

Hope

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[0 : 0 0] Today of course is Easter Sunday, a day where Christians around the world remember with great thanksgiving the fact that Jesus is risen. That of course is something that we remember every Sunday, that's why Christians meet on the first day of the week because that's the day that Jesus rose. But there's something very special about Easter Sunday, remembering the amazing truth that Jesus really is risen. And there's so many things that we could think about in relation to the resurrection. But this evening I want to focus on one of the most precious and important topics that we could ever turn our attention to.

And it's something that comes directly from the fact that Jesus is risen. Tonight we are going to think about hope. As we do so we'll be looking at Romans 15 but we'll also be looking at some other passages as well. But let me read the verse of verse 13 again.

So what do we mean when we talk about hope? Well the biblical words for hope, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, they convey the idea of expectation. You can see that in lots of places there's a couple of examples on the screen. Isaiah 8.17 says, I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob and I will hope in him. That conveys, that captures very well what hope is. It's a looking forward to something and you often see this balance between waiting and hope. It's a longing for something, expecting something, waiting for something. And we get lots of examples of that in everyday life. We hope for good weather. We hope for a good job. We hope that, well for lots of weeks we were hoping that we could get back into the church building.

Now we're hoping that everybody can come back and we're expecting something with a sense of anticipation. And for that reason hope is always looking forward. We don't hope for something that happened last week. We're always looking ahead and Paul brings that out really well. He says hope, that scene is not hope for who hopes for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. And so Paul is saying that hope is not about what we already see or possess. It's all about expectation. So for example, I spent many years hoping for a wife. But now that I have one, I no longer need to hope. I just need to pinch myself. Hope is a longing and an expectation for something that we need or that we desire. And there's a sense in which hope is kind of an opposite of being scared. Because when you are scared, you are waiting in expectation of something bad. Whether you're maybe going to the doctor, scared that you're going to get a bad result or going into an exam scared that it's going to be a disaster. When you're scared, you're waiting in expectation of something bad. When you hope, you are waiting in expectation of something brilliant. I want to say four things tonight in relation to hope.

First thing I'm going to say is that hope is something that we need. In fact, hope is something that we desperately need. If you look around the world, you'll see that there are many people living in acute desperation. So you can think of refugee camps. You can think of war zones. You can think of places like Myanmar just now where there's an awful lot of civil unrest. And even closer to home here in Scotland, we think of the poverty of many housing schemes. We think of addictions that people are just in the grip of. We don't need to go very far to see broken lives, broken hearts. And for all of us, we face the threat of illness or loss or sorrow. And maybe you feel in the midst of something like that just now. Maybe you feel desperate. Maybe you feel broken. Maybe you feel empty. And for all of those reasons, I don't think that I need to persuade you that the world desperately needs hope. And this, of course, is where we see that hope is incredibly powerful. Because if you think about it, hope can meet you wherever you are. Because no matter how difficult your situation or how much pressure or chaos you might face, hope can still reach you at that point. I think a good example of this is when you think of refugees, they leave everything and they embark on a long, dangerous journey. They have nothing except hope. And it's hope that's driving them forward as they take each step.

[5 : 53] And it's reminding us that hope is one of our most important and urgent needs as human beings. Imagine that you lost the hope of everything that's precious in your life. The hope of seeing your family again, the hope of being able to achieve things at work, the hope of having a home of possessions. The emptiness of that would be unbearable. And if we had no hope of these things, we couldn't live with that situation. We couldn't survive. And that, of course, is why even people who will go through their whole lives and say, you know, that there isn't a God or will just say, you know, that there's just a kind of natural explanation to everything and there's no afterlife. Even people who live their whole lives like that, when they're burying a loved one, they'll say, till we meet again. And that's because no one can live without hope. But that, of course, raises the question, why is it that we all tend to hold on to hopes that ultimately can never last? So I hope that I'll stay healthy one day. I won't be. I hope that I'll always have my loved ones around me one day. They won't be. I hope that I'll be a success in my job for many years to come. But one day I won't be able to work. I hope that I'll always have a nice house that I can welcome people to in a garden where I can have barbecues and things like that. One day

I'll leave all that behind. And you can add your own hopes and dreams to that list. We all desperately need hopes, but they can't last forever. But this is why the Bible really is the best book in the world. And this is why the Gospel really is the greatest thing that you will ever hear. Because I can stand here today and tell you with the authority of God that in Jesus Christ you can have hope that will last forever. Indeed, that's why we have the Bible in order that we might have hope. Look at what Paul says in verse 4. He says, for what was written in the former days was written for our instruction. So he's talking about the Old Testament there, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Hope is the thing that we all desperately urgently need. And that's exactly what God wants to give us through his word.

And in fact there's a beautiful phrase in the New Testament that captures this. There's an example of it in Ephesians 1.18 in Ephesians chapter 4. Paul says, Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. Then later on there's one body, one spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. I love that phrase called to a hope. The world around us, all of you and me, we need hope and God is calling us to a hope that will last forever. He's saying come, come look if you need hope, I can give it to you. Today God is calling every single one of us to a wonderful, certain and eternal hope. But how do we respond to that call? Well that brings us to the second thing that I want to say about hope, that hope is something that we do. Romans 15 again this time in verse 12 Paul quotes from

Isaiah where he says, The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles in him will the Gentiles hope. Now in that verse there the word hope is a verb. In other words it's something that we do and that's emphasized throughout the New Testament you see the same example in Ephesians 1.11 to 12 talking about being the first to hope in Christ. It's reminding us that hope is an activity that we engage in. By that we mean that we have a sense of expectation, we wait and we long and we anticipate. But the crucial point that in all of that action and doing that activity of hope there has got to be an object because hope is like love. You can't just love in a kind of abstract sense, you can't just say I love full stop. You must love something whether it's a person or an activity or a possession or whatever it may be. Same with faith, you can't just have faith in a kind of vague sense, you must have faith in something or in someone. Hope is the same, we hope in a specific object. So if we go to hospital when we're unwell we're putting our hope in the medical staff. We've got an election coming up and as you vote for somebody you're putting your hope in that person that they will lead our nation well and we even hope in ourselves. So we think well I hope I'll be a good father or I hope that I'll be successful in my degree or I hope that I'll manage to make progress in my job.

Hope always has an object and the Bible is emphasizing to us that when it comes to this everlasting hope that God offers us there is an object in whom we must hope and the Bible emphasizes that by using the phrase hope in. It doesn't just say hope in a kind of vague sense, the Bible says hope in God and there's two examples for you from Peter and from Timothy. Who through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God. Same in 1st Timothy 4-10 for to this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set and the living God who is the savior of all people especially of those who believe. This is really important to recognize because a lot of people have hopes for eternity and so what I mean by that is I think I think it's I think I'm safe to say that most people in the world have hopes for something beyond this life but not everyone has a hope in God for eternity but that's what we must have in order to have hope we must have an object of that hope we must set our personal hope and trust in Jesus

[12 : 44] Christ and you can see in these verses that there's a very strong connection between hope and believing we have hope because we believe and trust in God and as a result of that we can hope for some brilliant things we can hope for eternal salvation because of everything that God is and everything that he has done for us that's really what the message of the Bible is all about Christianity is not about what we have done or what we contribute it's about what God has done through his son so God has sent his son into the world as one of us God has taken the punishment and implications of our sins onto himself on the cross in his son God has conquered death by raising his son from the dead and God has offered this salvation to us all as a free gift by his grace God has opened a way for us to come into his family and because of everything that he is and because of everything that he has done we can hope and that's why Paul can say in 1st Timothy that our hope is Jesus Christ he speaks there of being an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our

Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope and all of this is reinforcing the fact that Christians don't have a kind of vague empty mystical optimistic hope where we're like yes you know we kind of hope for nice stuff one day it's not vague and mystical and fluffy it is concrete and real and certain because we are hoping in something that we're hoping in someone in Jesus Christ he is the substance and definition of our hope he's the object of our hope we hope because of him our trust our expectation our dependence our hope must be in him and all of that's amazing because it means that as Christians our hope is in someone who is real not someone who's made up because the Bible is presenting us with facts about the Persian and work of Jesus Christ and it's that reality of who he is that enables us to hope and that means that the the vital question that every single one of us has to ask ourselves is not do you hope because everyone hopes the vital question is where do you hope who do you hope in do you hope in a vague or general way or do you hope in Jesus Christ and if you don't you can bow your head right now and set your hope in him so hope is something that we need God is calling us to it hope is something that we must do we set our hope in God father son and spirit the result of that is the third thing I want to say that hope is now something that we have Paul highlights that in verse 13 that we read at the start may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace and believing so that by the power of the Holy

Spirit you may abound in hope so if God is the object of our hope the result is that we have hope now and so as we've been saying we need hope and by hoping and trusting in God we can have it the New Testament gives us a bit more details about just what that means about the fact that we have hope in Christ remember a moment ago we said that the New Testament uses the phrase hope in in that it was pointing us to the idea that we'd have an object for our hope the New Testament also uses the phrase phrase hope of and that's revealing to us just what we have through our hope in God and there's just four examples here that I want to just read out and think about they've all got that phrase hope of something so first Thessalonians 5 8 Paul says but since we belong to the day let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation Galatians 5 5 for through the spirit by faith we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness Colossians 1 27 to them

God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory and Titus 3 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life four things there a hope of salvation a hope of righteousness a hope of glory a hope of eternal life now remember what we said at the start hope means to expect to have a scent sense of anticipation look just look at what you can anticipate if you are trusting in Jesus if you're a Christian or if you become one then in him we have the hope of salvation it's salvation as I'm sure you know just basically means to be rescued and you can use the image of a sinking boat or a fire or whatever may be somebody rescued from danger we of course are in mortal danger because of our sin but in Christ we have a rescuer we have salvation and the result is that we're safe so you think of everything that can threaten you the power of sin whereby we live in a hostile world where people can teach each other so badly you think of the effect of sin where we can and will face the threat of disease and suffering you think of the the father of sin the attacks of the devil who would love nothing more than to see you fall in the face of all of that we are completely and totally safe because we have the hope of salvation in Christ we also have the hope of righteousness how often do we look at the world and see so much that's wrong so we see suffering that's wrong and we spoke earlier about refugees and others who suffered in in awful ways because they're caught up in conflict we see people behaving in a way that's wrong so you can go through any level of society in a Western country and you'll find corruption we see attitudes that are wrong we see hatred between peoples and communities we see people using money and other resources in a way that's wrong and things have kind of gone so far wrong that now huge parts of human society take their pleasure from things that deep down we know are wrong and all of that can leave us to go well where do we turn and the answer is that in God we find the one who will put everything right because in God we have a hope of righteousness and one day there'll be a new creation where righteousness dwells that means an end to corruption a ban on exploitation a disappearance of immorality and all suffering will come to an end and that's reminding us of the fact that that in the new creation there will be a lot of things that we can't do and thank God that that is true that humanity will never be able to be brutal to one another again everything that you see in the world going on around you and that you know is wrong and you wish was different will be gone forever because in Christ Jesus we have a hope of righteousness we also have a hope of glory now that's amazing because glory is a characteristic of God and here we see not only do we have a hope of rescue not only do we have a hope of everything being put right we also have the hope of being so close to God that we will even share in his glory Paul speaks about that when he talks about we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of God and being transformed into

the same image from one degree of glory to another it's a great reminder that God doesn't just want us safe nor does he just want us righteous he actually wants us as his family and as his family he wants us to share in the family traits of God himself often we can see resemblances in families one of the brilliant things about being together again as we get to see some of these babies who have been born in lockdown and you see some of the since these babies and you can see that they're just like their parents in so many ways the family trait of God's household is glory and God wants us to share in that and that means that we can look forward to a closeness with God to a knowledge that he loves us with an immeasurable love and to being treasured to being his treasured possession forever it's reminding us that the promise of the gospel is at the highest level it is a hope of glory the Bible uses a beautiful image of the new creation as a great wedding feast and I think I've probably used this illustration before and so forgive me if you've heard it and it's not really an illustration it's just a point but and it's so easy to think that when you get to heaven you'll just kind of slot in slightly unnoticed because you think well you know there's a lot more important people than you there and you know just be nice to just be there and just just to be one of that number would be amazing I mean I know that I'll just be like at the back and you know if you imagine it's a football stadium you'll kind of maybe be in the top tier like way back row because there's loads of people that have done a far better job of Christianity than you have and we have the image of the wedding feast and you know you can imagine maybe a wedding in a massive football stadium and you think oh it would be amazing if I could just be like up in the crowd maybe just even if I'm at the very back row I don't mind it would just be amazing if I could be there and we think you know you'd look down and wonder at a distance and see Jesus there and think wow it would be amazing just to be a guest but the astounding truth is that if you are a Christian or if you become one when you come to the new creation to the marriage supper of the Lamb as Revelation describes that to that great image of marriage you won't be a guest you'll be the bride in Christ we have a hope of salvation we have a hope of righteousness we have a hope of glory and we have the hope of eternal life all these hopes salvation righteousness glory they're wonderful but I think the most amazing thing of them all is that they're going to last forever forever and ever and ever because in

[24 : 34] Christ Jesus we have the hope of eternal life and I want you just to try and let your minds drift to the endless days of eternity often in life I find myself thinking how many more times will I get to do this so you think of you know you think of all the things that we haven't been able to do maybe stuff that we've loved doing like maybe going up a Monroe or maybe meeting together as a big group for a barbecue or playing your favorite sport or whatever it may be you know the things that we get to do that we love I sometimes find myself thinking you know how many more times will I get to do this because you know everything's on a countdown really isn't it there's no countdowns in heaven by trusting in Jesus we have a hope that will last forever it's the hope of eternal life and all of that is what enables us to endure Paul speaks about this in Romans 5 he says we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance endurance produces character character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy

Spirit it's reminding us that if you hope in Jesus then no matter what this world brings you have hope so if you get a devastating diagnosis it cannot take away your hope if you suffer a heartbreaking loss it cannot take away your hope if you are betrayed or abused or shunned by your fellow human it cannot take away your hope if you feel weak and useless as a Christian if you think you're struggling and failing and making so many mistakes it cannot take away your hope and as we all face the shadow of death in Christ Jesus we have a hope that is stronger than death itself death can and will break every bone organ and cell in your body but it will never break your hope and that's why God can fill you with two amazing things even in the face of the greatest trials and they're in verse 13 and can you see what they are joy and peace through all that God has done for us in Jesus we can be filled with joy and with peace and so often life gives us the opposite of these things often life fills us with sadness and with worry so things happen and our joy is robbed and we just feel like enough like we've been kicked in the stomach and we can be full of anxiety about all sorts of things big things small things you go to bed at night and you can't sleep because you're worrying about stuff so often life will fill us with regret and fear so we think of our lives and maybe things that we've said in the past week or done and we think I wish I hadn't done that and we can be afraid of the consequences of our actions or of things that might happen to us or to loved ones or maybe life will fill you with disillusionment and insecurity where maybe you've just you just felt you've been bathed so many times you just feel like giving up or you feel threatened that everybody's out to get you or that things are gonna go wrong and that that you know that in some way everything's gonna be bad and you might get hurt so often life fills us with these kind of things the gospel changes those things to joy and peace joy because of all the amazing stuff that God has done for us and peace because his promises are so secure and this means two things it means that you can go into tomorrow morning with joy and peace because God's done so much brilliant stuff for you and is promising so much brilliant stuff for you you can have joy and peace no matter how rubbish tomorrow morning might feel you can go into tomorrow morning with joy and peace Monday morning 5th of April you can have joy and peace but even more importantly you can go into eternity with joy and peace the moment you die can be a moment of incredible joy and unbreakable peace all because of Jesus so hope is something that we need hope of something that we do hope is something that we have last of all hope is something that we share now this is hinted at in verse 24 where Paul says I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain Paul hopes to see these Christians because he shares a bond with them he's never met them before but he's hoping that he'll get to see them because they're his brothers and sisters in

Christ and he shares something incredibly special with them and the New Testament makes it clear that our hope in Jesus is something that we share with every other believer Paul speaks about this in Titus 2 he speaks about our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great Savior great God and Savior Jesus Christ it's our hope and many many other passages speak in the same way we share this amazing hope that means that as I look forward to spending eternity in heaven I can look forward to spending it with you and with everyone who trusts in Jesus because if we are Christians we are hoping together we are anticipating together and we are looking forward to the fact that we will be together because my hope is your hope and that should bind us all more closely together as Christians we have an eternal hope and and we are part of it together because the hope of the gospel is not a private individualistic hope it's a shared hope it's something that we have together and and that's why you know if you think about the gospel if you think about what Jesus said about the two most important commands were to love God and to love one another that's what we are to spend our lives doing it's also what we're going to spend eternity doing loving God and loving one another as brothers and sisters in his new creation it's a shared hope and that also means that if you're not yet a Christian you can share it too because it's not a private club that's just exclusive it's an open door and God is holding out his arms and he wants you to have this hope as well and we want to share it with you we want to share this hope with any everyone that we meet this week so hope is something that we need hope is something that we do it's something that we have it's something that we share and it's all because of who God is and of course it all makes perfect sense because what kind of God is God well Romans 13 15 13 tells us he's the God of hope and remember what we said at the very start hope is looking forward in expectation for something brilliant and God is saying that's what I am all about that's exactly what I will give you trust in me and I have so much brilliant stuff for you to hope for but never forget that God won't actually satisfy your hopes he'll blow them out the water and he will utterly overflow them with more than you could ever have hoped for Amen father we thank you that you are the God of hope and we pray that you would fill us all with that joy and peace that only comes through the hope that you give us in Jesus Christ and we pray for people who are in desperate need of hope and if we meet anybody this week who is in desperate need of hope please help us to see that and help us

to give them the hope that that that only you can give us in the gospel thank you so much that we can go into a new week with hope and with our hope that is utterly secure and it's all because you gave your son to die on the cross and the fact that he has now risen again Amen