

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Message 1

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Reading: Romans 8:18-25

INTRO: Our subject is hope for the future. In our men's church meetings we have been going through Romans. In our last meeting we just got to chapter five. Turn there. Paul has proved in Romans 1-3 that all of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are sinners and therefore come short of the glory of God and therefore will go to hell, unless they get saved. This salvation has been provided by the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then in chapters 4-5 he deals with how a sinner can be justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ. And in 5:1-2 he says this:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

True justification by faith in Jesus Christ brings about peace with God. That means we no longer fear being condemned to hell by our sin. We are confident that no matter what the future holds, if we should die, we will go to glory. That is our blessed assurance when we are truly justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that we have access into this grace, that is, into this assurance of salvation in which we stand.

And when we have this assurance, it says that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God! Now, this is what should happen to every believer who is truly saved. He or she should rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And here is the question before us now: What is this hope in the glory of God? As I prepared for the devotional that day I thought, "Could it be that this is the hope of the glory that will be revealed in the believer?" Or, "Is this the hope of the glory we will see in God?" Is Paul speaking about our glory in the future, or is he speaking about the glory we will see in God?

As I pondered this question, I did what I usually do and that is to come to some conclusion myself before I look at the commentaries. So after I concluded that I thought it would be the glory that would be revealed in the believer I looked at the commentaries. Albert Barnes said it will be, and I quote:

"The glory that God will bestow on us. The word glory usually means splendour, magnificence, honour; and the apostle here refers to that honour and dignity which will be conferred on the redeemed when they are raised up to the full honours of redemption; when they shall triumph in the completion of the work; and be freed from sin, and pain, and tears, and permitted to participate in the full splendours that shall encompass the throne of God in the heavens."

Listen now to John Gill:

"...by the "glory of God," is not meant the essential glory of God; nor that which we ought to seek in all that we are concerned, and which we are to ascribe unto him on the account of his perfections and works; but that everlasting glory and happiness which he has prepared for his people, has promised to them, and has called them to by Christ, and will bestow upon them; of which he has given them a good hope through grace; and in the hope and believing views of which they can, and do rejoice, even amidst a variety of afflictions and tribulations in this world."

William Hendriksen says, and I quote: "This 'glory of God' indicates the marvelous salvation God has in store for those who place their trust in Him" (152).

Ellicott says, "That glory which 'the children of the kingdom' shall share with the Messiah Himself when His eternal reign begins" (223).

Here is what true justification does: It gives rise to the hope of the glory of God. So we ask, what is hope and which hope is in view?

For the most part, we people are caught up with what we can build up in this life, but are we caught up with what we can build up in the next life? I propose that the glory that awaits each believer in the future is directly dependent on the life

lived here on earth. So I give this first message to prepare us to look at this subject in the next message.

I am giving this message by way of reminder of some prophetic things you are mostly familiar with, but I give it in preparation for the next message where I will share some things I believe you will not be familiar with and I give them for the purpose of encouragement.

I. DEFINITION OF HOPE

We begin with a definition of hope. Let me begin by pointing out a few things about hope.

1. Hope always has to do with the future. We never hope for things that are past.

2. Hope is raised by an anticipation of good things to come.

3. Third, hope can keep you going when everything else is going wrong. All else going wrong is what our world looks like today, but we should be rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

4. Fourth, hope is contrasted with fear. When we expect something bad in the future, it gives rise to fear.

Today, the world is filled with the possibility of bad things to come. Today, the one global fear that is causing concern is the corona virus. Those who are not fearful of the virus, are fearful of how they will manage with their jobs and plans. It strikes fear into the hearts of mankind. Our world is filled with talk of the virus and our world is filled with fear. We are told you may suffer with this virus, or you may be carrying it and you may be the cause of the death of others, like your parents or grand-parents. And time and again fear spikes!

5. Fifth, we need to understand the difference between faith and hope. 1 Peter 1:21 says that our faith and hope are both in God. The Christian's faith is based on facts from the past. The Christian's hope is based on the promises of God for the future.

6. Sixth, a legitimate hope must have a good foundation. Listen to Hebrews 11:1. It says:

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This verse is often used to show what faith is but it does not show us what faith is. It shows us what relation faith has to hope. Now consider the word *substance*. The original word is *hupostastis*. *Hupo* means under. Doctors and nurses use *hypo*, hypodermic needles. These are needles that get UNDER your skin, no pun intended. *Hypo* means under. The word *stasis* comes from the word *to stand*. Faith is that which stands underneath hope. It is the foundation of hope. Our faith in Jesus Christ is that which forms the foundation of our hope.

7. Seventh, here is how I define hope. Hope is an anticipation with pleasure for something that has a possibility of or a promise of happening in the future. An expectation of evil brings fear. An expectation of good brings hope.

Now our faith gives rise to a hope that should carry us over and beyond corona virus and all other things to come. In the time we live in right now, and in the days to come, which look like they may well get considerably darker, we need to learn to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!

And how can we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God? That is what I want to seek to show us something of in these two messages. You see, hope is built on some information of good things that according to Bible prophecy are coming in the future. Since hope is based on something good, our hope is not based on the bad things the Bible says are coming. There are plenty of those. Our hope is based on the good things the Bible says are coming for Church age believers, and for them only. And these good things are found in the promises of God.

II. THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

A. The Backdrop

1. Where we are today

In this message I want to give us a brief backdrop to the hope of the glory of God. We'll look first at that which we call the rapture. So let me show you first of all where we are in time and what lies before us in the next while. To understand the Christian's hope it is helpful to understand what this world will yet experience, things we may well find terrifying. But in the midst of that, we are given the hope of the glory of God.

So let me give you a brief outline of what is coming. We begin with where we are today. Turn now to Matthew 24. Just before Jesus was crucified He gave the teaching of Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21. We'll read Matthew 24:1-8:

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 *"All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

The time described in verses 4-8 is the time before the tribulation begins. From verse 9 and on we have a description of the tribulation time. That is a time period in which God will pour out His wrath on a world that has become corrupt beyond anything that has ever happened before. Now what I want to show you is what it will be like just before the tribulation begins. How long it will be like this we do not know, but what is certain to me, is that we are in the time of verses 4-8, and what does it say it will be like?

Well, from verse 4 we learn that it will be a time of religious deception. Many will be deceived. Is today a time of religious deception in the Church? Without any doubt, it is. Then we learn it will be a time of national disruption and upheaval. But this is not the tribulation. This is leading up to the tribulation. That is where we are today.

Then it is a time of natural disruption and upheaval. The earth is acting strangely. There are famines and pestilences and earthquakes. Yes we could add fires and hurricanes and floods. The earth is acting strangely. It is preparing for something.

Who would have thought that a pestilence, which is what the corona virus is, would have such an impact on the whole world? None of us could foresee this, but here it is in verse 7. This is one pestilence. We have had others like aids and sars and I have heard there is another one coming.

And you will say, "Well, all of this amounts to that which is evil and tends to fear, not hope." Well, that is just the beginning. Verse 8 says this is the beginning of sorrows. The word is birth pangs. They get worse and worse and so verses 9-31 then describe the tribulation. This time will be much worse. And if you want further details, you

might read Revelation 6-19 and you will see how horrible it will be.

Yes, all of this is in expectation of evil and it is enough to bring fear. According to Luke 21, in that time men's hearts will fail them for fear of those things that come upon them. We are not there yet, but it is not far ahead of us.

2. The rapture

Now the good news! This is the hope of the believer! What a huge contrast to the tribulation is promised to the Christian! You see, the tribulation is the time of God's wrath. God is going to pour out His wrath on the whole world. But the Apostle Paul taught in a number of places that before verse 9 of Matthew 24 takes place, and before Revelation 6 begins, God will catch the Christian out of this world! In the NT it is called the *catching up*, or the blessed hope of the Christian.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1. Paul had taught the Thessalonians all about this. And now they were eagerly awaiting deliverance from the wrath to come. By the way, we should be looking with anticipation to the great catching up. So look at verses 9-10:

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

At that time already they were expecting the wrath of God to come soon. And they were waiting with outstretched necks for Jesus who delivers believers from this wrath.

Now go to chapter 4. We'll read verses 13-18:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Here we have the promise of God to be caught up out of this world to meet Christ in the air and be with Him forever! And it is not after the tribulation, because these are words of comfort. This is how the Lord delivers the Christian from the wrath to come. Somewhere in the time of Matthew 24:4-8, this event happens.

Paul continues this subject in chapter 5 so we read on beginning in verse 8:

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

God did not appoint us to wrath, the tribulation, but to obtain salvation from the tribulation through our Lord Jesus Christ! And again, these believers are exhorted to comfort one another with this teaching. You see, this is the believer's hope and it is based on the words of Scripture.

What happens when the believer is caught up? According to the Thessalonian 4 passage, all the Christians who died after Christ ascended and all those who are alive when He comes for them are caught up to heaven. I want you to look at another wonderful promise of God in John 14.

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

The believer is caught up to glory, and here he will dwell in those places Christ prepared for them. And in this experience in heaven, an event will transpire that is pictured in the NT as the wedding between Christ and His bride, the Church. What will happen in those seven years in glory?

I propose to you that every believer that enters glory with Christ will receive glory according to how they lived their life on earth. We go now to 1 John 3:2. John writes:

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

How do we rejoice in hope of the glory of God? We trust in the promises of God. The true believer is a child of God now. Oh there are all kinds of believers. There are many struggles among believers. There are liberal believers and conservative believers. There are believers who are strong in some points and weak in others. There are those who are weak and ready to die, and there are those who are accomplishing great things for God. But if they are truly real believers, we know that when He appears each one will be like Him.

You see, now we see Him by faith. Paul says we see through a glass darkly. But in that day we will look at the actual Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead and has a physical body. We will see Him as He is. And we will all see some likeness in ourselves to Him! This likeness happens in the process of sanctification. Do you wonder how you will look like Jesus? It will be revealed when we see Him as He is in real life!

I ask you, on a wedding day when all is as it is supposed to be, what glory is there for the bride? She is the center of attention! It is a day like no other day in her life. I ask you, what will it be like for the bride of Christ? I have no doubt that this memory will go with everybody that makes up that bride for all eternity. They will never forget this day even though before them lie days that are glory on top of glory.

Let me just mention that the word "mansions" in this passage is unfortunate. These are simply dwelling places; they are not permanent dwelling places and there is a good reason for that. Now for those who listen to these messages and these things are new to you, let me recommend our messages on sermonaudio.com/mecl. There are several series. There is a series called, "Prophecy." Another is called: "Pilgrim's Progress, the Journey of the

Church Age Believer." Another is called, "In My Father's House."

I believe the place Jesus went to prepare are temporary dwelling places. The believer is there from when he dies, or when he is raptured, until the end of those seven years. Then even greater things lie before the true believer!

What glory will the believer experience in heaven during his stay in this heavenly city, this New Jerusalem? We are given very little information on that. What we are given more information of is the tribulation that happens on earth at that time. But we know it is the time of the wedding. The Jewish wedding sometimes lasted for seven days. This wedding will take seven years. What all will take place? We are not told. But since it is likened to a wedding, from that we know it will be glorious! We are told the Church will be caught up. What we do know is that the wedding takes place and we are told how it ends. This is found in Revelation 19.

3. The beginning of the millennium

We want to look now at what happens right after those seven years. At the end of those seven years Christ comes down to this earth with His new wife, the Church. At that time He puts an end to all sin and sinners on earth. After this He will then set up His millennial kingdom. You can read this in Revelation 20:1-6. Here, OT Scriptures abound in information. This millennial kingdom is the kingdom the Jews of the OT patiently waited for. And it is here that the believer's greater glory is achieved. The wedding has been phenomenal. But the time now entered will be 993 years longer than the Church's time with Christ in heaven. The glory for God, for Christ, and for the every believer when they come back down to earth I do not know how to describe. So far I only get a glimpse of it.

I find that it is in the millennium that the believer's hope in the glory of God rises to greater heights. It is at this time that we learn the most about the believer's realization of the hope of the glory of God. All this was to begin shortly after the Messiah came. But the Jews rejected the Messiah, and it was then that the Church age entered.

Now I want you to consider something here. If the rapture happened today, and we think it will be soon, then only around 7 years go by until the millennium begins. Let us say the tribulation began in October of 2021, then as early as October of 2028 the millennium would begin.

So I ask, how close to the time of the tribulation is this world? This last week in the *World Net Daily* was an article titled: "Australian official says 'New World Order' will define COVID practices.'" It seems they expect the new world order to begin before covid is over! When you hear the words, "New World Order" in biblical terms you must think of, "One World Government." When the one world government arrives, and it will, the tribulation will begin. Are we that close? Well, if the rapture is truly near, then we are.

Turn now to Matthew 19. Let us look now at how Jesus spoke of the millennium in the Gospels. It was this kingdom that was spoken of many times. We begin in verse 23:

23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The kingdom referred to here is the millennial kingdom, the kingdom the Jews had been waiting for.

Verse 25:

25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"

28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus speaks here of the regeneration. This regeneration is the new birth of the earth. This is the kingdom to come. And Jesus speaks here of the time when He comes. It is the time when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.

Jesus then says that they, the apostles, who are part of the Church, would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel! That is phenomenal! This will take place in the millennial reign. Here is the hope of the glory of God for the Apostles. Almost, if not all the apostles lost their lives for their ministry for Christ. And here, like Joseph of old, they will be vindicated and set on high and glorified, especially of the nation of Israel, but also in the eyes of the whole world.

But that is not all. Jesus then says:

29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

Here is a special blessing for all Christians of the Church age who have left possessions and family and have ministered for Christ during the Church age.

We go now to Luke 19. We are nearing the time of the crucifixion. The disciples were convinced that Jesus would now set up His kingdom. They did not know that their fellow Jews would see to it that Christ is crucified in just a few days from now. We begin in verse 11:

11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

They were just sure that the kingdom would be set up just any day now. They had no idea what lay ahead, though by now Jesus had told them several times that He must die. So because they thought the kingdom would begin very shortly, we go on in verse 12:

12 Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'

14 "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

Christ speaks here prophetically that He will be leaving earth. His fellow Jews hated Him and would not have the kingdom now. So Christ would leave for a long time and then return. Verse 15:

15 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be

called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

The nobleman represents Jesus Christ. When He returns He now reckons with the servants he had instructed on what to do with the money He had given them.

Verse 16:

16 "Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

17 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

18 "And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'

19 "Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

21 'For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

22 "And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

23 'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'

25 ("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')

26 *'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.*

We learn very clearly that the Lord is a capitalist, not a communist. What we have here is that those of the Church age are being rewarded. Now note how they are rewarded. They are set over cities, according to how they have prospered with the money that had been given to them. This is how it will be for all those of the Church age when the millennium begins. They will be honored, they will glory in the hope they rejoiced in while they lived.

Things as little as giving a cup of water to a believer the Lord calls "a little one" will in no wise be forgotten (Matt. 10:42). If that is true, what about mowing grass at the church; attending a meeting; teaching SS; training your children spiritually. Keeping your children from harmful things and many other things. Sure, many of these are little things. Add up 20 years. Add up a life-time, and when God is glorified in His saints in the future, all of this will become manifested to all others around them. Christ will be glorified in it all and the believer will experience this glory with Him!

In Matthew 16:27 Jesus put it like this:

27 *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*

Here is what I am proposing. After the Church comes back to earth with Christ and the millennium begins, every believer of the Church age will be rewarded according to what they have done in their life-time. I believe that the reward of the least of believers will be glorifying to an extent beyond our fondest dreams. There is no doubt that some will lose rewards, but even then to be raptured and

then later to return and to be rewarded will make what is endured in this life not worthy to compare with it.

When Jesus returns in the glory of His Father, the Church will share in His glory. I tend to think that every believer's glorified body will in some way reflect what they have been like on this journey through life. Revelation 3:21, speaking to the Church age believer says:

21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

So let me put together what we have so far. During the time Jesus set out in Matthew 24:4-8, the time I believe we are in right now; the rapture is prophesied to happen at any time. When it does, very shortly thereafter the tribulation begins.

When seven years have passed, the Church will come down with Christ to rule on earth with Him. I see this as taking place when Christ comes down on the white horse and the Church follows on white horses. It is described in the NT as the Church age believer appearing with Christ in glory.

When we appear with Him at this time, it will be a most glorious event, one in which we have a part. At that time the world has reached the highest point of evil ever. The antichrist and the false prophet will have gathered with the armies of the world to do away with Jesus Christ. Christ is coming down from heaven with His new wife, the Church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. What will follow, with respect to glory, I do not know how to put into words. But when you read the last part of Revelation 19, there it is described. And I ask, in the midst of all we see happening around us, are we rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?

Turn to Revelation 19. We want to now read a Scripture that shows us how the tribulation ends,

and how the millennium begins. We begin in verse 11:

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

18 "that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by

which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

I view this as the battle of Armageddon. This is when Christ who is our life appears and we appear with Him in glory. The time frame in which this happens is a most phenomenal time! I picture it as Christ on His white steed, and the Church following and it looks like a white cloud, because the Church is dressed in white and they are on white horses. On earth, TV cameras are rolling. The antichrist is scrambling to destroy Christ when He comes down. It is an unprecedented moment. And where is the Church? Riding in the glory of Jesus Christ. No doubt, they will be in bands according to what they have been rewarded with for their life's service to Christ.

CONCL: I ran myself out of time to make a proper conclusion. But let me just say that I believe we are in Matthew 24:4-8. Covid, among many other things, are clear signs of this. That means in a very short while the new world order will come into being, and when it does, what will happen on this earth has no equal in the past. But the blessed hope of the believer is to be caught up before that time begins.

Then the Church will be with Christ in heaven for 7 years, and tribulation will be upon the world for that time. The Church age believer will experience glory. The world will suffer. Then Christ and the Church will return to earth, and I see large fulfillment of the hope the believer had here in this life being fulfilled in that time. The hope of the glory of God is the subject for the next message.