

New Life: The Way Hope Works

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 January 2011

Preacher: Canon David Short

[0 : 0 0] Well, we all breathe a big sigh of relief this morning because we've finally come to Romans chapter 5.

If you're new with us, we've been working through Romans and we've covered the first four chapters that were pretty tough going. And now we start, and if you'd open up your Bibles please, at Romans 5 on page 942.

The first 11 verses. This is happy Paul. And he pulls out blessing after blessing after blessing after blessing that we've received by faith in Jesus Christ.

And he can hardly contain himself. I don't know if you picked this up as the passage was written, but four times he says, more than that. Much more than that.

More than that. Much more than that. And I think it's almost criminal to try and cover this passage in one go. And I understand the early service had a good 40 minutes on it and didn't cover it completely.

[1 : 1 0] But this is an embarrassment of riches. Romans 5, 1 to 11. And I would really love to drill down on every verse for a couple of weeks, but I'm not allowed to.

So let's work through this passage and just look at the first verse because in a phrase, Paul summarizes everything that's gone before.

Therefore, he says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have, ongoingly have and continue to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't think you could have come to the time when we were in the first four chapters of Romans without feeling the piercing and difficult truths of our own sinfulness, the reality of evil and God's anger, his righteous anger.

What became blindingly clear was that the problem for each of us and for humanity in general is not that I've been naughty and it's not really the result of sin in my life or the damage sin does to the world or to my relationships.

[2 : 2 3] The great problem for us is the wrath of God, that we're moving towards a day of judgment and on that day, God's wrath is personally directed towards me and there's nothing that I can do about it.

And into this, at the beginning and the end of four, the beginning of the first four chapters, the great good news of Christianity is that God has found a way to righteously, justly execute his wrath and deal with evil and welcome people back into fellowship with him through the cross of Jesus Christ.

At the centre of Christianity is the Son of God on the cross. That is where the love of God and the wrath of God meet. So for every one of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ, our day of judgment is past.

It's back there on the cross in Jesus Christ, where Jesus became our sin and we became his righteousness. By faith in Jesus, God has declared us righteous with the righteousness of Christ, even now while we are still sinful and disobedient and don't have it all together.

That's why this is Christianity in a nutshell, since we have been justified by faith. Religion says, do good, work hard and you'll be accepted by God.

[3 : 54] Christianity says, you've been accepted by God through Jesus Christ, do good, work hard. Religion says, achieve.

Christianity says, receive. And it's important because this little phrase, justified by faith, is the basis of everything that follows.

And I just want to say one more thing about it. It's a time shifting miracle of God's doing, where God takes his verdict of the judgment day, which is in the future, and brings it back into the present.

And his verdict is 100% righteous, totally forgiven. Enter into the joy of the Lord. And that is why Paul states it right here and then again in verse 9.

This is the basis of all our blessings through Jesus Christ. But here's the thing. Justification by faith is not an end in itself.

[5 : 02] It opens us into a world of wonder for every single one of us. And I've tried to find ways of getting this passage and trying to choose and see what Paul wants us to take away.

And there are four present blessings in this passage that spring from justification by faith. And the first one we've already read, since we are justified by faith, verse 1, we have peace with God.

Peace with God. And what's important about this is this is not just a neutral tolerance, the absence of hostility. This is the great Bible word of peace, shalom, of well-being and harmony.

It's the positive blessing of being welcomed into the presence of God. It's not the peace of God, my subjective feeling, although it leads to it.

We'll come to that in a minute. It is the outward situation that I am accepted and being at peace with God. And it's so important, Paul ends the passage with the same thought.

[6 : 09] He begins and ends the passage in this way. Look at verse 11, please. More than that, he says, We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reconciliation. Now, we use this reconciliation word pretty anemically today. I am having an ongoing catastrophic war with squirrels in my backyard.

We have a bird feeder and they are committed to guerrilla warfare. And I've tried a lot of different things. The neighbours have not yet complained, but I've tried all sorts of things.

But now I'm basically, I've given up and I'm reconciled to the fact that the squirrels will do exactly what squirrels will do. Now, that's how we use the word reconcile, but that is not the way it's used in the Bible.

Reconcile comes from the word to change. It means there's a difference. We are really made different people. It's a change in our relation to God and him to us through the death of his son.

[7 : 23] That is why in verse 11, we receive reconciliation. We don't achieve reconciliation. I don't generously choose to receive Jesus into my heart because I'm a spiritually sensitive person.

The gospel says the opposite of that. It says God is willing to receive me. And if I place my trust and faith in Christ, that is the place, the cross of Christ, where he satisfied his wrath.

Look at verse 2. And this is still the peace of God. In other words, through faith in the cross of Jesus Christ, we have gone through the door and we now stand in the presence of God.

We have constant, ongoing access to his grace. A humanity is not divided into floors, as one commentator says. Good people at the top, bad people at the bottom, most of us in the middle.

But by a door, the door of access to him. And the emphasis in all the verbs here is that having peace with God, we have entered and that is our continuing, daily, ongoing reality.

[8 : 53] Now, this is very important for us because Christianity is not just a religion of guilt and sin and servitude and pardon. It's not a grovelling sort of life where I'm constantly reminded what a failure I am.

This is the picture of the Christian life. Each of us has constant access to the presence of God and to the power of his grace. It's with me now. It's in me.

It's around me. It's there this afternoon. That is where you and I stand. God has opened the door and he has become my rock, my hiding place, my shelter, my fortress.

It's a massive change. And the verbs mean, the tenses of the verbs mean that nothing can ever take that away from us. Nothing. If you are justified by faith, if you are declared righteous, God delights in you constantly.

God is not hot towards us one day and cold towards us the next. God never holds our sins against us through faith in Jesus Christ.

[10 : 03] God never holds our sins against us through faith in Jesus Christ.

I am always his child. We stand in this grace because we've heard the word of God that we are righteous in Christ. You do not go in and out of grace.

You do not go in and out of God's approval. Otherwise, you'd have to be justified all over again. You do not go in and out of peace with God. Otherwise, Christ would have to die again.

You're no closer to God if you've had a really, really good week. You're no further away from him if you had a really, really bad week. Your performance or your lack of performance does not affect your peace with God.

Are you standing in this grace? Are you deliberately living and making access to his peace and his presence, knowing that through his only son he's reconciled you to himself?

[11 : 28] Are you enjoying this gift of peace? Peace with God. That's the first present gift. The second is the hope of glory in verse 2, the end.

You see, halfway through verse 2, this grace in which we stand and we rejoice, we boast, in hope upon, literally, the glory of God.

We boast, we celebrate upon hope of the glory of God. This word upon, very important. It's the word Herodias' daughter used when she said, bring me the head of John the Baptist upon a platter.

And what it's saying is this has to do with the very foundation of our lives. It has to do with my fundamental desires, my passion, what I'm building my life upon.

Paul says we rejoice upon hope. We live upon hope. And if you are justified by faith, the foundation and your hope, as Paul says right here, is the glory of God.

[12 : 41] The glory of God. The dazzling radiance and beauty and perfection and power and goodness. It's what we were made for. It's what we long for.

It's the glory that we've suppressed and lost by suppressing the truth. It's the glory that Jesus begins to restore in us.

Jesus came to earth and here's the wonderful thing, not just to show God's glory, but to share his glory. Just keep your finger in chapter 5 and flick one page over to chapter 8, please.

This is Jesus sharing his glory in the day when he comes again. Chapter 8, verse 17.

We pick up halfway through the sentence. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. So when he comes again, we will be glorified with him with the same glory that he has.

[13 : 42] Next verse. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. And in the original it says, in us.

Not just to us. So you see, when Christ comes and takes us to be with him, we're not just going to be spectators, even though that will be ravishing.

We will be participators. Brothers and sisters, there is nothing that this world has to offer that comes anywhere close to this.

This is what the rocks and the mountains are crying out for. Just have a look down at verse 21. The creation. This is still in chapter 8.

The creation itself. This is in the new world, the new heavens and the new earth. Will be set free from its bondage to corruption. And obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

[14 : 46] So the physical universe itself is caught up with us in this. And this is the present hope, Paul says in chapter 5. That fuels every Christian.

As soon as you are justified by faith. As soon as you place your faith in Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how weak or how tiny your faith is. You immediately have an assentance on your heart of the glory of God and the majesty of Jesus Christ.

And you automatically begin to long for and to hope for the future glory. Again, this word hope, we use it so weekly today.

You know, I hope the bay still has a special on kitchenware. That's not the way the Bible uses it. It is a confident expectation.

If it was not certain, we couldn't boast in it. It's almost too good to be true. Look at how Paul puts it at the end of the passage.

[15 : 47] Just turn back verses 9 and 10 to chapter 5. Paul uses two identical arguments, verses 9 and 10.

We should use our brains at this point. They are from the greater to the less. Look at verse 9. Since therefore we have been justified by faith. Oh, sorry, justified by his blood. Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Do you understand the tenses? If you've been justified in the past through the word of the gospel, much more at the judgment day, you and I will be saved from the wrath of God.

Much more. If God has done the incredibly difficult thing of taking sinful, rebellious humans like you and I, who are under his wrath and declared us righteous, how much more is he going to do the really easy thing of embracing his children and welcoming and saving us on that day of judgment?

If it took the blood of his son to move us from being enemies to friends, what power is going to overcome that? Or again, look at verse 10.

[17 : 07] 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?

If the death of Jesus can overcome God's hostility and God's wrath and our own sinfulness, how much more will the power of his resurrected and eternal life take us through the judgment day into glory with him?

Very simple logic. Remember the Chilean miners? They rescued last year. When they brought them to the surface, it was such an easy thing for them to unite them with their loved ones.

The difficult part was bringing them up from their tomb of death, reuniting them with the families when they got there. That was easy. And what Paul is saying is exactly the same thing.

If God has done the impossible and the unthinkable, bringing us to peace with himself, giving us access to his grace, forgiving us our sins, adopting us as his children, declaring us righteous, how much more on the judgment day will he do this very easy thing?

[18 : 11] And it's easy for him to do, to welcome us home, to glorify us in Jesus Christ, to say, well done, good and faithful servants. I wonder if you have certainty about that future day of judgment.

If you have no certainty about your eternal future, or if you think that it's somehow presumptuous, or arrogant, or unspiritual to have assurance on judgment day, you have not begun to grasp the massive work that Jesus did for you on the cross.

You haven't come to believe in justification by faith. And I urge you, go back to the cross of Jesus Christ. That's the basis for our hope of glory.

It's not the strength of your faith, or the sincerity of your good works and obedience. It's not how many times you pray, or come to church, or take the sacrament. It's Christ, and Christ alone.

This is the hope of glory. And I reckon in a city such as ours, where hope seems to be in very short supply, that if you rejoice in your hope of glory, you will immediately begin to shine with a different kind of light than folk around you.

[19 : 23] So, we're a little bit more than halfway through. I told you there was a lot. Should we take an intermission? No, let's not.

All right. That's not kind of in the liturgical calendar, is it? So, the first present blessing is peace with God. The second is hope of glory. And the third one is astounding.

It's joy in suffering. And if you have no taste for the glory of God, verse 3 will sound absolutely ridiculous.

Look at verse 3. More than that, he says. We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

It's interesting. Almost always in the New Testament, every passage in the New Testament that speaks about glory, also speaks about suffering. They go together in the Christian life.

[20 : 29] And the suffering that Paul talks about here, is the complete scope of trouble, and difficulty, and affliction. From the minor irritation of being stuck in traffic, to being tortured to death, for the name of Christ.

From having a splinter, or a disappointment at work, to the complete loss of physical health. From sadness, to depression, to assault.

Paul says, we rejoice, we boast, in our sufferings. It's very difficult, for we wealthy, healthy Canadians, who want to pretend, we have heaven now.

The truth is, all Christians suffer. In fact, if you don't know this already, if you become a Christian, you're more likely to suffer, in ways that you wouldn't, if you were not a Christian.

God has so designed things, that we are blessed, in the very suffering. Now how can it possibly be, that we rejoice in our suffering? It is because, as Paul says, through and in the suffering, in a way we couldn't, in any other circumstance, we begin to experience, the love, and the glory, of God.

[21 : 44] If your goal, is a pain free life, Jesus is not for you. Don't follow a saviour, who got himself crucified. But if your goal, in life is glory, if you're building your life, on glory, then pain and suffering, is not just something, meaningless to get rid of, it becomes a means, for love and glory, to grow in you.

Christians, we're not masochists, we don't deliberately, choose pain. Since we're justified, by faith, God works sorrow, and distress, to our own good, and to his own glory, even when we don't, understand it.

It's not that Christianity, God sort of cotton wools us, from the pain. It's not that tough times, make tough people. Pain's very real, and every single one of us, struggles with our own bitterness, and our fears.

But in suffering, what happens is, suffering exposes, and strips away, every false hope, that we have. And it begins to show us, the power, and the weight, and the beauty, and the reliability, of the glory, and grace of God.

The most darkest, and agonizing, overwhelming suffering, cannot hinder the glory of God, cannot separate us from his love. Why? Because suffering produces endurance.

[23 : 12] It can. It doesn't always. Sometimes suffering, becomes an excuse for us, to blame God, and curse God, but those, those who do, have only built their lives, lives, on something else, and they want comfort, or they want entitlement.

When the fire comes on us, and it seems just too much, and you begin to bend, and we cry out to God, like the psalmist does, for deliverance, and we endure, the word is literally, we stay under.

It is God, it is God, who is enabling us, to rely on him, and his glory, becomes more important, to us, than our toys, or our luxuries, or even the people, around us, patience, and patience produces, character, provenness, authenticity, the flame, of pain, burns away, the things we've relied on, you know, my physical beauty, or my financial success, and it reveals to me, that my faith, in Christ is real, and that my access, to his grace, is real, that's why the end of the chain, suffering, endurance, character, is hope, because we come to experience, hope in a way, that we never would have before, and we see, not only am I real, but God is real, and God is good, I'm not a fake, and neither is God, only in suffering, can we know, that God's love, is better, than life itself, this has been my experience, a few years ago,

I had the privilege, of going to the, Global Anglican Futures Conference, in Jerusalem, and I met many friends, who I'd known for years, who've been abused, and tortured, and imprisoned, for their faith, and you know the one thing, that marked them out, they were just, terminally joyful, they were just, they shone, God was real, and they had hope, of glory, and I fear, that many of us, our experience of hope, may be shallow, and it may be academic, and my question for us, this morning is, what is it, that's going to get you, through your own suffering, is it your intelligence, or your past success, is it your money, or your career, or your family, I think there's, I tell you, there's only one thing, that we can rely on, that's the hope, of the glory of God, but if we rely on that, we rejoice, peace with God, hope of glory, joy and suffering, and fourthly, and finally, the love of God, you okay for us to go on, okay, one of the nice things, about coming back to work, is that I've lost, a little sense of time, and,

I don't mind telling you, it doesn't bother me at all, I hope it doesn't bother you, this, Romans 5, is one of the loveliest, and most powerful depictions, of God's love for us, in the whole Bible, this is my favorite passage, in the scriptures, as a young man, this was the first time, I ever heard God speak to me, was through these verses, and what Paul does, very beautifully here, is he combines, our subjective experience, of the love of God, with the objective reality, of the love of God, if you have one, without the other, you don't have it at all, but if you have both, you have both together, have a look at verse 5 please, hope does not disappoint us, this is the subjective side, does not put us to shame, because God's love, has been, is being, ongoingly, poured, flooded, into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, who was given to us, in the past, context is suffering, we experience, the love of God, and the favor of God, how do we experience it, directly, into our hearts, from the Holy Spirit, when we're pressed down, when the waves of grief, overflow, the Holy Spirit, gives me a direct feeling, a direct sensation, that God himself, loves me, even me, and that his love, is better than anything, the world has to offer, it comes into the core, of my being, isn't that great, everything else, we set our heart, and hopes on, will let us down, apart from the glory of God, but if we build our lives, upon the glory of God, the Holy Spirit, ongoingly, pours out, the love of God, immediately, directly, into our hearts, into your hearts, as I preach these words, it's been my prayer, that God would pour, his love directly, into your hearts, by the Holy Spirit, this is not a superficial happiness, it's an immediate, feeling, and experience, of God's favour, and love, and approval, and acceptance, and joy, which nothing can take away, and it is only, the Holy Spirit, who can give you that, assurance, in the depths of your heart, church can't,

[28 : 39] I can't, comes from God alone, through his Holy Spirit, and it's not a trickle, it's not, you know, a little sprinkle, it's a flooding thing, which, overflows, so you see, our confidence, about the future day, of judgment, and our acceptance, before God, it's not just, an objective, intellectual thing, I don't think, that would be enough, to keep us, in suffering, it's an internal, emotion, sensation, and feeling, that comes directly, from the Holy Spirit, love of God, I wish I could say more, but let me just turn, and make a couple of comments, on the objective, love of God, in verses 6 to 8, let me just read verse 8, but God shows, his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, now you can tell, how much someone loves you, by what it costs them, to give to you, and by how much, you deserve, what they give, and in the, in this verse 8, it says,

God shows, his own love, which is beyond anything, any human could imagine, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us, if you go through the passage, it says, we are weak, powerless to help ourselves, we are ungodly, we suppressed the truth, we are enemies of him, we made no move towards him, we were completely unworthy, of his love, because his love, doesn't depend on anything, in us, it was while we were sinners, Christ died for us, and how much, did it cost God, it was the life, of his only begotten son, I mean I have, I've got two sons, I can't imagine, I can't imagine anything, in the world, that I'd give their lives for, but you see, God's own love, is so high, and so wide, and so deep, and so long, he gives his own son, to death on the cross, for us, and if you take this passage, this afternoon, and read it through, you can see,

Jesus is talked about, ten times, and in verses six to eight, about the love, of God, each of the four sentences, finishes with the death, of Jesus, because there's no contradiction, between the wrath of God, and the love of God, in verse eight, the love of God, in verse nine, the wrath of God, never put a wedge, between the two, it was the love of God, that saved us, from the wrath of God, through the sacrifice, of the son of God, and the only way, we hold them together, is through the cross, no wonder Paul finishes, in verse 11, more than that, we also rejoice, in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've now received, reconciliation, we don't just rejoice, in what God gives us, peace, and hope, and love, glory, we look through, those blessings, to the one who is behind them, to God himself, here's the reason, for our joy, what makes glory, and grace, and peace, and hope, so magnificent, is God himself, it's the glory of God, it's peace with God, it's the love of God, he's the ultimate cause, of our joy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Amen.