

Romans (15:13)

Overflowing with Hope

Part 89 – November 26, 2006

OUR SOURCE OF HOPE



There's a story of two foreigners on a cruise ship one morning. Both carried Bibles, but neither spoke the other's language. They held up their Bibles, shook hands, and parted. Suddenly, one turned back and said, "Hallelujah!" The other grinned and replied, "Amen!"

The point Paul's been making (since 14:1) is that the deep things that unites us in Christ are far greater than the surface things that can separate us. And Paul concludes this section today, by praying that the Christian Jews and Gentiles in Rome will experience joy and peace and hope together, through the power of God's Spirit.

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. - *Romans 15:13*

It's interesting that Paul calls Him: "the God of hope". He could've called Him "the God of peace", "the God of joy", or "the God of love" (all true), but he's focusing on hope.

Q: What does that even mean: "the God of hope"?

A: Other translations say: "May God, the *source* of hope ..."



There were two old villages. One village got its water supply from a stream. During the dry seasons, when the water was needed most, the supply would dry up and dwindle away. The second village got its water supply from a deep artesian well. That faithful fountain overflowed no matter how severe the drought or dry season.



Q: Which town better represents you and your faith?

Anyone can have great faith/hope when life is going ... *great*. That's when joy and peace come *naturally*. But, the droughts and desert times are what display the source of our hope. Paul's prayer isn't that everything will just go *great* so you can have joy and peace – that is unrealistic in this real world. His prayer is that the Only Source of genuine hope will:

Fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him

It's very conditional: "As you trust in him"

TWO TYPES OF FUNERALS

Throughout history, there've been two types of funerals – and I've personally conducted both:

1. There're the ones where there is hope beyond the grave.
2. And there're funerals where all that's left is despair.



Something incredible happens when family and friends can gather together to share an odd mixture of sorrow *and* celebration. There's grief for the loss, but gladness that the life didn't end at death's door. *And* we rejoice in the hope of reuniting in Heaven.

- Hope drives out despair.



A life “overflowing in hope” is *not* a pain-free life. Nowhere does Scripture teach us to: grieve not, weep not, or sorrow not. But, over and over we're told to: *fear not*. This is because we don't suffer as those *without* hope.

The only place in the Bible that I found “sorrow not” was in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, where it tells us to *sorrow not* as those who have no hope.

Q: So, what causes us to “overflow with hope”?

A: “Joy” and “Peace”

Q: And, what is the condition for joy and peace?

A: “Trust”

Paul isn't talking about wishful thinking, or a fuzzy positive attitude. He's describing a deep conviction in God's promises. Joy and peace are both listed as fruits of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:22*) which means that they grow through intimacy with God.

OLD FAITHFUL

Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote this declaration:

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! – *Philippians 4:4 NKJ*

Q: You suppose that conviction came from a dwindling stream or a dependable well?

A: I'm guessing it came from Old Faithful!

Paul wasn't too “happy” in that cold, damp, lonely prison cell; and yet, he had the reserves to *rejoice with hope*. If we depend on circumstances to keep our joy and peace flowing, then our hope will fluctuate with the natural seasons and sadnesses of life.



But, if they are deeply sourced in an intimate, relationship with a loving, reliable, dependable, unchanging, trustworthy God, then my hope won't fail because *He* is faithful. This type of "overflowing hope" only happens as we cooperate with His Spirit; or as Paul puts it:

By the *power* of the Holy Spirit

We can't do it on our own ... but we can sure keep it from happening, simply by refusing to do our part.

Q: You know how to tap into that overflowing well?

A: You gotta dig for it!

We just studied Romans 15:4, where Paul told us that:



The Scriptures give us patience and encouragement so that we can have hope. - *Romans 15:4b NIV*

- We can't trust His promises if we don't know 'em!

But when we know 'em, and trust 'em, His Spirit will use 'em to refresh and restore us in those dehydrating moments of life.

Then, when I am feeling abandoned (by death or divorce or distance), though I am lonely, I will not be alone.

[God] Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." - *Hebrews 13:5 NKJ*

And when I am feeling ugly and unlovable, I will know in my soul that I have put my hand in His and He will never let go.

... neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - *Romans 8:38-39 NIV*

And when I've done irreparable damage to my reputation, and I feel that all is beyond hope, I'll give Him the pieces and He'll give me the peace.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. - *Romans 8:1 NIV*

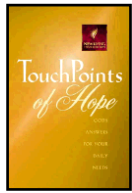
And when I am tested with the turmoil, trouble, and turbulence of life, I will remember that God turns the worst tragedies into the greatest testimonies.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. - *Romans 8:28 NIV*

Hope is not the same as optimism. Hope isn't the conviction that everything is going to turn out happy and wonderful in this life.

True hope is the confidence that there is purpose behind the pain; that things make sense regardless of how they turn out.

TOUCH POINTS



I've come across a great little resource for digging up hope and direction and promises for the daily problems of life. It's titled: Touch Points of Hope. It's from the folks who publish the New Living Translation. There are 112 topics, indexed in the back. And since it's so festive in here this morning, we thought you should have an early Christmas present! So I got you a shovel!

Do this: during December, set this in your bathroom. Topics include: adversity, bitterness, chaos, disappointment, endurance, failure, financial difficulties, helplessness, resentment, and stress ... so it's *perfect* for the holidays!

START DIGGING!

Paul is wrapping up his teaching on unity in the body, and today's verse mentions four marks of a mature congregation: "Joy", "Peace", "Hope", and "Power".

That's the kind of church I want to be a part of! And as I look around, I see strong evidence of each of these signs.

- We're not perfect by a long-shot ... but we're healthy.

It's like raising kids; you don't aim for perfection, you aim for health. No child and no church will ever be perfect.

- But we are growing in joy, peace, hope, and power!

Q: Are you like the village with the artesian well, or the one with the trickling stream on the verge of drying up?

If you're like the later, then you've forgotten how much He cares. And there's only one thing to do: start digging!