

The Hope of Glory

Last week as we began to work our way through **Romans 5**, and we spent most of our time examining the subject of grace. In particular, we looked at the phrase –“**grace in which we stand**”.

But we only made it halfway through **verse 2**, and I'd like to take care of finishing that off first thing this morning. We'll read the entire verse, just to give us the context.

Romans 5:2

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

So we want to concentrate on the last half of the verse, which says, “**We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**”

Normally when we see that phrase, “**the glory of God**”, it suggests images of God sitting on His throne and angels bowing down before Him. Or perhaps we are reminded of how His glory came down in view of the Israelites during their flight from Egypt.

When His glory set Mount Sinai on fire and caused such an astonishing scene that Moses—we are told in the book of Hebrews—he said, “**I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.**” The sight of God's glory up close brings both humans and angels to their knees in a hurry.

But here in **verse 2** I don't believe that's what Paul has in mind. He actually seems to be speaking of God's glory somehow being connected to you as an individual. And he speaks in future terms—saying that Christians have **a hope** of experiencing that glory.

Now I want to be clear at the outset and say that anything that might be considered good within us is ultimately traceable to God's work within us. Paul settles that in **Philippians**.

Philippians 2:13 NLT

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

We all understand that, don't we? It's like we're fond of saying around here, “**It's all about Jesus.**” He gets all the glory.

But that being said, the overflow of His glory is present in the life of every believer. Many do not realize that just yet. And most would be reluctant to say such a thing out loud.

But His glory in our lives is something taught in the Bible on numerous occasions. And that is the road that Paul has us on this morning.

Sometimes, even when a person is a relatively new Christian, they have a sense in the depths of their soul that something big is coming.

Something that's beyond their experience at the moment, but it's up ahead somewhere. Something big is up ahead, and they are headed straight for it.

I remember after I first became a Christian. Everybody says you are supposed to read the Gospel of John. I read the book of Revelation.

And trust me, I didn't understand very much of what I read. But even so, as I read parts of the book it was doing something down in my soul. I could sense something big was coming, even though I didn't understand what it was.

An example comes to mind. I read a verse in **Revelation 2**, where Jesus is making a promise:

Revelation 2:17

“**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.**”

At that point in time I had no idea what manna was, much less “**hidden manna**”. And that white stone that has a new name written on it just for me? No clue there either.

But as I was reading it was like my heart was burning—in a good way. Sort of like the 2 disciples in **Luke 24**. Remember what they said?

Luke 24:32

And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

What I was experiencing there was the hope that we’re talking about this morning. I didn’t understand much of what I was reading. But the Lord was communicating with my heart, burning this hope into my spirit.

In an unrelated passage, Paul alludes to this kind of communication between God and us.

In one passage, Paul is describing what it was like for him to pray in other tongues. And something he says as an aside caught my attention for this message today.

I Corinthians 14:14

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

His spirit prayed, but his understanding—his mind—was unfruitful. He didn’t understand.

And there are times when God communicates something to our spirit, and our mind is left out of the loop.

It’s like you sense something is up—like something is going to happen, but it’s beyond your ability to put your finger on exactly what it is.

This happens sometimes when a person begins to sense a call of God to ministry. But they can’t explain what exactly they are supposed to do or where exactly they are supposed to go. But they know God is calling them to go. He is speaking to their spirit. Their mind will catch up later, and the blanks will be filled in.

And so just like Paul, God can be working on a person’s heart, while for the time being they are unable to connect the dots intellectually.

And so Paul is talking about our experience of the glory of God and what’s waiting for us up ahead in the future. He says things a bit more directly over in [Romans 8](#).

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Note: For those who may be reading from another translation, *the context here dictates that the Greek word “eis” be translated as “in” not “to”*. The glory is not revealed **to** us. It is revealed **in** us.

And I say that with confidence, because immediately following that statement, Paul describes something very intriguing. He says that all of God’s creation is essentially waiting in breathless anticipation for the unveiling of the children of God. Because that is when the glory of God is revealed in them.

Romans 8:21 NIV

The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

So is there any connection between this future hope of the glory of God and our present experience as Christians? Let’s take one more look at our text.

Romans 5:2

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

So if I read that correctly, this says two things about our faith.

First, faith opens the door to grace. In particular, the grace in which we stand. Enabling grace that helps us to make the right choices, to do the right things, and even think the right thoughts.

But he doesn’t stop there. He also notes that having walked through the door to grace, we encounter hope. The hope of the glory of God.

And here’s how that works: You become a Christian. And almost immediately, you discover that it’s more involved than you first thought. As your commitment to follow Jesus begins to deepen, you discover that following Him faithfully isn’t all that easy.

At some point it becomes painfully obvious that you need His help to overcome your own sinful tendencies. And as you sincerely seek His help by faith, that's when you begin to discover this enabling grace that Paul is talking about. You are really becoming a serious disciple.

And that is when the last half of **verse 2** really starts to kick in.

Romans 5:2b

We...rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

As we embrace the grace that helps us to live for God, we will begin to experience something of a surprise. An energizing hope begins to arise within us. And it's not just the hope of heaven. It's the hope—the definite anticipation—of the glory of God showing up in our life.

But this future hope has its roots in our present spiritual experience.

I Peter 4:14b

...for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

That's the here and now. So let's talk about the here and now, shall we? One day we'll be in heaven with the Lord. And it will be wonderful. Incomparable. In fact, Paul puts it in precisely those terms. We read it just a few minutes ago.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

But we don't have to wait until heaven to experience that glory to some degree. In John 17, Jesus prays for His disciples. And not just for the 12, but for all Christians as well. And when He makes that statement, He says something that is almost incomprehensible. But He says it very plainly.

John 17:22

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.

Present tense. Not off in the future somewhere. A limited amount, to be sure. But real and genuine, and of the same substance.

Now stick with me. Last week I encouraged you to take hold of the grace that is there to help you live for Christ. Faith opens the door to that enabling grace. But the door is opened to something else as well. The hope of the glory of God needs to take hold of your heart. How does that happen?

2 Corinthians 1:22

who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Consider that last phrase. God has "*given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*"

Now I think the translation of that last word—guarantee—is an unfortunate one. Because when we think of a guarantee we think of a company saying that something will work, and if it doesn't they'll fix it or give our money back. That's a guarantee. But that is not what God has given us through putting the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The Greek word translated "*guarantee*" is the word "*arrabon*". It literally means "earnest money". We would call it a down payment. What's the difference? With a guarantee, you just get an assurance of performance. With earnest money, you get a bit of what's coming later. Some real money in your hand.

In other words, the Holy Spirit in our heart is a foretaste of what we will experience in full measure once we get to heaven. You experience a taste of the glory of God. You experience a bit of what it will be like to be you in eternity.

That deep desire you have to be more like Jesus. That longing you have to be used by God for His glory. That's all coming from the hope of the glory of God that is there in your spirit.

Now let's talk briefly about your current experience as a Christian. There is a problem in the lives of many believers. The spiritual richness that is supposed to be part and parcel of the Christian experience seems to stubbornly elude them. Why is that?

Now I'm speaking of folks who are truly saved. Born again and on their way to heaven when they die. That is not the issue. But for whatever reason, they find themselves existing in something of a perpetual dry spell, spiritually speaking.

And they assume that that is normal. Because we don't serve Jesus because it feels good. We serve Jesus because it's the right thing to do.

Now let me hasten to add that I admire people who walk the straight and narrow path without receiving very much in the way of emotional feedback. But all things being equal, I have to question whether or not that is a Biblical approach to serving the Lord.

I am not suggesting that we are supposed to be on some sort of perpetual spiritual high. No, ups and downs are the normal state of affairs for any Christian. It's like the old Dallas Holm chorus:

“Sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes so low I just cry. But always with Jesus.”

The Bible strongly suggests that our experience as Christians will involve a wide swing on both the positive and negative sides of the emotional spectrum. Read through a few Psalms, and you'll see what I mean.

What I'm contesting here is the notion that the Christian life doesn't involve much in the way of an emotional experience.

And I'll go this far: if that is the case, then praise the Lord. Because one day we'll meet in heaven and rejoice forever together. There's a tremendous emotional experience waiting for us on the other side.

But is that how God designed things? I don't think so. On the contrary, the Bible indicates that the Christian life is supposed to be a pretty rich experience. Or at least it has the potential to be so.

Now let me insert a quick disclaimer here: If you are struggling with something like clinical depression, I'm not trying to put a Band-Aid on that and telling you to just cheer up. Sometimes the best a person can do in those situations is just make it from one day to the next.

And I would hate to add to anyone's burden by giving the impression that they are guilty or sadly lacking in faith because they don't just snap out of feeling depressed.

I know how powerful those dark feelings can be, and I don't want to add to your already heavy load.

I read the suicide note of someone I tried to help when I was in my early 20's. One line stood out to me. ***“I'm just so tired.”***

Maybe you're here today, and you feel like giving up. Maybe you're getting so tired, you just want to give in.

Please listen to me. The hope I'm speaking of today is for you too. The enemy of your soul does whatever he can to get you to believe that you are beyond hope. That is a lie.

Understand, depression is not always a spiritual problem. Sometimes there are medical issues that need attention. Sometimes counseling can be a huge help, as you work through some of the hurts from the past. There are answers to be had; Just don't give up.

There is nothing but hope for you from God's perspective. Don't hesitate to seek help if you need it. And don't give up on God either. Give Him a chance to lead you further into the hope of His glory.

But barring the possibility of facing that kind of a crisis, I need to speak to the rest of us here. Please understand, I never speak flippantly about these things. The emotional aspect of our faith is more foundational than most people realize. The richness of the Christian life is something that needs to be pursued with vigor and confident anticipation.

The life of a disciple can be immensely rewarding. A full and satisfying and enriching path to travel.

But let's be clear on how it works. We need to be standing in grace for this hope to work as it should. Grace for the forgiveness of our sins, and grace to empower us to live as we should.

When we stand in grace, that's when the hope becomes more prominent. That's when you start to move spiritually into the future. That's when the things of God become a greater priority.

Your walk with God in the here and how has a great effect on your ability to rejoice in the hope that Paul is describing.

And these two things work together to bring about growth in other areas of your spiritual life.

Romans 5:3-5

3 And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

There is no reason for any Christian to experience a perpetual emotional flatline in their walk with God. Grace leads to hope, and hope leads to joy, and it all leads to growing stronger in terms of character.

This hope becomes the driving force in our lives if everything is working as it should. The desire to be like Jesus and bring glory to His name.