A ROUND OF DELIGHTS

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A SERMON
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"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."
Romans 15:13

THIS is one of the richest passages in the Word of God. It is so full of instruction that I cannot hope to bring out even so much as a tithe of its teaching. The apostle desired for the Roman Christians that they might be in the most delightful state of mind, that they should be filled with joy and peace, and that this should lead on to yet further expectations, and create an abundance of hope in their souls.

See, dear friends, the value of prayer, for if Paul longs to see his friends attain the highest possible condition, he prays for them. What will prayer not do? Whatsoever you desire for yourself, or for another, let your desire be prepared like sweet spices, and compounded into a supplication, and present it unto God, and the benediction will come.

I gather, also, from Paul's making this state of happiness a subject of request unto God, that it is possible for it to be attained. We may be filled with joy and peace in believing, and may abound in hope. There is no reason why we should hang our heads, and live in perpetual doubt. We may not only be somewhat comforted, but we may be full of joy. We may not only have occasional quiet, but we may dwell in peace, and delight ourselves in the abundance of it. These great privileges are attainable, or the apostle would not have made them the subjects of prayer.

Ay, and they are possible for us, as the meaning of the epistle to the Romans was not exhausted upon the Romans, so this text belongs to us also, and the words over us still rise to heaven as the prayer of the apostle for us, upon whom the ends of the earth are come, that we also may be filled with joy and peace, and abound in hope through the Holy Ghost.

The sweetest delights are still grown in Zion's gardens, and are to be enjoyed by us—and shall they be within our reach and not be grasped? Shall a life of joy and peace be attainable, and shall we miss it through unbelief? God forbid. Let us, as believers, resolve that whatsoever of privilege is to be enjoyed, we will enjoy it—whatsoever lofty experience is to be realized, we will, by God's gracious help, ascend to it. For we wish to know to the full the things which are freely given to us of God.

Not, however, in our own strength will we thus resolve, for this condition of faith, and joy, and peace must be wrought in us by God alone. This is clear enough in the text, for it is the God of hope who alone can fill us with joy and peace. And yet again, our hope which is to abound will only abound through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The fact that the happy condition described is sought by prayer is a plain evidence that the blessing comes from a divine source, and the prayer itself is so worded that the doctrine is prominently presented to the mind. So, brethren, while we resolve to obtain everything of privilege that is obtainable, let us set about our effort in divine power, not depending upon our resolutions, but looking for the power of the Holy Ghost, and the energy of the God of hope.

I shall want you to follow me whilst I notice concerning the blessed state of fullness of joy and peace, first, *whence it comes*. Secondly, *what it is*, taking its delights in detail. And then, thirdly, *what it leads to*. We are to be filled with joy and peace that "we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

I. If there be, then, such a condition as being divinely filled with all joy and peace in believing, WHENCE DOES IT COME?

The answer is, it comes from "the God of hope." But in order that we may see how it comes, let us look a little at the chapter in which we find our text, for the connection is instructive.

To know joy and peace through believing, we must begin by knowing what is to be believed, and this we must learn from Holy Scripture, for there *He is revealed as the God of hope*. Unless God had revealed Himself, we could not have guessed at hope, but the Scriptures of truth are windows of hope to us.

Will you kindly read the fourth verse of the chapter, and note how strikingly parallel it is to our text, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." See, then, the God of hope is revealed in Scripture with the design of inspiring us with hope. If we would be filled with faith, joy, and peace, it must be by believing the truths set forth in the Scriptures.

Before we have any inward ground of hope, God Himself, as revealed in the Bible, must be our hope. We must not ask for joy first, and then found our faith upon it, but our joy must grow out of our faith, and that must rest upon God alone. Our apostle sets us an example of how to use the Scriptures, for in this chapter he searches out the truth from Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and then places one text with another, and gets a clear view of the testimony of God.

What is very much to our point, he sees in those Scriptures that to us Gentiles, God has of old been set forth in the Scriptures as the God of hope. Aforetime it seemed as if salvation were of the Jews and of the Jews alone, and we were shut out. But now, on turning to the Old Testament itself, we discover that God had spoken good things concerning us before we knew Him.

There was always hope for the Gentiles, and though Israel perceived it not, yet patriarchs and kings and prophets full often spake words which could not otherwise be interpreted. "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" is a promise which overleaped the bounds of Canaan.

As, then, by searching, the apostle found in the Word of God hope for the Gentiles, so will the most heavy laden and burdened spirit discover sources of consolation, if the Bible be diligently read and faithfully believed.

Every promise is meant to inspire the believer with hope—therefore use it to that end. Use the written Word as the source of comfort, and do not look for dreams, excitements, impressions, or feelings. Faith deals with the Scriptures, and with the God of hope as therein revealed, and out of these it draws its fullness of joy and peace.

Beloved, if you desire to get faith in Christ, or to increase it, be diligent in knowing and understanding the Gospel of your salvation as set forth in the Word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing," or by reading the Word of God. How shall you believe that which you do not know? Do not at once make an effort to believe before you are instructed, but first know what God has revealed, see how He has displayed to you the hope of everlasting life, and then believe with all your heart the testimony of God.

Every promise and word of God must be to you a foundation most sure and steadfast whereon to build your hope. Let your anchor grasp and hold to each revealed truth, whatever your feelings may be. We begin then by saying that fullness of joy and peace comes to us from the God of hope, as He reveals Himself in holy writ. As it is written, "Hear, and your soul shall live," so do we find that we must hear if our soul is to rejoice.

Now, it so happens that the Scriptures were not only written that the Gentiles might have hope, but that they might have joy. I ask you to notice the passages quoted by the apostle, for at least the last three of them call us to joy.

Thus in verse ten, Moses says, " Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people." If there is any joy for the elect nation, it is for us also who believe. If there be any joy for Israel redeemed out of Egypt, led through the Red Sea, fed with manna, and brought to the borders of Canaan, that joy is for us also. If any

joy over the burnt offering, if any joy at the paschal supper, if any delight at the jubilee, all that joy may be shared by us, for thus says the Lord, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people." Joy in their joy.

Again, David says (verse 11), "Praise the LORD, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people." Now, where there is praise, there is joy, for joy is a component element of it. They that praise the Lord aright, rejoice before Him. Go, you Gentiles, when David bids you thus unite with Israel in praising God, he bids you take full possession of the joy which moves the favored nation to magnify the Lord.

Again, Isaiah says, "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust," or as it should be translated, "hope." Now, hope is ever the source of joy. So, then, in the Scriptures we see God is the God of hope, and on further search we see that the hope of the Gentiles permits them to rejoice with His people. In fine, we see that God Himself is the hope of all those who know Him, and the consequent source of joy and peace.

Again, then, I am brought to this, that, to begin with, the joy and peace which we all desire to obtain must be sought through a knowledge of the God of hope, as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures. We must begin with that sure word of testimony, whereunto we do well if we take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place.

There must be belief in God as revealed in the Word, even though as yet we see no change within ourselves, nor any conceivable internal ground in our nature for hope or joy. Blessed is he who has not seen, and yet has believed. He who can hang upon God, without the comfort of inward experience, is on the high road to being filled with joy and peace.

But the apostle in the text leads us through the Scriptures to God Himself, who is personally to fill us with joy and peace. By which I understand that He is to become *the great object of our joy*. As Israel in the Red Sea triumphed in the Lord, even so do we joy in God by our Lord Jesus Christ. Like David, we say, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." And with Isaiah we sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall be joyful in my God."

When first the Lord looked upon us through the windows of His Word, we began to hope. By and by His good Spirit caused our hoping to grow into believing, and since then, as our knowledge of the Lord has increased, our believing has risen to fullness of joy. Our God is a blessed God, so that to believe in Him is to find rest unto the soul, and to commune with Him is to dwell in bliss.

Beloved, when you think of God, the Just One, apart from Christ, you might well tremble, but when you see Him in Jesus, His very justice becomes precious to you as "the terrible crystal," and you learn to build it into the foundation of your joy. The holiness of God, which aforetime awed you, becomes supremely attractive when you see it revealed in the person of Jesus Christ your Lord. How charming is "the glory of God in the face of Christ."

As for the love of God, as you see it set forth in this Book and in His Son, it inspires you with every sacred passion. As for His eternal immutability, it becomes the groundwork of your peace, for if He changes not, then all His promises will stand sure to you and to all His people from generation to generation. His power, which was once so terrible in the thunder and in the storm, now becomes delightful to you as you see it yoked to the promise that the promise may be fulfilled, and behold it concentrated in the man Christ Jesus that His purposes may be achieved.

In fact, there is no attribute of God, there is no purpose of God, there is no deed of God, there is no aspect under which God is seen, but what becomes the object of the Christian's joy, when he has seen Him, and believed in Him as revealed in the Scriptures. To the believer, God is his sun, his shield, his portion, his delight, his all. His soul delights herself in the Lord.

At first he hoped in God, that perhaps He would smile upon him. He turned to the Scriptures, and he found there many a cheering declaration, and these he knew to be true, and therefore he believed God that He would do as He had said. And now not only has his hope become faith, but his faith has budded and blossomed, and brought forth the almonds of joy and peace. You see, then, how the Lord is the author of all our holy gladness.

Our God is, however, called the God of hope, not only because He is the object of our hope, and the ground of our joy and peace, but because *He it is that works hope and joy in us*. No joy is worth having unless the Lord is the beginning and the end of it, and no joy is worth receiving except it springs from hope in Him.

He must breathe peace upon us, or else the storm-tossed waters of our spirit will never rest, nor is it desirable that they should, for peace without God is stupefaction, joy without God is madness, and hope without God is presumption. In true believers their hope, faith, joy, and peace are all alike of divine workmanship. Our spiritual raiment is never homespun—we are divinely arrayed from head to foot.

This blessed name of "God of hope" belongs to the New Testament, and is a truly Gospel title. Livy tells us that the Romans had a god of hope, but he says that the temple was struck by lightning, and in a later book he adds that it was burned to the ground. Exceedingly typical this is of whatever of hope can come to nations which worship gods of their own making. All idol hopes must perish beneath the wrath of the Most High.

The God of human nature unenlightened, or only sufficiently enlightened to discover its sin, is the God of terror. In fact, to many, the Lord is the God of despair. But when you turn to the revelation of God in Scripture, you find Him to be a God whose gracious character inspires hope, and henceforth you turn away from everything else to fix your hope on God alone. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." God, in Christ Jesus, has ceased to be the dread of men, and has become their hope.

Our Father and our Friend, we look for all to You. And blessed be God, the hope which He excites is a hope worthy of Him. It is a God-like hope—a hope which helps us to purify ourselves. At first we hope in God for cleansing from every sin, and then for acceptance here and hereafter. We hope for pardon through the atonement which is in Christ Jesus, and when we have it, we hope for sanctification by the Spirit. Our hope never ceases to rise higher and higher, and to receive fulfillment after fulfillment, and we know that it shall continue to do so till we rise to dwell at His right hand forever and ever.

He who grasps this hope has a soul-satisfying portion, for which a man might well be content to suffer a thousand martyrdoms if he might but abide in it. It is a hope which only God would have contrived for man—a hope founded in Himself—a hope presented to the sons of men in Christ Jesus, because His sacrifice has been presented and accepted.

A hope which God alone can inspire in men, for even if they hear the Gospel they do not find hope till He comes in power to their souls. It is a hope which always adores God, and lies low at His feet, never dreaming of being independent of Him. A hope which lays her crown at His feet, and takes Him to be her Lord forever and ever. This is the hope which is the mother of our joy and peace, and only as it is wrought in us by the Lord can we be truly happy and restful.

II. Secondly, let us inquire, WHAT IS THIS BLESSED STATE OF MIND of which we have spoken a little?

Let us look into the words. He says, "That the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing." This is a state of mind *most pleasant*, for to be filled with joy is a rare delight, reminding one of heaven.

It is, however, a state as *safe* as it is pleasant, for the man who has a joy which God gives him may be quite easy in the enjoyment of it. The best of the world's joy is but for a season—while you are enjoying it, you are in fear because it will soon be over, and what then? Earth's best candles will soon burn out. The day of this world's mirth will end in a night of misery.

This thought mars and sours all fleeting joys. But the joy which God gives has no afterthought about it. It is wholesome and safe and *abiding*. We may drink our full without being sickened, yea, revel in it without surfeit.

At the same time it is most *profitable* joy, for the more a man has of this joy the better man he will be. It will not soften him and render him effeminate, for it has a singular strengthening power about it. There is, doubtless, a tonic influence in sorrow, but holy joy is also exceedingly invigorating, for it is

written, "The joy of the LORD is your strength." The more happy we can be in our God, the more thoroughly will the will of Christ be fulfilled in us, for He desired that our joy might be full.

The more you rejoice in God, the more you will recommend true religion. The more full of delight you are, especially in trying times, the more you will glorify God. Few things are at the same time both pleasant and profitable, but holy joy and peace possess that double excellence.

Fullness of spiritual joy is both the index and the means of spiritual strength. I commend this state, therefore, to you. I trust that we shall not be so unbelieving as to be afraid of heaven's own consolations, nor so unreasonable as to decline to be filled with joy and peace when they may be had by believing.

Now, notice, that it is *a state which has varieties in it*. It is joy and peace—and it may be either. Sometimes the believer is full of joy. Joy is active and expressive. It sparkles and flashes like a diamond. It sings and dances like David before the ark. To be filled with holy joy is a delicious excitement of the sweetest kind. May you often experience it until strangers are compelled to infer that the Lord has done great things for you.

Nevertheless, the flesh is weak, and might hardly endure continuous delight, and so there comes a relief, in the lovely form of peace, in which the heart is really joyous, but after a calm and quiet manner. I have seen the ringers make the pinnacles of a church tower reel to and fro while they have made the joy bells sound out to the full, and then they have played quietly, and let the fabric settle down again. Even thus does joy strain the man, but peace comes in to give him rest.

In this peace there is not much to exhilarate, not much which could fittingly be spoken out in song, but silence, full of infinite meaning, becomes the floodgate of the soul. You seek not the exulting assembly, but the calm shade and the quiet chamber. You are as happy as you were in your joy, but not so stirred and moved.

Peace is joy resting, and joy is peace dancing. Joy cries hosanna before the Well-Beloved, but peace leans her head on His bosom. In the midst of bereavements and sickness we may scarcely be able to rejoice, but we may be at peace. When faith cannot break through a troop with her sacred joy, she stands still and sees the salvation of God in hallowed peace. We work with joy and rest with peace.

What a blessing it is that when we come to die, if we cannot depart with the banners of triumphant joy all flying in the breeze, we can yet fall asleep safely in the arms of peace. How pleasant a life do they lead who are not the subjects of any great excitement, but maintain calm and quiet communion with God. Their heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. They neither soar nor sink, but keep the even tenor of their way.

It is a state of mind, then, which admits of variations, and I really do not know which to choose out of its two forms. I should not like to be without joy, and yet methinks there is something so solid about peace that I might almost give it the preference. I think I love the quiet sister the better of the two.

That famous text in Isaiah, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" looks somewhat like an anti-climax. It would appear to place the greatest first, and then the less, and then the least, but it is not so.

The mounting up with wings as eagles must always be more or less temporary. We are not eagles, and cannot always be on the wing. The Lord renews our strength like the eagles, and this shows we are not always up to the eagle's mark.

Well, though it is a grand thing to be able to fly, it is a better thing to be able to run. This is more like a man, involves less danger, and is more practically useful. It is good to run, but even that is not the best journey pace. It is best of all to walk, for this is a steady, persevering pace to move at. "Enoch walked with God."

This is God's pace, who even when He makes clouds, His chariot is described as walking upon the wings of the wind. We read of the walk of faith, and the walk of holiness, for walking is practical, and is meant for every day.

You young people, I like to see you run, and I am glad to take a turn at it myself, but after all, steady, sober, unwearied walking is the best. To walk without fainting is a high experiential attainment, and is

none the less valuable because at first sight there seems nothing striking about it. Walking is the emblem of peace, and running and mounting up with wings as eagles are the emblems of joy.

But beloved, *this blessed state is also a compound*, for we are bidden at one and the same time to receive both wine and milk—wine exhilarating with joy, and milk satisfying with peace. "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." You shall lie down in the green pastures of delight, and be led by the still waters of quietness.

Our heart may be as an ocean, gloriously casting upward its spray of joy, and lifting up its waves on high in delight, as one claps his hands for joy. And yet, at the same time, as down deep in the coral caverns all is still and undisturbed, so may the heart be quiet as a sleeping babe. We see no difficulty in understanding both lines of the hymn—

"My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing."

We rest and praise—as trees hold to the earth by their roots, and perfume the air with their bloom—as morning comes without the sound of a trumpet, and yet awakens the music of birds by its arising. Ours is no froth of joy—there is solid peace beneath our effervescence of delight. Happy are we to have learned how to combine two such choice things.

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

"But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made His glories known,
These fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone."

Now, I want you to lay stress on the next observation I am about to make, because I began with it, and wish to leave it upon your minds as the chief thought. *The joy and peace here spoken of are through believing.* You come to know the God of hope through the Scriptures, which reveal Him. By this you are led to believe in Him, and it is through that believing that you become filled with joy and peace.

It is not by working, nor by feeling, that we become full of joy. Our peace does not arise from the marks, and evidences, and experiences which testify to us that we are the sons of God, but simply from believing. Our central joy and peace must always come to us, not as an inference from the internal work of the Spirit in our souls, but from the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and the promises of God contained in the Scriptures.

We must continue to look out of self to the written Word wherein the Lord is set forth before us, and we must rest in God in Christ Jesus as the main basis of our hope—not depending upon any other arguments than those supplied by the Bible itself.

I will show by and by how we shall afterwards reach to a hope which flows out of the work of the Spirit within us, but at the first, and I think permanently and continuously, the main ground of the surest joy and truest peace must come to us through simply believing in Jesus Christ.

Beloved, I know that I have been converted, for I am sure that there is a change of heart in me. Nevertheless, my hope of eternal life does not hang upon the inward fact. I rest in the external fact that God has revealed Himself in Jesus as blotting out the sin of all His believing people, and as a believer, I have the Word of God as my guarantee of forgiveness. This is my rest.

Because I am a believer in Christ Jesus, therefore I have hope, therefore I have joy and peace, since God has declared that, "He that believeth in him has everlasting life." This joy can only safely come

through believing, and I pray you, brothers and sisters, never be drifted away from child-like faith in what God has said.

It is very easy to obtain a temporary joy and peace through your present easy experience, but how will you do when all things within take a troublous turn? Those who live by feeling change with the weather. If you ever put aside your faith in the finished work to drink from the cup of your own inward sensations, you will find yourself bitterly disappointed. Your honey will turn to gall, your sunshine into blackness—for all things which come of man are fickle and deceptive.

The God of hope will fill you with joy and peace, but it will only be through believing. You will still have to stand as a poor sinner at the foot of the cross, trusting to the complete atonement. You will never have joy and peace unless you do. If you once begin to say, "I am a saint, there is something good in me," and so on, you will find joy evaporate and peace depart. Hold on to your believing.

Come back to the text again, and you will find that *this joy and peace, according to Paul, are of a superlative character*, for, after his manner, Paul makes language for himself. He often manufactures a superlative by the use of the word "all," as here, "Fill you with all joy." He means with the best and highest degree of joy, with as much joy as you can hold, with the very choicest and most full of joys in earth or in heaven. God give you the joy of joys, the light of delight, the heaven of heaven.

Then notice *the comprehensiveness of his prayer*. "All joy"—that is joy in God the Father's love, joy in God the Son's redeeming blood, joy in God the Holy Ghost's indwelling, joy in the covenant of grace, joy in the seal and witness of it, joy in the promises, joy in the decrees, joy in the doctrines, joy in the precepts, joy in everything which comes from God, "all joy."

Paul also requests for them all peace—peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with one another, peace even with the outside world, as far as peace may be. May you all have it.

And now observe the degree of joy and peace which he wishes for them—"that ye may be *filled*"—and that by the God of hope Himself. God alone knows our capacity, and where the vacuum lies which most needs filling. A man might try to fill us and fail, but God, who made us, knows every corner and cranny of our nature, and can pour in joy and peace till every portion of our being is flooded, saturated, and overflowed with delight.

I like to remember David's words, "The rain also filleth the pools," for even thus does the Lord pour His grace upon the thirsty soil of our hearts till it stands in pools. As the sun fills the world with light, and enters into all places, even so the God of hope by His presence lights up every part of our nature with the golden light of joyous peace, till there is not a corner left for sadness or foreboding. This is Paul's prayer, and he expects its answer to come to us *through believing*, and in no other way.

He does not ask for mysterious revelations, dreams, visions, or presumptuous persuasions. He seeks for us no excitement of fanaticism, nor the intoxication of great crowds and pleasing oratory, neither does he seek that we may imagine ourselves to be perfect and all that kind of lumber, but that we may be happy through simply believing in the God of hope as He is set forth in the Bible.

I take this Book of God into my hands and say, "Whatsoever things are written here were written for my learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures I might have hope." I do have hope, for I believe this Book, and now I feel joy and peace welling up within my soul.

Brethren, receive you this benediction! O Lord, fulfill it in the heart of every believer before You.

III. Now thirdly, WHAT DOES THIS LEAD TO?

"Lead to?" says one, "Lead to, why surely it is enough in itself. What more is wanted?" When a man brings you into a chamber vaulted with diamonds and amethysts, and pearls and rubies, with walls composed of slabs of gold, and the floor made of solid pavements of silver—we should be astonished if he said, "This is a passage to something richer still."

Yet the apostle directs us to this fullness of joy and peace through believing that we may by its means reach to something else, "that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." How often do great things in the Bible, like the perpetual cycles of nature, begin where they end and end

where they begin? If we begin with the God of hope, we are wound up into holy joy and peace, that we may come back to hope again, and to abounding in it by the power of the Holy Ghost.

First, I notice that the hope here mentioned arises, not out of pure believing, but out of the joy created in us by our having believed. Hope led to faith, faith to joy, and now joy back again to hope. This is the story as far as I am concerned—I began with believing. I felt nothing good within me, but I believed in what God revealed concerning Himself. I saw nothing, but I believed on the ground that God said so. I soon had joy and peace in my soul as the result of my faith, and now, because of this joy and peace, I hope and expect further blessings.

Though still resting my soul upon the finished work of Jesus, yet hopes do arise from the work of the Holy Ghost within me. The God who has given me by believing to rejoice that the past is all atoned for, and who has given me peace because my sins are forgiven me for His name's sake, will not dash that joy by revoking my pardon.

He who has given me joy, because He has quickened me, and has, up to this day, preserved me, will not, I am persuaded, forsake me, and suffer me to perish. Surely He will never leave me, after having done so much for me. My present joy gives me a hope, most sure and steadfast, that He will never turn His back upon me. If He did not intend to bless me in the future, He would not have done so much for me in the past, and He could not and would not be doing so much for me now.

This hope, you perceive, drinks its life at the fountain of personal experience. The first hope we ever know comes together with our simply believing the Word of God. But now there arises in us an abounding of hope, which is the outgrowth of the inward life. Fear is banished now, for we have looked to the God of hope, and found acceptance in the Beloved. Now, therefore, in the chamber where fear formerly dwelt, hope takes up its residence—azure-winged, bright-eyed hope makes its nest there, and sings to us all the day long.

The text speaks of an abounding hope, and if you consider for a while you will see that very much hope must arise to a Christian out of his spiritual joy. If you have once been in the bosom of Jesus, and known His joy, your hope will overflow. For instance, you will argue—He has pardoned my sin, and made me to rejoice as a forgiven man—will He condemn me after all? What means the pardon if, after all, the transgressions are to be laid upon me and I am to suffer for my sin?

The believer has great joy because God's love is shed abroad in his soul, and he argues that if the Lord loves him so intensely now, He will not undergo a change, and remove His love. He who in love redeemed me by the blood of His Son will love me eternally, for He changes not.

Is not this sound argument? Grace enjoyed is a pledge of glory. Redeeming love is the guarantee of preserving love. Acceptance with God today creates a blessed hope of acceptance forever. Faith and joy within the soul sing to one another somewhat after this fashion,

"His smiles have freed my heart from pain,
My drooping spirits cheer'd;
And will He not appear again
Where He has once appeared?

"Has He not form'd my soul anew,
And caused my light to shine;
And will He now His work undo,
Or break His Word divine?"

Perfectly assured of the Lord's goodness, the man confronts the future without fear, and in due time approaches death without dismay. Since the Lord has begun to make us like His Son, we conclude that He will perfect His work, and raise us from our graves in the full image of our Redeemer. He has given us already to know something of the joy of Christ, who prayed that His joy might be fulfilled in us that our joy might be full, and therefore we are sure that we shall bask in the joy of heaven.

We will, therefore, lie down in peace and rest when our last day on earth shall come, for we shall rise with Jesus—of this we have no doubt. We shall enter into the joy of the Lord, for we have entered into it already.

Thus out of peace and joy there grow the noblest of human hopes. Little enjoyment, like a weak telescope, gives us but a faint prospect, but great enjoyment is an optic glass of marvelous power, and brings great things near to us. Joy and peace are specimens of heaven's felicities, and set the soul both hoping and hungering.

Having tasted of the grapes of Eshcol, we believe in the land which flows with milk and honey, and long to rest under the boughs which bear such luscious clusters. We have seen the celestial city far away, but the light of it is so surpassing that we have longed to walk its golden streets, ay, and have felt sure of doing so ere long.

He who has seen a little of the light of the morning expects more eagerly the noonday. He who has waded into the river of joy up to the ankles, becomes eager to enter it still further, till he finds it a river to swim in, wherein the soul is borne along by a sacred current of unutterable delight.

Up, you saints, to your Pisgah of joy, for there you shall have a full view of Canaan which stretches before you, and is soon to be yours. Whatever your joy and peace may be now, you ought to see at once that they are meant to be only a platform from which you are to look for something brighter and better still—you are filled with joy and peace that ye may abound in hope.

Our apostle rightly adds, "*by the power of the Holy Ghost*," for I take it that this is partly mentioned by way of caution, because there are hopes arising out of inward experience which may turn out to be fallacious, and therefore we must discriminate between the hope of nature and the hope of grace.

I have heard young people say, "I know I am saved, because I am so happy." Be not too sure of that. Many people think themselves very happy, and yet they are not saved. The world has a happiness which is a fatal sign, and a peace which is the token of spiritual death. Discernment, therefore, is needed lest we mistake the calm before a storm for the rest which the Lord gives to those who come unto Him.

Hope may arise out of our joy, but we must mind that we do not fix our confidence in it, or we shall have a sandy foundation. The solid grace of hope which abides and remains in the soul is born of faith through the Word. It is only *the abounding* of hope which comes out of our joy and peace.

Let me begin again with you lest there should be any mistake. You hear of the God of hope, and are led to believe in God as He is revealed in Scripture. So far all is plain sailing. If you believe in the Christ of God, you obtain joy and peace, but these are results, not causes. You must not begin with your own joy and peace, and say, "My hope of salvation is built upon the happiness I have felt of late." This will never do.

Begin first of all with the Scriptures, not with your feelings or fancies, nor with your impressions and excitements—these will be ruinous as a foundation. Begin with God revealed in Christ Jesus as the God of hope, and let your joy and your peace come from your believing in Him. Then afterwards it will be fair enough to draw arguments for the aboundings of hope, but it must be by the Holy Ghost. That hope which is worth having, which springs from inward experience, must still be wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and I will show you how it is natural that it should be so.

We ask ourselves, "How shall I hold on to the end?" The answer will be suggested by another question, "How have I held on till now?" I feel now a joy and peace because my faith has been sustained until this day—how have I been preserved hitherto? By the Holy Spirit. Then He is able to keep me to the end.

I feel joy and peace already, because in some measure sin is conquered in me. How will my soul be yet further sanctified and sin cast out of me? Why, by the same Holy Spirit, who has already renewed me.

I have had an earnest of what He can do, and therefore I have an abounding of hope of what He will do. My joyful experience of His indwelling, comforting, illuminating, and sanctifying power leads me

into a full and confident assurance that He will carry on the work of grace, and present me complete at the last great day.

Beloved, go forward, keeping close to the groundwork of faith, and you will feel joy and peace in your hearts. At such times give full play to your hope. Expect what you will. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Expect great things, expect things beyond all expectation. Your largest hopes shall all be exceeded. Hope, and hope, and yet hope again, and each time hope more and more, but the Lord will give you more than you have hoped for. When you enter His palace gates at the last, you will say, "My imagination never conceived it, my desires never compassed it, my hope never expected it. The glory surpasses all. The tenth has not been told me of the things which God had provided for me."

"Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 15

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—291, 738, 721

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.