

Abounding in Hope
Romans 15:13
ABC 7/9/17

In one sense, the book of Romans ends with our text this morning, 15:13, because what follows is mostly personal in nature. We could call this the 1st benediction of the letter because there will be 2 more, 15:33 & 16:20, followed by a doxology in 16:25-27. Before we get into it, where have we been? In vs 7 Paul gives the exhortation that we're to **accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God**. The strong & the weak, the Jew & Gentile, welcome & receive one another because Jesus has accepted them. We don't do it as a chore but for **the glory of God**. We do it in a way that makes God look good, because He truly is. Vss 8-9 motivate this behavior by showing us that Jesus became a Servant to the Jews so they'd glorify God for His faithfulness in that He keeps His promises & so that the Gentiles would glorify God for His mercy. Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God & Son of David, came not to be served but to serve & give His life as a ransom for both Jews & Gentiles. He's set an example of how we should serve each other. Vss 9-12 are 4 quotations from the Jewish Scriptures, our OT. As we know & as vs 4 tells us, all Scripture is designed to help us have **hope**. Vs 12 makes this clear with the quote from Isaiah 11:10, **there shall come the root of Jesse, & He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope**. Not only does Paul quote Scripture, but the Scripture he quotes comes to a climax in this promise to the Gentiles that they, & not just the Jews, will **hope** in the Messiah of Israel. & then vs 13 both begins & ends with **hope**. He appeals to the **God of hope**, not the *God of peace* or *joy* or *love*, but the **God of hope**. & his appeal is that this God would work in us so we'd **abound in hope**, that we'd overflow with hope. Let's read this wonderful wish-prayer that Paul wants every believer to experience: **13**

When we read a vs like that, we must ask, *Does that come close to describing me? Can I honestly say my life is filled with all joy & peace in believing? Do I abound in hope?* &, since we aren't always the most objective, we need to ask, *Would my family or good friends describe me as being filled with all joy & peace in believing & abounding in hope?* Maybe we should ask them. To varying degrees we all fall short of experiencing this vs completely & so we all can benefit by

thinking about what it means & how we can grow in these qualities. We all want & need these qualities, & yet even among believers, very few can claim to be filled with all joy & peace & to be abounding in hope at all times. PRAY

1. The Source of Hope: the God of Hope. If we want **hope** we'd better go to the right place to get it. You don't go to Sears to buy groceries or to Winco to get a couch. Biblical **hope** isn't found in pills or a bottle or in other people. Our hopes will be dashed if we look to programs, politics, or entertainment to renew & sustain us. But we can go to God seeking **hope** because He's the God who's both the source of hope & the object of hope. He's the source of **hope** because He's the source of every good thing. He's the object of **hope** because we have hope in Him & not in the things of this sinful world. By **the God of hope**, Paul means God is the Giver of hope. He's also the object of our hope, but here the focus is on God as the source of hope. In Rom 15:5, he describes God as **the God of endurance & encouragement**. God gives those qualities as we seek Him through Scripture & prayer. In 15:33 & 16:20 Paul describes Him as **the God of peace**. He gives peace to His people. Thus if we lack hope, the 1st place we should look for it is God, who is the source of true **hope**. Paul isn't telling us to approach life with a stiff upper lip or to look for a silver lining in everything or to never give up as he speaks of **hope**. To be hopeful is a human characteristic possessed by many people we admire. But if that's all Paul's talking about in terms of our spiritual state, it would be complete deception & delusion. Why? Because without God our condition is literally, thoroughly, & unmistakably hopeless. We're completely **without hope & without God in the world** (Eph 2:12). As soon as we bring God into the picture the situation is reversed. Now we have **hope** through the work of Jesus, because God Himself is our **hope** & has given **hope** to us. Nothing else can be or do that. If you put your hope in other people they'll disappoint you. If you trust in your savings or retirement you'll find they can disappear. Health will fail. Houses can burn. Jobs can be lost. But the one who has his **hope** from God & trusts God as He's revealed Himself in Jesus can stand firm in anything.

Obviously, the word **hope** here links back with **hope** in vs 12, quoting Is 11:10, **in Him shall the Gentiles hope**. **Him** refers to Jesus & the promise of salvation that comes to all peoples through

Him. What are we to **hope** in? Jesus Christ Himself. He is the ground of our hope. We must bank our **hope** on Him, not on ourselves, our intelligence, our health, our money, our family, our job, or our reputation. None of these can sustain **hope**. They can collapse at any moment. God means for our **hope** to be firm & unshakable. So He put underneath it His own Son. **In Him will the Gentiles hope**. At every turn in life know that Jesus is your **hope**. He is our **hope** for salvation, for our marriages, for our children, & for our service to God. He is our **hope** that we will live & die well. He is our **hope** because He will never fail, never forget, never change, & never grow less interesting. This means if you haven't come to Jesus as a guilty sinner & put your trust in Him as your only **hope** for eternal life, then you have **no hope & are without God in the world** (Eph 2:12). What a bleak description of life without Christ!

Dave Barry wrote a book close to 20 years ago titled, *Stay Fit & Healthy Until You're Dead*. In it he pokes fun at the fitness craze in America, but his title also uncovers the raw truth that we all tend to suppress: It's 100% certain you will die, no matter how fit & healthy you are. Unless you have Jesus as your **hope**, you don't have any true hope beyond the grave (1 Thes 4:13), but only **the terrifying expectation of judgment** (Heb 10:27). Put your trust in Jesus as your Savior today! Hopefully, we've seen & remember that the theme of Romans is **the gospel of God** (1:1, 16, 17; 15:16). Paul mentions *hope* in Romans more than in any of his other letters, because the gospel is our only **hope**. In 4:18 we read of Abraham with reference to God's promise that he'd have a son & become the father of many nations, **In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.'** In 5:1-5, Paul elaborates on our hope through the gospel:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; & we exult in hope of the glory of God. & not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; & perseverance, proven character; & proven character, hope; & hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In 8:19-21, Paul mentions the **hope** of the fallen creation as it waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Then he adds with regard to our waiting eagerly for the future redemption of our bodies: (8:24-25)

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

In 12:12, we're to rejoice in hope as we persevere in our tribulations. In 15:4, we have hope through the perseverance & encouragement of the Scriptures. &, as 15:12 indicates, Jesus is the object of all our **hope**. He's the Savior who's freed us from condemnation. He's given us eternal life as a free gift. Our **hope** rests completely in Him & the promise of His coming (Titus 2:13). As John tells us,

Beloved, now we are children of God, & it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. & everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 Jn 3:2-3).

So if you're lacking **hope**, you know where to find it: Seek the God who is the source of all true **hope** & put your **hope** in Jesus as your Savior & Lord.

2. The Foundation of Hope: Be Filled with All Joy & Peace Paul doesn't pray that you'll have a little bit of **joy** & **peace** trickling into your life now & then. Rather, he prays that the **God of hope** will fill you with all joy & peace so that you will abound in hope. He piles this up to show us what God can & wants to give us. Paul wants our **joy** & **peace** to be overflowing so we're continually abounding in **hope**. Again, while we all fall short of this, don't settle for an empty or ½ full life of **joy, peace, & hope**. Ask God to fill you to the brim with His **joy** & **peace** & **hope**. Paul's already mentioned **joy** & **peace** in 14:17, **for the kingdom of God is not eating & drinking, but righteousness & peace & joy in the Holy Spirit**. Both **joy** & **peace** are listed as part of the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in believers who walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 22). As qualities that the Spirit of God produces in us, the **joy** & **peace** Paul's talking about don't come from having a certain personality type. A person with Holy Spirit-produced **joy** isn't just a person with a bubbly, optimistic personality. The Christian's **joy** isn't a matter of circumstances or personality. It's supernatural in origin & in the way it expresses itself in spite of circumstances. Barnhouse writes,

It is not a question of being an extrovert or an introvert. Some people are by nature gloomy & morose... Other people are buoyant & outgoing... But jovial people are sometimes plunged into the deepest despair & gloom when something goes contrary to their selfish desires. & contrariwise, some who are naturally despondent learn to settle upon the eternal Rock, & are filled with a deep & steadfast joy, which does not have its spring in this natural life.¹

In His High Priestly prayer in Jn 17 Jesus indicated we should have a full measure of this divine **joy** within. But we don't always; that's why He prayed for it on our behalf. We find the same thing in our text today. Paul is praying that God might fill us with *all joy & peace as we trust in Him*. This teaches that there must be degrees of these blessings. Since this is true this means that although many have them, not all of us are filled with them. Instead of being mostly empty of these blessings, we should be filled to the brim with them.

A person with Holy Spirit-produced **peace** isn't just a laid back guy who never gets ruffled. 2 kinds of peace are spoken of in the Bible: peace with God & the peace of God. In Romans the 1st meaning has dominated because Paul's been showing how sinners who are at war with God might find **peace** with Him through the death & resurrection of Jesus. Here, however, he's talking about personal peace, the peace of heart & mind that God gives. This isn't a natural quality. This peace doesn't come from being in favorable circumstances. In fact, this **peace**, & **joy** for that matter, is most noticeable when a person is in a situation where almost everyone would be depressed or anxious, but the Spirit-filled believer is full of **joy & peace** in God. It's also important to understand that the **joy & peace** that Paul's talking about aren't a *Pollyanna* outlook that denies the reality of sorrow, grief, & troubles. Paul had great sorrow & unceasing grief over the great number of Jews who were rejecting Jesus (9:2), yet he could write about being filled with all joy. The shortest vs in the Greek NT is, **Rejoice always** (1 Thes 5:16), but the shortest vs in the English NT is, **Jesus wept** (Jn 11:35). There's no contradiction between these 2. Paul described himself as **sorrowful, yet always rejoicing** (2 Cor 6:10). By the way, Paul mentions **joy** 21 times in his letters; the next closest is John with 9 times. It's especially helpful to study **joy** in Philippians, where Paul was in prison & being wrongly criticized by fellow believers, & yet he was rejoicing always in the Lord. We also need a realistic view of Spirit-produced **peace**. It doesn't mean we

¹ *Faith That Lives*, booklet 88 in the series of radio messages on Romans, p 13

glibly shrug off concern over difficult problems. Paul was filled with **peace** & yet he mentions the daily pressure on him **of concern for all the churches** (2 Cor 11:28). So we're not talking about a *who cares, whatever will be will be, que sera sera* kind of **peace**. Biblical **peace** comes from taking all our anxieties to God in thankful prayer:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. & the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts & your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:6-7).

Biblical **joy** is an inner delight in God & His sure promises that gives us comfort & contentment in every trial, trouble, or tribulation. It comes from knowing that our sovereign God will work all things, including distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, together for our good because we love Him & are called according to His purpose (8:28, 35). Biblical **peace** is the inner contentment & freedom from crippling anxiety & fear that comes from being reconciled to God &, as much as it depends on us, being at peace with others (5:1; 12:18). Being filled with God's **joy & peace** is the foundation or platform that results in abounding in **hope**.

It's a marvelous thing to pray that we as Christians will be filled with **joy & peace** because we can be sure God wants to do that. After all, the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, & peace**, right? So the way to get that fruit is by **believing** what God has said & responding to Him to ask for it in prayer. Do you see how the Word & prayer work together? God wants to give what He's promised & commanded in His Word & yet He alone is the One who can give them. We can't create fruit like **joy & peace** on our own so we must seek God to bring them. & He is gracious in that He wants to give them & wants us to ask for them. He brings **joy & peace** in answer to prayer & He brings them in our **believing**, through our faith in what He's said. It's this cycle of us responding to God & God graciously responding to us, of God revealing Himself to us in His Word to lead us to seek Him & then He blesses us as we seek Him. We never want out of that upward spiral of God's work. Though we all stumble, we want to continuously be plugged into the sustaining power of the Spirit using the Word to work in our hearts which then moves us to seek further power. We all want this kind of **joy & peace** so we'll abound in **hope**, but how do we get these qualities? Paul mentions a human means & a divine means:

3. The Human Means of Hope: Belief in God & His Word Paul doesn't specify the object of our faith, but obviously it's the same as the object of our **hope** (15:12), Christ, **the root of Jesse who arises to rule over the Gentiles**. In the Bible, **hope** & *faith* are sometimes virtual synonyms. Heb 11:1 tells us, **Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen**. Ps 71:5 says, **For You are my hope; O Lord God, *You are my confidence from my youth***. So to **hope** in Christ is to *believe* in Christ. It's to look to Him alone to fulfill all the promises of God to us. We find those promises in Scripture, which is why Paul said that the Scriptures give us **hope** (15:4). Or, as he said, **faith comes from hearing, & hearing by the word of Christ** (10:17). To have & increase in abundant **hope**, we must believe & keep on believing in God & His Word. It's simply a matter of believing God when He tells us who He is & what He's done & will continue to do for His people. I'm convinced the most important of all differences between people is at this point, not whether they're intelligent or unintelligent, kind or unkind, joyful or Eyore-ish, introverts or extroverts, but whether or not they'll trust God. Christians by definition are believers; non-Christians are unbelievers. If your not a believer, if you haven't put your faith in Christ alone, you'll never have this **joy, peace, & hope**. But even as Christians, we you may wonder, *How do I get this kind of faith that helps me abound in hope even in the midst of trials?* Part of the answer is to know your God & His ways through His Word. The Word shows God to be faithful to His people in all sorts of trials. Quite often, He delivered them as they trusted Him, but sometimes He permitted them to suffer & die, promising rewards in heaven. Heb 11:33-38 mentions those ... **who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received *back* their dead by resurrection**

Then, without missing a beat, he continues,

& others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; & others experienced mockings & scourgings, yes, also chains & imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men of whom the world was not worthy*), wandering in deserts & mountains & caves & holes in the ground.

Knowing God & His ways through His Word will show you that He is completely trustworthy. Even if you suffer a martyr's death, He'll give you the crown of life (Rev 2:10). To say it another way,

it's faith in God's sovereignty. He's in control & He never lets anything come into the lives of His children that He hasn't ordained for their ultimate good. A person who really trusts in God's sovereignty will have **joy, peace & hope** that others can't even comprehend. The other side of having this kind of faith is to choose to believe God in spite of horrible circumstances that seem to be contrary to His promises. After Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed Jerusalem & the temple & slaughtered many Israelites, Jeremiah grieved & lamented, but then he directed his thoughts toward God: (Lam 3:21-24)

This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him"

Or, as with Abraham & Sarah, whose bodies were beyond the natural ability to conceive a son according to God's promise: **In hope after hope he believed ...** (Rom 4:18). He chose to believe God's promise in spite of circumstances to the contrary. The human means of growing in abundant hope is to believe & keep believing in God. Learn to trust God more & more. Abound in faith in our great God. You'll find that as you trust Him you'll grow stronger in your faith & you'll become ever more firmly settled in the wonderful truths taught us in the Bible. Besides that, you'll find something of the perfect **joy & peace** of believing God. God operates through His truth as we hear & read & believe & receive & respond to His truth. But it all starts with **believing**, with responding to the reality that God has come in Jesus as the only perfect Man to die as the only worthy substitute to pay for our sins & risen again to prove His victory. God says to turn from your sin & self-trust & bank on God being gracious because of who Jesus is & what He's done. He is Lord & God & He's the only Savior & Messiah. Trust & seek Him continually to rule your life with ever-increasing **hope** & life-calming **peace** & motivating **joy** & Christ-centered unity all by the power of His Spirit. & if we can help you trust Him for the 1st time or trust Him more, please let us talk/pray with you.

4. The Divine Means of Hope: the Power of the Holy Spirit Did you notice that the 3 members of the trinity are all mentioned in the context here? God the Father is **the God of hope**. The object of our hope is Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God who is also the root of Jesse. The power for **joy,**

peace, & abundant **hope** comes from the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is, of course, nothing less than the power of God that created the universe! He spoke & it was done (Ps 33:9). The Spirit's power is the resurrection power that gives new life to dead sinners (Jn 3:6-8). The Holy Spirit opens our minds so we can understand the truths of God's Word (1 Cor 2:9-13). The Holy Spirit is the power that produces His holiness in us as we walk in dependence on Him (Gal 5:16-23; 1 Cor 6:11). The Spirit confirms our adoption as children of God & helps us as we struggle to pray (Rom 8:15-17, 26). The Spirit strengthens us with power in the inner man so Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit seals every believer so we're kept for the day of redemption (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30). &, as Paul says here, the Holy Spirit is the power who produces in us His fruit of **joy & peace** as we trust in Him, so that we abound in **hope**.

Nothing of any spiritual value is possible in & of ourselves since even our believing is God's work, as Jesus said, **apart from Me you can do nothing** (Jn 15:5). We can't even believe unless we're enabled to do so by God (Eph 2:8). We can't find **peace** unless we submit our requests to God by prayer & petition (Phil 4:6-7). **Joy** comes only from God & is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work within (Gal 5:22). **Hope** is impossible on our own (Eph 2:12). But while these blessings are impossible for any of us to achieve by ourselves, everything is possible for God who makes them possible for us & in us by His Spirit's power. In fact, God promises to bless us in all these ways if we trust Him, & it's for this that Paul is praying. By ending with a reference to the **power of the Holy Spirit**, the prayer that is our text both begins & ends with God, which is exactly what we found in Rom 11:36 which closed the doctrinal section of this letter. It ended with a doxology, the final words of which were: **For from Him & through Him & to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.** Everything in the universe begins with God, is accomplished by God's agency, & exists for God's glory. But if that's true of the inanimate universe, & it is, it's certainly true of salvation. It's true of you, if you're a Christian. You exist because God created you. You believe because He worked faith in you & sustains it in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. He does this so you would

live to His glory now & forever. Left to ourselves we can do nothing. But because God is for us we can stand firm & triumph.

According to our text, all of this is so we might overflow with hope. God who is the source of hope, is asked by Paul to fill believers with **joy & peace** through their learning to trust Him, so that by the power of the Spirit's working they might overflow with the **hope** of which God the Father is the source. This is the 4th mention of **hope** in this chapter (4, 12, & 13). Obviously, it's Paul's main concern & should be ours as well, especially since we live in an age that's so lacking in hope. People have lost hope in politics, the economy, & everything else. They are without God & therefore there is no hope for them. What an opportunity for us as God's people. We have divine, uplifting, overwhelming, & overpowering **hope** from God. So let's be hopeful. Abound in **hope** & let the world know why you do.

Here are some basic strategies for growing in God's **joy, peace, & abundant hope**:

- Pray! Paul's praying here & we must as well. It's a prayer of faith in who God is & what He's promised in Christ & therefore it's a prayer God loves to answer. This is a prayer for biblical abundant life, which is what Jesus came to bring (Jn 10:10).
- Spend time daily in God's presence, reading & meditating on His Word, praying & spending time with Him. As I've said before, George Muller, who trusted in God to provide for over 2,000 orphans through prayer alone, used to make it the 1st business of every day to have his soul delighted in God. If you lack **joy & peace & hope**, ask God to fill you with these qualities for His glory.
- Memorize some of God's wonderful promises that kindle **joy, peace, & hope** in your soul so you can meditate on them throughout the day. Rom 8:28, 8:32, 15:13, & many other vss like them will help you set your mind on things above rather than on the things that get you down (Col 3:1-4). The Psalms are loaded with vss of trust in God.
- Immediately confess all sins, including grumbling, complaining, despair, & bitterness & deliberately think of things you can thank God for. Begin by thanking Him for sending His beloved Son to save you from your sins. Thank Him that you have His Word & His Spirit to guide

& sustain you. Thank Him for all your blessings & even for your trials (1 Thes 5:18), which help you to grow.

- When you feel overwhelmed with despair, desolation, or depression, tell yourself again & again to hope in God. The psalmist did this repeatedly:

Why are you in despair, O my soul? & *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence (Ps 42:5).

Why are you in despair, O my soul? & why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance & my God (Ps 42:11).

Why are you in despair, O my soul? & why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance & my God (Ps 43:5).

- Read the biographies of godly saints who have run the race before you. Read how William Carey, Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Charles Spurgeon, Adoniram Judson, & many more men & women of faith trusted God in the midst of overwhelming trials. (Piper's short biographies, *The Swans are Not Silent*).² Here's a quote from Adoniram Judson, as he suffered horrible torture & deprivation in a squalid Burmese prison. A friend sent him a letter & asked, *Judson, how's the outlook?* Judson replied, *The outlook is as bright as the promises of God*.³ Judson was abounding in **hope** through the power of the Holy Spirit. We must do the same. What will be the fruit of a church that's marked by unity? **Joy, peace, & hope**. God will be the One who fills us with these fruits. Biblical unity is impossible humanly. Only the power of the Spirit is capable of bringing it about. It's my prayer that God would inundate each of us with **joy & peace** as we trust in Him. Paul concludes his argument in Romans with this prayer for you, that you'd know the **hope** of God, & it would lead to a unity of fellowship in the body of believers that would witness to God's glory. Our *outlook is as bright as the promises of God*. Since this is true, we should be abounding in **hope** together.

² Many, if not all, are free downloads at www.desiringgod.org/books/all

³ http://www.preceptaustin.org/adoniram_judson