

Romans 15:5-13 God of all Hope. 20th September 2026

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you our God, rock and redeemer. Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, to that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

This beautiful benediction in the middle of the second last chapter of Romans, feels like it could be the end of Paul's formal letter as he wraps up his gospel presentation and teaching of how to live as a Jesus believing, Holy Spirit filled Christian. The rest of the letter is about his travel plans, his hope to come to Rome, his hope that he hasn't offended anyone and then his final greetings.

Did you notice that the beginning of our passage at verse 5 today also began with a kind of blessing or benediction also.

⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I feel as he finishes his letter, Paul wants to bless his readers and point them to God who pours out his Holy Spirit on us, the one who gives us good gifts. Paul's desire is that we will glorify God together with one voice – united in Jesus Christ. I am looking forward to worshipping with our brothers and sisters from other denominations at our combined service hosted by the Adventure Resort on the 4th October. United in Jesus, glorifying him as we worship together. It was a most incredible experience when I attended the Alpha Leadership Conference at Royal Albert Hall in London a few years ago, with Christians from many nations and different denominations all worshipping together. At one point we sang a well-known song in our own native tongues. A taste of heaven!

Paul prays that God who gives endurance and encouragement will give us the same attitude- that we will be like-minded and accept and love each other, just like Jesus. Jew and Gentile, weak and strong in faith, summing up the message we looked at in chapter 14 last week.

Let's just pause and reflect on the first part of Paul's prayer in verse 5 – acknowledging that God gives us endurance and encouragement.

We may feel at times that we can't carry on in our faith, or our suffering, or our ability to love others – and we probably can't in our own strength. But with God we can.

When we are ready to give up we need to pause and pray – God please give me more endurance, give me strength, encourage me to continue in faith and hope. Help me to glorify you and praise you in all circumstances and with all people. Lord take away any hardness of heart, help me to love and accept others as you do.

Paul refers to four Old Testament verses pointing to the Gentiles praising the Lord, all the nations rejoicing together. We see that God always intended to bring the nations of the world into equal fellowship with Israel. The final quote from Isaiah 11 points to Jesus, the root of Jesse who will spring up to rule over the nations and in him the Gentiles will hope.

As Christians, our hope is in Jesus, it is not wishful thinking, naïve optimism or a vague hope that all will be okay in the end. Our hope is confidence in the eternal and unchanging promises of God. As the writer of Hebrews puts it...*we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus has entered on our behalf.* (Hebrews 6:19) We have hope because of what Jesus has done for us, in his death and resurrection.

Paul begins his blessing in verse 13 with the words *May the **God of hope** fill you*, pointing to the fact that God is the source of our hope. It is part of his very nature.

There is so much despair and hopelessness in our world – ongoing conflicts, one disaster after another of floods, fires, earthquakes, so much suffering and grief, our loved ones dying of cancer and disease. A good friend and Godmother of our second child died last Saturday after being diagnosed with lung cancer 2 months ago. Our lovely sister in Christ, a member of our church family, Laurel, is journeying with the devastating effects of Motor Neuron Disease. It can be easy to lose hope.

And yet as Paul prays so should we pray...*God of hope, fill us with new hope every day, help us to hope.* As the writer of Lamentations writes in the midst of despair and great suffering; *Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."* (Lamentations 3: 22-24)

God will hold our hand, he will walk with us, carry us through the suffering and brokenness of the world. He is the God who gives us endurance and encouragement.

As I reflected on this blessing of hope at the end of his letter, I remembered that Paul had written on hope in suffering in the middle of his letter.

Remember that glorious chapter 8 – we spent 3 weeks on it. In the middle week, right in the middle of the chapter, in the middle of the letter, Paul speaks of the hope we hold onto through our present suffering as we look to the future glory.

He spoke of how we and all creation are groaning for the day when our bodies and the whole earth will be gloriously transformed. Paul says that *it is for this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.* (Romans 8: 24-25)

I spoke that week of the hope Michael and I had in our planned kitchen and bathroom renovations, we had chosen the builder and some of the appliances, but work had not yet begun. Fast forward a few weeks and we are living in the broken, deconstructed mess, looking forward and waiting patiently to enjoy the complete restoration. Our hope is in the builder; we trust that he will beautifully complete the work that has begun and that we will have endurance and be encouraged to live through the process.

As Christians we wait in hope for the glorious future to come. For the time as described in Revelation 21 of the new heaven and earth...a place where God will dwell with his people where there will be no more tears or death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will pass away. (21: 3-4)

In the meantime, even in the midst of suffering as Paul prays, the God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in him.

Hope generates joy and peace within us, even in the face of adversity. Christian joy is not a fleeting happiness just when things are going well, rather it is a gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, and knowing that he knows and loves us, that we are united to Christ, part of his family, filled with the Holy Spirit.

And Christian peace is not the absence of conflict, or a subjective feeling. Our peace is a blessing that we have through our relationship with God through Christ. Paul wrote more on this peace earlier in his letter, chapter 5. He says;

*Since we have been justified through faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

Paul finishes his benediction in chapter 15:13, praying that his readers *may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*.

When I think of the word ‘overflow’, I imagine the hope we have in Jesus flowing out of us into the world around us. Sharing our hope with others.

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we will be filled with hope. Hope that looks to the future, as we lift our eyes beyond what we can see in front of us, to the day when every knee will bow, when Christ will come in all his glory.

I pray that you will place your hope in Jesus, and live and walk in joy and peace in the power of the Holy Spirit. On those days when you feel more hopeless than hopeful – will you pray to the God of hope to fill you, will you lay your burdens, your worries, your fear down at the foot of the cross and look up and take the hand of the good shepherd who laid down his life that we might live. He will give us peace and lead us by still waters. We can have real hope assured of God’s grace and the glory yet to come.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, to that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)
Amen.