

Romans 15:13 (The God of hope)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Now I have only one verse to read, in the 16th chapter of the Epistles to the Romans, and verse 13, Now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

In the evening I had really a very short message to give. I asked our dear brother not to curtail his remarks, and I am glad he has not done so. But my little postscript is this, there may be some here who say, well it's all very well, I don't somehow feel I've got so to speak the asset in my hand, in order to be effectual as a steward. [00:01:11] In other words, maybe that's what you say, you're really admitting you're not yet in the liberty and yawn of the God. Now this is the great Gospel Epistle, and in this verse the Apostle sums up his desire for those to whom he wrote, if the truth unfolded in this wonderful letter really possesses our hearts, that's the result.

We shall be living like those who are filled, not half filled, filled with all joy and peace in believing, and we shall be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.

[00:02:04] That's the effect, the proper effect of the Gospel on those who receive it.

Of course, nobody has much joy except they have peace. Peace is the fundamental thing.

I might ask any young person here, have you peace in relation to God? You won't be very happy if you haven't. If you have it, then indeed joy follows.

Many years ago I read about some tourists, and they wake up to St. Julius, it's a lovely mountain, south of Naples, and there are those beautiful views of the summit. When they came down, everybody said, oh what an enjoyable time you had, and they said, oh no we didn't. Why, what was the matter? Why, they said, Richard's mountain began thundering and booming and making all kinds of probably noises behind us, and we were all so scared that we really never saw it. [00:03:07] The fact is they were all so troubled about the question of their own security that all the joy was dissipated. They had no joy because they had no peace. That's the natural thing, that's exactly it. First peace, then joy, and then of course we discover there are good things to come, and we can abound in hope.

But remember, it is in believing. In believing we get these things.

Some people want to reach it, I'm really talking to you very young Christians here perhaps, some people want to reach it in their feelings. They say, oh I want to feel things, and of course you do, but you don't arrive at my process of feeling. It has often been said there are three things beginning with A. There's fact, there's faith, there's peace. [00:04:10] When faith apprehends the glorious fact of the gospel message, then feelings of peace and joy take possession of the heart.

When I was a young fellow, I don't think I ever met him, but there was a very excellent evangelist. His name was Hamilton Mann Cook. He was greatly used, though he died in middle age. One of the things I remember about him was a good lady who was always talking about her peace, but never got any further than the absence of the feelings that she desired. And one day in a little tea party, Mr. Cook was just between her and the hostess who was pouring out the tea. [00:05:01] So the tea came down the table, and when he saw he'd got her cup, he went over and he said, I must say it loudly, of course, but he said it very politely, he said, well, sir, when you feel this cup of tea inside, will you tell me and you shall have it? Well, he said, Mr. Cook, I shall never feel the cup of the tea inside me till I take it. Well, he said, madam, you never receive, you never feel the blessedness and joy of the gospel until you receive it in faith. He got out of her chair and disappeared.

About half an hour after she came down, this was a woman. His simple illustration had robbed him of his sense. In believing, he was landed into peace, and the joy of salvation entered her heart.

Now, my message is this.

[00:06:01] In spite of the simplicity of the gospel, there are things that hinder. I wonder if somebody here is hindered by a very simple thing. You are looking at yourself, really, instead of at Christ. I would hardly ask you to turn to that sixth verse of the first epistle to the Ephesians, the first chapter, I should have said, where we are told how God has made us accepted in the beloved.

You and I may have access by faith into this grace or favor in which we stand.

Young Christians, if you stand in the favor of God, what is the character of that favor? Is it that God has made you a very nice young person, and isn't trying to accept you? You have heard the gospel and you have received it. [00:07:02] No, there's only one ground of acceptance. You'll be accepted in the grace of the beloved.

That is Christ, of course, that he is so spoken of that we may be made conscious of how wonderful is the acceptance in which we stand. Have you got that acceptance in the beloved?

I find illustrations helpful. Now, here's one.

It's kind of hard to criticize, but in the broad way, imagine that Her Majesty the Queen Mother has great service rendered by a certain young lady. She has her own household. She's not in court circles. She's in the order of the circle. Comes with a very humble home, as a matter of fact. She has perhaps the most ordinary name. Let me suppose it's Mary Smith. She says to her daughter, the Greatest Queen, [00:08:02] My dear, I would like to introduce Mary Smith into your service. She is so much with me and renders me such service. And I'm sure that Her Majesty would say to her mother, My dear mother, if that's so, I need ask nothing more if you back her, so to speak, if I'm to accept her in you. That settles it.

I should give her a good reception in view of the one in whose great you stand.

Yes. If the young lady is introduced in court circles, the Queen will only have to look at her mother and nod their head and smile. It's all right.

She stands in a very excellent position.

I venture to say that a much more important person who might be introduced by some very much less important individual than Her Majesty the Queen Mother, [00:09:01] well, she wouldn't have a better reception, would she? All would depend on the person who stands behind in whose favour that person is accepted.

My dear young friend, may God accept with you, even with Christ, and even with all of you, He accepted you.

Oh, what peace, the knowledge of that is. But somebody may say, you know, I don't do these things myself, that's why perhaps I'm talking to a few fellow sisters of you. Somebody may say, yes, you know, but the trouble is, since I've got converted, I seem to be worse than I was before. But you know that's not quite right, because I think I am. I began to think of acts of failure, of sins, things that never troubled me, in my unconverted days, part of it again, grave troubles of my soul. [00:10:02] Another illustration may I produce. There's a poor old fellow, and he suffers from cataracts. He's all alone in a little cottage, he's got very little stuff, you know. And they take him to the hospital, and they perform the operation, and they bandage his head, his eyes, and presently the mystery comes back. The little cottage has been closed up. There's a woman just near there, to do a little health service for him. Back into the cottage he comes. He's really, to tell you the truth, very ill. Well, presently, it's removed, and he begins to see. He says, oh dear, oh dear, I'm afraid.

Hmm. It's rather messy, you know. And a few days later, he says, look at the pain this girl of mine is getting. I never knew death could accumulate. It's an awful thing.

Why, it's four times as bad [00:11:01] today as it was three or four days ago. The doctor comes in and says, my dear old fellow, don't you trouble. The real solution is your eyesight's getting better. Yes, of course, his eyesight's getting better. It was there all the time and he didn't see it. I'd rather like a young convert to say, you know, sir, I feel I feel I'm so bad.

I think it will be worse than I was before I was converted. Yes. Not in God's estimation, but in yours.

Look, there's another verse. I don't suppose you can find it. In the 15th of Acts, when they had that conference in Jerusalem, Peter, referring to the conversion of Cornelius, makes this remark.

God, who knows the heart, gave them the Holy Ghost. He delivered it unto us. [00:12:01] That's always been a comfort to me.

I didn't know my heart in its dirtiness.

When I knew it was dirty, I knew it in terms of the danger, but I didn't know how dirty it was. I discovered something of that. See, I'm afraid I don't know the full truth of the flesh even yet, in a practical way.

But I trust as we go on, our spiritual eyesight gets better. Yes. The fact that you now see defects in your self that you never dreamed of earlier here, rather glad to hear it. As a matter of fact, they were there all the time. It means spiritual advancement. You're more tender-hearted. You're more conscious of what is according to God and what isn't according to God. That's what we would desire to see.

But don't forget [00:13:02] that when God rips you away, you are converted and you receive the spirit that God did it and knew the worst about you. I have no doubt it was in the case of Cornelius. God knew the man's heart and he was groping after God. That is equally true, of course, but God knew the worst about him.

And I'll tell you a third thing, because this, as I chose, fits in with what we've been having a good deal in our meetings. If you were to turn and read the 18th chapter of the first book of Kings, you'd have that story about Elijah and the years of drought and famine and how, when three and a half years were up, Elijah went forth and met a cure.

Our dear brother's been talking about [00:14:02] stewardship. Yes, Ahab had a cure and his name was Obadiah.

And when Obadiah saw Elijah, he thought he was greatly delighted. He wasn't. He was thrown into a panic. Oh, he said, What? You want me to go with a letter to Ahab?

If you read that chapter, you'll find about verse two or three, there are those little brackets which mean the parentheses. And it is the entire record between now Obadiah really did fear the Lord greatly.

And he expressed it as though he was cured under a fiercely ungodly man with an even worse wife, Jebediah.

He said, [00:15:01] some of the Lord's prophets in the cave. He was a steward, but a steward in the wrong direction. It's rather important what we have before us this morning. There was a man who had a very fine position, a tip-top position in the Ten Kingdom tribe under Ahab.

He was steward of his house and handled all things well and good. But, well, I always think, poor dear man, he was frightened of Ahab, finding out his true character, the evil man, he masqueraded as though he were one of the Ahab tribe and was steward of Ahab's house. And when he met the out-and-out man for God, Elijah, well, he was a sick predator filled with all joy and peace in believing, abounding [00:16:01] in hope, though he was shivering and fearing.

Why? Because he was allied with the evil.

Because he feared in both directions. He was like a puppet onto his tail between his legs, frightened of making a kick in both directions. Poor Obadiah.

Look, my dear young friend, don't be an Obadiah.

Don't try and carry favor with the world if you're a true child of God. Why should God take the trouble to put that little word into practice?

Presently, Obadiah said it. He said, oh Elijah, have they told you what I did? How I fed the Lord's prophets in the cave? I don't know whether he had or whether he hadn't. But anybody might have said, ah, men can pitch all kinds of stories.

[00:17:02] Yes, he did.

He put it into practice. Now, it's perfectly true, he said, he did. He did in secret.

He feared God.

Outwardly, he was in league with the darkest king that ever sat on the throne of the same tribe.

He certainly had words which indicated of all the kings, not one of them was a really God-fearing man. He was the worst.

And very well, meet up with that. What a miserable tradition. You know, there are dear Christian friends, yes, they do fear the Lord. We've got to put it in. God said in effect, yes, you do.

It doesn't look like it does. You're playing fast and loose. You're trafficking with the powers of evil, with the will.

Well, my dear friends, [00:18:01] the Lord deliver you. The Lord deliver you from fixing your gaze on any but the beloved in whom you're obsessive.

The Lord deliver you from making your sight the measure. Because God's sight is the measure. He knows the worst about you. He has blessed you. He has given you His Spirit.

And the Lord deliver you from this half and half type of Christianity that wants to hang on to the world and to the evil for the sake of earthly profit. When you won't be filled with all joy and peace in believing and abounding to the power of the Holy Ghost. Because if you really receive the Gospel, that is the Gospel and look at the individual who is filled with joy and peace and whose heart [00:19:02] is abounding with the hopes that center in the risen and the coming Christ, who's able to take up and loves to take up the pure joy and to do the little things to him or her faithfully to the glory of God while we wait for our coming Lord.

Now I think we might sing that little hymn. I'm sure we've sung it before. Now even in these meetings it's number 268. Salvation's captain and the guide of all beneath thy shadow we abide the cloud of thy perfecting love our strength thy grace our rule thy word our aim the glory of our Lord. 268