

Hope Overflowing

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[0 : 00] We can turn back together to our reading in Romans chapter 15. Romans chapter 15.

! Hope for a time and try and whet your appetite to either come along yourself or to invite others to come along to encourage us to learn more just about how precious a thing this hope is that we find in the scriptures.

What do you think of when you think of the word hope? We use it in many different ways, many different contexts. But when we use it, so often there's an element of doubt.

We say, for example, I hope it doesn't rain or I hope the ferry sails. But when we use it in that kind of context, we've always got an element of doubt in the back of our mind because we know the reality is that it's going to rain or there will be days that the ferry doesn't sail.

So that hope isn't always certain. It's not always guaranteed. But that is not the kind of hope that the Bible speaks about.

[1 : 34] When the word hope is used as it is here in Romans 15, it's a very certain hope and a hope that is secure because it's got a foundation that is Jesus Christ and God who has given us this great hope.

If you read, for example, in Hebrews 11, verse 1, it speaks there of hope. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

That hope is not maybe it will come to be, but it is a certainty. It is a hope, an assurance, even in the things that we do not see just now.

It is still a certain and a sure hope that we have through faith because that hope is fixed on an object, on a person, on Jesus and what will come through him.

And that's the hope that the Bible speaks to us about. As one writer put it, hope puts something glorious on the far horizon that is worth striving for.

[2 : 51] Something glorious on the far horizon. We know it's there and we find it through Jesus Christ. And let's read verse 13 together.

See what it says there. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

It's just a short verse, but it says so much to us. But when you read a verse like this, you ask yourself, does that verse come close to describing me?

Does it come close to describing what my life is like just now? Can I say that my life is filled with all joy and peace in believing?

And that I am abounding in hope, overflowing with hope. We would love to be able to describe ourselves like that. And to varying degrees, we want to be able to.

[3 : 54] And sometimes we do. We can say, yeah, I've got joy, I've got peace, I've got hope. But there's always a time when we all fall short of experiencing what this verse speaks about.

And it's not just speaking to those who haven't come to believe in Jesus yet or who aren't members in the church as yet. It's speaking to every one of us. Even those who have been Christians for many, many years, this verse speaks to every one of us.

Asking that question, are we filled with joy and peace in believing? Are we abounding in this hope? We should be when we look to Jesus.

But there's things that rob us of that joy and peace and hope. And so it's important for us to always come back and look, well, where is this hope found?

I can't imagine anybody here, anybody in life really saying, I'm not interested in having joy and peace. I don't want to abound in hope. We all want, we all need these things.

[5 : 01] Everybody is looking for it in this world, that joy, that peace, that hope. But the question is, where is it found? How can we know it?

There's a hymn that starts with a question. What is your hope in life and death? It's a great question. It's an important question for us as we come to look at this word.

What is your hope in life and death? How do you answer that? What is your hope in both these scenarios? As we live our lives and as we know the reality of death, what is your hope?

Well, the hymn answers the question for us. But do we know it? What is your hope in life and death? Christ alone.

Christ alone, the hymn says. Is that your hope in life and death? Well, as Paul concludes this section in Romans 15 at verse 13, he is doing so in this verse with what is really a prayer.

[6 : 15] A prayer that we would know this joy, this peace, this hope in Christ. So I want us to focus on the word hope.

What we're going to do is break it down into its individual letters. H-O-P-E. And look at hope from four different perspectives.

And where we can find this hope. So the first letter, H, help. The opposite of hope is hopeless.

Like we're thinking of those who had leprosy in Jesus' day. They didn't have hope. They felt hopeless. Because there was nothing that could help them. And that's the way we are in our sin.

We are hopeless. And so the word hope reminds us that we have a great need. Think of the question, what is my hope in life and death?

[7 : 22] Is your answer one where it's an uncertain hope that this world offers? Where you're not sure and certain of what lies ahead?

Of what's going to help you in your time of need? Or is it the certain hope that the Bible speaks about found in Jesus Christ? We need help.

And the word hope reminds us that there is help. Because God has come to help us. And so we see that help and hope has a history.

It has a past. When you look at this chapter and verse 4, what does it say there? Romans 13 verse 4. For whatever was written in former days was written for you our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

So hope has a history. And it's a history that speaks to us of the help that God has given to us.

That's what it was saying here as Paul was writing to them and saying to ourselves as well, that the Scriptures, what was written in the past, was written for our instruction and our encouragement, that we might have hope.

[8 : 49] And so God is one who has come to give us help, to give us hope. The foundation of our hope is God, as verse 13 makes very clear for us.

May the God of hope. He is the God of hope. And it is the God who has come to help us.

So there's a foundation to this hope. There's a history to this hope. And it is God who has made all things, who has created the heavens and the earth.

And although sin has come in, he came to give help to his people. And so, as verse 13 says, may the God of hope fill you.

Well, if you are to be filled with something, the obvious question is, where is it going to come from? If you are to be fed when you're hungry, you need a source of food.

[9 : 47] You need to find food. If you are going to go on a journey in your car, you need fuel. So you have to go and fuel up before you go on that journey. And so for ourselves, if we're asking this question, if I am going to be filled with joy and peace and hope, we have to ask, are we going to the source?

Are we looking in the right place for it? Well, if we're looking around us, we see so many things that offer hope, but it's always temporary.

It's always uncertain. But when we look to the scriptures, we find the God of hope who is able to fill you. God is already described in verse 5 as the God of endurance and the God of encouragement.

He is the source of all of these things. And here we see He is the source of joy and peace and hope abounding, the help that He gives.

Because when you look through the Old Testament, that verse 4 speaks about the scriptures that were written. You go to Isaiah 41, verse 10. And there in the midst of a people who felt hopeless, God's people who were captured by a foreign nation, taken into captivity, God speaks to them and says, Fear not, for I am with you.

[11 : 09] Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. He is one who is able to help.

And so He is the source of hope. And we are to come to that source. As Hebrews 4, verse 16 makes clear to us, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hope reminds us that there is help for us. The second thing is the letter O.

And this speaks to us of opportunity. And two ways we see opportunity here is that God is speaking and He is speaking to all, to everybody.

As you read through the book of Romans, you find, and as you read through the scriptures, you find very often that there are two groups of people mentioned that this world is made up of.

[12:21] There are Jews and there are Gentiles. That's what the Bible makes very clear to us.

There are Jews and there are Gentiles. Jews are directly descended from Israel, from the people of God, and all other nations, all other people are Gentiles.

And so we therefore fall into the category of Gentiles, Gentiles, at least most of us will anyway. And what God is saying to us is that it is for everyone.

You look in the Old Testament, God was looking after His own people. But here you see in the book of Romans that the word is going out to all. And you see it in how often it is quoted in these verses from 9 through to verse 12 where scripture is quoted.

You see the word Gentiles used in each of these verses. And it's reminding us that this is an opportunity for us all. So when you look at Romans 15 verse 12, the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles.

In him the Gentiles hope. It is speaking of Jesus, the root of Jesse, and it's speaking to us as a people, the Gentiles, that our hope is to be found in him.

[13:43] So God is speaking. And he is speaking to all. So that none of us need feel that we are far away from him, that we are not welcome to know this hope, that we are undeserving.

There is no way we can have this hope. He is speaking to us all that we might find in him this hope. So there's an opportunity for all.

But the opportunity also speaks about time. Everyone lives, but only for a time. And it is this time to find this hope in Jesus.

And now is our time. Now is our opportunity. Now is your opportunity. If you don't know this hope, or you feel you've lost this hope, it is your opportunity to know it again, or to know it for the first time.

Psalms 95 verse 7 to 8 says that to us. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

Today. But so often we're living in view that this life is just for us to live as we want.

[14:55] And there's nothing afterwards. Living day by day, as the phrase goes, you only live once. Or as 1 Corinthians 15, 32 puts it, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

But there's no thought of eternity. There's no concern for our soul. Our hope is just for this life. Nothing else. But the scripture hope is so different.

Because the scriptures tell us that there is an eternity. That there is a day of judgment. That death is not the end. But that the Lord will come again.

And so this life is our opportunity, our only opportunity, to prepare for eternity. As C.T. Studd said, only one life, it will soon be past.

Only what's done, for Christ will last. So we have opportunity. And again, what is your hope in life and death?

[16:06] There was a man called John Harper. He was a minister in Glasgow, and then laterally in the city of London. He was a great evangelist.

He was known as a great evangelist. And he was invited to preach on a couple of occasions in America to go to Chicago, where Dwight Moody was ministering. And the second time he was going, he traveled to Southampton to board a ship to make his way to America.

He was a widow, but he had his six-year-old daughter, Annie, with him. And so together, they boarded the ship to cross the Atlantic. The name of the ship, Titanic.

And it is recorded for us afterwards what happened in his life by others, because he never survived. But his daughter did. And she was able to recall how she was woken urgently by her father at midnight and how he took her to a lifeboat to make sure that she was saved.

[17:12] But he went back on board. And what he did was speak to others about their need of Christ. And several months after the sinking of the Titanic, there was a man who stood in a prayer meeting in Ontario, in Canada.

And in tears, he recounted his story because he had been on board Titanic that night as well. And he had ended up in the water clinging to a piece of the wreckage.

And he said that on two occasions, a wave brought a man close to him. And this man was John Harper. And the first thing he said, John Harper said to this man was, man, are you saved?

And the man replied, no, I am not. And John Harper said to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And then the waves took him away again.

Short time later, the waves brought him back near this man. And he said to him, are you saved now? And he called out, no. And John Harper said to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

[18 : 30] And then just moments later, the cold got to John Harper. He let go of the piece of wreckage and he slipped under the water. Well, in those moments, this man looked to Christ and was saved.

And a lifeboat came near, plucked him out of the water. And not just was he saved physically, but he was saved eternally. And this was him months later, recalling this night.

And he said, I am John Harper's last convert. With his last breath, this man was pleading with others to be saved because the opportunity was then.

Today is your opportunity. Today is the time that you are given. But are you making the opportunity count? Are you listening?

Are you finding this God of hope who will fill you with joy and peace in believing? In believing in him that you might abound in hope.

[19 : 39] There is opportunity. There is thirdly, peace. P is for peace. If you don't have this hope, you cannot have peace because there is no peace apart from Jesus Christ.

And you will find in this life when you maybe feel that you have peace, that you are going on and everything is fine, that your peace will be interrupted. It will be interrupted by things that will come your way.

Sadness and sorrow and illness and uncertainty and fears. All of these things. And then you have to face up to death. And what then?

What is your hope in life and death? We have to know the source of hope and peace.

As G.K. Chesterton once said, it's only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength. And it's so often true for us.

[20 : 44] Sometimes God has to bring us down to our lowest point, to feel that hopelessness.

When we've tried everything else in this world, but to see that hope and peace is not found apart from Christ.

So is your hope today in finding peace based on your own thoughts, your own ways, or is it based on Christ alone?

If we are to be filled, we think of it in this way, as we may be filled with joy and peace and hope and believing. When does it end?

The hope of this world, it may make us feel full for a time, but ultimately it leaves us empty. When you're thinking of eating food or filling the car, there's always a point where you're saying, oh, I'm just full.

I can't eat anything else. Or when you're filling your fuel tank, it will always stop. It won't overflow. But when we see Paul's prayer here, it's not just that we will have a little joy and peace, like a little trickle into our life.

[22 : 01] It's that we will be filled. May he fill you with all joy and peace, abounding in hope. This is overflowing.

And this is the kind of peace that God is able to give through hope, and hope that is found in him. God is the God of hope.

But do you have peace in him today? So often we fall short. We settle for the little things in this world, just a partially full life.

But God offers a peace that abounds, that overflows in hope by believing in him.

The fourth letter is E. And E speaks of the eternal nature of this hope.

[23 : 05] There is an eternity before us, but this hope is eternal. This hope has a history, as we see in the beginning.

It goes back, the foundations of God speaking to us. It has a present where it speaks to us for this life, what is our hope in life. But what is our hope in death and beyond?

The phrase is used, hope springs eternal. People use that because they want to have an optimistic outlook in life. There's always a hope that things will be better.

But this worldly hope is always uncertain. But this hope, the biblical hope, abounding in hope, is eternal. There's no end to it.

There is this hope on the horizon, as one writer puts it when he's looking at the Bible and how it concludes. The Bible concludes with a stunning vision of a far horizon that lies ahead of us.

[24 : 12] is that where our hope is focused, on the eternal nature of it through faith in Jesus. And he's speaking there about the book of Revelation and how it speaks about this hope fulfilled.

And especially the last two chapters of the book of Revelation where all things are made new. Where everything is, that was wrong and hurtful and painful in this world is gone.

And where Jesus makes all things new. Peter puts it so wonderfully in his first letter, 1 Peter chapter 1, where it speaks of this eternal nature of hope.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

It's a living hope. through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.

[25 : 17] This hope is eternal. This hope will not let you down. This hope will not fail you because it is secure in Jesus Christ.

But what horizon are you looking to? There was a question asked of people in Scotland. What is closer to us, America or the moon?

And the answer is obvious to most, but one person replied and answered, the moon. And so the person asked, well, how do you conclude that?

How can you say the moon is closer than America? And he said, well, I can see the moon from here. I can't see America. But the moon is 240,000 miles away.

America is 4,000 miles away. The difference in his mind was, I cannot see it. And for many, that's the way they live in looking for hope in this world.

[26 : 29] the things that we can see are what our hope is based on. But Hebrews 11, verse 1, says to us, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Just because we can't see America doesn't mean it's not there. Ships and planes set off every day knowing it is there over the horizon.

and knowing that they can reach it. And that's the life of faith. It is knowing that the hope is there, that eternity is before us, that blessings are ours from Christ.

We don't fully see it, but faith is the assurance of things hoped for. So what horizon are you looking to today?

The things of this world that you can see are the hope that is on a glorious horizon for all of God's people. This hope is what reminds us of the help that God has given.

[27 : 43] It reminds us of the opportunity that we have today. It reminds us of the peace that he can give and it reminds us that this hope is eternal.

So again I ask, what is your hope in life and death? The answer is Christ alone.

Do you have him as your hope? Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you for all that you reveal to us through your word, even the things that are at times hidden from us that we cannot see, even as we think of Jesus in our lives and how at times or in times in our own experience where he has been unseen and unthought of, we thank you for your spirit that helps us to have our eyes opened to understand our need of him and we thank you that he is there for us even in times where we feel he's not or that he cannot be seen.

Broaden our horizons, Lord, and help us to know through faith that hope of Christ alone. Hear our prayers and pardon our sins in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 130, the Singed Psalms version of it.

[29 : 15] The tune is Martyrdom. Psalm 130, page 173.

Psalm that reminds us and speaks of the hope that we have in God. Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from on high and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

And then the last verse, O Israel, put your hope in God for mercy is with him and full redemption from their sins. His people he'll redeem. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

Amen. Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from the night and give attention to thy voice when I for mercy cry.

Lord, in your presence you have stopped if you are sinned to be part but yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord.

[31 : 05] I wait, my soul waits for the Lord My hope is in his word More than the Lord I wait for God My soul waits for the Lord O Israel good your broken God For mercy is with him And full And full redemption From their sins

Let be the Lord Heal Greetings After the benediction I'll go to the door to my right We'll close with the benediction Now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen Thank you.