

# HOPE THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

## Romans 5: 5 (Part 7)

**And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us (Rom. 5: 5)**

And so we come to the climax of our little series on the glories of the doctrine of "justification by faith". I hope and pray your soul has been lifted heavenward in thanksgiving and exultant praise to our Heavenly Father for His mercy and love so freely showered on us in Christ Jesus.

How can we ever thank Him enough for freely forgiving us and taking us into His favour on the basis of the atonement offered in our Lord Jesus, quite apart from our own merits and deserts?

How can we ever hope to drink in the full draught of our glorious destiny in the coming Kingdom of God?

How can we ever bless His holy Name sufficiently, even when sufferings and afflictions and tribulations buffet us badly, because He has assured us these things are part of His loving purpose to transform us into the likeness of His beloved Son and to fit us to live in His presence forever?

And yet, we have not quite reached the climax of the consequences of **having been justified by faith (Rom. 5:1)**. We keep asking the question, What more can Paul possibly add? Yet, we keep answering, But wait, there's *more!*

It's as though we are hiking through a grand National Park (my New Zealand readers call this tramping, and perhaps they're allowed to be a bit different because they certainly have many spectacular National Parks!). We ascend a steep climb, and getting to the top, exult, "Wow! Just look at that view, would you?" What could top this? But we keep hiking, climb another ridge, and come upon another glorious vista. Our breath is taken away, "Oh, can it get any better than this?" But we tramp on. Climb another hill, and wallah!

Well, you get the picture, I'm sure. And here in **verse 5** the apostle brings us to the summit of this little section. He has another splendour to show us. One more awe-inspiring look at what God gives us in Christ when He declares us right in His sight by His grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### TWO FIRSTS!

Would you be surprised if I told you, that **verse 5** introduces for the very first time in the entire book of Romans, two firsts? Check me out on it, but this is the first time Paul mentions **the love of God**, and it's also the first time he mentions **the holy Spirit** in the Roman epistle. And that is a big surprise!

Two first-mentions and they do not pop up exactly where we might expect! We seem to always want to start with the love of God. But Paul does not do that --- at least here in Romans, anyway. We naturally ask ourselves, Why? Surely he could have introduced the love of God way back in the beginning when he wrote that he was not ashamed of the Gospel. But no. There he exults in the Gospel for it is **the power of God to save (Rom. 1: 16)**. Paul puts God's power before God's love. Is this significant?

As far as I can tell, the answer lies in the logical argument of the immediate context. Remember that we have just considered the very practical question of Christian sufferings. And far from shaking us out of our faith, far from driving us away from God, we learned that our troubles and afflictions actually have a profound and eternal purpose in our Father's dealings with us, causing us to glory in them.

Is it not entirely surprising that Paul says we really experience the love of God in the midst of our tribulations? It is quite possible to know the power of the Gospel of Christ as soon as we repent and are converted. We know we are new creations in Christ. We know the old has passed. The new has come. We've been set free from sin and death.

And, whilst at conversion we certainly do experience the love of God, many a beautiful Christian will say that it was not until they went through the darkest of trials after their conversion, that they *really* knew for the first time God's love for *them*.

In Part 6 (*We Boast in our Troubles*), we saw afflictions teach us at least two invaluable lessons. First, they reveal to ourselves our utter weakness in ourselves. We come to the end of our powers and feel utterly without strength. Second, they prove how strong and faithful our God is on our behalf. Tribulation teaches us that the God of the Heavens is acting in our circumstances proving He is also our Heavenly Father.

We also noted that our troubles **produce perseverance** seen in a **proven character** that is filled full of **hope in the [coming and still future] glory of God**. Heavy as our troubles might seem, we know they are only temporary and indeed **light** when we understand they are **working for us a far more and exceeding weight of glory (2 Cor. 4: 17)**. Thus, our troubles work in us hopeful expectation (not mere wishful thinking) for Christian hope based on the rock-solid promises and the righteous character of God.

#### WE HAVE A HOPE THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

However, I hasten to add, that here in **verse 5**, Paul is not only talking about hope that is wrapped up in the future. I venture Paul is not only talking about how the Christian will not be disappointed or ashamed on that Great Day of our Lord's appearing, true and marvellous as that hope is.

No. I suggest Paul is talking about something more immediate, more direct and more instant. He is referring to a hope that is never put to shame right here, right now, right in this present evil age. The immediate context is surely talking about a hope that does not disappoint right in the midst of *today's* troubles.

Even as we are suffering persecution, ostracism, troubles on all sides, even as we are being squeezed almost beyond human endurance sometimes, God gives a hope that does not let us down, that does not make us feel disappointed, that does not cause us to feel ashamed in the now. We have a **hope that does not disappoint** in the meantime, *before* we arrive in the Glory.

There are many Christians who are the despised minority throughout the world. How tempting to be ashamed to be seen to be associated with a despised, or even persecuted minority. There are many Christians who are mocked, laughed at, criticised in the workplace, at school, in sporting clubs, and in the public arena. How tempting to abandon the faith in the face of the unpopularity of our message and to save one's own skin --- either figuratively or literally. How do we fortify ourselves in these troubles? How do we hold our nerve and not go with the crowd because we feel ashamed?

The universal story of those who have suffered for Christ throughout the centuries, is that they remained strong by keeping the hope of the coming Glory of the Kingdom of God before them. Theirs was a hope that looked to the certainty of future glory. But surely there must be more than doggedly hanging on to this hope, fundamental as that is? I believe there is, and I agree with Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones when he asserts that some of the great commentators,

Seem to have missed the point completely by imagining that what the Apostle is saying here is that the man who has this hope in him will not be disappointed in the great Day of Judgment, that he will not be put to shame then when the final and last test comes. That of course is perfectly true, but here, surely, the Apostle is not referring to the future but to the present, to the actual experience of the believing Christian while he is in this life in this world.<sup>1</sup>

#### TWO FIRST-TIME MENTIONS

Now let's see how Paul anchors our hope into present experience ... **And hope does not disappoint because ...**

And it's right here that Paul introduces what we noted earlier ... two first-time mentions. **And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 5; Assurance*. Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, p74-75

us. Did you notice that he introduces something new, something additional to explain why hope does not disappoint us today, right in the midst of our pressing tribulations?

Firstly, we glory in hope because we have experienced the love of God.

Anybody who has believed the great gospel announcement that God declares as righteous in His sight all who look to Him on the basis of Christ's faithfulness understands that God has loved us. What mercy!

Anybody who has understood the great results of being put right with God, namely that we enjoy peace and favour with God and are sure of the glorious destiny stored up for in the coming Kingdom of God, knows something of God's love for them. What grace!

Anybody who has grasped that the circumstances of life are all part of our Father's purpose to bring us to His perfection of character, perceives the love God has for them. What wisdom!

The deepest cry of every human heart is to be loved. To feel special. To feel esteemed and valued. And God our Creator could put no higher value on us, than to have sent His only begotten Son to redeem us and to bring us to Himself for time and eternity! For Christ has once suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God (I Pet. 3:18).<sup>2</sup> God has abundantly proved and demonstrated His love.

Paul will go on to demonstrate this way God has loved us from verse 6 onwards ... For when we were yet without strength [i.e., sick, infirm, weak], in due time Christ died for the ungodly, etc.

But there is more to this than objective knowledge of the Gospel story, and this is the next astounding part of the equation. For we are told the love of God has been poured in our hearts ...

This speaks of a direct, inner, immediate experience of God's Personal love that we feel. This is experiential. This is more than head-belief, more than something deduced from reason and argument, critical as that has been. Let me be blunt. The believer who is resting in Christ alone and who has been "justified by faith" knows the love of God experientially, directly in the heart.

The experience of the love of God in the heart is more real to the believer than even the love of friend or family. Let troubles assail you, let all the world desert you, and you will still know the love of God deep in your heart. You are more certain of God's love for you than anything else. And the reason is ...

Secondly. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Over and above all the intelligent and rational reasons for our faith, we have an immediate, direct, experiential witness of the Spirit of God in our hearts. This is something God Himself pours in our hearts!

Because we have received the spirit of adoption, we cry, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God (Rom. 8: 15-16). And, because you are children, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4: 6).

Let me be perfectly clear. This is not something you just know in your head, not something you have deduced from the facts of the Gospel, essential as that is. No. This is something on top of that, or as well as that. This is something you feel and directly know in your innermost being, in your 'spirit', in your 'heart'. It is something God's Spirit puts within you directly, immediately, experientially, personally. You just know it!

Now, it's important to understand that in the Bible the holy Spirit refers to the immanent presence of the Living God Himself operating powerfully in His creation.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to be a Christian without the holy Spirit in your heart.

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<sup>2</sup> The word Peter uses for bring --- that he might bring us to God --- is the same word we have considered in Romans 5: 2 --- we have access into His grace. In Part 3 of this series, *Standing in Grace* we noted that the word means 'introduction'.

<sup>3</sup> Most English translations are unfaithful to the Greek text when they read that the love of God has been poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us, implying that Paul is talking about the Third Person in the Trinity, i.e. God the Spirit. This is an imposition on the text, unwarranted, uncalled for, except to satisfy a presupposed bias. The text literally reads, the love of God has been poured in our hearts through a holy Spirit having been given to us.

Paul will tell us, **But you are not in the flesh; you are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Rom. 8: 9-10).**

The Spirit being poured in our hearts is rich with OT images of oil or water or perfumed fragrance being poured over and upon a king or prophet or priest for special service. In the NT Jesus himself is said to have received of the Spirit **without measure (John 3:34)** for he is the Son of God, the ultimate king, high priest and prophet of God. And every single believer has been baptized **in one Spirit**, and as members of his body (ie. the church of Christ) and we **have all been made to drink in one Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 13 -14)**. No exceptions. No believer is left out. Glory to God!

Furthermore, the apostle says this inner witness in our hearts has been given lavishly, it has been **poured out**, or as the KJV says, it is **shed abroad**. This speaks of a gushing forth, an abundance. The picture is of a torrent, an overflowing, a super-abundance. The believer who has been “justified by faith” has a deep, inner testimony from the Spirit of God Himself, that he or she is a child deeply loved by the Father. There is an inner, elemental, cry from our hearts, “Abba, My Father!” that nothing can shake. And this does not disappoint.

Here, I agree with Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones,

This is the highest form of assurance possible to the Christian. It is a form of assurance that you do not deduce. There are forms and types of assurance that can be deduced. You can argue, Scripture tells us, ‘Whosoever believeth is not condemned’. I believe, and therefore I am not condemned, therefore I can be sure. That is quite right. You can go further and say, ‘I go to the First Epistle of John and I read there the tests of life and sonship. I examine myself in the light of these tests, and finding evidence of these things in me I deduce that I am a child of God’. That is also good; it is another form of assurance and a higher and better one than the first. But the highest form of assurance is the one we have here. You do not deduce the love of God here; the Holy Spirit sheds it abroad in your heart. <sup>4</sup>

## TESTIMONIES

Lloyd-Jones then goes on to cite the personal testimonies of what this looks like. He gives the case of a Church of England vicar by the name of Henry Venn who died in 1797. Venn wrote this to the Countess of Huntingdon. He wrote it just after the death of his wife, leaving him with five children. Venn was certainly being squeezed by tragic circumstances, but he writes,

Did I not know the Lord to be mine, were I not certain His heart feels even more love for me than I am able to conceive, were not this evident to me, not by deduction and argument, but by consciousness, by His own light shining in my soul as the sun’s doth upon my bodily eyes, into what deplorable situation should I have been now cast? <sup>5</sup>

Venn emphasises that his assurance in his tribulation was not evident to him **by deduction and argument, but by consciousness**. He says he knew God’s **own light shining** in his soul as real and felt as the rays of the sun he saw with his **bodily eyes**.

Venn goes on to express his grief over the death of his wife whom he describes as the most amazing Christian lady and wife and mother to his children. Then he says,

Nevertheless I can say, *all is well*; Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. At all times and in everything pertaining to me, let Him do what seemeth Him good. Were there no Holy Ghost now to strengthen me mightily, were there nothing more than a dependence on the Word of Promise, without an Almighty power and agent to explain, impress and apply it, how my hands hang down, and my knees be so feeble that I should fall under the pressure of my cross. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit. *Romans*, p 81

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp 81-82 quoted from *The Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon, Vol. 2*, p 7

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p 82

Observe the distinction this minister draws between reading about the truths and promises from Scripture --- thus deriving comfort by reasoning and applying the word of God to our needs --- and the direct witness of God's Spirit to our inner consciousness.

### MY OWN MUM

It was not till years later, long after my own father was killed in a car accident, that my mother confided this very thing to me from her own experience. Out of the depths of her sorrows, suddenly the Lord bore witness to her inner soul in an unmistakable and direct way that He loved her, was her Saviour, and that she was His child. She says that in the depths of her grief, her joy in Christ was not extinguished. She *knew* the love of God being poured in her heart experientially.

### WHEN WAS GOD'S LOVE POURED IN OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

So, at what point in their past was Paul saying these Roman Christians experienced the love of God like this? <sup>7</sup>

It is highly instructive to note that the same verb **pour out** occurs several times in the second chapter of the Book of Acts (**Acts 2: 17-18,33**). The Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost in fulfilment of OT predictions. God promised He would **pour out** His Spirit **on all mankind. Sons and daughters, young and old, men and women, slaves and free**, indeed **everyone who calls on the Name of the LORD will be saved** this way.

Peter appealed to **Joel 2: 28-29** as the dawning of the promised New Age, the age of the Spirit, the age when God's personal presence would be directly communicated to every child of God by His Spirit. This is the birthright of every believer, not just a privileged few.

But this still does not directly answer our question. At what point was Paul thinking these Roman Christians experienced the love of God like this? Well, surely it was the day when they expressed their repentance and put their trust in Christ Jesus and were buried in the waters of baptism into union with Christ? Or, to use Paul's more technical language, it was the day they were justified by faith, the day they knew their sins were forgiven and they had peace with God, the day the Spirit of God quickened their hearts with the life of God.

For many of us, that day we turned our lives over to the Lord's saving grace, marks the day when the witness of God's Spirit was made to our hearts, and we shouted with joy. But others are not able to point to an exact day and date, (perhaps it's because they grew up in a Christian home, being exposed to the teaching of Christ and so say they have always believed).

### STILL NOT SURE?

Now I wish to be very 'pastoral' here. I am quite aware that many sincere souls will still be uncertain. Indeed, you may be thinking, "I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, my Lord and Saviour", but I am still not sure if I have the love of God in my heart like this. Can you please help me a little more?" Let's try.

### THE WORD OF JESUS

Do you remember those folk who did not accept the claims of Jesus that he was the Christ of God? Go to **John 5: 16-47**. Jesus assures them that he is the legitimate Son of God. His Father backs him up through a sure display of mighty words and works. These prove His Father has commissioned him,

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<sup>7</sup> The verb **poured out** is in the perfect tense, indicating that the gushing forth began at a specific point in the past and continues into the present.

sent him, given him authority, to say and do what he is publicly doing. But these folks continue to deny Jesus' evident power from God and seek to persecute and to kill him (v. 18).

As they continue to deny Jesus, out of desperation Jesus says, **But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you** (v. 42). Now isn't that an interesting turn of phrase? Jesus knows they do not have **the love of God** in their hearts --- same expression as **Romans 5: 5 ... the love of God in our hearts!**

We might think it would be more natural for Jesus to have said, "I know you, that you do not have **love for God** in your hearts". But no. Jesus says he knows that God's love is not dwelling in them. There is a world of difference between the man who claims he loves God and the one in whom the love of God dwells. Ultimately, the critical thing then, is not just to say or think that I love God. The vital thing is to know that God's love is towards me, for me, indeed in me. Does He own me? Big difference!

On what criteria does Jesus base his assessment as to whether **the love of God** is therefore in somebody? Well, Jesus himself explains. First, the love of God is not in anybody who, against all the evidence, fails to accept who Jesus is --- the Anointed One sent or commissioned by his Father God with full authority to determine the destiny of every body (vs. 22, 27-29).

The love of God is not in the one who refuses to believe the Scriptures and their testimony concerning who the Christ would be is: **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: yet they testify of me ... Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words (vs. 39, 46-47)?** So, if you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messianic Lord, you are on your way to knowing the love of God is in you!

Next, the love of God cannot enter the heart of the one who refuses to listen to God's testimony concerning His Son Jesus --- **you have not His word/teaching abiding in you** --- and therefore **you will not come to me that you might have life (vs. 38-39)**. So, if you have cried out to God for mercy on the basis of His offer in Christ, again I assure you, that the love of God is in your spirit.

Then, the love of God cannot be in a heart that is more concerned to please other people, than God. Jesus said these rejects took comfort in the approval of one another over that of God: **How can you believe, who receive honour one from another, and seek not the honour that comes from the only God (v. 44)?** Does knowing God's salvation and pleasing Him concern you more than what anybody else thinks? Then I say, you may be assured the love of God operates in you.

So let me answer your heart's sincere cry for the assurance that the love of God is in your heart. Putting Jesus' own criteria together, we may say with certainty, that **if** you truly believe Jesus is the Christ of God as the Scriptures testify, **if** His teachings (His word) remain in you, **if** you have come to him for life, **if** you don't care what others in your society or family think about you and are only concerned with pleasing God and having His honour, **then** he assures you that the love of God is in you. This is Jesus' own testimony.

Now, it's up to you. As you develop your walk and relationship with God through Christ by talking with Him (prayer) by diligent searching the Scriptures for the wisdom and guidance of your Father, by fellowship with the body of Christ, then your *experience* of the love of God being directly known and felt in your inner spirit, will become greater and greater as the years pass.

## LOVE "JUNKIES"!

Those who are into physical fitness --- "adrenalin junkies" --- tell us that exercise is like a drug. The adrenalin rush released into our bodies is addictive. Those hooked on physical exercise can't seem to get enough. But those of us who have been "justified by faith" will testify that the love of God satisfies

us fully, but we are never fully satisfied. No matter how much we experience the love of God, we are thirsty to experience more! We are 'junkies' in the realm of the love of God! Our song is:

Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need;

Mercy drops 'round us are falling, but for the showers we plead!

God is not niggardly. He has more than enough love to go around. Why should we be content with less? God wants us to enjoy Him. He wants us to have a foretaste of His coming glory here in the now. Certainly, those who suffer exceptionally for their faith seem to be granted exceptional visitations of His Spirit. But each of us should be (and can be!) more sure of His love for us, than anything else this world has to offer.

### CONFIRMATION OF TWO WITNESSES

So we see, Christian joy and hope is founded on two sources. It is a hope that is both rationally founded in the Gospel facts that whoever believes on Jesus Christ is "justified by faith", and it is a hope based on our inner experience of God's Spirit witnessing His love to us directly. Hope doubly confirmed in head and heart, mind and spirit, knowledge and experience, our hope never will be disappointed!

Doctrine must always lead to feeling. Objective truth must lead to subjective assurance. For the apostle here takes it for granted that these Christians knew in themselves the truth of what he was writing. It seems to me that many today are content to say, "Yes, I believe Christ died for me." But so far they seem not to have entered into their birthright, knowing very little of the power, life, and love of the Spirit of God uplifting, guiding, imparting the very love and presence of God into their daily lives.

Yes, our sorest troubles and trials sometimes overshadow our hearts like black, stormy clouds. Contrary winds buffet us. But out of the blackness of tribulation we find the love of God being poured in our hearts like showers of silver drops from above, infused with the presence of His own holy Spirit!

Just like the showers of rain lift the drooping grass and parched plants of the land, my prayer for you is that God's gracious Presence, His holy Spirit, will fill your heart with His love and lift your wilting head heavenward with renewed hope that does not disappoint, both here and now, until eternity dawns!