

# A New Hope

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our scripture reading for this morning will come from Romans chapter 5, verses 1-5. If you don't have a Bible, it will be up on the screens.

There are also some Bibles in the back if you want to grab a hard copy. I didn't write down what page it's on, but Romans chapter 5, verses 1-5.

Romans chapter 5, verses 1-5. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him we also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

[ 1 : 08 ] And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us.

This is the reading of God's Word. We are talking today about hope. And I just think that song captures so much.

The psalmist that wrote that was capturing so much of our condition of so many times a situation feels like, God is not even there. Has He hidden His face from me?

And we just recall to mind who God is and what He's done for us. And that gives us hope. Today we're talking about hope. So we're taking a break again from Ephesians. Next week, Corey will be back, and we'll be picking back up in chapter 5.

But today we'll be discussing, really, this passage. As I was trying to think about what to preach on, I've been reading a book called *The Hiding Place*, which is the biography of Corrie Ten Boom, if any of you familiar with that.

[ 2 : 13 ] And just the hope in the midst of suffering in that book, along with just some other things. So I work with uni students, and you may have heard some statistics about how mental health in uni students, where they are today.

And there's a statistic that would say that over 40% of Gen Z battle with depression and feelings of hopelessness. Over 40%.

And so these things are just on my mind a lot. And this passage in Romans chapter 5 has actually just been a big personal help to me in times when I feel like I need hope.

There is actually a global foundation that has been tracking hope, what they would call the Hope Index.

Since 2014, it was a global project, and then it included studies here in the UK. It assessed various dimensions of hope, like expectations for a better future, one's ability to, or perceived ability to achieve that future, and the motivation to overcome challenges.

[ 3 : 23 ] Then COVID happened, and newer studies started happening based in the UK. There's a company called 5654 and Company that started publishing statistics in 2022 on the Hope Index.

And again, it started really with COVID as they were trying to measure where people are. And all this is found in the Office for National Statistics here in the UK. These newer studies that began in the UK, they suggested that fluctuations in hopelessness were influenced by factors like economic conditions, political developments, and societal changes.

So coming out of COVID, the numbers were like below 40% of people felt hopeful for the future. And today that number is closer to 66%.

It's a massive jump in just a few years. And one of the things I think this tells us is just as human beings, we view hope in light of our circumstances.

If things are going well, we're more hopeful. If things are going bad, we feel less hope. But that's not the biblical view of hope and what Jesus has for us.

[ 4 : 34 ] So we come to this passage in Romans chapter 5, where we're talking about, Paul is talking about sufferings.

And look what he says in verse 3. He says, But we rejoice in our sufferings. Rejoice in our sufferings.

This is one of those times where you're like, Paul, have you lost your mind? What do you mean rejoice in your sufferings? Now, my wife and daughter will tell you that I'm prone to hyperbole. Okay? And a lot of ministers, we'll just call it out, we can be prone to hyperbole. Dramatic effect sometimes. Sometimes it's just, that's what we're feeling and thinking, is this what Paul's doing? Saying, like, he's just being super spiritual and saying, we rejoice in our sufferings? To be quite honest, this sounds like something someone would say who hasn't suffered.

[ 5 : 32 ] You know what I'm saying? Are you out of your mind? But we know Paul is one of those people that suffered a ton. I mean, in fact, he has different places in Scripture where he talks about some of the suffering he's gone through.

And one time he casually just throws in there being shipwrecked. Doesn't say much about it, but just shipwrecked. And I was thinking about that. Do you know how scary that would be to be shipwrecked? Shipwrecked? Back in those days, there's no Coast Guard.

There's no radar. People aren't coming to help you. Shipwrecked. I mean, he faced anything from physical suffering to emotional suffering with planting the churches and trying to be a minister. This is a man who knew suffering extremely well. And he's saying that we rejoice in suffering. That word rejoice, some of you may have translations of your Bible that actually translates the word to boast.

We boast in our sufferings. Now, that seems like a weird word. It kind of has a negative connotation. And our vocabulary to boast is like to highlight one's successes. Right?

[ 6 : 37 ] But in a sense, what Paul is saying is that suffering can highlight what God is doing in our lives. It puts a spotlight on different things where God is going to say, I am there, I am with you, and I am working.

For those who are in Christ, it is not to our shame that we're suffering. But instead, it is a place that God walks with us through these things.

So he says, We rejoice in sufferings. When we suffer, we know that God is up to something and that we are assured it is for our good.

And then he goes on to explain what he means. But we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance. Okay. Suffering produces endurance.

All right. Endurance. It means a patient steadfastness. We might even describe it as someone that's solid. He's really solid. Or she's really solid. Meaning they're not just blown and tossed by the wind.

[ 7 : 36 ] It's a steady ability to persevere through the storms. A few Sunday nights ago, we talked about give us this day our daily bread and how that can even be a little bit of like coming to God and just saying, Give me exactly what I need to make it through today.

That's when we do that day after day after day through suffering, it produces this perseverance and endurance that provides a steadfastness to our lives.

I mean, even the world would say something like, What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Right? I mean, so even some general wisdom, kind of, we can see this a little bit, that through suffering, I learn to endure.

I learn to persevere. It's like, okay, I've seen that to be true. I'm listening, Paul. Maybe you're not crazy. Suffering produces endurance.

And then he goes on to say, And endurance produces character. This word character is a really interesting word that it basically means that you've been tested and approved to be true.

[ 8 : 45 ] It's this idea, the same concept of the refiner's fire where metal is heated up and the impurities are taken away so that what's left is more pure.

That's the same idea here. Something that is tested and approved. So he says, As we endure, character is built. As I endure, I become a deeper, weightier person.

As I endure, there's more substance to me. A person of character. It's like, okay, this is making a little sense. As we endure, it produces a maturity.

A person of substance and weightiness. And then he says, And character produces hope. As I grow and mature, I learn to hope.

Now this word hope has the idea of a confident expectation. It's not like wishful thinking, but this is a confident expectation. Now one of the things that we can be tempted to do is we can be tempted to look at our lives and say, All right, suffering is not going away.

[ 9 : 59 ] This problem hasn't necessarily gone away. I'm not promised that it will go away. So how can I have a confident expectation if I can't be assured that the problem will go away?

Well, hope says that we know there is a future that God is working for our good. A confident expectation, not a wishful thinking. And one of the things that we also, like as I was studying this passage, every commentator that I read, every sermon that I listened to, everyone agreed that Paul is not talking about the hope of heaven or the hope of when Jesus comes back.

That is certainly true. But he's talking about hope now. He's talking about that now in Christ, having been declared righteous, it says in verse 1, justified by faith, we have peace with God and access into this grace in which we stand.

It's talking about now. We have hope now. No matter how hard life is, no matter how great the suffering is, we have hope now.

All right. Many of you have faced suffering before and you're like, all right, time out. Stop right there. I have learned that the more I hope, the more disappointed I'm going to be.

[ 11 : 24 ] So I've learned, this is the quote we say, I'm not going to get my hopes up. Right? I'm not going to get my hopes up. We put this self-protection on where it's like, yeah, if I just, if I'm hope, hoping is kind of like for those people that want to bury their head in the sand and avoid reality.

And we start letting that dictate the way that we view truth. But look at the next verse. It says, a character produces hope.

And then Paul says, and hope does not put us to shame. One translation says it does not disappoint. You could also translate it as, hoping does not dishonor us or disgrace us.

In other words, we're not going to look like a fool by hoping. That's a promise that Paul is giving us here. We don't have to be afraid to hope. We don't have to worry about getting our hopes up because they're just going to be dashed.

Nothing's ever going to happen the way I think it should happen. We start letting our experiences dictate what we believe is true and not. But this passage tells us that we don't have to be afraid to hope.

[ 12 : 44 ] We don't have to hedge our bets. We don't have to try to minimize losses and disappointments by self-protection. That is not what God teaches us.

How? How does hope not put us to shame? How do we, how is like hoping, really hoping, deep down hoping, not going to make me look a fool, not feel like an idiot?

Why was I believing that would happen? How can we believe this? Look at verse 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.

Because God has poured His love into our hearts by, through the Holy Spirit, we don't have to be afraid to hope. When it talks about God's love here, it's talking about the knowledge of God's love for us.

We know God loves us, therefore we can have hope. This word poured out, the good old King James version says shed abroad.

[ 14 : 00 ] It's this idea of love being gushed out, poured out liberally. It's one of the things that a lot of commentators really put their finger on and says, this is not just little sprinkles of love here, but this is an inundation of God's love for us.

God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. This word here about God's love being poured out through the Holy Spirit is the same word used in Acts chapter 2 when it talks about the Holy Spirit being poured out on the church.

This incredible pouring out and gushing out inundation of God's love for us. That is what we can experience in our hearts when we recognize who God is and what He has done for us.

The Holy Spirit helps us to experience God's love for us. That everything the Bible says about God's love toward us is true. So if we're walking with the Lord and walking in the Spirit, God's love for us, that knowledge, will just be poured out into our hearts and we will understand experientially how much God loves us.

Now, many of you may be like me. I had a friend one time that said this that I thought was very insightful. He said, because of how my parents loved me, I don't really have a hard time understanding that God loves me, but I do have a hard time believing He likes me.

[ 15 : 35 ] I do have a hard time believing that I don't just disappoint Him all the time. Paul is telling us that the Holy Spirit has been given to each one of us to help us know that God loves you, He likes you, He wants you in His family.

He's not looking for an excuse to kick you out. And because of this, we can have hope. As we meditate on God's love for us, what He did for us in Jesus, what He does for us on a daily basis because of His character.

I mean, just even as we were praying earlier, it was just praying like the very air we breathe is because God loves us. The rain we'll experience later this week is because God loves us. Our atoms don't rip apart within us because God is holding them together because He loves us. Are we convinced of that? And if so, you don't have to be afraid to hope.

You don't have to self-protect and hedge your bets. I can believe that God loves me so much that whatever I'm going through, He is working on my behalf right now.

[ 16 : 50 ] A lot of times, suffering can feel like He's abandoned me. Even the psalmist said that. Has God hidden His face? Has He withdrawn His compassion?

That's what the psalmist in Psalm 77, that's what He was facing. I feel like you're not here, God. But then, I will recall the Lord's great love.

I will recall what He has done for us. I will recall His mighty hand and outstretched arm. I will recall who He is and what He has done. How do I know that He loves me?

How do I know that I can have hope? Because He didn't spare His own son, but gave Him up for us all. And because of that, we can have confidence that He's not going to withhold any good thing. If He gave us Jesus to come live the life that we couldn't live and die the death that we deserve to die, if He did that for us, what in the world would He withhold from us?

[ 17 : 55 ] We can have hope because God loves us and He doesn't withhold from His children. J.I. Packer in his great book Knowing God says this, every single thing that happens to the believer expresses God's love to him.

Every single thing expresses God's love and comes to him for the furthering of God's purpose for him. Over and over we see in Scripture the things that what Satan intended for evil, God used for good.

He is working on our behalf to make things good. So we have the promises of Romans 8.28 that says, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

I can hope because God loves me. He really, really loves us. He loves you more than you love yourself. And all these things in your life that would cause us that stress of maybe even hopelessness, maybe it's a broken relationship, maybe it's financial difficulties, maybe it's problems at work or uncertainty about your future, maybe things just look grim and you just can't see very far out to see clearly of the direction that you're going.

God cares more about those things than you do. Do you believe that? It says He knows the numbers of the hairs that are on our head. Now I don't have many of those left, but He knows which ones are still there.

[ 19 : 31 ] He takes care of the little birds, the sparrows, the most inconsequential beings. He takes care of all of them, clothes of the grass and the grass of the field. Will He not take care of us? Now we might think, how can I hope when I can't have confidence that such and such will happen?

I can't have confidence that He's going to just fix everything in my life right now like I want it to, like I want Him to. That could point to the fact that we're hoping in the wrong thing.

We're not hoping in the thing that can really bring us soul satisfaction. I mean, I was just reminded of the story in the Old Testament of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

You know that? And the fiery furnace. I always heard that as a little kid. They say this. They're telling the king who's threatening to throw them into the fiery furnace for not bowing down to the idol that was made.

And they said, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us. But if He doesn't, we still will not serve your gods.

[ 20 : 44 ] And it's this idea that God may not come through in this situation exactly like I would want Him to, but He's got a better plan. And then we go on to see that the king talks about they threw them into the fiery furnace and he says, did we not bind three men into the fire?

but I see four unbound men walking around and one is like the son of the gods. There's four in the fire.

And even though God may not save them, He does, but even if He doesn't save them for the fire, He is with them in it. And that is our greatest good.

Even if He doesn't deliver us from this specific trouble, I can still hope in Him. He is going to work for my good and He is present with us in the fire.

If eternal life is having a relationship with God, like Jesus said in John 17 verse 3, then the greatest thing that we can ever experience is God's presence.

[ 21 : 54 ] And so sometimes our greatest and deepest joys will be found in suffering. I said this, I think I, yeah, I'm pretty sure I said this a few weeks ago when we were in the Sermon on the Mount talking about daily bread.

I had a friend who told me one time, Kelly and I were going through a pretty hard season, some suffering that was pretty great, and one of the things that he was asking me some questions, and I was giving some answers that maybe were a little bit like, I'm kind of trying to avoid all the heartache that I probably feel.

I'm trying to skirt around it a little bit. And my friend said to me, trying to avoid suffering is a great way to avoid Jesus because sometimes the greatest ways we experience Jesus is in the middle of our suffering.

everything that we've been talking about, about the ability to have hope, is true for all of those who are in Jesus Christ.

This passage starts out, therefore, since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And if all that's true, that we have peace with God and access.

[ 23 : 21 ] That word access in verse 2 is like the idea of someone being introduced to royalty. Someone has come on your behalf, introduced you to royalty, and therefore, you now have access to royalty.

That's the word picture that is given there for access. Through Jesus, we have peace with God and access to the creator and sustainer of the universe. And if all that's true, how will not all these other things be true for us?

That we don't have to be afraid to hope. As you look throughout the Bible, it talks so much about hope. In the Old Testament, this same concept of hope, this same word in the Greek for hope, is used to refer to hope, trust, and refuge.

Us going to God as our refuge, to hide in Him. That is a great word picture for hope. That we're going to Him to be under the shadow of His wings.

It's not a passive thing. We're just sitting around, twiddling our thumbs, hoping that, you know, God does something in the situation. It's an active hope where I'm saying, God, I'm running to you.

[ 24 : 30 ] I'm trusting you. And it could be just one of those things that you have learned to take one, put one foot in front of the other and just pray, God, I need you.

God, I need you. And when you see Him answer those prayers and come through for you in ways you couldn't have even anticipated, it builds our faith. It's an active hope, awaiting, a trusting in the refuge that He provides.

Sometimes we feel like the Lord has forgotten us like we just sing about in Psalm 77. But for the Christian, if your story is looking like a tragedy, that just means you're not at the end of the story yet. There is more to be told. There is more that God is writing in your story because He's going to make all things new.

He's going to make all things right. And in the meantime, He's going to walk with us and give us His presence. I feel like this is one of those times that you need to quote the Jesus Storybook Bible.

[ 25 : 34 ] Is anybody? Are you all familiar with the Jesus Storybook Bible? Any of you? where it talks about how God loves us with a never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

Because of that love that has been poured into our hearts, we don't have to be afraid to hope because God is working on our behalf.

Even right now. Let's pray. God, we thank you that you care about all the things in our life more than we do.

We come to you with our requests and many times we don't even know what to ask, but you've given us your spirit that translates those things to ask for the things that we should have asked for. So many times we're focused on our circumstances and we can be like the rest of the world that our hope fluctuates with if things are going good, our hopes are up, things are bad, our hopes are down, I mean, just even the sun not being present for a few days, that mood can change the way we hope.

We're just, we're prone to let our emotions and our feelings and even untruths, falsehoods, dictate the way we hope. And I pray, Father, that you would help us to understand the way that you love us and as much as you love us, it guarantees that you're working on our behalf because you said you are.

[ 27 : 09 ] We're just taking you at your word. We're not making this up. But help us to experience that love that many of us, we have in our heads and we need it pushed down into our hearts and we ask you to help us to experience that love that you have for us in Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, we thank you. Without you, we have no hope, but we have you, therefore we have hope. Help us to not be afraid to hope, Lord God, because hope does not disappoint because your love has been poured out into our lives.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.