

# Romans 5:1-5 "The Gospel and Suffering"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself.

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, you have made many very precious promises and guarantees to us. And we confess before you, Father, that we keep forgetting your promises, and we don't take you at your word. And so, Father, we know that you know our condition, and we thank you for once again reminding us of these promises. We ask that your Holy Spirit would bind these promises and these truths to our heart, that we might live out of them in our day-to-day lives.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So I have bad news for you today as a congregation. The scripture text that I'm going to be looking at today is very, very, very abstract and like sort of an internal theological discussion that's really very boring to most people because we're going to talk about suffering and how to have hope and suffering. That was supposed to be a joke. Nobody laughed. There you go. We had one person laugh.

[ 2 : 25 ] There you go. So that's what the text is about today. It's about suffering. It's not the only thing that the Bible says about suffering and about having hope, but it is an important thing that the Bible says. It's part of a series of biblical teaching. So we're going to look at one part of how the Bible helps us to understand suffering and how to live in the midst of suffering with hope. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Romans chapter 5, verses 1 to 5. Romans chapter 5, verses 1 to 5.

And it begins like this. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. I could just pause here. Okay. Sorry. I know there's a handful of grammar nerds here. So this is for you. I think it's really neat that this is like a double therefore. Like therefore and since are sort of the same thing grammatically, very similar. So it's as if it says therefore, therefore. I chuckle at it. I don't know. I'm the only one. My wife often doesn't understand why I chuckle at things, but I chuckle at that. It's just sort of neat, like a therefore, therefore. It also means it's pretty important, actually, with the therefore since or therefore, therefore. Anyway, say it again. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. So he's now saying we have been justified by faith sort of summarizes what's been going on in the previous chapters. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So he's not going to jump right into suffering. It's going to come up in a moment. And this is how he begins. And so what on earth does he mean by this? What does it mean by justified and by faith and all of that? Well, here's what's sort of going on. It's been a truism in certain sectors of Christianity for the last 50, 60, 70 years to make a simple statement about how Jesus and following Jesus and being a Christian is completely different than all other ways. So, for instance, Buddha teaches the way. He teaches the four noble paths that he's got as a process of his illumination and meditation, etc., etc. Muhammad got his message. Believe it or not, the Quran teaches that Muhammad got his message from jinn and angels. Like jinn are

like demons.

But Muhammad doesn't get his message directly from God. That's what the Quran teaches, but from jinn and angels. And Muhammad points to the way in terms of how you're to live if you want to be made right with God. And the prayers and the, you know, the Kabbalah and, I mean, you know, the circling around the thing and all of that stuff. But Jesus and all of the different spiritualities and religions of the world all involve saying, this is the way. Look over there. I know the way. It's over there that way. And Jesus is completely and utterly unique. He doesn't say that. He says, I am the way.

Every other way points to the way. Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. John chapter 14, verse 6. So, Jesus is the way. We have to be in Jesus to actually be on the way, to actually make our way to God. And so, when it says here, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, and we've been looking at this the previous weeks, what this means is that we trust ourselves into union with Christ. We take Christ at his word. We believe and trust that God, when he says certain things, when Christ says certain things, we take him at his word. We trust him. And it's a personal type of trust in the person and his message that he's trustworthy. And it's just like all relationships of deep trust, that you not only, in a sense, open yourself up to the other person, but the other person opens themselves up to you. And that is a tiny little bit of an image or a picture of what happens to us with God, that when we trust God at his word, trust Jesus at his message, trust this message that if we trust him, that Jesus will, has done everything that needs to be done for us to be made right with God, we enter into union with him, enter into him, and he enters into us. And so, in a sense, in a very, very real sense, a mystical sense, but a true sense, not just mystical in terms of woo-woo-woo, but like, you know, it's reasonable, but at the limits of our reason, that we now enter into him. So, the death he dies, he dies our death.

[ 7 : 05 ] The punishment he takes is our punishment. His resurrection becomes our resurrection, and it's because he is the way, and we have faith in and into him and his words.

And it says here, but therefore, since we have been justified by faith, and I haven't talked about this very much, and justified sounds a bit weird. And, you know, some of you who know from other church traditions, they always talk about the justified bit and never the righteousness bit. But here's the thing. All the way through the book of Romans, when you see the word justified or righteousness or made right, it's the same word in the original language. And what the different translations are trying to get at are two different important aspects of this singular idea. And maybe to get at it would be to describe that, like a coin. And if Jesus is the coin of great price, and I, passing on the message of who Jesus is, I give you the coin. And that's not just me giving it, it's the Holy Spirit giving you the coin, and you receive this coin. And if you look on one side of the coin, it said, made right with God. And if you look on the other side, it says, justified. So, what are these two ideas getting at? These two ideas are getting at this. The fundamental idea is that you're now made right with God, right? So, it's as if you're in, you know, problems with an organization or whatever, and you go and you deal with it. At the end of the day, okay, things are all, they're right now, it's all right. Things are settled. It's all right. It's right. And that's what it's saying, is what God does for us in the person of Jesus is what makes us right with God. And the word justified implies an official proclamation and declaration. Another way to put it would be that that, so that's on one side of the coin, George is now right with God. And you look at the other side of the coin, and it says that George is justified, which means that there has been a formal declaration, proclamation, and guarantee from God himself that you are right with him and are his forever. It's a formal public proclamation, declaration from God himself, guarantee from God himself that George is right with him, Daniel is right with him, Deborah,

Jono, Andrew, they are right with him forever. And you use a type of picture language to make it like a bit of a story. It will be as if when I finally appear before God face to face in heaven, and I go in heaven, and there's a big, big sign. And on that big sign, it says, on November 5th, 1972, I, God, proclaim and declare that George, and guarantee that George is right with me from all eternity. And we all go there. And I can go with Laurier and Andrea, and Andrea can, hey, look, there's my sign over there. And Laurier can, hey, look, there's my sign over there, you know? And I look, and there's my sign over there. And that's, it's a formal public guarantee and proclamation. And so sometimes when the Romans is translating the word as justified, it could also be translated as righteousness-fied, or righteousness-fied, which of course doesn't exist as a word. But it's always

the same word. It's just trying to capture these two different elements of the same reality and precious truth, that that is what God has done. When I put my faith and trust in Christ, I take God at his word, and it's not just believing him, but believing into him, and he comes into me, and this union with Christ occurs, and that is now this new reality that I am in, that you are in, when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. So it's a formal public declaration and guarantee from God himself that you are right with him for all eternity. And so that's this profound, profound truth. And now what Paul is going to say is, if this is true, listen to it again, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, he's now going to paint three different pictures, or another way to understand it as three different metaphors, or another way to understand it as three different narratives, or stories that we tell that flow from this profound truth, part of the benefits or new reality that we live in when we put our faith and trust in Christ in such a way for saving faith. You know, sometimes you use the word metaphor, and people might not know what that is, but the fact is that we tell ourselves stories all the time, right? So, you know, somebody ignores us at the coffee shop, and we tell ourselves a story. Oh, they ignored us because they don't like us, right? We're always telling narratives about things that go on. Or, you know, that person's, you know, smiled at me, oh, that means this. Or, you know, my boss emailed others and didn't email me, and we have narratives about it. So it's what Paul is going to do now is there's this profound truth, put your faith into Christ, Jesus is the way, and you are now made right with him. And just so you know, in heaven, there was a formal public proclamation declaration that you are right with God forever, all eternity, because you have put your faith into Christ. And there's sort of three different narratives or metaphors that help you to understand a little bit more what that means in terms of the richness of what Christ has accomplished. So let's just read this in verses one and two. We'll read verses one and two. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, here's the first one, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Here's the second one. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And here's the third one. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The three sort of different narratives or metaphors as to this, that part of this big reality, right? Justified by faith, it's a tiny word, but it's a huge reality. And so, you know, Romans is going to help keep stretching our minds and stretching our hearts and stretching our knowledge and our imagination with these, you know, profound truths. And so the first one is this, right, is that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And what you need to understand about that is this peace with God is objective, not subjective, but it has subjective consequences. The peace with God is objective, not subjective, but it has subjective consequences. This is such a beautiful idea. Like so much of the advice that we give each other and secular advice, and there's a lot of secular advice, which is very, very helpful. I learn lots by reading novels and stuff like that, and reading different, you know, columnists and op-ed people and bloggers and sub-stack people. I learn lots from lots of different people. And it's all very precious. But a lot of it is at a very superficial surface type of level. And this is something very, very profound. God cares about surfaces. He gave me one. He gave you one to the outside of your body.

[ 14 : 40 ] But he cares for all of you, all the way into your very, very, very, very depths. And so what this is saying is that, you know, when you have peace with God, when I say that peace with God is objective, not subjective, this is really opening up to a very profound truth. Because the Bible teaches, like our world basically teaches that the way to understand things is that life is one dang thing after another. They wouldn't say dang, they'd say another word, but I can't say that in church.

And I shouldn't say it generally, by the way. Life is one dang thing after another, and then you die. Right? But the Bible says that's not the right way. That's not the real world. If you think the world is one dang thing after another, then you die, you're the one living in unreality. Because that's not the real world. The real world, there is a creator who's created all things. You know, it's very, very interesting. A lot of meditation techniques that are designed, like a sort of a lot of, if you were to Google how to have peace, what you get is a lot of, I guess one way to put it is secular Buddhist thought, a bit of some aspects of Buddhism with some therapeutic stuff, and maybe a little odd Christian idea sprinkled all into something.

But one of the things about it is that they all emphasize, and the new interest in Stoicism, they're all emphasizing that you deal with the givenness of the world in different ways.

Right? Mindfulness is trying to separate yourself from your experience in your life and being able to view things and see the givenness of things so you can live in the present. But here's the problem

with all secular, Buddhistic type of thought. They emphasize givenness, not realizing that if you have givenness, you have a giver. You can't have givenness without a giver. And they want to just have the givenness without ever talking about the giver. This is deep in that it says you have objective peace with God because you have peace with the giver, the creator and sustainer and redeemer.

So the peace you have with God is eternal and transcendent and imminent because it is with the giver and it's objective. Now it's going to have hopefully part of growing in Christ, and we're going to talk about this in a moment. It starts to have some types of subjective consequences in terms of how you feel.

[17:13] But it's not actually talking about feeling peace. It's actually being at peace with God because of the fact that you are justified by faith into Christ. And then the second thing, and this is important, it's in all of the ideas. It's in the idea of justified. It's in the idea of peace. It's in the next two ideas. And it's really, really important. You know, I've talked to several people over the last year or two, and it gets to the point about me talking about Christianity, and they come up and they just say, you know what, I could never do that. I'm not like you. I couldn't do this. Like, I can't have that type of faith, and I can't have these things happen to me. I just can't accomplish them. It's a very, very common reaction to hearing about the Christian faith and this message. But the message here, and it's seen in the original language of this next phrase, that it's always a matter not of me climbing, but of God carrying me.

If my relationship with God was connected to me being able to climb up towards him, boy, am I in trouble. I would fail every day, and I'd start, I'd fail even trying. Like, I'm in big trouble. But if it's being carried, that's a completely different truth. And what you need to understand, it's going to be very important when you get into the suffering thing as well, is that at the end of the day, the primary way to understand the world is that God is the giver that we're receiving gifts from him. That's what we talked about a lot in Ecclesiastes. It's the pattern of salvation as well. And it's not a matter of me climbing or accomplishing. If it's a matter of me climbing and accomplishing, I can look down my nose at other people, and I can feel superior. But if it's in fact that I can only be carried, and that every single person can only be carried, I have absolutely no grounds to ever boast in anything about myself. And I can be like in Spurgeon's image that all I am is one beggar telling another beggar where to find free bread or to change the image. I am one hopeless, failed beggar telling other hopeless, failed beggars where you can go to have God carry you into his presence. That's all we can do. He carries. I don't climb. And we see that in this next little bit. It's more in the original language. It's not here in the English. It goes like this. Verse 2, through him, or in him, or by him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

So you are carried by God himself into the presence of God himself to stand without fear of him and with full access to him. This is a very profound truth. By the way, just as an aside, it's one of the reasons why most of the early church and Protestants don't believe that you should pray to saints. Like in heaven, I'm going to be standing beside Mary and Paul and John.

equally standing beside them. And this is profound, profound truth. You get to stand. When you are justified with Christ, you actually now, as far as God is concerned, you can come into his presence and you can stand. And you don't stand on your own accomplishments. You stand in grace. And you have full access to him to pour out your heart in your troubles, in your sorrows, pour out your heart about his glory. There's nothing too small. I didn't tell you that. You know, I mentioned how when I went to Tucson, I had all this terrible experience. And rather than getting there at 11, you know, 15 in the afternoon, I got there 11, 15 p.m. And I called in advance because I'm going to a retreat center. And I wasn't sure if they'd even have the doors open for me. And so they said they'd leave the door open for me with my keys. And it's like a retreat compound. So that, you know, accommodation is scattered all over. And everything is dark. And I pull up. I've never been there before in my entire life. Everything is dark. And it's like 1130 at night, quarter to 12. Everything is dark. I get my key and my map to my room. And I go outside. And everything's dark. I can't see where anything is. And I'm worried about rattlesnakes because I'm a wimp, okay? But they have rattlesnakes there. So, and I'm wandering around.

I'm trying this. I'm trying that. I couldn't figure out what to do. And like, I'm just, I'm dumb in two senses. I'm just sharing with you in case any of you are dumb. I said, God, I need your help for this to find the room. That's what I, I literally said, God, I need your help. And then almost instantly, it was as if God said, look at the map. And I looked at the map. And there's a north sign.

[ 22 : 33 ] And then I think, my phone has a compass. I get out my compass. I realize that all of my attempt to look was completely backwards. And I look, and then I see outlined by the stars, a tiny shape of a roof.

And I find my building. You have access to faith for the most trivial things. And for the really, really, really big things in life. And it's a little bit like, you know, for Louise and me, when our grandchildren come to visit us, and not just our grandchildren, but our children, it's like, we're so glad you're here. Like, we're so glad you're here.

And that's what God is like with us. When you're justified by faith in Christ, you have full access. He brings you into his presence, and you stand on grace. And he's so delighted you're there to pour out your heart to him and to praise him.

Like, isn't that, isn't that so beautiful? Like, I just think it's so beautiful. Like, we don't know that and believe that enough. And then the next thing, the third thing is this. So we'll read verse 2 again.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace which we stand. And that's the second thing. And the third thing is, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And this is something which Protestants don't think about enough, is that, in a sense, you were made to glory in his glory and glory into his glory. You were made, I don't have the points up because I just got my points sort of sorted out this morning. I didn't have time to email them.

[ 24 : 10 ] Maybe I'll put them up for those who are interested. But you were made to glory in his glory and glory into his glory. Like, you see, all three tenses of salvation here. You're made right with God when you put your faith and trust into Christ. When you have peace with God and access to God and rejoice in him, that means you're becoming more like Christ, sanctification and glorification.

We were made to glory in his glory and glory into his glory, to be filled with his glory, and to be in the glory of the triune God without embarrassment. And that's what we're made for.

That's what heaven will be like. And it's just to picture this, the glory of God and the glory of the new creation. And we see him and glory in him. And that glory fills us, shapes us, directs us.

It is the narrative of our lives. And that is for all eternity. And there is no end to the beauty and splendor and glory of the triune God. Amen. Isn't that just fantastic?

Now, there's probably lots of questions you've had about all of this. But one obvious question would be, and I can just think of one of the people that I've shared the gospel with several times, and I know what his response would be with this, would be this. Okay, George, I mean, if that's true, why the heck have you suffered the way you've suffered different times?

[ 25 : 40 ] And why is it that I know a couple of Christians and they've suffered? And why is it that I saw a news report? They must have been looking at a U.S. news report because Canada hardly talks about the number, the hundreds of Christians that were killed in Nigeria, northern Nigeria over Easter, being ignored by the world. But it's a terrible thing going on there. Why does that happen to Christians if all that's true?

That's a great question. In fact, the Bible now is going to go to it. Look at what Paul does next with verses 3 to 5. So, 3 to 5, not only that, what he's just talked about, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. I'll read it again.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

So, what's going on here? So, the first thing is the word suffering is a good word. Some of you who like the King James Version of the Bible will notice that it's translated as tribulation. They're both good words. And in fact, in some ways, you need both words to understand the idea in the original language. The problem with just using the word tribulation is it can make people feel like Christians are like Superman, and as long as there's no kryptonite, everything just bounces off of you, you know? And suffering can be problematic because it makes it look like just purely a personal thing that doesn't have anything going on with your life. So, that's the two ideas together here in the particular word. And what it's saying is that Christians do have times when they have huge financial setbacks. They sometimes have to deal with famine, persecution, and war. They have to deal with the breakup of marriages. They have to deal with their kids getting sick or their spouse getting very,

very sick. They have to deal with unemployment. They have to deal with running into debt and financial problems. I don't have to go on. I can go on if you want, but those things all happen to Christians.

And it's not then that verses 1 and 2 of Romans are false because those bad things happen. I'm going to talk about it more in the weeks to come, but all the way through this, the Bible has this idea of the already not yet. And the already not yet means it is already the case that God has put a sign in heaven publicly declaring that George is right with him and he publicly proclaims it and he's guaranteeing that this will be true of me for all eternity. And it's already, in fact, completely and utterly true in the heavens and in reality that I, because of that, have access to God to pour out my heart to him. These things are all completely true. But God has not made me like Jesus yet.

[ 29 : 06 ] It's already true, but it's not yet true. I still have to deal with the sin and problems and hard times in my life. Why is that the case? The only quick answer that I have is that I think that if God, the second you gave your life to Jesus, God just instantly raptured you up to heaven, like that was to happen, then two types of things would happen. A whole pile of people would want to say the right words so they get out of this mess into heaven, not because they want God or they know their unworthiness, but just merely to get the goodies. You know, it'd be as almost as if, if you find out that somebody's a billionaire and you want to divorce your current spouse to marry that person, not because you love that person, but because you'd like to have a billion dollars and you don't actually care about that person. The other type of thing is that salvation would be reduced to like the right code or buzzwords or spell, and we'd be spending our time trying to say the right words. Was it, no, grace, then faith, then no, no, it's grace, then no, no, right? And maybe that's why. We'll find out in heaven why. But that's the case. And so when it says here, not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, it's not calling us to be thankful for the sufferings that we're having, the tribulation that we have. We shouldn't say, oh God, I am so, so, so thankful that they laid me off at work and that my dog died and my car broke and my wife is thinking of leaving me.

No, you don't say thank you to God for those things. That's not what it is. And rejoice as well, it's not a command to feel a particular emotion. It's not God saying, okay, feel joyful. It's not that at all. Rejoice, another word for rejoice is boast and it's to glory. And it's a type of speech.

It's an internal speech or an external speech, which emphasizes the promises and the glory of God. In a sense, what it's saying is that all of what I described for the most part of this sermon in Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, you do that when times are really good. It's important to do it when times are really good because it will ground you. It will make you have an attitude of gratitude about what's going on. It will help to make you more humble and not have you be completely and utterly full of yourself and obnoxious. But it's also important when things are going really, really, really hard. Like, gosh, if you think about it, when on earth do you really need to understand that you can stand in the presence of God with full access to him to pour out your heart than when you are in deep trouble. That's when you really need to do it. I mean, you need to do it 24-7, 365 days a year. But how do you face these things without knowing that you have a Father in heaven who loves you, who when you come to him in prayer, it's like grandchildren coming to our house to see Louise during the day and she has the biggest smile in the world. She's so delighted. And that's God with you and me when we come into his presence to pray. We need it even more. We always need it. And we don't spend our time thanking God for the terrible things that are going on with us. We have full eyes. We look at them. And this isn't a recipe to get numbed to things or to ignore things, but it's in fact how you frame the world and get the grit. You see that word encouragement? Another way to understand those of you who like the two versions of the movie, true grit, you know when it says here, verse 3, not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope. Those two words, endurance and character, that's just like that young girl in those movies saying, I'm looking for a man with true grit.

True grit. Who wouldn't want to have true grit? And so the Bible isn't saying there's this naturalistic process that happens automatically with suffering. It's saying that when you are in suffering, all that's been described in verses 1 and 2 are still the way that you are to carry yourself. It is to remember what Christ has done for you on the cross. It's to remember that you have a Father in heaven who loves you. It is to pour out your heart in prayer about the small details and the big details. It's about being honest with him about what you've contributed to your troubles and repent and ask for amendment of life. It is for him to help you in these things. It is to remember that the end

of your story is not going to be that you are a failure, but that you in fact are going to be in his glory and into his glory, and that's the final word about you. I mean, one of the terrible things that the devil does to Christians is say to them, George, I mean, this can happen to me, by the way, not because I'm George, but because I have to come to church. Like, I'm the pastor. Like, you know what I mean? Like, I can't call in to Josiah and say,

Josiah, I've been really, really bad this week, and I'm really screwed up and depressed, so I'm going to give church a pass for a while until I've—I'm sort of stuck, right? I have to come. But I understand the feeling, by the way, let me tell you. But it's, you know, one of the things that the devil does to people is that he says to them, oh, gosh, you know what? You can't go to church. Boy, you can't go to church. Look at the state of your marriage. Look at the state of your finances. Look at the—look at this. Look at this. Like, you are screwed up. You're a screw-up. And he might even say another word, you know, about it. You're a screw-up. But that's—that's not church. We should have a big—when we get a church building, maybe we should have a big sign that said, a place for screw-ups, losers, rejected, abandoned, completely hopeless. This is your place. Come join us. Because, you see, here's one of the things that we can pray about as a church. It's like we come to God pouring out our hearts in these times of great tribulation. And we'll be honest. You know, when you're having a real hard time like that, it can sometimes be, if you're at all like me when I've had hard times like this, you can hardly put three words together in a prayer. And that's one of the things that we can pray that we will be the type of church where you can come on a Sunday morning during coffee, you say to a person,

[ 35 : 52 ] I am so screwed up and I am so down, I can hardly put two words together in a prayer. Could you pray for me? You know, there's that image in the Old Testament of there's a battle and Moses, when he has the staff above his head, the Israelites are winning and when it falls, they lose. And so Joshua, and I can't remember the other fellow, come and prop up his arms. That should be a picture of what our church should be like. We should pray that we can be the type of church, not that people screw up and then they don't think they can come until they're unscrewed up. And by the way, good luck with that.

The fact of the matter is, everybody's way more screwed up than you realize, right? Everyone looks normal until you get to normal. Everybody looks unscrewed up until you get to know them. Then you realize, boy, they're screwed up in some areas, right? I mean, that's just true, right? I know that some people say churches should never say things like that, but then that's just churches telling you not to walk in the real world rather than just being, this is telling us we're having trouble. And you come to church and you say things like that and we pray that we're the type of church where we'll say, I would love to lift your arms when you can't pray. I will pray for you.

You don't have to tell them the details. You don't have to use prayer requests as a form of gossiping. If a person really wants to know the details, just say, I think I'll have somebody else pray for me.

You can just share, I'm really going through a hard time. Could you pray for me? And pray that we're the type of church that that can be shared and that we will pray for each other in such a place. You know, a lot of times in the world, I have to wrap this up, failure and being screwed up is treated as radioactive. You know, when I left the diocese, we had our legal struggles and left the diocese and all of that. And they didn't know, I think in the diocese, most people didn't know that the congregation walked with me, but they just knew that I was unemployed. That was from their point of view. And when you have that type of conflict and from their point of view, I was screwed up. I think I was actually the healthy one, but they would view me as screwed up.

You know, out of the 100 and, you know, counting retired clergy, I don't know, 150, 200 clergy in the diocese, guess how many people contacted radioactive George? One.

[ 38 : 21 ] One person. And asked if he could bring me groceries. We all know that in life. You're not radioactive if you screw up. We want to be a place where you're not radioactive.

And people, when they screw up, they think it's their fault. Or they look down, people look down their nose at you, they pity you, they jump on you, they laugh, they kick you, and all of those types of things. But the Bible here is saying something completely and utterly different.

That as you try to embark and live a Romans 5, 1 and 2 life in the midst of your troubles, look at the end of all of this in verse 5. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us. God is not thinking George is radioactive. God is not shaming me. God is not belittling me. God is not diminishing me.

God is not calling me names. I come into God's presence and say, Lord, I need your help. And he helps me to stand. And he builds within me not something that I can do, but true grit. And his love is being poured into my heart and into yours. Not castigation and condemnation, but his love is poured into your hearts.

[ 39 : 42 ] Isn't that just so beautiful? Like if you're here and you haven't given your life to Christ, like wouldn't you like that to be true? Wouldn't you like that to be the true story of the real world?

And I have good news for you. This is the true story of the real world. Jesus really did live. He really did die. He really did rise from the dead. It's a constant shock to people when they look into the evidence, just how good the evidence is that he really did live, that he really did die and rise from the dead. It really is true. And nobody here is so passed over, so forgotten, so abandoned, so screwed up, so sinful, that me telling you this right now is not a message from God to you.

Come to me. And I will accept you. Trust me at my word.

I am completely dependable. Invite you to stand. Just before I pray, this week in my sermon, I've been saying either morning or evening prayer, the ancient morning and evening prayer thing, maybe five, four, five, six times a week for quite a few years now.

And it dawned on me how morning prayer and evening prayer is structured around making this true. So you either, you know, you confess your sins or maybe do that in the morning, not the afternoon, but you go from the Lord's Prayer. And at the end of the Lord's Prayer, at the beginning of the service, you know, our Father who art in heaven, then it says, And then the next thing is, O Lord, open our lips, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

[ 41 : 38 ] O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Praise ye the Lord. The Lord's name be praised.

This ancient liturgy developed as sort of synthesizing this ancient monastic tradition and bringing the gospel into it and making it that ordinary people like you and me, those guys writing that in 1500, they were smart.

They structured it around the truths of this. Let's pray. Father, you know, some of us really need, all of us need this, Father, but you know some of us are maybe really going through a hard time with a bad health diagnosis or some terrible financial or employment news.

And Father, we ask that you would turn all of our hearts to live out of the great truths of Romans 5, 1 and 2. And we ask, Father, that you would so work in us as a congregation that we, Father, are able to help each other in prayer and lift others up when they're going through hard times.

That you help us, Father, to look at each other with, not with pity or superiority, but with eyes and hearts of compassion, that we might in compassion lift each other up.

[ 43 : 02 ] So, Father, we ask that you would do that wonderful work in our lives. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. And all God's people said, Amen.