

The Holy Spirit and Hope

Scripture Focus: Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-27

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he did so to remind them that even though they were experiencing much suffering and persecution, there was every reason as believers in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to be hopeful. These words of scripture were, of course, written for us as well. Yet what we know is that fear creeps in and sometimes causes us to doubt there is any reason to be truly hopeful. This is definitely not a new challenge. Hopes and fears are oftentimes found side by side. Consider the familiar carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*:

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

Above the deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.

The hope and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

(Text written by Phillips Brooks in 1867, an American Episcopal priest, and published in 1868.)

When Phillips Brooks wrote the lines to this beautiful Christmas carol, America was dealing with the lingering effects of being torn apart by the Civil War (1861-1865). It is estimated that as many as 650,000 people lost their lives in that terrible conflict and in April of 1965, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. How easy it would have been to fear the future and how hard to be hopeful.

Notice what the Apostle Paul emphasizes in Romans 5:

- We should ***boast in our hope of sharing God's glory***. (5:2b) This is a godly boasting!
- Be mindful that - ***Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope***. (5:3-4)
- Be confident that - ***...hope does not disappoint us***. (4:5a)

And all of the above is true - ***...because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us***. (5:5b) The gift of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to have this confidence!

The Apostle Paul goes on to write about the Holy Spirit and hope in Romans 8:

- The Spirit dwells in those who believe in Christ. See Rom. 8:9-11.
- We have NOT been given a spirit of fear but rather a ***spirit of adoption***, meaning we are a member of God's family and joint heirs with Christ, with all the rights and privileges that go with family status! (8:15-17)
- Even though we have ***the first fruits of the Spirit*** we ***grown inwardly while we wait for*** [full] ***adoption, the redemption of our bodies.***" (v. 23) We wait even as creation waits ***with eager longing.*** (v. 19a)
- Patiently waiting is never easy. ***But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*** (v. 25) This means believing by faith with hope for what God has promised, gives us confidence as we wait.

In this time of waiting, Paul immediately points out in these verses a profound truth. Although we will suffer in some form in this life, and are weak, we can still hope even when we do not know how to pray. The Holy Spirit who is at work in us, will intercede for us.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

- In what ways might the season of Advent be a good time to ask the Holy Spirit to help us exam our personal fears, especially regarding the future, and remind us of the foundation of our hope that we have in Christ Jesus?
- What is it about the birth of Christ that helps us come to terms with our hopes and fears?
- What are our hopes and fears for the days ahead; for ourselves, our church, our community, our country, the world?

Be certain that because we have been created in God's image and a member of God's family, is in our DNA to hope! Praying the Holy Spirit helps us to be a hopeful people. ***Verse to Remember: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (Romans 15:13)