell us, tell us. And the pastor decided that it was enough.

[12 : 29] Enough was enough. He couldn't handle seeing his son being beaten. So he said to his son, I'm going to tell them so they'll stop beating you. And his son said, No, do not do that.

Don't give in to these people. I would rather die praising Jesus than let you betray your fellow brothers and sisters. And they killed him right in front of his father.

But he died praising Jesus. Well, what would make a little boy, a 14-year-old boy, do such an amazing thing? What would make him even go to death?

I think he was boasting in the hope he had. He knew that his sufferings or what was happening at that time was not the end. There's something more to come.

And on that day, he stepped into sharing in the glory of God. And that was worth hoping for. Well, this passage moves on.

[13 : 34] And it actually explains to us how we can have this hope. Because I don't know about you. I hear those stories and I think, I don't know what I would do in that situation. I don't know whether I'd be strong enough to actually stand up for Jesus.

How can we actually have, you know, a faith that is so sure or this hope that's so sure and stand up when we need to like that? Well, in verse 5, it actually says that the hope that we have does not disappoint us.

Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. And then the rest of the passage, it goes on and explains the depths of God's love for us.

And we're going to walk through that. But it's because of God's love and what he has done, this amazing, miraculous thing, that we can be so sure of the hope.

So let's look at this love together. We can be sure. I'll basically outline it for you. We can be sure because Jesus died for us when we were his enemies.

[14 : 40] Okay, so he died for us people who hated him. This is how much he loves us. We weren't in a place where we were seeking him or even asking for his help.

But we were people who were rejecting him and he died for us. And that's the hard yards. That's the hardest thing that he had to do. The hardest path for Jesus was actually dying.

So how much more, now that he's died, will he bring you into this glory? Will he save you from God's wrath on that last day? He's done the hard part.

Of course he's going to do the easy part. That's the flow of this passage. Let's read verse 8 together. I want to paint a picture for you.

Imagine that your mum or your dad has decided that you can get a bike for your birthday. So it's a really, really expensive bike because you are actually a proper bike rider.

[15 : 52] You don't just paddle around the neighbourhood. But you actually, you know, one day might want to race. And you have your eyes set on this bike. But it's two grand. It's a lot of money.

And your parents decide that, yeah, that's actually what you need. And that's what they're going to get you. So they save up really hard to get this two grand. And it takes them a while.

And they go in and they pay off the money. But they don't pick up the bike yet. Because they're waiting until your birthday. They're going to pick it up on that day so that you won't see it.

Or, you know, you won't get to ride it or touch it, play it, play with it, whatever, before the time. Now, do you think that your parents, when it comes to your birthday, that they're actually going to go in and pick it up?

Of course they would. Of course they would go in and pick up the bike. They've already paid two grand. You know, they're going to want something back for it. This is very similar to what Jesus has done.

[16 : 50] He's already paid the price for you. He's already forgiven you completely. And that forgiveness was costly for him. It cost him his life. And you think about, you know, we're here at Easter each year and we'll hear again in a few weeks.

You know, just the amazing sacrifice that was. Jesus on the cross with nails on his hand. With the weight of the world's sin upon him. Working, I suppose, releasing that sin from us.

Already forgiving us. He's already done that. So how much more that he's paid that price will he come and pick you up, just like the bike, and take you home?

How easy is that for him? And that is why we can be 100% more confident in this than we can be in anything else in this world.

The reason we can be so confident in this hope is because Jesus has already done the hard work. And he's going to come back. And he's going to take you home to share in the glory of God.

[17 : 52] Well, I want to close by giving you some examples from my life about boasting in the hope of the glory of God times when I haven't and times when I have.

Because I think as Christians, you know, there are times where we find that really easy to do. And we want to do that. We want to boast in the hope of the glory of God.

And what that might mean is making hard decisions for Jesus. So I don't know if you've heard of... I can't think of it now.

Meet at the pole. Pray at the pole. Yeah. At schools. But it's when Christians get together before school and pray for their school. It happens once a year in May.

And they get together and they pray. And not only are they asking God to work in their friends' lives, but it's also a big stand to get out there while kids are coming to school and to stand around the

pole, usually in a place that's very visible, and actually pray.

[18 : 54] And this is something, you know, that you can do to make a stand and take a stand. But on a very basic level, with me each day, one of the things is will I actually spend time with God or not, reading His Word and praying?

We'll actually do that. Because life gets really busy and it's always hard to work out, you know, how to spend time. But if I'm thinking about the hope of which we have, of which we can be so sure, if I'm thinking about that hope, of course I will.

Everything else, you know, it doesn't seem half as good as hanging out for God and investing in that relationship. Because there's something better than watching television or there's something better than playing computer games or jumping on MSN and talking to your friends.

There's something better. And for me that's one of the hard things. Or those times when someone does something that really annoys you. And all I want to do is just get really angry and, I don't know, say something that I shouldn't.

Say something that will tear someone down instead of building them up. And there are times when I don't boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of God. Because there are times when I actually do that. But when I'm thinking about this hope and what we have and what I've got coming up, it's easier then to say, no, I'm not going to indulge in that sort of thing because I've got something better.

[20 : 22] For me the hardest decision to make was, will I go into ministry or not? Because when I was growing up I didn't want to, I wasn't even thinking about being in ministry.

All I wanted to do was work in the city and wear a business suit and drive a convertible. You have heard this before. But I really, I wanted to do that. That's what I was hoping to be and hoping to do when I grew up.

And eventually over time came to the decision that I wasn't going to do that because the reasons why I was doing that were all about me. Absolutely about me.

Just having power and climbing the ladder and making a name for myself and having nice things. That's basically why I was doing it. And God showed me there was more to life.

And so one of the ways that I've boasted in the hope of sharing in God's glory is by saying, actually I don't want to do that. I want to do something that's going to glorify Him, whatever that is, God. And He sent me into doing youth ministry at the moment.

[21 : 23] But that's a really good question for us to ask ourselves. And also for me to ask myself each day, thinking about whether our lives and where we're going, the direction we're going, where you want to be after school, who you want to become, is that in line with boasting in the hope that you have?

Well, I just want to end by putting that question up on the board again. What does it mean to boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of God?

Guys, what that means is having your eyes so fixed on what's to come, being so confident of the eternal life, the forgiveness, the reconciliation that awaits us, being so confident of that, that our whole entire lives are transformed.

Everything we say, everything we do is all in line with that. And this passage is such a great encouragement. And it says, because we are Christians, this is something we can be sure of.

So tonight, as we read through this passage, be sure of what's ahead of you. Be sure of what's coming up. If you've been justified by faith, then you can be confident of sharing in this glory with God.

[22 : 34] Let's pray together. Lord, we do thank you so much for what's ahead. God, we thank you that this world is not the end.

God, we thank you that each day, Lord, you give us your spirit and you help us to make hard decisions for you. And Lord, we just thank you so much for the encouragement that this passage is, that you have really proven to us that this hope is sure through your love.

And Lord, I pray that each day we would not only know that in our heads, but deep in our hearts and our whole lives would reflect this. Lord, please help us to be people who boast in the glory of God, of sharing the glory of God.

Because Lord, that's all you wait for. And we can't wait. It's going to be fantastic. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[23 : 50] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.