

# BOASTING IN HOPE OF THE GLORY

## Romans 5:1-2 (Part 4)

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**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we indeed have gained access into this grace in which we stand, and exult in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2).**

As we continue with this marvellous statement of the doctrine of “justification by faith”, it’s my prayer that each of us is being caught up into the height and depth and length and breadth of our new standing before God in Christ. There is nothing in all the world’s religions or philosophies to compare or compete with what God’s grace has done for us in His Son. Nothing!

That God declares as righteous in His sight all who trust themselves to His Gospel word in Christ is wonderful enough --- we are freely and fully forgiven and acquitted of all sins on the basis of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice.

That we are no longer alienated from the Creator and enjoy peace with God is mind boggling enough --- we no longer live in fear of facing God and His judgment.

That we now are “under grace” and stand in higher favour than all other beings in God’s universe --- “equally honoured” with the apostles and prophets as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ himself --- is staggering enough.

We might be tempted to stop there and bask in these Gospel treasures, but in all honesty, that would still not be the Gospel of “justification by faith”. In fact, at the end of the day, that would be no Gospel at all, as we shall soon see.

Paul is still working out the logical and glorious consequences of his **therefore, having been justified by faith**, for he goes on to give the third great result of our being put right with God. It is that **we exult in hope of the glory of God**.

### WE BOAST?

Some translations say that we **rejoice** in hope of the glory of God, but that is not strong enough for what Paul actually wrote. I have translated it as **exult**, but I recognise that is a slightly antiquated word these days. But exult is a good translation because it carries the idea of full-throated rejoicing. Even so, this idea of jubilation still does not go far enough.

When we compare how this word (*kauXaomai*) is elsewhere used, we find it is mostly translated as **boast**.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the better idea is that we **boast** in hope of the glory of God, but even that conveys to the modern ear a less than ideal nuance. After all, boasting is not considered good manners in polite society!

However, the word actually does mean to **vaunt** --- to speak in a confident and yes, boastful way about something. Of course, the apostle is not boasting in anything he himself has achieved or gained. He is boasting about what God’s kindness has done for us. He is saying that we believers in Christ Jesus who truly grasp what God has done for us in the Gospel will confidently boast about it!

When we add all this together, we see that for Paul, the doctrine that we are justified by faith is not dry theology. In fact, one of the tests as to whether you and I have grasped this wonderful Gospel teaching, is to ask ourselves

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<sup>1</sup> The verb *kauXaomai* occurs 37x in the NT, all by the apostle Paul with the exception of James 1:9 and 4:16. See a few examples in Eph. 2: 8-9; I Cor. 1: 29, 31; 2 Cor. 10: 17-18 and just a few verses down in Romans 5: 11.

whether we are filled with a confident, unstoppable, confident, jubilant confession that --- dare I say it? --- *boasts* in what God has done for us and gives us in Jesus Christ.

It seems that the apostle Paul was a 'boots and all' kind of character. Before his conversion to Christ, he was a man who boasted in his heritage and achievements, most notably his Jewishness (Phil. 3:1-11). After he met Messiah his whole being was thrilled with his new found position of peace with God and high favour for Jew and Gentile, apart from the Law.

So, if Paul once boasted in his own righteousness --- what he called "the flesh" (Phil. 3: 4f) --- now he will make his boast in the grace of God as given in Christ, that is, the doctrine of "justification by faith".

But we must ask, what specifically is it about his understanding of the doctrine of our being justified by faith that causes Paul to so confidently exult and boast? Well, he gives the answer: **We exult in hope of the glory of God.**

## BOASTING IN HOPE

Do you mean to say Paul is boasting in a *hope*? Well, there you go, says the man of the world. You Christians with your 'pie in the sky' stuff. You are always building your lives on something that can't be seen, can't be touched, can't be proved. Give us something scientific, something observable, something pragmatic, something tangible, something concrete, something we can *see*! Your Christian hope is nothing but a blind stab into the dark.

OK, my friend, just so you can be sure we are not boasting about a chimera, let me assure you Paul is not promoting wishful make-believe. His hope is not based on a made up fairy-tale. Not at all. For in the Bible, hope is evidence-based. In the Bible, hope springs from what we have already seen God do in the past. Our hope is based on His revealed character. The God Who has revealed Himself in His redemptive acts of history --- particularly in the nation of Israel and more especially in His own Son's life and death and resurrection --- proves He is working towards a definite plan, an expected fulfilment, a certain end, a hope that is evidence-based.

Paul's confident hope is inspired by his knowledge that God will make good what He began through the history of Jesus. Paul has already written what that First Century audience could not deny --- that God had "**publicly displayed**" His redeeming work when the Messiah Jesus was executed by Rome (Rom. 3: 25).<sup>2</sup> So, the Bible says that when Jesus was crucified, God openly set out in the public domain His Gospel-statement to the world.

Paul knew that the Roman and Jewish worlds could not deny these known historical facts. Namely, that God had publicly demonstrated His power and trustworthiness by raising Christ up from the grave. The physical resurrection of Messiah proved his claims to be the Son of God. When He raised Jesus up, God vindicated His promises before the world. And the Christian hope is based on these solid, verifiable and public events.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus himself declared, "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). And this is the hope that got Paul leaping out of his skin. He is boasting in a sure and certain **hope**. So now we need to ask, exactly what hope is Paul so confidently looking forward to, so exulting in, as a direct result of our having been declared right with God?

## CHURCH, ARE YOU LISTENING?

When Paul says **we exult in hope of the glory of God**, what does he mean? Most of Christianity today would answer, Oh, it's the hope of seeing the glory of God in heaven when we die. Well, let me be blunt. This is not the hope that Paul has in mind. Nor is it the hope the rest of the NT puts forward for our joy and comfort. Let's prove this.

One of today's most highly esteemed church academics and historians is Bishop Tom Wright. Wright has broken ranks with the popular church notions about what the Christian hope is. He points us in the right direction when he writes;

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<sup>2</sup> The KJV translation reads that God has "set forth" our Lord to be an atoning sacrifice. The idea is of a placard pinned up in the public square for all to see.

<sup>3</sup> For a more thorough apologetic of this theme see my series of articles on Dan Barker at this web site.

As long as we see 'Christian hope' in terms of 'going to heaven', of a 'salvation' which is essentially *away from this world ... [we are not] thinking straight about God and his purposes for the cosmos, and about what God is doing right now, already, as part of those purposes.*<sup>4</sup>

Is Wright right? I would suggest that even a cursory study of the "glory of God" in the NT will prove that when the Christian hope is being discussed it is not talking about going to heaven when we die. No. The NT hope is always and inevitably associated with the promised coming New Age of the Messianic Kingdom on this earth. Which is to say, **the hope of glory** is for the people of God to rule with Christ over a renewed, regenerated planet earth.

This is the hope that ties the destiny of the OT saints so beautifully together with the hope of the NT Christians. The prophet Daniel expresses this hope gloriously,

**But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come ... the saints took possession of the kingdom ... Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him (Daniel 7: 18, 22, 27).**

The conclusion of the NT agrees precisely with this Kingdom hope of glory, for when the seventh angel sounds (the seventh is the last to blast!);

**There arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our LORD, and of His Christ; and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15)**

*The time and place when we shall see the glory of God will be when the Kingdom of God comes upon earth. Thus* our Lord's prayer that our Father's kingdom would come, and that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, will finally be answered. **Thus** the prophetic decree that God will **give the nations** to His Son, and that **the very ends of the earth** will become his **possession** will come to pass (Ps. 2: 8).

Jesus believed this prophetic word. He confessed that he himself was destined to usher in God's glory,

**For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels ... (Matt. 16: 27; cp. 25:31; Mk. 8: 38; cp. 13:26; Lk. 21:27 ).**

Paul writes in another place that we should **walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory** (I Thess. 2:12). Observe: the appearance of the Kingdom brings the hope of the glory of God to fulfilment.

Also, **when Christ who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory** (Col. 3: 4). *First* the manifestation of Christ at His coming, *then* our manifestation with Him in glory.<sup>5</sup>

And Peter continues with the theme that, **to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exultation [for] When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory** (I Pet. 4: 13; 5: 1, 4).

The salient point again to observe is that our glorification is only ever associated with the return of Jesus Christ. Failure by the traditional Church to so read the Scriptures brings Tom Wright to this rather astounding conclusion:

*As far as I can tell, most people simply don't know what orthodox Christian belief might be.*<sup>6</sup>

Now that is a staggering claim from one of the world's leading Christian apologists --- the majority of Christians don't know what the Bible hope is!?! Is he serious?

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, SPCK, London, 2007. pp 5-6 (Italics original).

<sup>5</sup> The word "revealed" is the Greek word for manifested openly (*phanerothe*) ... We are only manifested openly in glory after Christ has been openly manifested to the world.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 19 (Italics original).

Most definitely, for the Christian hope in the NT is not focused on the individual Christian's dying and immediately being glorified with God in heaven at that instant: The NT witness always places our glorification in the context of a simultaneous corporate experience of glory at Christ's Second Coming.

The NT teaching is that the OT believers **did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect (Heb. 11: 39-40)**. God is going to bring us all to glory at the one spectacular event;

If the promised final future is simply that immortal souls will have left behind their mortal bodies, why then death still rules --- since that is a description, not of the *defeat* of death, but simply of death itself, seen from one angle... If this is true, then death is not conquered, but redescribed: no longer an enemy, it is simply the means by which, as in *Hamlet*, the immortal soul shuffles off to its mortal coil. <sup>7</sup>

For Paul, for Peter, for the NT saints, their **having been justified by faith** inevitably brought them to this confident looking forward with exultant boasting to seeing the glory of God to be revealed at the Coming of Christ.

*Our hope has nothing to do with our going to Heaven, for Heaven is coming to earth!*

Now, in case you think I am making a tall story up, let me quote the words of another one who is considered to be most orthodox, most evangelical (a Reformed theologian no less);

The Scripture teaches the resurrection of the body as an essential part of our salvation. We shall dwell in these glorified bodies on the glorified earth. This is one of the great Christian doctrines that has been almost entirely forgotten and ignored. Unfortunately the Christian Church -- I speak generally -- does not believe this, and therefore does not teach it. It has lost its hope ... <sup>8</sup>

And Wright again,

Many Christians grow up assuming that whenever the New Testament speaks of 'heaven' it refers to the place to which the saved will go after death. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus' sayings about the 'kingdom of God' in the other gospels are rendered as 'kingdom of heaven'; since many read Matthew first, when they find Jesus talking about 'entering the kingdom of heaven', they have their assumptions confirmed, and suppose that he is indeed talking about 'how to go to heaven when you die', which is certainly not what either Jesus or Matthew has in mind.

But the language of heaven in the New Testament doesn't work that way. 'God's kingdom' in the preaching of Jesus refers, not to post-mortem destiny, not to our escape from the world into another one, but about God's sovereign rule coming 'on earth as it is in heaven'.

It comes as something of a shock when people are told what is in fact the case: that there is very little in the Bible about 'going to heaven when you die', and not a lot about a post-mortem hell either ... <sup>9</sup>

When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven, he was not telling us to prepare to leave this world, but he was announcing what God is going to do on this earth through His Messiah. This is the moment all the patriarchs and prophets of Israel yearned to see --- the glory of God covering the earth in universal righteousness. A new earth under a new heavens, where righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13).

**BUT!**

But somebody interjects. But what about that statement that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15: 50)?** Doesn't this suggest that our physical, material bodies cannot enter the Kingdom, and that we will have to receive **a spiritual body** so we can live in heaven (I Cor. 15: 44)?

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 22 (Italics original).

<sup>8</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 8: 17-39; The Final Perseverance of the Saints*. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, p 72

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 25

At least two parts must be given to answer this good question. Firstly, where have we met this expression **flesh and blood** before? That's right. After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus commended Peter, "**Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven**" (Matt. 16: 17).

Jesus thus defines "**flesh and blood**" as the un-enlightened, spiritually dark person. In other words, "**flesh and blood**" is a term describing the natural man, unaided by the revelation and life that comes from God alone. In short, a "**flesh and blood**" person is one who has not been born-again, or born from above. And we have Jesus' own words that **except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3: 5)**.

Secondly, failure to understand what a **spiritual body** is will also lead to a misunderstanding. The NT idea of a spiritual body is not that of an ethereal body made up, or consisting of spirit. A spiritual body is not immaterial, like that of a see-through ghost. When Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom he does not mean that our physicality will be abolished. As Wright says,

'Flesh and blood ' is a technical term for that which is corruptible, transient, heading for death. The contrast is not between what we call physical and what we call non-physical, but between *corruptible physicality on the one hand and non-corruptible physicality on the other ...* <sup>10</sup>

So, when Paul says our glorified bodies will be "spiritual" he is telling us they will be material bodies --- like the resurrected Jesus who said he could be touched for he was a body of "flesh and bone" (Luke 24:39). This is to say our glorified spiritual bodies will be animated by resurrection life. There will be a new dimension to our bodies for they will be energised and empowered by the Spirit --- immortal, therefore never dying and therefore, eternal. <sup>11</sup>

I like Tom Wright's illustration at this point;

It is the difference between asking on the one hand 'is this a wooden ship or an iron ship?' (the material from which it is made) and asking on the other 'is this a steam ship or a sailing ship?' (the energy which empowers it).

Paul is talking about the present body, which is animated by the normal human *psyche* (the life-force we all possess here and now, which gets us through the present life but is ultimately powerless against illness, injury, decay and death), and the future body which is animated by God's *pneuma*, God's breath of new life, the energizing power of God's new creation. <sup>12</sup>

When we enter the glory of God's Kingdom, our bodies will possess startling new capacities, new properties!

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones agrees,

The Christian does not merely desire to get out of the body. That is Hinduism, that is false religion. The Christian does not merely want to die and get out of the body so that he can get away from his troubles ... the Christian desires to be clothed with this house which is from heaven, this glorious body that is coming. <sup>13</sup>

## A RENEWED EARTH

New bodies demand a glorified earth. An integral part of our **exulting in hope of the glory of God** is that, 'nature' will be finally released from its present decay and **slavery to corruption (Rom. 8: 21)**.

Our eternal state is not going to be lived in the heavens, in the air, in some vague, nebulous spiritual condition. We shall spend our eternity on the glorified earth under the new heavens --- 'the new heavens, and the

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<sup>10</sup> Tom Wright, *Op. Cit.* p 168

<sup>11</sup> In 2 Cor. 5: 2 the hope is that we are **longing to be clothed with our dwelling [or, house] from heaven**. This does not mean our bodies are coming down from heaven, but that they originate from God --- no more than John's baptism was **from heaven**, which is Jewish worldview terminology (Matt.21:25).... "**From heaven**" means with God's doing, authority, and promise. Heaven is the origin of John's baptism and the origin of our resurrection bodies of glory.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p 168

<sup>13</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of chapter 8: 17-39; The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1975, p 70

new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness'. In other words, we can say that heaven in an eternal sense is going to be 'heaven on earth'. Heaven on earth --- that is where we shall spend our eternity, and not as disembodied spirits, for the whole man will be redeemed, the body included. A concrete body [Lloyd-Jones means a physical and material body] must have a concrete world in which to live; and we are told that that will be the case. The whole creation is going to be delivered. <sup>14</sup>

So I ask, are you revelling in this prospect? It is the destiny for all who have been justified by grace through faith. Since we have already been justified by faith, **therefore we boast** in the inevitable outcome of entering the glory of God.

Once we get a little foretaste of God's presence even now in this world of suffering and sin and heartache, we find ourselves getting rather impatient (more of this theme in Part 6 on the Holy Spirit). We yearn and ache for an uninterrupted enjoyment of the glory of God.

In this world, every man and every woman who has had a close encounter with the glory of the Living God has felt as though they were crushed by the sheer weight of the glory. Many of these mighty saints have cried out to God to please STOP. They felt as though the weight of glory would kill them. Their present physical capacities were not geared nor equipped to handle the experience. {Remember those priests who could not enter the Temple for the glory of the LORD was so great (2 Chron. 7: 2)? Even Moses was told he could not see the glory of God and live (Exodus 33: 17f) }.

Our Lord Jesus makes this promise to his faithful followers, **He who overcomes I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne (Rev. 3: 21).** <sup>15</sup>

And we will exercise this glorious authority by **reigning as kings upon the earth (Rev. 5:10)**. The original plan that man be **crowned with glory and majesty and ruling over the works of Your hands with all things under our feet** will at last be achieved (Ps. 8: 5-6). Note that the Psalmist includes the animals being part of this new earth (v. 7-8). As a result we join the Psalmist by shouting, **"Oh LORD, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth (Ps. 8: 9)!**

And we shall be like him for, **Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself (Phil 3: 20-21).**

Jesus is the first ever glorified and immortalised man. He is our model. His resurrection body is our template. Look at Jesus after his resurrection and see your new body! When God gives us our new capacities we shall be fitted to enter the glory.

Every healing miracle that Jesus performed --- whether it was opening blind eyes, loosing mute tongues, cleansing lepers, freeing demonically oppressed, raising dead people, whether it was calming stormy winds and seas, or turning water into top quality wine, or feeding hungry multitudes, etc. --- every miracle was a sign of what Jesus is going to do at his return for this world and for each and every believer. His miracles were signs pointing to the coming glory of the Kingdom Age!

When the Kingdom of God is fully manifested we will start leaping and shouting for exuberant joy that our "bodies of humiliation" are made gloriously fit to live with God forever. We shall see God in His glory. And we shall be able to take it all in, in bodies that will never get sick, drag us down, or be subject to decay.

Yes, there is a sense in which this process has already begun in those of us who are justified before God through Christ. God has put His divine seed in us as His deposit for this promised inheritance (see Eph. 1: 13-14)! We can taste those powers of the Age to Come right now.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp 88-89

<sup>15</sup> The verse would, I think, be better rendered if it read, "I will grant him to sit down **at** my throne, as I also ... sat down **at** my Father's throne." When we compare the Greek preposition *ev* + the dative noun in verses like Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12: 2 the preposition is translated as **at** ... **He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; Having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God, etc.**

But the question is, are we boasting in it as we should? Here is another test as to whether we have truly grasped the fulness of our **having been justified by faith**. Seeing this reality by faith, are we going through life with exultant, and dare I say it, boastful hope in this hope of the glory of God? Do we know even a little of this foretaste of glory?

Paul will go on to tell us that those who boast in this hope of the glory of God **groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Romans 8: 23)**. It's like when we were children looking forward to Christmas, or the holidays, or some super pleasurable event. We would groan. How many more sleeps? Only another week. How many more sleeps now? Just two more sleeps. How many more sleeps? Tomorrow! Oh, the groaning of expectant hope. How it all seemed to drag on and on. The hope was almost painful!

Because you knew the certainty of it, because you knew it was coming, you groaned within yourself. If you had not known it was coming you would not have groaned. The certainty of the hope created the pain of the groaning.

So here is our test. Are we daily groaning, longing, yearning, jumping in our inner spirits, to enter the glory of God? Are we boasting, exulting, rejoicing exuberantly, that since God has justified us on the basis of His own saving grace in Christ Jesus, that we are destined to reign as joint-kings with him in the kingdom of glory?

Perhaps our groaning is so weak because we have not fully grasped this third certain consequence of our having been justified by faith --- that we are definitely heading for glory? I said, we are heading for glory! The glory of God!

The early NT Christians boasted in the coming Glory. Nothing could keep them down or depressed for long. Even their persecutors were impressed with their boasting and exuberant joy. Those early believers were not afraid of death. They would not say 'Caesar is lord' to save their skins. No, they bragged about their hope. They boasted before the unbelieving world in the certainty of the coming glory.

What did it matter to them, and what should it matter to us now, if we are mocked, ostracised, persecuted for the Faith? In this world we shall have tribulation, but that is only the gateway to the Kingdom of Glory and of God (Acts 14:22).

Those early Christians did not pin their faith in political parties, prime ministers, presidents, procurators or imperators. Their hope was not in this present world. But of course this did not stop them from working in the spheres of social and economic justice for all, knowing that God's government and God's justice and God's peace is coming to this world, and their cause would ultimately prevail.

Are we like them and getting ready for the big change-over? Do we boast that we are children of the kingdom that cannot be moved, cannot be shaken, cannot be stopped (Hebrews 12: 28)? They knew all empires in this present evil age were destined to pass away. They knew a day was coming when swords would be beaten into ploughshares. They knew a transformed world where the lamb would lie down with the wolf was coming.

Knowing that God has justified us in His sight, and that he is grooming us to rule His new world, are we living in the hope of that glory?

God is preparing us for an indescribable destiny bathed in brilliance and immortality. That's why in these dark days we lift up our heads, knowing our redemption draws near (see Luke 21:28). That's why we can boast in hope of the glory of God, because we know everything this side of Christ's return is passing away and temporary.

Were we to know a little of this assured hope, then I feel sure others would see in us a transformation already. They would see us being changed from glory to glory, little by little, each and every day. If we really entered into the fulness of our being declared right with God, then others might see a glimpse of the radiance and the glory of God breaking through us now.

Our joyful confidence in the coming Kingdom glory of God would surely awaken in others a thirst to find the Lord. And others might begin to ask questions deep within themselves, and feel a hunger to enter into this Gospel hope too.

**Therefore, having been justified by faith ... we boast in hope of the glory of God!**

