

Our Hope in God through Christ

1. Scripture Text

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I thank God for this opportunity to share with you on the topic: Our Hope in God through Christ Jesus. In Romans 5 the Apostle Paul, having expounded on the subject of Justification by Faith in chapter 4, now begins a new subject on hope:

Romans 5:1-8

- 1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:
- 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this **grace** wherein **we stand**, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.
- 3 And not only so, but we **glory in tribulations** also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
- 4 And patience, experience; and experience, **hope**:
- 5 And **hope** maketh **not ashamed**; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
- 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
- 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Richard Sibbes, a 17th century Puritan preacher of Cambridge once said:

“If I face a temptation to be dishonest, to steal, to lie, or to lust, I look to the emotional reservoir of hope for the strength to hold fast to the way of righteousness, and deny myself some brief, unsatisfying pleasure.”

2. Introduction

The noun “hope” occurs more than 50 times in the New Testament and in the passage above, it appeared 3 times. What is this hope that the Apostle Paul is referring to? Secular hope is the feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen or a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen (Probable or Possible). In contrast, “hope” in the Bible is always used in a good sense: expectation of good, hope; and in the Christian sense, joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation. For example, Romans 12:12 “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer”; 1 Cor 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Titus 2:13 speaks of the “blessed hope” and 1 Peter 1:3 talks about the “living hope”. When Paul writes to the believers at Rome during his third missionary journey (from Corinth), his purpose was to exhort them on matters concerning their salvation, whether Jews or Gentiles, with regards to God’s righteousness, faith, hope and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In chapters 1 to 4, Paul wrote concerning the judgments of the righteous God and his wrath against all unrighteousness, against all sinners both Jews

and Gentiles, and God's eternal salvation plan by grace through faith in Christ. Therefore being justified by God through Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all the spiritual seed of Abraham. In chapter 5, Paul progresses from "faith" to the subject of "hope" whereby sinners now look forward to the future glory. This hope not only desires something good for the future, it expects it to happen. And it not only expects it to happen, it is confident that it will happen (Definite or Factual). Hebrews 11:1 states that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for ..." where substance can also be translated "confidence" or "assurance". Faith and hope are closely related to each other. They even sound alike in Greek. This hope is certain as it finds its source in the immutable God who is the justifier of our faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. **The Reality of our Hope** (Romans 5:1-4)

In verses 1-4, Paul highlights for us the certainty or reality of this hope which is the result of faith. Verse 1 begins with "Therefore being justified by faith". The object of our justification is Jesus Christ while faith acts as the means of justification. It is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed on us that justifies. It is the blood of Christ at the cross that appease God's wrath upon sinners. God has set forth Jesus to be the propitiation for the remission of sins.

A. **We experience Peace with God** (Rom 5:1)

There is no longer enmity with God. Christ our saviour has fulfilled the righteousness of God. Being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we no longer face God's wrath and judgement. This peace with God which surpasses all understanding (Phi 4:7) is experienced by every believer in Christ. All this is part of God's love and mercy upon us in his eternal salvation plan.

B. **We stand at the throne of the Grace** (Rom 5:2)

Therefore, we can now stand boldly before the throne of grace, not based on our own merits but being justified by Christ alone who sits on the right hand of God. Again this access to the throne of grace is by means of faith knowing that our heavenly Father who loves us will answer our prayers because of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

C. **We rejoice in Hope of the glory of God** (Rom 5:2)

The Greek word translated as "rejoice" here is not the more common word "χαίρω" but the lesser used "καυχάομαι" which means "to **boast**" or "to **glory**". This does not mean you boast about yourself but to live with **head up high** with God-given confidence. The "glory of God" here does not mean the essential glory of God but the eternal glory which God has prepared and shall bestow on his people. This glory from God is waiting for us and is sure.

D. **We glory in tribulation** (Rom 5:3-4)

Our heavenly Father makes use of trials, tribulations and temptations in our lives to mould and sanctify us to be conformed to the image of Christ. Therefore, we can glory (or **boast**) with **heads up high** when persecution and affliction comes our way; for we know that this is God's means to develop patience (fruit of the Spirit) in us. This patience, when exercised regularly, will lead to a proven character that is translated as "experience" here. By the grace of God, our faith and hope will also be increased and

strengthened, and this hope from God will allow us to go through greater trials and tribulations.

4. **The Reason of our Hope** (Romans 5:5-8)

This hope, a gift from God, will never disappoint or disgrace us because God's love **has been poured out** (KJV: **is shed abroad**) into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The reason why this hope will never fail us is that our all-powerful God, who is also infallible and immutable, guarantees it. This love of God that "has been poured out" into our hearts describes the love that gushed out in abundance, so much so that our hearts are "immersed" in it. The perfect tense of this verb may not be very obvious in the English translation, but in the Greek form, this verb stares at you in the face. Paul uses the next three verses to describe this sacrificial love of God.

A. **Established by the Love of God** (Rom 5:5,8)

The love of God is shown by the ultimate giving of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ and the seal provided by the Holy Spirit also given to us. This three-fold assurance by the Triune God provides us with a hope that is certain of future glory and eternal life and helps us live a victorious Christian life. God's love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8a)

B. **Assured by the Holy Spirit** (Rom 5:5)

The Holy Spirit which is given to every believer also provides the assurance that this hope will never disappoint us. In Eph 1:13-14, Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the earnest or down-payment of our inheritance. God has provided the ultimate Guarantee who pours out God's love into our hearts.

C. **Justified by our Lord Jesus Christ** (Rom 5:6-8)

Verse 6 not only describe our helplessness, it also describe our corrupt sinful state before God. But Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the perfectly righteous Lamb of God, was given to us as the perfect sacrifice, to atone our sins on the cross at Calvary. This historical fact has been foretold in Old Testament prophecies and realised in the person of Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers also testified to this fact and all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour are justified before the righteous God. In verse 7, Paul provided a contrast between the sacrificial death of Christ for sinners and a person's willingness to die for a "good" man. This is to illustrate that God's love for sinners is unequalled.

5. **The Response of our Hope** (Romans 5:2-6)

After knowing that we have this perfect hope in Christ Jesus, how are we as Christians to live our lives in order to reflect this hope that is in us? What is your response?

A. **Live with Confidence rejoicing in hope**

It reminds us of the covered lamp under the bed that Jesus spoke about in Luke 8:16-18. Sometimes we may be guilty of trying to hide our identity as Christians, be it for fear of being ridiculed or persecuted or simply a lack of confidence. I am not suggesting we go out every day and tell everyone we meet: "I am a Christian", but our hope in Christ should be reflected in our lives and bear testimony of it, so that people

will take notice. As God's children we can stand with our heads up high because of the hope that is in us. This reminds us of the giraffe that God has created. The long neck is not meant to look down on other creatures but to reach food that others are unable to reach. Let us therefore rejoice in this blessed hope and be a **witness for Christ**.

B. Live with Courage when facing tribulations

When we do face persecution, like our brethren in places like China and the Middle East, we should rejoice knowing that this hope from God will strengthen and see us through in times of difficulties and distresses in life, knowing that we stand before the throne of grace. The Apostle Paul is a good example for us to follow. Even when he is imprisoned, he is rejoicing and **sharing the Gospel** message with other prisoners and prison guards.

C. Live with Comfort in the love of God

In Singapore, many people including Christians are anxious for their livelihood because the cost of living keeps going up, whether in times of economic growth or during a recession. Do we respond like the Hong Kong protestors? Or do we bury our heads in the sand thinking that nobody will notice us (like the ostrich) and our troubles will go away? Of course not! For we are not a people without hope. Let us go to our heavenly Father in prayer and He will come running to us with much more than we can ever ask for, just like in the parable of the lost son (Luke 15). What a comforting thought to know that our heavenly Father loves and cares for us and He has given His Son to us.

6. Conclusion

Therefore, when we face trials and tribulations in life, are we able to respond with confidence and courage through the Blessed Hope in Christ Jesus that is given to us? Can we live a life that testifies of this Lively Hope to the people around us with the love of God that comforts us? Let us share the **Gospel of Jesus Christ** with unbelievers with much conviction, patience and love knowing that this Hope shall come to pass.

Richard Sibbes: *“Glory follows afflictions, not as the day follows the night but as the spring follows the winter; for the winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.”*

The Psalmist in Psalm 42 concludes with these words: *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”*