

In the Key of Hope

Romans 15:4 (5-7; 13)

One of the most powerful pictures in Pilgrim's Progress is when Christian and his companion are taken captive by a giant.

The giant treats them like dogs, beats them and starves them, and throws them in a dungeon filled with the bones of others who had died there!

The name of the Giant is Despair; and we are brought into the depths of Doubting Castle.

After three days of misery and gloom, Christian realizes he had a key in his pocket – the key called *Promise*, which opens any lock in Doubting Castle.

And with it they make their escape!

I love that account. But what stands out is that in that deep, dark dungeon of despair, is Christian's companion, whose name is Hope!

See how hope can sink so low, be covered in black, deadly gloom!

And most of us look at hope that way – it is something that rises and falls. It is the opposite of despair and depression. It is a weapon or key against sinking into the depths.

David say to himself in Psalm 42, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disturbed within me?" Hope in God, for I shall praise Him for the help of his countenance!

Hope is no slim and slender thing. Bible hope is an **anchor** of the soul; hope is a strong helmet to protect our heads. Hope in Hosea 2 is a gate that opens to a new world.

You are not just to have hope, but to abound in hope, live in hope, breath hope as your oxygen, your fresh air off the sea of his love and grace.

Paul here begins to wrap up this lengthy section by ringing the bells of hope about weaker brothers and sisters. They are sounded out again and again and fill the atmosphere of his closing charge.

Paul is the Apostle of hope. Almost a third of his 57 uses of hope are in the Book of Romans.

Three times in chapter 5. Six times in Romans 8. And now 5 times in Romans 15, the hope of the Scriptures, and closing with abounding hope from the God of hope in verse 13.

Biblical hope is not a human thing, but divine. It is not a hope-so, but a sure hope, and unfailing. Jesus is Himself our hope – Christ in you the hope of glory.

It is the future impacting the present; the root for hope is to anticipate something with pleasure. So hope bridges the now and the not yet. How? By reaching into that not yet for us, of the king and the kingdom coming, and receiving in hope now the future graces and blessings that are ours in him.

Now you have a handout today that helps us see what Paul is saying on living in the key of hope. He tells us where hope comes from – beginning with the Scriptures of promise in verse 4. And he ends with

the God of hope filling us to the brim with joy and peace by faith in hope by the Spirit.

In the middle, this hope is given to us – verse 5; it is granted; it is grace.

Hope's Giver is connected with hope given, and what hope does.

But this doesn't all come about magically. You must ring these bells by three powers – the power of the Word of God the Father; the power of acceptance by Christ to the glory of God; and the power of the Holy Spirit filling you by faith.

We begin with the **source** of true hope – beautiful bells of gold, silver and more precious than any metal. We have to begin at the end – the hope from the God of hope! All hope is in God and none apart from God! God and God alone is our all in all through Christ, who has become the anchor of a heavenly hope – Hebrews 6:19.

When Paul wrote to Timothy the Timid, he began with four words: Christ Jesus our Hope.

Hope in God – why? Because all hope is in Him! He has an overabundance for every soul to call on him in faith, to receive all and more than our souls need!

Paul sees the fullness of the God of hope breaking open the seals of other blessings – joy in the Lord, peace of God, all joy and peace, a living faith, to a living, abundant and abounding hope forever.

Now this hope must connect with us – how does the God do this? By his Word – the Scriptures, in verse 4. More precisely, Paul is referring to the promises of the Scriptures – see verse 8.

We believe all the Scriptures but we do not hope in all the Scriptures. We do not hope in the truth of the devil and his evil; but we believe it. We do not hope in the final judgment against all sin and wickedness, but we believe it. We do not hope for hell but with fear and trembling, we believe the Word of God.

But the promises of God – they are the source of all hope, abounding hope. We should feel their firmness, their richness, their full splendor of glory.

Get this – God not only has spoken to man; He has spoken with all sorts of authority and power to man, and has spoken with such love and self-commitment to man. He not only says so, He promises so; He not only promises so, He swears, He vows, He commits himself as solemnly as He knows to be a God of hope to those who hear him, who believe him, who obey him.

The instruction is not just that we would be familiar with our Bible but to eagerly receive and embrace God Himself in His Word.

And all of this is a matter of pure grace. Receiving the Word of the God of hope is carried over in verse 5 as a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast!

Have you considered – hope is a gift! Hope is of grace! Hope is not something that comes to you because you have been a good boy or a good girl! Your assurance, your confidence in Christ, is a matter of grace!

Now does sin affect that? You betcha! But not in a strict ‘this for that’ way. There is mercy with the Lord that He may be feared, worshipped, loved, and trusted.

Faith is the key. Faith with repentance. A humble, contrite faith. Humble yourself before the Lord and he will lift you up – according to your works? No! By grace!

Now we move forward to what the grace of hope does in our lives.

See the great duo in verse 4, repeated in verse 5 – God gives with this hope, perseverance and encouragement.

Hope is practical to these two.

Hope is our aid as we persevere. This word means to stand up under or beneath a weight. This is the muscle of hope – a living hope produces patience, waiting upon the Lord.

Trials crush men and women every day. But hope makes them stand up – with God's help, saying 'I know He is with me, I can trust him, he will not give me more than I can handle; in fact, these trials he gives to me, cannot hurt me but make me shine as gold. And at the end, I know he will reward me for following Him.

You can put up with that weaker brother! You can love your enemy – how much your neighbor and difficult brother in the Lord?!

But hope is not merely corrective. It is an ornament of godliness to comfort and encourage.

That word encouragement means you are made strong and comforted as though a stronger and better one is beside you – because He is!

Hope tells you you are going to heaven! To a land of peace and joy! Hope fills you with that prospect now. It fills you with delight and comfort of every kind. It tempers your delight in lesser things – sports,

wealth, health, etc. Not by taking them away, but moving you to rejoice in the Lord – and again I say, rejoice!

Can you not say with Adoniram Judson, ‘My future is as bright as the promises of God’?

This assurance does not lead to laziness or sinfulness – it can’t. It purifies – everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

Tell me – knowing where you are going; whose you are; what your true glory is; how He has love you; spared nothing for you; saved you; and why nothing can separate you from this God who is for you; how can that not inspire? That elevates you! That makes you see and feel and live a different way, a heavenly way!

This leaves us with how hope is to be received. It is from each person of the Trinity – the promise of the Father, the acceptance of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit. You must deal with the living God if you would have a living hope.

No living hope without the living Word of your heavenly Father. No living hope without the resurrected One by whom you have been born again. And no living hope without God’s Paraclete – the Holy Spirit – abiding in you, filling your heart and mind, your soul and life.

The fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit has much to do with a vital and living faith. The Spirit does not produce his fruit in you, including grace-given hope, apart from faith in you. He moves us to give ourselves freely to our God, our Father, His Son who died for us, and yes, to His Spirit – to come and dwell within.

How rich – have you not found it so – when you can give your heart away to God for safekeeping? That faith, that trust, includes an element of self-surrender, doesn't it? And that giving up on selfishness, and giving up yourselves in self-surrender – that comes by the grace of God.

Trusting God the Spirit to come into your life more and more, is accompanied with hope, much hope, abundant and strong hope.

Faith and hope go hand in hand then. Listen to what Calvin said on this:

Faith believes him to be our Father,

hope expects him always to act towards us in this character;

Faith believes that eternal life is given to us,

hope expects it one day to be revealed;

Faith is the foundation on which hope rests ~

hope nourishes and sustains faith.

— **John Calvin**

We have only touched the surface, and will have to come back to some of this in the next message.

Let me put this challenge before you – aim at this benediction of verse 13.

Could this be put on your tombstone? Here lies Truyen Tran; the God of all hope filled him with all joy and peace in believing while here

below, so as to abound in shining hope by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Or would it be the opposite? Here lies Mr. So and So - a stranger to the God of hope, empty and full of discouragement and fear all his days, miserable and tossed around in unbelief, so as to abound in despair and hopelessness, grieving the Spirit and rejecting his help?

The God of all hope fill you with all hope! Amen