

Hope and Joy

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[0 : 00] Let me add my hello to everyone else who said hello. It is really great to see some parents of campers and also our regular 5pm family and of course all of the slightly weary and smelly summer campers.

We have had a fantastic week soaking in God's Word and we are not done yet. So I'm going to pray and ask that the tiredness and the stickiness and anything else that might distract us would be taken away so that we can hear what God has to say.

So let's pray. Father God, we want to thank you for your Word and we want to thank you for this time right now where we get to sit and reflect on the hope that is held out in the Gospel and the joy that you have designed for us in this life and we pray that you would give us alertness and eagerness and that we would hear you speak and that our hearts would be captured.

Amen. So as we've kind of hinted over this week since Wednesday, we've been walking through Romans 1 to 4. So it's a bit hard for you if you've just walked in to kind of catch this series.

But the good news is, and this might disappoint all the people who are on summer camp, Romans 1 to 4 can pretty much be summarised in chapter 5 verse 1. So we might have been able to be a little more economical if I'd planned to head further, but that's good news for everyone else and a refresher for those of us who are feeling tired.

[1 : 23] So let's have a look at chapter 5 verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So far, this letter to the Romans has been all about the Gospel. Paul's just been teaching what the Gospel is, how the Gospel works, why the Gospel matters, and then he sums it up in this incredibly action-packed sentence.

We have been justified through faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The message of the Gospel is not simply a message that God will not punish us if we trust Jesus.

It's actually more than that. The message of the Gospel that comes out in Romans 1 to 4 and that comes out in all of Scripture is God's message to say, you don't deserve to be in heaven.

You don't deserve to know me, a God who is righteous and perfect and holy, but I choose to justify you. I choose to declare you innocent, not just so that you can avoid punishment, but I choose to justify you.

[2 : 34] I choose to declare you innocent so that you might know me. One of the verses that we have bounced around a lot this week is back in chapter 1. If you want to turn there really quickly, chapter 1, verse 16, says, I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed. The Gospel message is not just a way to get out of the discipline or the punishment that you deserve.

The Gospel message is God revealing who he is so that we can know him, so that we can actually have a relationship with him. Back in chapter 5, he continues on having explained that we have peace with God, and he says, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into the grace in which we now stand.

The message of the Gospel in Romans 1 to 4 is that God gives us something that we do not deserve, and that if we place our faith in Jesus, if we accept the forgiveness that God offers, having sent his Son to die in our place, that we now stand in grace, that we now stand confident that we will be able to continue to stand, that we now stand confident that one day we will stand for all eternity at peace with God, because it's by grace, and it has nothing to do with what we have done, or haven't done, or will do, or won't do.

It has everything to do with what God did in sending Jesus to die in our place. The peace with God might be a little bit bigger than we first grab when we read a verse like this.

[4 : 20] Yes, God deals with the fact that we've been rejecting him, and he brings peace there. But he also deals with the fact that God, who is perfect and righteous and holy, and has to punish those who reject him, so instead of standing under judgment, we have peace.

Romans 1-4 makes it really clear that although God loves us, although God is gracious, he will not tolerate sin. He will not tolerate people who treat him like he's not important, and so this first verse of chapter 5 holds a lot of incredible encouragement.

It says, we have been declared innocent, and we have peace with a God who should actually punish us because that same God provided his son to take our punishment on the cross.

It's an action-packed four chapters. And we are encouraged since we have been justified, because we are justified, because we have peace with God, because we now stand in grace.

In Acts 2-2, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Because of what God has done in Jesus, we are joyful people.

[5 : 49] The Christian faith is not a stoic and sad and serious faith. It is a joyful faith. Because we no longer have to fear any possibility of judgment, because God has welcomed us back into his family and has restored us so that we might have a relationship with him, we are now people who rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

The hope of the glory of God is the hope of his glory and his character being fully revealed. It's another way of saying we rejoice in the hope of heaven. We rejoice in the hope that one day God will come back to the earth and he will bring justice where there is injustice.

He will remove pain and suffering. He will deal out the punishment that he's rightly deserved. We rejoice in that hope because we know that we stand on the right side of the ledger.

We rejoice in that hope because we have peace with the one who will come back and establish his rule and authority finally and completely. We have an anchor that is bigger and greater than the circumstances that we face in our day-to-day life.

With the hope of the glory of God as an inevitable destination, if we believe in the hope of the gospel, if we believe we are forgiven, if we believe we have peace with God, it is inevitable and immovable and unchangeable that our final destination is heaven with God.

[7 : 15] And because of that, because we know how the story ends, because we know where we're going to end up, because we know what the finish line is, verse 3, we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance.

Perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.

Hope is our anchor. Hope means that as you deal with pain in your life now, you know that it's temporary. Hope means that as you miss out on things that you deeply desire and maybe even as you wonder whether or not God is withholding things from you, you know that one day, completely and finally, he will pour out every blessing that you have asked for and more.

Hope is our anchor because hope gives us confidence that God loves us even when the world around us says that can't be true. As we deal with sickness and death and the world says just give up on the God who's clearly not looking after you, our hope for the future enables us to trust that God is loving and good in the present.

our faith that he has done what needs to be done to guarantee our eternal inheritance means that we can trust that even right now he is doing what is good and beneficial for us even when it's painful.

[8 : 55] We are confident in the love of God in verse 5 because he has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. We're confident because his spirit reminds us of God's love.

In those moments of darkness when we pray and we cry out he reminds us that he is with us but not just by his Holy Spirit. We are confident of God's love because of verse 6.

You see at just the right time when we were still powerless Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die but God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. When we were rebelling against God when we were there cheering that God would be crucified when we were choosing that he is not important when we were making the decision that he has no claim on our life that we can live however we want at that moment he sent Jesus to die so that you would know that he loved you.

not just so that you would know but so that it would be possible for you to be forgiven and have the hope of heaven if he did that when you were still a sinner if he did that when you were still rejecting him if he did that while we were still the ungodly you can be sure that as one who is trusting in his love as one who is calling him king as one who is leaning on the hope that he has provided that he still loves you and that he's still working for your good if he gave you Jesus what would he possibly withhold from you?

[10 : 51] Paul says effectively that in Romans 8 how could he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all not eagerly along with him also give us all things?

If God has delivered his son while we were rejecting him now that we call him our heavenly father now that we call Jesus our savior how much more confident we are even in the depths of despair and pain and suffering that God is good and loving and that he is using our circumstance for his glory and our benefit and so we rejoice in our sufferings we are anchored to the goodness of God because of the hope of a savior who died in our place and who is now risen he spells it out in verse 9 since we have now been justified by his blood how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him for if when we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his son how much more having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life the gospel gives us the benefit right now of knowing for certain that we are forgiven knowing for certain that the slate has been wiped clean we are justified we are declared innocent our punishment has already been absorbed and exhausted in the person of Jesus when he went to the cross because we know that and we have future hope we rejoice in our sufferings because we know that even as beneficial as that certain hope is that there is more to come having been forgiven that there is even more as we approach the day when God returns or calls us home to be in heaven having been justified by his blood we will now be saved through his life not the life he had before the cross but the life he lives now and for all eternity having been raised having defeated death

Jesus life now sitting on the throne in heaven is the life that guarantees our future salvation so we rejoice in suffering because even as we hurt we stand and we say with confidence I'm loved by God I'm forgiven by God and I know where I am going we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God in the future that is to come we rejoice even in our sufferings but there is something even better have a look at verse 5 let's read from verse 3 we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance perseverance character and character hope and hope does not disappoint us I remember when it was almost time for Bailey to be born I'm sure that some of you would remember it as well because I was fairly annoying around this particular point

I was busting to become a dad I was counting down the days I had decided very early in the pregnancy that Bailey was going to be born at least two weeks early I had no basis for that hope but I was absolutely committed to it and convinced of it and so I was telling everyone I was in preparation I even took holidays from work two weeks before the due date because I was sure that he was going to be born the result was he managed to come ten days late so not only did hope disappoint but it also probably seriously annoyed poor Sal as I was wandering around the house and you know hurry up come on what's going on I was absolutely convinced it was going to work out this way that I was going to become a dad on this day that my life was going to be changed and that hope was absolutely shattered because by the time he was born I was so exhausted from disappointment that I could barely enjoy the moment until about two weeks afterwards when I somehow found what normal was again hope is dangerous if it's not sure hope creates the possibility of disappointment hope that is not met breeds sadness and grief but that is not a possibility for our hope in God we can rejoice in suffering because it is feeding our perseverance and our character and our hope and our hope is sure our hope is not something that we have invented it's not some desire that we have that we have elevated to the position of our eternal destiny our hope is specific our hope is that having been justified by the blood of Jesus having been forgiven by the blood of Jesus we will one day spend eternity in God's perfect new creation completely restored free from pain and sickness and death and most importantly in the presence of God himself we rejoice in the hope that one day

God's name will be vindicated he will be known as glorious throughout all of his creation we rejoice in our sufferings because we know that they are merely part of our journey towards that hope but we rejoice in verse 11 in God we rejoice in him through Jesus that's why our joy as Christians is both something that is overwhelming in our circumstance now but also something that we anticipate something that that spurs us forward in our life because we do know our heavenly father now having been justified and having been drawn into a relationship with him but we know that now we know only partially all we know of God is amazing and glorious and joy giving but imagine what it will be like when you get to know him face to face imagine what it will be like when you come face to face with the one who when you were still his enemy gave his son so that you could be forgiven we rejoice because that is the only response to the glorious God who has revealed himself to us in the gospel of Jesus we rejoice and we look forward to the day we rejoice in our circumstance now we rejoice in anticipation of that unhindered relationship

[17 : 39] Christians should be the most joyful people there are I always find it slightly amusing when people talk about how serious we are or how focused or stoic we are when we gather together for church sometimes they're right sadly but really we should be overflowing with joy we should be exploding with joy we had a conversation with the kids this morning on camp and we said don't let this joy stay on camp bottle it up as a grenade and release it when we get to church and I think they did a good job if you're a parent they're saving a second grenade of joy for the trip home to share with you how amazing the week was but really as Christians we should have more joy than anyone else because we have nothing to fear because our eternal destiny is guaranteed because we live in absolute certainty that God loves us and is working for our good and expressing his love for us in any and every circumstance and situation what else could give you more joy than that but what if you're sitting here now or what if you're sitting here in a week's time or a month's time or a year's time and you don't feel joyful it's great for me to say we should be joyful but what about when we're not then we need to go back to the beginning we need to go back to verse one since we have been justified through faith we have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into the grace in which we now stand we have to go back and remember that we're innocent before God that we're forgiven that our debt has been paid that there is no possibility of God's wrath for us because Jesus has taken it we have to look back and understand that we have peace with God which doesn't just mean the absence of fighting peace means that we have been drawn into an intimate and loving relationship with a heavenly father when we struggle for joy we need to come back to the hope of that final day when the pain that you're experiencing now will be a distant memory when we struggle for joy we need to reflect on the limitless love of God shown in the sacrifice of his son when you struggle for joy you need to bask in the encouragement you need to soak in the adrenaline that comes from the hope of the gospel doesn't mean that we'll walk around with goofy smiles all the time and we'll never get sad and we'll never cry

I'm sure there's a lot of people from camp that can testify that tears are part of the joy but what it means is you have an anchor and a foundation you have a joy that's bigger than how you're feeling today that's bigger than how you're going this year that's bigger than how much energy you have you have a joy because your eternity is certain because your God loves you and because no one and nothing can take that away since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God and we have joy let's pray father God we want to we want to thank you for Jesus we want to admit that often we let our circumstance and our situation and our relationships and our anxieties and whatever else speak louder than the gospel we want to admit that we get distracted by right here and right now and we forget what you have done to prove to us that you love us that we forget about the amazing eternal home that you are preparing for us that we forget that you have promised that even right now in the midst of our pain you are working for our good you are expressing your love for us but father we ask that you would open our eyes to the hope of the gospel that we would wake every morning with a new sense of awe that when we were enemies Christ died and brought us back in a relationship with you I pray that we would know the joy of a relationship with you today and the anticipation of the joy that will come when we get to see you face face to face I pray that the world around us will see us and want the joy that we have I pray that you would use us to represent you and to draw other people into the hope of the gospel the hope of

Jesus amen amen for us and let's we feed on life