

Unwavering Hope in Unshakable Salvation

Romans 5:1-5

“and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God”

Introduction: In 2004, a relatively unknown politician from Illinois stepped to the microphone at the Democratic National Convention and delivered a 20-minute message that catapulted him to the national spotlight. The message was entitled *“The Audacity of Hope”*, and the speech turned into a book by 2006 (and a nice \$1.9 million payday) and a slogan for an eventual run for the presidency in 2008. Barack Obama shrewdly tapped into a word most people know and a concept everyone desires in offering *hope* in something better, regardless if one can define what that is or even how to get there. The promise of hope is a common tool for politicians, marketers, and salesmen alike:

“Hope --- Hope in the face of difficulty. Hope in the face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope! In the end, that is the greatest gift to us...a belief in things not seen. A belief that there are better days ahead.”

Barack Obama

You can see the power of offering a future payoff without explaining *how* to get there. This is a pure rip-off of Biblical concepts, appropriated for a different use. Notice there is a definition of grace (gifts), faith (belief in things not seen) and hope --- better days ahead. But hope that is NOT ground in an object that can actually deliver is merely a new version of an old school snake oil salesman. The person offering has NO ability to actually make someone better in the future, and if they somehow DO get better, it is simply a happy coincidence.

But hope IS longed for by all, and there are two dramatically different offers of hope in this world. According to *“Psychology Today”*, hope is a strategy to employ, a nebulous practice of focusing on things that bring us brightness, happiness, and better emotional states, without defining what that would be or whether it can sustain.¹ Worldly hope functions in the way that we cross our fingers and *hope* that things will go well tomorrow, that our loved one will get better, that we will be able to get married someday and that marriage will be satisfying, that home ownership will be available for our kids, that Social Security won’t go bankrupt, that war will not come, that government will shrink, or that our team will win today: *at best we can play the percentages and cross our fingers*. The advice from counselors when dealing with hopelessness: *look inside, try to control even little things in your life, and trust it will get better!* This is NOT hopeful, but rather a recipe to remain hopeless and to feel let down.

But the Bible offers something far better. Listen to what **Hebrews 6:17-20** says about the foundation and nature of hope:

“So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this (hope) as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/everyday-resilience/202512/why-the-world-needs-a-big-dose-of-hope-right-now>

Far from being a “cross your fingers and hope for the best” way of operating, God offers us hope in the **nature of His character** AND the **finished work of Jesus Christ**. Out of His character He gives two **unchangeable** things: His *promise* and His *oath*, the first given to Abraham (Heb. 6:13) and the second sworn by the greatest of entities: *Himself*. Hope is not nebulous nor uncertain, but is based solely on the fact that God keeps every single promise, that He CANNOT lie, and the fact that Jesus is our High Priest forever. It is significant that this hope is called “**a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul**”. An anchor has the ability to weigh down, but it can also steady and hold fast during a storm, standing firm when everything else swirls and rages around. This hope recognizes that life is hard, that storms will rage, that depression and the hopelessness that we face are REAL, but that there is something far greater to come.

We have finished the first four chapters of Romans, with the clear emphasis and case built that followers of Jesus are **justified by faith alone**, as faith is a gift of grace and the only basis of God’s declaring us righteous. Works, obedience, or compliance to law can never cut it. That means that both Jew AND non-Jew (Gentile) come to God the same way: *through Jesus’ life, work, and resurrection alone*, not by external means. But now, Paul begins to look at the **future** and **results** of our justification. Hope is simply *faith in the future tense*, trusting God at His Word and believing that He will keep every ounce of His promises. AND, faith in Jesus prepares us to thrive in the midst of a difficult life, since Jesus prayed that God would not take us out of the world but to keep us from the evil one (John 17:15). So we will look at the results of our justification, with the predominant theme of **unwavering hope**.

Hopeful Result #1: Peace from enemy status

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

There is a clear transition of thought that happens between chapter 4:25 and 5:1. Paul was a master teacher, building an argument from the ground up so that his readers can see all the connective tissue in all the parts of our salvation. The first phrase intends to summarize all that he had covered before, and also signaled that what is to follow *comes out of* the realities of saving faith. It is important that we keep this in mind when walking through this section, since he is speaking of those who have been *declared righteous by God*, not all of mankind in general.

The first result that Paul wanted to point out is the fact that justified believers in Jesus Christ **have peace with God**. There is no small argument whether this phrase says that having peace is a settled condition (in the indicative) or something that we should embrace (“let us have” in the subjunctive). The application does not change significantly, but the context seems to mean that the fact we have peace with God is a settled reality, not something that we do or pursue. This is both good news to our mind and heart, but also has practical realities as we face the barrage of pain in our world.

Now, because of our context as a culture, often **peace** is NOT a huge value, even though we enjoy the fruit that peace brings: freedom, lack of fear or concern of war every day, being settled and calm each day. In my lifetime, America has had wars and battles, but they have all taken place somewhere else besides our own shores (9/11 is an exception, but definitely a different kind of battle). I did not grow up with, nor have my kids, the fear that an invading force may come into Simi Valley and try to kill or take up prisoner. We have experienced unprecedented peace, which often causes us to forget the possibility of war around us or the **cost of our freedom and peace**, which came at the cost of innumerable lives.

To understand the rich nature of being at peace with God, we first must ask the question: **peace from what?** Peace in the present necessitates there was conflict in the past. The reality is the fact that when

we were in our sin as rebels against the glory of God (see Rom. 1), exchanging His glory as Creator for creation, we were truly at **war with God, enemies of Him, as He was truly our enemy**. Does that seem harsh or different than we typically think? Probably. But look at Rom. 5:8 and 10, where we see we were both **sinners and enemies of God**, and our mind was set on the flesh making us **hostile toward God** (Rom. 8:7) and we were unable to please Him (8:8). By definition, in our rebellion and worshipping the creation, we were friends with the world, which made us enemies of God (James 4:4). But this was not a one-way conflict, since God was set against US because of our sin:

Psalm 5:4-5 “*For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.*
⁵ *The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.*”

Psalm 11:5 “*The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.*

John MacArthur, in a sermon entitled “Enemies of God”, declared:

“Who is the **most dangerous person you will ever encounter**? Now the greatest enemy you will ever encounter is not human. That narrows the choice. And some of you, no doubt, are thinking, “Well, he must be talking about the devil, must be talking about Satan.” No. Satan is not your greatest enemy, not at all. Are you surprised to hear that? It’s true. **Your greatest enemy, deadliest enemy, most destructive enemy is actually God.** The demons know that, Satan knows that, that’s why they said to the Lord Jesus, “Have You come to destroy us?” Even the demons know that God is the final Judge and Executioner².

Why is this important for us to realize and remember? Because the cost of our peace was the atoning and substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross. God did not just pour out His wrath on sin, but treated Christ like a sinner (2 Cor. 5:21). God does not judge sin by sending it to Hell, he punishes the sinner in Hell. Unbelievers do not realize that they are not only under the wrath of God, but that He is there enemy, as we make Him an enemy in our unbelief and sin. It is God’s common grace and love that gets misconstrued by people, thinking that God will not actually judge the living and dead one day.

But here is the Divine mystery: **God is simultaneously hating AND loving**, since while we were still sinners God showed His love by having Christ die for us (Rom. 5:8), just as He is both just and justifier (Rom. 3:26). When God declares us righteous, we move from enemies to sons and daughters, from war to peace, from wrath to joy. This peace is settled, which allows us to enjoy a new relationship with God, from distant caretaker to intimate king. This gives us **practical realities**:

John 14:27 “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”*

Philippians 4:7 “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”*

Colossians 3:15 “*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”*

For justified believers, the war is over. We now enjoy the peace of Christ so that we do not have to be troubled, can work through anxieties, and let Christ rule in our heart. But there is MORE than merely being at peace with God.

² <https://www.gty.org/sermons/82-14/enemies-of-god>

HOPEFUL RESULT #2: Access into Grace

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

One of the benefits of being raised in a church and with Christian parents is the ability to learn how to **pray** early on. We pray before bed, as we go on a trip, and regularly for meals so that talking to God is regular. When we come to Christ later on, this concept of talking to God feels much more foreign and strange, and often praying out loud, in a group, is avoided. But, one downside of learning to pray or sing or memorize Scripture early on (and praise the Lord for each of these!) is that sometimes coming before the God of the universe can seem too common, almost flippant, and we lose the sense of awe and glory that are His alone.

The word for “*glory*” in the Old Testament is *kabod*, which means “**weight, substance, or heaviness**”, which refers to the inherent *worth, majesty, and splendor* of the presence of God. His glory is weighty, which means it should not be taken lightly or with any ounce of frivolity. Our minds should be taken with understanding His nature and our hearts consumed with reveling in His greatness. In understanding this, we better understand the revolutionary opportunity to have access to God in His glory.

In the Old Testament economy, no believer in God could be in the presence of God and live (Ex. 33:20). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:6-10), the High Priest would enter the holy of holies and offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people. There was strict protocol, making sure that the priest Himself had made the proper sacrifice for himself, since any false step would result in death. Israel could worship God, but NOT with access to His presence. When Jesus died and the heavy veil of the Temple, put up to keep people OUT of His presence, was torn, we now were given access to Him through Jesus Christ. This means we can commune with, talk to, and stand with Him by grace.

Why does this give us reason to **rejoice in hope**? Not only do we have a God who never compromised His glory to buy us back, but with access comes help.

Hebrews 4:16 “*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.*”

We have a Savior that not only made the pathway for us to have access to God, we have a High Priest who lived our life, along with all its temptations and weaknesses, so He can sympathize with us. He is our Advocate (1 John 2:2), Intercessor (Matt. 7:25) who prays for us, and Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). So we not only have a helper in our time of need who understands what we are going through, but He lavishes the grace that we need in real time, and gives us the hope of being with Him in glory in the future. This is the Savior God who we approach boldly, confidently, and consistently, but never flippantly or superficially.

Now both of these results are necessary for the third result, and this one is both shocking and glorious.

Hopeful Result #3: Meaning in Suffering

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

The next phrase was as shocking to Paul's readers as it is to our modern day ears. "**We rejoice in sufferings**" sounds more like a morbid statement from a glutton for punishment rather than a hope driven apostle. But the words mean exactly what it looks like they mean: *As a result of our faith driven salvation, we can find JOY in suffering.*" The word for 'sufferings' is a general term, which means 'trouble, affliction, distress, or tribulation that causes pressure'. John Piper said, "Anything that makes life harder and threatens your faith in the goodness and power and wisdom of God is tribulation."³ **EVERYONE in this room experiences these sufferings.** They may vary in **intensity or duration**, but we all have stuff in our lives where we are prone to question the goodness of God, or wonder what it's all for, or why it had to happen to us, from disease, physical ailments, rebellion from children, job issues, financial issues, or marriage ones.

It is so important that we see how Paul frames this thought, because if we can believe and practice this truth and promise, it may just **revolutionize your life and how you view the discomfort, pain, and loss in this life.** Notice that he uses the word "**knowing**" here, a word that does not just mean knowing facts, but means having full understanding. In other words, part of the grace of God is giving us full understanding of the "**why**" question behind suffering. *These are tests of our faith to help us pass the test and grow in not only maturity but assurance!* So Paul lays out a logical sequence of how we handle affliction and how God moves us along:

- 1) **Suffering PRODUCES Endurance** – Nothing grows without some sort of resistance, and the way to build endurance is to be put under some sort of pressure. When steel is first forged, it comes out brittle and must be *tempered* to get rid of its fragileness, which happens as it is heated and held before cooling off slowly. Tribulation and affliction is the fire that God uses to temper us (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12). How does this work? Each time something hard, painful, frustrating, or disappointing comes up in your life, and you trust in the grace God provides by NOT giving into bitterness, complaint, or resentment, your faith is strengthened. This is the process God puts us under often, preparing us for future and even more strenuous trials (James 1:2-4) as the tempering process produces growing endurance. But endurance does not stay alone:
- 2) **Endurance PRODUCES Tested Character** – The word used for character here is "*dokimen*" which means something that has been tested and proven, and is now genuine and authentic. I think we all struggle from time to time feeling like an imposter, where everyone else seems like they have it all together with the Lord or never struggle or never doubt. That is why this step is so important. When we go through a tough but tailored trial and test and PASS, trusting the Lord, we get a God given sense of **authenticity, seeing our faith as real.** When you respond with joy, hope, trust, or rest when you receive the diagnosis, or the tough news, or see the response from a friend, you grow in your future trust and dependency on the grace of God.
- 3) **Tested Character PRODUCES Hope** – This testing and proving of character leads to hope that is grounded and sure in the person, work, and glory of God. This means that HOW we walk through trials is not a minor thing, but one that moves us from unsure about our faith, or if we are merely following the crowd or our parents' belief, to someone who clings with hope to the realities and glories of Jesus, *not with fingers crossed but with arms gripping.* The hope is that on the other side of all suffering will be the waiting arms of our Savior, who will tell us 'well done, good and faithful servant.'

³ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/we-exult-in-our-tribulations>

- 4) **Hope PRODUCES No Shame** – The word for shame here is in a future tense, so what hope produces is something forward looking. We may experience shame from others in this life in suffering, as we will be persecuted, hated, and misunderstood. But what is produced in this process of tempering is **assurance** of faith and **fixed hope of the future**. Only those who experience judgement will feel shame. And Paul connects this whole process with the **love of God poured into our hearts** and the **work of the Holy Spirit**, who ultimately points us to Christ (John 15:26). This is an important bookend because we may wonder if God truly loves us during a long trial or test, but it is actually **evidence of his love**, just as it is with a parent who is willing to discipline their child (Heb. 12:7-9).

So we walk in hope, the kind of hope that is truly audacious. God not only secures our salvation by grace in Jesus Christ, He builds assurance of our faith into us, stripping away unbelief and self-trust. In His great love He is willing to turn up the heat in our life to grow and strengthen us. All of this is lived out with a rock solid hope that God we have peace with God, access to Him, and experience His love poured out on us. So better days are truly ahead, but we know that they are because of, to, and for the glory of our great God, not some nebulous trope used to win an election.