

A Benediction For A Blessed Life

Romans 15:13

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Follow with me as we read only one verse, Romans 15:13. Paul says, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

I’m not a real Peanuts cartoon fan, but I’ll never forget many years ago I was reading the Peanuts cartoon in the paper. I saw a cartoon that I thought was theologically profound. Lucy and Linus were watching TV, and Lucy turned to Linus and said, “Get me a drink of water.” Linus looked a little surprised and said, “Why should I? You never do anything for me.” Then Lucy said to Linus, “On your 75th birthday, I’ll bake you a cake.” So Linus gets up and heads for the kitchen, and on his way, the caption read, “You know, life is much more pleasant when you have something to look forward to.” I thought, “That’s good theology”; life is more pleasant if you have something to look forward to.

As a Christian, you have something to look forward to. Not only do you have heaven right now, but you are on your way to heaven. If you are a child of God, you will spend eternity in heaven. And life is much more pleasant if you have something to look forward to. That’s why the Christian life is a blessed life. It’s full of joy and peace and hope, verse 13.

Before we experienced salvation, the Bible described us as “without God and without hope.” I do believe the two go together. When a person is without God, they are, in essence, without hope—or at least an eternal hope. At least an unchanging hope. At least an unwavering hope. If you’re without God, you’re without hope. In Romans 5:2, Paul said, “Rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” So as Christians, we are rejoicing in our hope in one day experiencing the glory of God.

Our text in Romans 15:13 is the end of the doctrinal section of the book of Romans. In Romans we have all this section of doctrine: man’s condemnation, God’s salvation and then sanctification. We see the wisdom of God revealed, Romans 9-11—what God is going to do with the nation of Israel in their rejection and restoration.

To see a complete study of Romans, go on the Revival Christian Fellowship website at www.revival.tv. Click on Media and then go under Expository Studies and you’ll find the book of Romans titled In the Grip of Grace. Immerse yourself in the study of Romans. It is so very important for your Christian understanding of God’s redemptive plan.

Now as you come to Romans 15:13, it is the end of the doctrinal section of the book of Romans. From here forward, Paul is going over some practical things with the believers in Rome. In verse 13, Paul blesses them, he prays for them and he lifts up his voice to God. He says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.” That is, I believe, the blessed life. The

blessed life is an overflowing life of joy and peace and hope.

As I looked at this passage, I discovered that it is really a great description of the Christian life. There are five facts or truths that I want to pull out of this text; five things in this verse that describe the blessed life that God wants us to have and God wants us to experience. First of all, the source of the blessed life is the God of hope. God is the source of our hope. Our hope is in God. So God is both the source of our hope, and He's the object of our hope. A person without God is without hope, but as Christians, we've come to know God through Jesus Christ. And then we know hope, because we know the God of hope.

The names of God by which He reveals Himself are very interesting: the God Who sees, the God Who provides, the God Who cares, the God Who heals. In Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." I have everything I need. He's the God Who guides, Who directs, but He's also the God of hope.

It's awesome to thinking that our God is the God of hope. He's a personal God; He's not an abstract force. He's a powerful God; He can do anything. He's a loving God; "God is love." In John 3:16 it says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." So this personal, powerful, loving God of hope gave His Son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for our sins. When I repent of my sins and I believe and receive Jesus Christ as my Savior, I come into a personal relationship with God. Knowing this, God brings to me hope, an overflowing hope or an "abounding hope."

A blessed life starts with God; He is the center and the circumference of a life that is blessed. So make God the center of your life. Live for God. Love God. Trust God. Focus on God. Be a godly person. That's a person who is godlike. They are godlike because they are in communion with God; they are in fellowship with God. If you haven't trusted Jesus Christ and been born again into the family of God, then you are not a child of God, and you haven't a relationship with God and you're without hope. What hope do you have in this world today without God? For the Christian, the blessed life is knowing the God of hope.

Secondly, notice the quality of this blessed life. Verse 13, it is a life filled with all joy and peace. May He "fill you with all joy and peace." Notice that phrase "fill you." The Christian life is full: It's full of joy, and it's full of peace and it's full of hope. Those are great words in that verse: joy, peace and hope. The word "hope" appears twice in this one verse. He is the God of hope, and He fills you with an overflowing hope. So the Christian life is full.

Before you became a Christian, life was empty. My life was empty without God. You were created by God to know God, and until you know God, your life is empty. I remember being a rebellious teenager. Before I graduated from high school, I went off on my own. One night, after coming back from a wild party with my friends, my mom could tell something was wrong with her son. I went to my room, and before I could shut the door on her, she opened it quickly and said, "John, until you give your heart to Jesus, you'll never be happy." She messed me up.

"Mom, why did you do that? I'm trying to have fun here, and you give me Jesus." Then the Hound of Heaven started after me. I found years later that my mom was right: Until I gave my heart to Jesus I was never really happy. That's a profound thought to think that a parent actually knows what they're talking about. I should have listened to my mom and given my heart to Jesus so much earlier. But thank God that eventually, through her prayers and other people's prayers, I came to know Jesus Christ, and I found my life was filled. I had a full life. He filled it with two things—notice them in the verse—joy and peace.

Joy is not based on circumstances. It is the fruit of the Spirit. Until you have Jesus, you don't really have joy. You can have happiness, but happiness is based on happenings: everything's going smooth, everything's happening, I have a good job, I've got a nice car, I have my house, I'm doing what I want where I want, things are running smoothly. I'm happy, happy, happy. But what about when the car breaks down or you lose your job or you're diagnosed with cancer and things start turning for the worse and things in your life start to unravel? Life is not always smooth; there are bumps in the road. Detours and road blocks. The Bible says, "Man is born for adversity." Sparks fly upward. Life is difficult.

But as a Christian, in the midst of your difficulties and circumstances, you can have joy. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit, and it wells up within us as we walk with God and love the Lord. John 15:11 says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Fullness of joy. "I want My joy to be in you, and I want you to have fullness of joy." Do you find joy in knowing God? If God is the center of your life, He's the source of your hope, and He's also the source of your joy.

Your life is also full of peace in God. There are two kinds of peace. The first is peace with God, Romans 5:1. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That white flag goes up, and you surrender. That's basically when salvation takes place: you surrender to God, you're not trying to live on your own, you're not trying to do your own thing anymore. "God, you made me. You know what's best for me. I surrender to You." Figuratively speaking, the white flag goes up in your heart, and you surrender to God. You say, "I'm not going to fight, I'm not going to rebel, I'm not going to run. God, have Your way in me." You surrender to God. That's when you have peace with God. The Bible describes our preconverted days as being at war with God. We are at enmity with God. We're actually fighting against God.

So salvation brings you peace with God. That puts you in a relationship with God, and you can experience the peace of God, the second kind of peace. In Philippians 4:7, Paul says, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep..."—"guard" or "garrison" or "protect"—"...your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." He describes it as peace that passes understanding. Have you ever experienced that? When life has fallen apart, you still have a peace in your heart? You know that God loves you, that God is still on the throne and that God is in control. D.L. Moody said, "A little faith will get you to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." As you learn to trust Him and depend upon Him, He fills you with His peace. The Bible says, "Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, because his mind is stayed on

Thee” and because he trusts in God. Peace isn’t the absence of trouble but is the presence of God in your life.

You say, “How can I experience this quality of joy and peace?” The third quality from this text is the condition for the blessed life—faith. There is something we must do. It’s found in verse 13, “in believing.” “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” That’s faith. Faith is trust. The NIV renders the verse, “as you trust Him.” Faith is the open hand that reaches out to God and receives God’s blessings. Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” When we reach out in faith, we are saying, “Lord, I’m going to trust You. I’m going to trust You with my marriage. I’m going to trust You with my finances. I’m going to trust You with my job. I’m going to trust You with my health. I’m going to trust You with my kids and my grandchildren. I’m going to trust You with my ministry. Lord, I’m going to put my life in Your hands, and I’m going to trust You.” If we’re going to experience a blessed life—the benefits of this benedictive prayer—then we need to have God at the center of our lives, and we need to trust in God all of our lives.

You say, “Well, I wish I had more faith.” I hear people say that all the time. When the Bible uses the word “believing” or “faith” or “trust,” it’s no different than the belief and faith and trust you exercise every day. You got up this morning, and maybe you ate some cereal by faith that it hasn’t gone bad; you didn’t ask your kids to taste it first to see if they spit it out. Why do we get in the car and turn the key or press the ignition button? Because we believe, we trust, we have faith that the motor will start. I was in a rent-a-car all weekend. I couldn’t figure out where reverse was or neutral. Your pastor was burnin’ rubber everywhere he went. Anyway, you put the car in reverse in faith that the car is going to back up, then you put it in drive, you take off and come to an intersection and, by faith, you put your foot on the brake. That’s faith. And I’ve seen some of the cars you guys drive, and it takes a lot of faith to believe that thing’s gonna stop. It takes faith just to get into that car you’re driving.

You come to church by faith; you believe the roof won’t fall on your head. You sit in a pew by faith. How many of you looked at the pew and went, “I don’t know. If we sit down, it may collapse.” You bring in your flashlight and look underneath to make sure the screws are tight. You sit down very gingerly. No. We do everything by faith.

We got in an airplane to Florida this week by faith. I’ll never forget the first time I ever flew. We leveled out at 30,000 feet and the pilot walks by. Back in the old days, they put it on autopilot, and the pilot comes out and shakes hands and talks to everybody. Now he’s under lock and key, but you wonder who’s flying this thing. The pilot did come out before we took off from San Diego for Orlando, and he made a little announcement. I’m looking at him to see if he looks drunk or has been smoking pot. I felt like interviewing him: “How long have you been flying this baby? Can I see your license?” No, we don’t do that. I don’t know who that guy is. He’s flying the plane. My life’s in his hands. And you don’t kick the wheels of the plane and shake the wings to make sure it’s okay; you just jump in. You get in an elevator. Did you examine the cable before you got in? How do you know the thing’s not going to break? No. Everywhere we do all day long is an exercise of faith.

We have a friend who calls us on the phone and asks, "Hey, you want to go to Disneyland tomorrow?" "Yes." "Okay. I'm going to pick you up at 10:00 o'clock, and I'm going to pay your way in." "Wow! Praise God. Thanks. That's awesome! I really appreciate it." You hang up the phone and say, "I'm going to Disneyland tomorrow!" "How do you know?" "Because my friend told me so." "How do you know he's good for it? How do you know he's not messing with you and he's going to leave without you?" "He wouldn't do that; he's a nice guy." Isn't it funny when someone says something like this to you and you say, "Yeah, it's great. See you tomorrow." How do you know he'll do what he says? You don't know. But you have faith that he will.

And then you open up your Bible, and it says, "Have faith in God." You go, "I don't think so. I don't think I can really trust God. I know He's big and I know He's very powerful and I know He's real loving. But I can't touch Him or feel Him; I know He's out there. Can I really trust God?" The Bible says, "We receive the witness of men. The witness of God is greater." If we believe what people tell us, why can't we believe what God tells us?

Learn to live by trusting in God. Resting in the promises of His Word. God says He'll "never leave you nor forsake you." I'm constantly giving comfort to people who come for prayer. I tell them that God has promised to never leave them, and He'll never forsake them. Do you believe that? Are you grabbing hold of that? Are you living like that? Do you know that He's with you?

God's promised that "As your day is, so shall your strength be." Have you looked at the week ahead and thought, "I don't know how I'm going to make it. I don't know how I'm going to survive another week"? "As your day is, so shall your strength be." God gives you strength for the day. "Give us this day our daily bread." God will strengthen you and help you. God's promises are "exceeding great and precious," and they are found in His Word. So we rest in God and we rest in His promises; we live by faith. The blessed life is a life of faith in believing that He will never disappoint us.

Notice the fourth fact in verse 13, and that is the consequence of all this—the result of the blessed life. "That you may abound in hope." Why have a relationship with God? Because God brings us hope, God brings us joy and God brings us peace. When we trust in Him and when we believe Him by faith, the result is we have an overflowing hope. Some have translated this "overflow in hope."

We live in a world where people have lost their hope nearly in everything. Just this week, as they inaugurated the new President of the United States, some people thought the world was going to end. They are so freaked out. It doesn't matter who sits in the White House; what matters is Who sits on the throne of the universe. Our hope is not in government; our hope is in God. "In God we trust," and look to God and hope in God. When we do that, our hearts overflow with hope. That figure of speech is of a river overflowing its banks. Christians do have an overflowing hope.

In Romans 15:4, Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." The Word

of God brings us hope. In Romans 15:12, it says, “And again, Isaiah says, ‘There shall be a root of Jesse, and He shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust,’” or more literally, “hope.” Jesus Christ, that root of Jesse, would be raised up, and Gentiles—which are the majority of us here today—and Jews would trust in Him and would find hope. In verse 13, Paul uses the word “hope” twice: hope and abounding in hope.

What is hope? In the Bible, is hope crossing your fingers, grabbing your rabbit's foot and saying, “I hope. I hope. I hope there's a God. I hope this Christianity is real. I hope there really is a heaven, because if not, we've wasted our time”? It's real and you don't have to cross your fingers and hang onto a rabbit's foot. Biblical hope is an assurance. It's a confident assurance: steadfast, unmovable, unshakeable and it's unchanging. Nothing can shake your hope. Nothing can happen that can shake your hope, because your hope is in God. God is unmovable. God is unshakeable. “Though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, we will not fear,” for God is our refuge. God is “our ever present help in time of need.” Our hope is in God.

Our future hope is an awesome thing. This is where that great theologian, Linus, comes into play: “Life is a lot more pleasant when you have something to look forward to.” What we have to look forward to, in Titus 2:13, is “that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Are you looking for Jesus to come again? I am. Do you believe Jesus will come again? I do; the Bible says He will.

Not only do we have a future hope, but we also have a present hope. In John 14:1, Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” Don't be afraid. How often our hearts tremble and are filled with fear.

And He said, “In my Father's house...”—by the way, this is a description of heaven; a great place to go. You're going home. This world's not your home; don't get too comfortable here. “In my Father's house are many...”—and I love the King James translation here—“...mansions.” Some translations have “abiding places.” Some have “apartments”; I say, “No, thank you.” Can you imagine Jesus saying, “Don't let your hearts be troubled; I'm going to make some apartments, and you can come live with Me.” Now if He did make us apartments, they'd be awesome. I'm kidding. I'd be cool in heaven in an apartment; it's better than being in hell cast into outer darkness. “I will go to prepare this place, and if I go to prepare this place, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be there also.”

That's a promise. Jesus Christ just made us a promise that He's preparing a place, and He's preparing us for the place. So believe in a person—believe in God and Jesus—; believe in a place, heaven—that's it a real place, the Father's house—; believe in a promise—that He's coming again to receive us and take us forever to heaven. So the consequence of a blessed life is that I have an overflowing hope.

What is the enabling of the blessed life? How can I live this benediction? How can I live this blessed life? The fifth fact of the blessed life is found in the last phrase in verse 13, “through

the power of the Holy Spirit.” That’s the simple secret. The word “power” is the Greek word “dunamis.” We get our word “dynamic” or “dynamite” from it. God wants to give you His dynamite power to live the Christian life.

Sometimes people say, “I can’t live the Christian life. I’m not as good as you are. I’m not a good person.” The Bible says, “There is no one righteous; no not one.” We’ve all sinned; “we’ve all fallen short of the glory of God.” “We’re all like sheep, who have gone astray and turned to our own ways.” There is not one human being who is good enough to live the Christian life, strong enough to live the Christian life or able to live the Christian life, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. You cannot live the Christian life in your own strength, in your own resources, in your own power and in your own wisdom. “Then how can I live the Christian life?” “You can allow the Spirit of God to give you the strength.”

The Holy Spirit is responsible for your conversion. He convicts you, He draws you to Jesus and then when you trust Jesus Christ, He regenerates you, He gives you new life and He indwells you. Not only concerning your salvation, but you can’t be sanctified or live a Christian life, a holy life, without the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with God’s Spirit, the Bible says that “We can walk in the flesh and not fulfill the lusts thereof.” That doesn’t mean you’re going to be perfect. But the way to victorious Christian living is by dying and surrendering to self and yielding and surrendering to the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul the Apostle said, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” It is possible to live the Christian life.

I remember several months after becoming a Christian, I fell on my knees in my bedroom, crying out, “God, I can’t do this unless you give me the strength.” I’d fallen back into some of my old ways; I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I loved the Lord, I wanted to follow the Lord, but I just kept stumbling and falling. Then I got on my knees and said, “Lord, I can’t do this. I can’t be a Christian. I can’t live for You, God. I need Your help.” Immediately I sensed God’s Spirit strengthening me and empowering me, and a new sense of God’s presence came into my life.

If you need help today, you find it with the Holy Spirit. If you need help in your marriage, the Holy Spirit can help you. If you need wisdom to raise your children, the Holy Spirit can help you. You need to trust in Him and rely upon Him. Our service would be fruitless without the Spirit of God. Everything we do when we serve the Lord—salvation, sanctification and service—all needs to be done in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.

So in verse 13, we have a summary of the blessed life. It’s fivefold: number one, it’s lived in fellowship with God; number two, it’s full of the joy and peace of God; thirdly, it’s lived by faith in God; fourthly, it overflows with hope in God; and fifthly, it’s lived in the power of God the Holy Spirit.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in

hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Let's pray.