

How to Move Forward in Hope
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We're in a sermon series called Forward in Hope. As I studied I read almost every Bible verse on hope. I was drawn to a passage that gives us the way to move forward in hope. So, I'm preaching a sermon called How to Move Forward in Hope based on Romans 5:1-5.

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Also through Him, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

This hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. This passage shows us how to move forward in hope.

1- The first step toward hope is faith.

Romans 5:1 says:

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

The first step to hope is faith. This verse says we are declared righteous by faith. Which comes first? Righteousness of faith?

There are some people who believe that you must first be saved before you can have faith. But the Bible plainly teaches that faith comes first.

John 3:15 says:

Everyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life.

Romans 10:9 says:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

John 1:12 says:

To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

We see that faith comes before salvation. Actually, faith comes before everything with God! Hebrews 11:6 says: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.*

Faith is the starting point of receiving anything from God, including hope.

And when you do have faith in Jesus Christ, that results in the second step towards hope:

2- When you are born again you are declared righteous by God.

That means you are forgiven, justified, and made right with God. You will never have any hope until you are right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Remember, Ephesians 2:12 says:

You lived in this world without God and without hope.

who are without God are without hope, but as we saw last week, when you are born again, you are born into a living hope. That's because Romans 5:1 says:

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

3- When you are right with God, you have peace with God.

This does not mean we MAKE peace with God. It means we RECEIVE the peace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Hope is totally dependent on being righteous through faith in Christ and the peace that results from that. As a consequence of being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

Before we came to Christ – while we were still sinners, the Bible teaches that we were enemies of God. Romans 8:6-8 says:

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

That's our condition before we are born again: hostile to God. But thank God that Colossians 1:21-23 says:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

Notice that before we are saved we are enemies in our own minds because of our sinful behavior. We lived under a sense of guilt for sin and terror of hell. As a result, we had no peace. Isaiah 48:22 says:

"There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."

Before we came to faith in Christ we were at war with God, under condemnation, without peace and without hope.

But now, having our sins forgiven, we have peace in our hearts because all our guilt is taken away.

Peace is usually the first result of salvation because we are now submitted to God rather than fighting against God. When that happens, fear subsides and the heart is calm, like the waves of the ocean after a storm. Where we were once filled with agitation and alarm, we are now at peace with Him. In John 14:27, Jesus said: *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

The first step to moving forward in hope is to place your faith in Jesus Christ and be born again and receive His peace that the world didn't give you and the world can't take it away.

Because of the cross of Christ, we have peace with God. We stand in the presence of God, guiltless, uncondemned and righteous. That is reason for hope!

4- Standing in grace results in hope

Romans 5:2 says:

Also through Him, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

When we are born again, we have righteousness and peace with God. And – we gain access into grace in which we stand. The word "access" here means "entrance to the king through the favor of another." The child of a king can enter his father's presence no matter how the child looks or what they've done. In Christ, all believers have access to God and they can draw on the inexhaustible riches of the grace of God.

In the Old Covenant, the Jew was kept from God's presence by the veil in the temple; and the Gentile was kept out by a wall in the temple. But when Jesus died, He tore the veil and broke down the wall!

Through faith in Christ we now stand by grace, in grace and we enjoy all the privileges of grace. And that is exactly what our Lord does when a sinner repents. He clothes us with Himself as His righteousness, cleanses us in His own precious blood, and brings us into the full favor (grace) of God. Because of that grace –

5- We rejoice in the hope of God's glory

Also through Him, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

The hope here is that of participating in the glory of heaven. But it is also sharing in the glory of God now.

We rejoice because we have the hope of the glory of heaven for eternity. Heaven is not something that might happen – we are certain of it!

So – even if we have pain on earth – we know there will be none in heaven.
 There are tears on earth – but there will be none in heaven.
 That gives us hope in the here and now.

But the word glory is not just speaking of heaven. The Greek word translated glory here is doxa. It means splendor, brightness, magnificence, preeminence, majesty. It is all the kingly attributes of God in all of His perfection. Glory is the outshining of the holy character of God.

Jesus prayed to the Father for this glory in John 17:4-5
I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began.

And this same glory will be given to us in heaven. Colossians 3:4 says:
When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 says:
He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, heaven will be filled with God's glory – but we can enter into a measure of His glory here on earth. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 says to:
Live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and glory.

The kingdom of heaven is not just future – it is present tense also!

When Paul speaks of sharing God's glory, he means that the believer will share in the likeness of God. We will never be God – but we should be becoming more and more like God every day. The Amplified Version of 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:
All of us, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transformed His very own image from glory to glory, in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another, by the Spirit of the Lord.

The hope of glory we rejoice in is in heaven – but not just heaven. We are rejoicing in the fact that God is making us more and more like Him – from glory to glory – day by day! Can you rejoice in the hope of the glory of heaven?
 Can you rejoice in the hope of being changed into His glory now?

But the next step to hope is a big one:
 Romans 5:3-4 says:
And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

Not only that – you mean there's more? Yes, there's more.
 Not only do we rejoice in the hope of glory –

6- To have hope, you must rejoice in afflictions.

Now wait a minute! This sounds like bait and switch. I get rejoicing in the glory of heaven and glory on earth – But rejoicing in affliction is another thing!

The Bible tells us to rejoice in times of prosperity and health. But Paul is telling us to rejoice in afflictions. What are afflictions? The Greek word literally means pressure. Different Bible translations translate this word as suffering, tribulation, problems and trials. Specifically, it refers to the trials and persecution we must endure as Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because great is your reward in heaven.

The Bible teaches us that trouble will come into a Christian's life. Being saved does not exempt us from problems. In fact, it causes us some problems and pressure! Jesus said in John 16:33

In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer (take courage; be confident) for I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]

The power of God enables us to rejoice in times of trouble. Here's another thing that helps: knowing the purpose of the trouble. The Bible is not teaching us to rejoice because of trouble. It teaches us to rejoice because of their beneficial effect on our lives! These things are working in us an eternal weight of glory. They are helping conform us to Christ! But only when we can rejoice in them.

And to rejoice in these tribulations does not mean merely to rejoice when they happen – but to rejoice because of them! This does not happen naturally - it requires supernatural grace supplied by the Holy Spirit. May God open our eyes to the fact that the pressures of life are meant to work for us, not against us! How do they do that?

Well – Paul goes on to tell us in Romans 5:3-4.

And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

This passage shows us a further progression towards hope. It is one thing to endure tribulations without complaint, but it is another to rejoice in them. We can only rejoice in tribulations when we have a reason to. And Paul gives us the reason here: because of the end result. Rejoicing in affliction produces endurance which produces character which produces hope.

7- Affliction produces endurance

The Greek work here for endurance is hupomone which literally means to remain

under with hopeful endurance; to be patient. It is the ability to remain under pressure without giving up or giving in.

God intends for pressure to make us patient. Again, this is not natural. For unbelievers – problems result in the opposite effect. Unbelievers are irritated by problems. They complain about them and get angry because of them. For them – problems result in impatience and hopelessness.

When the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, but not till then, tribulation produces patience. By the way, only those who have faced problems can develop patience!

But believers who remain under trials in a God-honoring way –
 Believers who have confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God –
 Believers who remain under pressure rather than attempting to just be relieved of pressure –
 Believers who learn the lesson problems are sent to teach –
 These believers can take the next step in moving toward hope.

8- Endurance produces proven character.

Proven character is character that has passed the test! Character that has proved itself under trial and temptation. This approved character produces and increases hope.

James talked about this in James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James tells us to rejoice in trials because of the result of tested faith. It produces maturity in us. That's another way of saying proven character.

You might think you have character – but can you prove it?
 How do you respond to prolonged problems?
 Do you rejoice in times of trouble?
 Do you remain under pressure without blowing up or caving in?
 Do you exhibit the fruit of the spirit in your daily life?
 And you becoming more and more like Jesus?
 This is what proven character looks like. And...

9 – Proven character produces hope

And here's the amazing thing.

Romans 5:5 says:

This hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Hope does not disappoint because of the love of God and the Holy Spirit.

Love and the Spirit go together because it is the Holy Spirit who floods the heart with God's love, and with the assurance of it.

All of our hope rests upon the assurance of God's love. This hope will not disappoint! When we hope for something which we do not obtain, we are conscious of disappointment. But Christian hope is certain; it will not disappoint; what we hope for we will surely obtain.

The reality of God's love in a believer's heart gives the assurance, even the guarantee, that the believer's hope in God and His promise of glory is not misplaced and will not fail.

I want to encourage you wherever you are in this process of moving toward hope. I want to encourage you that this is a process – not a one-time event.

But hope begins in the event of salvation – when we are justified by faith. It continues by growing in grace of God and the peace of God. Hope grows when you rejoice in God's glory and rejoice in troubles. Those troubles produce endurance which produces proven character which results in hope!

And that hope does not disappoint because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all working together to help us move forward in hope!

Romans 15:13 says:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God is the God of hope and the Holy Spirit overflows us with hope.

And Colossians 1:27 says that *Christ in you is the hope of glory.*

God is a God of hope, the Holy Spirit overflows you with hope and Christ in you is the hope of glory!!!

Because of Christ you have the hope of heaven with no pain or tears or sin or injustice or Satan or problems of any kind!

There will be no sickness, no grief, no death, no disability, no blindness, no deafness, no diabetes, no cancer, no heart attacks, no tooth aches, no joint pain... no pain at all!

And not only do we have hope for heaven - because of Christ we have the hope of being changed into His image from glory to glory!

Can you rejoice in hope today? It will never disappoint you!

And can you rejoice even in your afflictions?

That's how you move forward in hope!