

(9) Being certain of the future

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[0 : 00] The reading is taken from Romans, chapter 5, verses 1 to 11, page 1135. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, 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. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

[1 : 31] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. David, thanks very much for reading for us.

Do please keep Romans chapter 5 open, on page 1135 of the Church Bibles, if you've closed it. Page 1135, Romans chapter 5.

Why don't we pray and ask for God's help this morning, as we look at his word together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you very much for all you've been showing us over these last few weeks in the book of Romans.

And we acknowledge our total dependence upon you to teach us and rebuke us and correct us and instruct us and to train us to think and live rightly.

And we pray, therefore, this morning for a deep work of your Holy Spirit in our lives and our hearts. Help us to grasp what you're saying to us. Pray for grace to be changed and transformed by what we hear.

[2 : 38] And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now my aim this morning is to show us why the Christian life is a life of deep rejoicing, regardless of the circumstances and life situations that come our way.

You see, let me ask as we start, what is it you rejoice in? What is it you really find yourself shouting about and getting excited about?

Might be your job. Might be your family. It might be your qualifications. Might be your lifestyle.

Perhaps your fitness, your achievements, the exams you've passed.

Perhaps it's some sport you're accomplished in. Perhaps it's the way you think other people look at you and perceive you. Well, I guess for others, perhaps we struggle to think of much we can rejoice in.

Perhaps actually as we think about our lives, as we perhaps think to the future, actually we're filled with a sense of dread and unease.

[3 : 55] We worry. Frankly, there doesn't seem to be much we can of rejoicing. Well, have a look again at Romans 5, verses 1 to 11, because rejoicing is right at the heart of these verses.

Have a look at verse 2. We rejoice in hope. Verse 3. We rejoice in our sufferings. Verse 11. We rejoice in God.

The Christian life is a life of rejoicing in what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. And where does such genuine Christian rejoicing come from?

Well, have a look at Romans 5, verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. It comes from being justified by faith, which is a summary of everything we have seen in Romans so far over

these last eight weeks.

You'll remember from chapter 1, verse 18, to chapter 320, we saw that no one is by nature right with God. In fact, all of us are by nature in the wrong with God.

[5 : 03] All of us face God's judgment. That is the problem to which Christianity and the death of Jesus Christ is the solution. And then in chapter 321 to 425, we saw that through the death of Jesus, we can be declared right with God.

we can be justified. Not kind of automatically, not blanket for everyone, but received by faith as a gift.

And now in Romans 5, verses 1 to 11, God shows us the implications of that and it is real, genuine Christian rejoicing. You see, we're not simply to be those who kind of understand the gospel, what Jesus has done for us.

We're also to be those who are shaped by it. We're not just to be those who can kind of tick the box and say, yes, I believe that, I understand it in my head. But we are to be shaped by it and moved by it in our hearts and transformed by it.

It is only then that we'll be a church fit for purpose, shaped by the gospel and shaped by what Jesus Christ has done for us. And on the outline, on the back of the service sheet there, you will see four great reasons for rejoicing if this morning we are those who have faith in Jesus Christ and if we are justified by his death.

[6 : 30] Well, for those of us this morning who are looking in on Christian things, we're delighted you're here. I think we'll see this morning that these verses will help us to see what it would look like for us if we said yes to Jesus and if we began the Christian life.

It's always important, isn't it, that we know what something would look like if we said yes to it. And these verses help us to see that far from the kind of popular caricature that actually the Christian life is a life of deep rejoicing, whatever circumstances, whatever life situations come our way.

So the first consequence of being right with God, of being justified by faith is there on the outline. It is peace with God. Have a look again at verses 1 and 2. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

We live in a world, don't we, that is hungry for peace. I take it we see that every day in our newspapers, we see it on television screens, we see it in our own lives. So whether it's hungry for peace in terms of international relations in Libya or Afghanistan or Iraq, whether it's a hunger for peace domestically perhaps in our own home situations, in our own families, or whether it's simply the kind of peace in the sense of wanting to feel at peace with ourselves and a sense of well-being.

[8 : 08] But there is no greater peace than being at peace with God. And that word peace in verse 1 isn't so much talking about a kind of a sense of peace or a feeling of peace, although it will lead to that, but rather first and foremost it is a declaration of peace.

Okay, it speaks of an end of hostilities, of no longer being enemies. So you just turn back to Romans chapter 1 verse 18.

A couple of pages back, Romans chapter 1 verse 18. And we saw, didn't we, back then that all of us are by nature God's enemies.

All of us, if you like, are at war with God. Chapter 1 verse 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

And now we come to Romans chapter 5 verse 1. And the glorious truth is that if we have put our trust in Jesus Christ and his death in our place, if we have faith in him and believed in him and therefore are now justified, why we are right with God, we are at peace with God, no longer hostile to him, he no longer hostile to us as we face the judgment, but instead at peace with God.

[9 : 45] And the implications of that are there in verse 2. It means we now have access to God and can approach God. Now isn't that an amazing thing? We were watching the early evening news the other day, part of it, and there was a reporter speaking in front of 10 Downing Street and just from the kind of right hand of the screen, a very ordinary looking lady kind of walked up Downing Street knocked on the door of number 10, the door was opened and she walked in.

And we were watching this with a couple of the children and they were absolutely amazed. You know, who was this very, very ordinary looking lady who can just kind of walk up to the front door of

number 10 Downing Street and be actually inside?

She wasn't the cabinet minister, she wasn't the head of state, she was just a very, very ordinary person with an extraordinary privilege. Well, can you see verse 2 speaks of the far greater privilege that every Christian believer has access to God himself?

And not only access natives, but a wonderful hope, the hope of the glory of God. That word glory speaks of the kind of weightiness, the brilliance, the godness of God, the fact that God is God.

And that is our hope, the day when God will show the world how brilliant he is, the day when everyone will see that he is indeed God.

[11 : 18] That is our hope, the day when he will usher in a new creation, the new heavens, and the new earth, when everyone will see that he is God, and those who have faith in Christ will be part of it on that day.

Now that word hope speaks of certainty. According to a recent poll, I was reading about this last week, 11% of Britons believe that holidays to the moon will be a possibility by 2020, just nine years away.

16% think that a cross-Atlantic rail link will also be a possibility by 2020. Now of course that kind of hope is just wishful thinking, isn't it?

It's like saying, you know, I hope the sun shines today, and it's simply wishful thinking. But Christian hope is about certainty. It is about confidence.

These things are secure if our faith and trust are in Jesus Christ. In the past, we've been justified by faith, we are right with God. In the present, we are at peace with God and have access to God.

[12 : 36] In the future, the secure, confident hope of the glory of God, of sharing God's glory in the new creation.

Now isn't that something to celebrate? Isn't that something to shout about? To get excited about? Of course, it raises the question, well, okay, if that is true, what then might my life feel like in the here and now?

Well, our second point, rejoicing in suffering. Have a look at verses three and four. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, character, and character produces hope.

We rejoice in our sufferings, at which point, I guess we may well say to ourselves, well, I knew it all sounded too good to be true. But the point of these verses is that the hard realities of life, okay, far from kind of dampening our sense of future hope and longing for the new creation, actually increase it.

You see, Christians are realists. We know, don't we, that we live in a world where there is much suffering. As Christians, we suffer, just like everyone else.

[14 : 03] Illness, bereavement, failure, stress, redundancy, loneliness. And then on top of that, of course, there are the things which Christians suffer because they are Christians.

Perhaps friends at school or colleagues or family members who just gradually begin to turn away from us because of our commitment and love for the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps the teacher who's sidelined in a school assembly because they won't take part in an assembly that gives the impression that all religions lead to God. Perhaps a colleague who is promoted, who isn't promoted rather, simply because she won't distort the truth.

I don't know about you, but I guess we might think to ourselves, well, perhaps suffering more than anything else is a thing which might cause us to doubt that we're at peace with God.

But quite the reverse. We see in these verses it is suffering which increases our hope. Have a look again at verses 3 and 4.

[15 : 14] We rejoice in suffering not in suffering for its own sake but because it increases our hope. It produces endurance. So you ask any sports player, the matches you lose, are they not the ones you learn the most from?

endurance, that means the character. It's a word that means proven, tried, tested, solid, stable. It would be great to be a Christian like that. And that character produces hope. So just see how you'd answer this question in your head.

When do you think, if you are a Christian, when do you think you might be most likely to give up the Christian life and to stop following Jesus?

others. Let me suggest it is when life is going well. Because of course it's when we suffer, isn't it?

[16:24] It's when life is hard and tough. That is when we find ourselves holding on to God. That is when we find ourselves praying. I was talking to someone just last week who's going through a terrible time as a Christian at the moment.

And what did she say? God is being very good. God is being very good. You see, where is the Christian who has the greatest grip on their future hope?

It is the Christian who has suffered. When we suffer we have to hold on to God more tightly. We're driven to pray more.

We know that he is our only hope and we are forced to trust in him alone. Those who hope the most surely are those, are they not, who have wept the most.

It's why I guess many of us can look back. We can look back on times of hardship and suffering and we can look back on those times and they were hard but actually we can look back on those times and there were times when, yes, we grew as Christian believers.

[17:42] Our confidence in the future as we look forward to the new creation grew. We found ourselves looking forward to it more, longing for that future day.

So don't be thrown off course by suffering as a Christian. Just notice in these verses that God is not saying when you're suffering, remember that even if there's nothing else to rejoice that at least you can rejoice through your peace with God.

It's not kind of rejoice despite suffering, it's rejoice in suffering. Suffering is part of God's plan for your life if you're a Christian.

Because you see he loves us far too much to leave us as we are. Here's another question just to ponder in your head.

what is it as you perhaps think what could happen to you and the ways in which you might suffer or as you look back to ways in which you have suffered, what is it you feared most about suffering?

[18:52] What is it you fear most about suffering? Perhaps losing your job or losing your lifestyle or your fitness or your health or family or achievements.

things. I guess so often we fear losing those things because if the truth be known, those are the things we rejoice in. But you see, God loves us far too much to leave us rejoicing in things which actually one day we'll lose anyway.

our jobs, our fitness, our lifestyle. If these are the things we rejoice in in the here and now, we will be disappointed because they will be taken away from us.

It's one of the miseries, isn't it, of old age for those who have no hope. we lose them all. God uses suffering to change us so that we learn to rejoice in what really matters and in what will last, the new creation.

Which means, of course, that how we respond to suffering reveals, perhaps more than anything else, where our hope lies. rejoice in suffering.

[20:15] Thirdly, confidence in God's love, verses 5 to 8. Now, apparently, before the disastrous final of the Six Nations rugby tournament two weeks ago, the sponsors of the England team printed thousands of commemorative t-shirts, and they even produced a celebratory video before the match against Ireland actually kicked off.

What a waste of money that was. So, they produced all these t-shirts, the video had kind of footage of Toby Flood, Chris Ashton, Ben Foden celebrating a Grand Slam victory.

But they were outmaneuvered, would be a polite way of putting it, I think, by Ireland. Their confidence, if you like, is simply a wishful thinking, and there was nothing to it.

hope does not put us to shame. This hope isn't wishful thinking.

We can be confident, you see, of God's love, and especially so in the face of suffering. God's Holy Spirit, verse five, has been poured out into our hearts. Would you notice Paul's assumption that everyone who has faith in Jesus has the Holy Spirit?

[21:33] There's no such thing as an unspiritual Christian without the Spirit. Just flick over to Romans chapter 8, where we see a similar thing.

Romans chapter 8, verses 16 and 17. Romans 8, 16, The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Here you see is the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit of God himself in our lives. But then, of course, you ask the question, well, how does the Spirit assure us of God's love for us?

Well, by pointing us to the death of Jesus. That is the link you see with verses 6 to 8. Verse 6, For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[22 : 42] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Now, the point there in verse 7 is simply that human love tends to love what is lovely and tends to love what is beautiful. I don't think there's meant to be much of a difference there between the righteous person and the good person.

It's just that it's very rare, isn't it, for anyone to die for anyone else. Even when it does happen, it's for a good person. It tends to be merited in some way. By contrast, do you see, God's love is quite the reverse.

Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Jesus who knows all our sins. Jesus who knows our secret sins. Jesus who knows our worst sin of our rebellion against him and rejection of him.

See, he didn't die for us because he saw something good in us, not even because he saw some inclination in us towards him. No, while we were weak and ungodly, while we were his enemies, Christ died for us.

[24 : 02] Do you want to know that God loves you? Look at the cross. Look at the death of Jesus Christ. Are you looking for some assurance from the Holy Spirit that God loves you?

Well, he wants you to look at the cross. to look at the death of Jesus. Now, I think we get this very badly wrong. You see, we can find ourselves thinking, can't we, well, if God really loved me, then he would make my life more comfortable.

If God really loved me, then he'd find me a wife or a husband. He'd give me my health back. He'd get me that job. He'd change some aspect of my life. In other words, he would make my life more comfortable. Now, if you want to see how much God loves you, look at the death of Jesus.

While we were still weak, while we were completely powerless and helpless, Christ died for us.

peace with God, rejoicing in suffering, confident in God's love, finally saved at the judgment.

[25 : 16] Now, in verses 9 and 10, Paul says the same thing, but he does so in two different ways. On each occasion, he says, look, God's done the hard thing already. God's done the hard thing.

Do you now think he's not going to do the easy thing? God's done the hard thing. Do you now think he's not going to do the easy thing? So have a look at verse 9. God's done the hard thing.

We're justified through the death of Jesus. Now that we're right with God, do you really think we won't be saved at the final judgment? Look at verse 10.

God has done the hard thing. While we're his enemies, we are reconciled to him by the death of his son. Now that we are reconciled, do you really think we won't now be saved at the judgments?

You see, on each occasion, God has done the hard thing at the cost of his precious son. So now he's bound to do the far easier thing which costs him nothing.

[26 : 15] Now imagine that I found you asleep on the back seat of your car tomorrow morning. And I might say to you, Mike and Ty, don't you have a bed to sleep on?

And you say, well, yes, I do actually. I just bought a very expensive lovely house. It's just I can't be bothered to move in at the moment. And so I say, well, how much did it cost you?

Have you paid for it? And you say, well, yes, it cost a lot of money. I've paid for it in full. It's all there. It's kind of beautifully painted. It's beautifully furnished. Just ready to move in.

Well, I say, what would it cost you to move in? And you say, nothing much really. I just need to move in. It would be a very odd conversation, wouldn't it?

You've paid the price. You've done the costly thing. The house is just waiting. For you to move in.

What is stopping you from closing the deal? Well, that is the strength of the argument in verses 9-11.

[27 : 22] God has done the costly thing. Those of us who have put our trust in Christ, we have been reconciled to God through the death of Jesus. Now, I don't know how much it cost God to send his son to die in my place.

I guess when I think of doing that to my own son, perhaps I have a tiny inkling of what it might have cost God to send his son. He's done the costly thing.

How much more will he do the easier thing? You see, do you remember back in Romans chapter 2, this is our last cross reference, just have a look again at Romans chapter 2 verse 5.

The reality of future judgment, Romans 2 verse 5. But because of your hardened impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

For here in Romans 5 is the promise for those who trust in Christ, whose faith is in Jesus. of being saved at the final judgment day. God has done the hard thing.

[28 : 41] Do you now think he won't do the easy thing? I began by asking what is it you rejoice in?

Jobs? Fitness? Family? Friends? Lifestyle? Achievements?

Reputations? These are good things, but they are not things to rejoice in. They are things to be grateful for, but they are not things to rejoice in.

They will fall apart. They will desert us. They will disappoint us. Instead, if you're a Christian believer, rejoice in the fact that you have been justified by faith, that you are right with God.

Rejoice in the certain hope of the new creation. Rejoice in suffering as God sets your sights on the new creation.

[29 : 47] Rejoice in God that he's done the hard thing. Christ has died. Do you not think having done the hard thing, he will not now do the much easier thing, being saved at the judgment?

These are the things that really are worth rejoicing in, because these are the things we can never lose, and they can never be taken away from us.

Well, for those of us who have yet to say yes to Jesus, can you see how very, very attractive the Christian life is? These are great things to be able to rejoice in.

They are wonderful things to be certain about. I don't know what's holding you back from putting your trust in Jesus and saying yes to him.

But I hope you can see that the Christian message really is the very best news in the world. And the Christian life really is the very best life in the world, because it is a life of rejoicing in what will last.

[30 : 57] God's God's love. I don't have a few moments of quiet, and then I shall lead us in prayer. therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him, we've also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your great kindness to us, that while we are still weak, ungodly, facing the judgment, so Christ died for the ungodly.

thank you, Heavenly Father, for the wonderful standing which those who have faith in Christ now have. Peace with you, a secure future hope, confident in your love for us, confident in the judgment.

Thank you that you work in our lives to fix our sights on that future day in increasing measure. And we want to pray, therefore, Heavenly Father, that we would indeed be those who rejoice in you, whose rejoicing is in the gospel.

[32 : 37] And we pray that that it would be true for ourselves individually, pray it would be true for us as a church family, that we would be shaped and transformed by the gospel.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.