

Text: Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Outline:

1. The Source of Hope
2. The Results of Hope
3. The Place of Hope
4. The Measure of Hope
5. The Helper of Hope
6. The Time of Hope

Hope is the best anti-aging virtue. Hope moves you forward and gives you a reason to get out of bed. Rick Warren said, “You can live weeks without food, days without water, minutes without air, but you can’t live five seconds without hope.” If you’ve got no hope you’ve got nothing to live for. And if you are not excited about life soon the grave will pull you down, literally.

The Bible says man was created from the dust of the earth. And Job says when we die we return to the dust. Hence the burial expression, “From dust to dust.” A year or so before my earthly father passed I called him up, “Hey Dad, how are you doing?!” His answer demonstrated humor and theology. “I’m keeping my head above ground, but that’s getting harder all the time.” Now Dad is buried. He was a man of the soil and his body is returning to it.

Aging involves a gravitational pull. We are being pulled down to the earth, our posture bends and our muscles sag.

Can we stop or delay the aging process? The answer may be found in the skies.

In 1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright flew their Flyer for 12 seconds in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Ever since that first flight aviators have been perfecting the art of overcoming gravity.

Can those of us in the throes of aging learn anything from these pilots? They, after all, are masters at beating gravity.

There are four laws of aerodynamics and the two most important ones are lift and thrust. Lift gets you up off the ground and thrust propels you forward. Lift is created by the shape of the airplane’s wing creating a vacuum above the wing, this helps the airplane go up. And thrust is essential too, either a propeller or jet engine moves the plane forward.

In the spiritual realm, as it pertains to aging, faith can be compared to lift. Trusting God lifts us heavenward. Hope on the other hand is similar to thrust. Hope is what moves us forward. The Bible says those who hope in the Lord shall mount up with wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31).

What is the difference between faith and hope? Faith is God-focused and hope is future-focused. Faith and hope are similar but not the same. One moves you up, the other moves you forward. We know what faith is, it's trusting God. But what exactly is hope? Hope is "confident expectation of good." Faith gets you ready to die, but hope gives you a reason to live.

In my itinerant ministry, visiting scores of churches every year, I see Christians with faith but some have lost their earthly hope. Oh sure they hope to go to heaven in the afterlife, but their outlook in this life is dim and fading. Some are growing old prematurely.

How do you get hope? Where does it come from? Why do some people have hope and others don't?

Bill Gaither penned these lyrics, "I just feel like something good is about to happen. I just feel like something good is on its way. He has promised that He'd open all of heaven, and brother it could happen any day!" Does that describe you? I'll be honest, my outlook is rarely that sunny. But I'd like it to be and I am working on improving my attitude. Perhaps that is why I am writing these words. Living in a godless culture can squash our hope and rob our joy.

In Romans 15:13 we find six helpful insights about hope, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

1. The Source of Hope

"Now may the God of hope" Paul knew that God is the only One Who gives true hope. Pity the person who only puts their hope in worldly things. The stock market, the weather, your health and your extended family will inevitably disappoint.

Christians have hope based upon what Jesus accomplished. In the preceding verse, Romans 15:12, Paul mentions the "root of Jesse" which is a code name for Jesus Christ. It refers to Jesse's downline descendent, Jesus the Messiah. Paul declares, "in Him the Gentiles shall hope." Jesus gives us confidence that one day the wicked will be judged, the righteous will be rewarded, Satan will be condemned, God's kingdom will come and Jesus will be universally worshiped. Yes, God fills our hearts with incredible hope. The flimsy things of this world are unreliable and disappearing, but God gives us real hope and this hope is an anchor to the soul.

2. The Results of Hope

What does it look like when you've got hope? Are there signs or indicators that reveal the presence of hope? Sure there are and Paul mentions two, "joy and peace." Just think of the child on Christmas Eve, nose pressed to the window, looking up into the dark sky, trying to see Santa and his reindeer. That's a cute picture of hope even if it is a false hope.

When a person has hope they experience joy and peace much like the Proverbs 31 woman. "She laughs without fear of the future." Does that describe your outlook?

In the 1960's the Beach Boys wrote a song, "Don't Worry Baby." Here are their words that describe how they faced the future. "Well it's been building up inside of me for oh I don't know how long. I don't know why but I keep thinking something is bound to go wrong." The tune may be catchy, but the message is depressing. But then again, when you don't have hope, you don't have joy and peace.

3. The Place of Hope

Where do you get hope? Can you purchase it? Is hope in an amusement park? Where do you find hope? Paul said it is "in believing."

The Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest commenting on this says, hope is literally "in the believing, in the sphere of the act of habitually believing." So here is where you find hope. It is in the space between an open Bible and the heart of a believing saint. In that gap between the printed word of God and the believing Christian is where hope grows. Faith comes first, then out of faith comes hope. "The scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled" (Romans 15:4). After you focus on God with faith, then you can focus on the future with hope.

Remember this divine order 1) scriptures, 2) faith, and 3) hope. But be forewarned, hope evaporates. That's why you need to replenish your faith regularly from the word of God. Look downward into the pages of your Bible often, then look upward to God with faith, and finally look forward to tomorrow with confident hope.

A personal and disturbing question is, how regular is your Bible intake? And when you read scripture do you meditate on it and allow your faith to grow? This is where hope comes from, your place of believing.

4. The Measure of Hope

In Romans 15:13 Paul wrote about hope so "that you may abound with hope." The word "abound" means more than enough, superabundance. Like if I asked you to buy me a hamburger and when you stretched out your hand for my money I gave you a \$100 dollar bill. I know we've got inflation but hamburgers don't cost that much! But that is the way God gives, He is generous. James 1:5 tells us when we lack wisdom we should ask God for it

because He “gives to all liberally.” That’s the way God is, He always gives more than enough.

When my wife was a college student she worked at Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina. Her job was to dip ice cream at the burger joint. Her line of customers was always the longest, because she was (and still is) extremely generous. That’s the way God is . . . He really piles it on and this is certainly true in the realm of hope.

5. The Helper of Hope

Paul said we can “abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” When Jesus told His disciples that He would be going away He explained that it was actually good because He would send a Helper to walk alongside them. This Helper more commonly known as the Holy Spirit is our companion cheerleader. When the world bombards us with toxic negativity, the Holy Spirit encourages us and lifts us up by reminding us of God’s promises.

6. The Time of Hope

Finally, when do you need hope? Now or later? Why not have hope at both times! Both eternal life and abundant life are possible.

In Romans 15:13 Paul prayed for the church in Rome to have hope “now.” They were in tough times. Nero was a mad-man emperor and Christians were being persecuted. They needed hope, not just for when they died and went to heaven, but they needed hope to get through their First-century challenges. Now, we also need God’s hope to help us face our Twenty-first century challenges. Fortunately, God’s hope is not in short supply. God has plenty of hope to share with us as we trust Him and receive aid from the Holy Spirit.

This is how you stay young.

You get hope from God.

His hope fills you with joy and peace.

He comes when you believe His word.

God will give you more hope than you need.

The Holy Spirit reminds you of God’s word so you have hope.

And, God’s hope is available today -- right now!

但願使人有盼望的神，因信將諸般的喜樂、平安充滿你們的心，使你們藉著聖靈的能力大有盼望。

大綱：

1. 盼望的源頭
2. 盼望的結果
3. 盼望的所在
4. 盼望的尺度
5. 盼望的幫手
6. 盼望的時間

盼望是最好防止衰老的美德。盼望會推動你向前走，並給你起床的理由。華理克曾經說：「沒有食物你可以活幾週，沒有水你可以活幾天，沒有空氣你可以活幾分鐘，但沒有盼望你就活不了五秒鐘。」如果你沒有盼望，你就沒有什麼活下去的理由。如果你對生命不再感到興奮，那麼墳墓就彷彿要把你拖下去了。

聖經說，人是用地上的塵土被創造的。約伯說，當我們死後，我們就會歸回塵土。因此，當埋葬一個人的時候，有俗語說：「從塵土到塵土」。我的父親去世前一年左右，我打電話給他。我問他：「爸爸，你好嗎？」他的回答顯示出他的幽默感和神學：「我儘量把頭保持在地面以上，但我發現好像越來越困難。」現在爸爸已經被埋葬了。他是一個來出於塵土的人，他的身體又回到塵泥。

衰老涉及地心引力。我們被拉向地面，我們的姿勢彎曲，肌肉下垂。

我們可以阻止或延緩老化過程嗎？答案或許可以在天空中找到。

1903 年，奧維爾·萊特 (Orville Wright) 和威爾伯·萊特 (Wilbur Wright) 在北卡羅來納州用他們的羽鷹號 (Kitty Hawk) 駕駛飛行了 12 秒。從此，飛行員一直在改善克服重力的藝術。

我們這些正在經歷老化的人能從這些飛行員身上學到什麼嗎？畢竟，他們是克服重力的大師。

流體動力學有四個定律，其中最重要的兩個是升力和推力。升力讓你離開地面，推力推動你前進。升力是由飛機機翼的形狀產生的，在機翼上方形成真空，這有助於飛機上升。推力也很重要，螺旋槳或噴射引擎推動飛機前進。

在屬靈的事情上，就衰老而言，信心可以比喻為提升。信靠神會將我們引到天堂。另一方面，盼望類似於推動力。盼望是我們前進的動力。聖經說，那等候耶和華的人必如鷹展翅上騰（以賽亞書 40:31）。

信心和盼望有什麼不同？信心是以神為中心，盼望是以未來為中心。信心和盼望相似但不相同。一個讓你向上，一個讓你前進。我們知道什麼是信心，就是信靠神。但盼望到底是什麼？盼望是「對美好事物充滿信心的期待」。信心讓你準備好迎接死亡，但盼望給你活下去的理由。

在我的巡迴事工中，每年都會拜訪許多教會。我看到有信心的基督徒，但有些人已經失去了活在世上的盼望。哦，當然，他們盼望離開世界後能去天堂，但他們今生的前景是暗淡和褪色的。有些人太早變老了。

你如何獲得盼望？它從何而來？為什麼有些人有盼望，有些人卻沒有盼望？

比爾蓋瑟 (Bill Gaither) 寫下了這些歌詞：「我只是覺得有美好的事情即將發生。我只是覺得有美好的事情快要來臨。祂承諾會打開整個天堂。弟兄，這隨時都可能發生！」你能認同這個描述嗎？老實說，我的心情很少那麼陽光。但我盼望如此，我正在努力改善我的心態。也許這就是我寫下這些話的原因。生活在無神論的文化中會粉碎我們的盼望並剝奪我們的喜樂。

在羅馬書 15:13 中，我們找到了關於盼望的六個有用的見解：但願使人有盼望的神，因信將諸般的喜樂、平安充滿你們的心，使你們藉著聖靈的能力大有盼望。

1. 盼望的源頭

「但願使人有盼望的神...」。保羅知道神是唯一能給人真正盼望的源頭。那些只把盼望寄託在世上事物的人是可憐的。股市、天氣、你的健康和你的家人都不可避免地會令人失望。

基督徒的盼望是基於耶穌所成就的一切。在羅馬書 15:12 中，保羅提到「耶西的根」，這是耶穌基督的代號。它指的是耶西將來的後裔，彌賽亞耶穌。保羅宣稱：「外邦人要仰望他」。耶穌給我們信心，有一天罪人會被審判，義人會得到獎賞，撒但會被定罪，神的國度會來臨，耶穌會受到所有人的敬拜。是的，神讓我們的心中充滿了難以置信的盼望。這個世界上那些脆弱的東西是不可靠的、逐漸消失的。但是神給了我們真正的盼望，而這個盼望是靈魂的錨。

2. 盼望的結果

當你懷著盼望時，會是什麼樣子？是否有跡像或徵兆表明盼望的存在？當然有，保羅提到了兩個：「喜樂和平安」。想想聖誕節前夕的小孩，鼻子貼在窗戶上，仰望黑暗的天空，幻想看見聖誕老人和他的鹿。這是一幅可愛的盼望圖景，即使它是一個虛假的盼望。

當一個人有盼望時，他會體驗到喜樂與平安，就像箴言 31 章中的女士一樣。「她想到日後的景況就喜笑。」這是否描述了你的心境？1960 年代，海灘男孩寫了一首歌曲「寶貝別擔心」。以下的歌詞形容他們如何面對將來。「嗯，它在我心中早已存在，哦，我不知道多久了。我不知道為什麼，但我總覺得肯定會出問題。」曲調可能朗朗上口，但傳達的訊息卻令人沮喪。但話又說回來，當你沒有盼望時，你就沒有喜樂與平安。

3. 盼望的所在

你從哪裡得到盼望？可以購買它嗎？盼望是在遊樂園嗎？你在哪裡尋找盼望？保羅說這是「因信」。

希臘學者肯尼思·烏斯特 (Kenneth Wuest) 對此評論說，盼望字面上的意思是「在相信中，在習慣性相信的行為範圍內」。所以這裡就是你找到盼望的所在。它位於一本打開的聖經和一位相信的聖徒的心之間的空間。盼望成長的地方，是在神的文字與相信的基督徒之間的空間。信心先出現，然後信心帶來盼望。「...叫我們因聖經所生的忍耐和安慰可以得著盼望。」(羅馬書 15:4)。當你懷著信心專注於神之後，你就可以懷著盼望專注於未來。

記住這個根據聖經的次序：1) 經文，2) 信心，3) 盼望。我預先提醒你，盼望會消失。這就是為什麼你需要不斷地從神的話語中補充你的信心。經常向下閱讀聖經，然後滿懷信心向上仰望神，最後滿懷盼望地向前迎接明天。

一個令人不安的個人問題是，你多久讀一次聖經？當你閱讀經文時，你會默想它並讓你的信心增長嗎？這就是盼望的所在，你的信心的根據。

4. 盼望的尺度

保羅在羅馬書 15:13 中談到盼望，「使你們大有盼望」。「大有」這個字的意思是綽綽有餘、非常豐盛。假設我請你幫我買一個漢堡包，當你伸手要我的錢時，我給了你一張 100 元的鈔票。我知道我們有通貨膨脹，但漢堡包沒有那麼貴！這就是神給予的方式，祂是慷慨的。雅各書 1:5 告訴我們，當我們缺乏智慧時，我們應該向神祈求，因為祂「厚賜與眾人」。神就是這樣，祂所賜的總是綽綽有餘。

當我的太太還是大學生時，她在北卡羅來納州的里奇克萊斯特會議中心工作。她的工作是在漢堡店賣冰淇淋。她的顧客總是最多的，因為她過去（現在仍然）是非常慷慨。神就是這樣。祂真的把祝福厚厚地賜給我們，在盼望這方面當然也是如此的。

5. 盼望的幫手

保羅說我們可以「藉著聖靈的能力大有盼望」。當耶穌告訴門徒祂要離開時，祂解釋說這實際上是件好事，因為祂會派一位幫手與他們同行。這位幫手通常被稱為聖靈，祂是我們的啦啦隊長同伴。當世界用有毒的負面情緒轟炸我們時，聖靈會提醒我們神的應許，從而鼓勵我們、振奮我們的精神。

6. 盼望的時間

最後，你在什麼時候需要盼望？現在或再晚一點？為什麼不同時抱著盼望呢！永生和豐盛的生命都是可能的。

在羅馬書 15:13 中，保羅祈求羅馬教會「現在」就有盼望。他們正處於艱難時期。尼祿是個瘋子皇帝，基督徒受到迫害。他們需要盼望，不僅是他們死後去天堂的盼望，而且他們需要盼望來度過第一世紀的挑戰。現在，我們也需要神的盼望來幫助我們面對二十一世紀的挑戰。很慶幸神的盼望並不缺乏。當我們相信神並接受聖靈的幫助時，神就會與我們分享許多盼望。

這就是你保持年輕的方法。

你從神那裡得到盼望。

祂的盼望使你充滿喜樂與平安。

當你相信祂的話時，祂就會來。

神會給你比你需要的更多的盼望。

聖靈提醒你神的話語，讓你有盼望。

而且，神的盼望今天就可能獲得 – 現在就可以得到！