

# Romans 5:1-5 - Hope

## ROMANS SERMON #12

December 3, 2017

We are going to Romans 5 today.

Today is the first of four Sundays in advent, a time when we are preparing to celebrate Christ's coming. In addition to hearing a story of Christ's faithfulness in our lives through these videos every week, we'll be focusing on the four traditional themes of this season: hope, peace, joy, and love - all of which are major themes in Romans 5.

So we'll spend each week in Romans 5, looking into these four major ways God's light breaks into our lives through the Gospel.

Paul started this book by saying we're all in the same boat: all law-breakers, all sinners, all condemned by God's perfect standards. On our own, we were hopeless, unable to muster up the goodness required to approach God.

We stood condemned before the perfect judge, and were all alike people expecting and deserving doom.

But then the judge surprised us: he called the wicked righteous. And he was able to do so because he provided a righteousness that we couldn't earn, but that was given to us through faith in Jesus. Just like he did for Abraham, who believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Just like He did for David who counted himself blessed for not having sins counted against Him. He does that for all who would believe.

And when that light breaking into our lives makes all the difference in the world. And we will see that one great consequence of our receiving God's righteousness by faith is that we are people of hope.

So in chapter 5, Paul is going to move from laying out the greatest doctrine of our faith: justification by grace through faith, to laying out some of the benefits and results of that doctrine.

One huge consequence of these truths is that, instead of being people who are doomed and under God's judgment and fearing judgment day, we can now look forward with hope. We are no longer outsiders who are estranged from God, but now insiders with access to him.

And our changed status before God means that He is always and forever for us, and now, even when we walk through suffering: loss, disappointment, depression, sickness, the unknown, and the chaos of life, we don't need to fear that this is God somehow being against us and we need not fear for the future.

And even if the holidays are dark and hard and feel hollow because of loss or disappointment this year, or if we are fearing for what 2018 holds, we have great hope:

**Romans 5:1-5 "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 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. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 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."**

Paul starts the chapter by saying "therefore" - of "because of everything I've just taught you about how we have access to God, these are the consequences."

Three times in these five verses Paul says that one great consequence of our receiving God's righteousness by faith is that we have hope.

When we talk about hope today, we usually use that word to mean the same thing as "wish". I hope I get that bonus, or I hope the Bills make it to the

playoffs. It's wishful thinking. We throw a penny in a wishing well and imagine some pleasing future - and that's what we're hoping for.

But that isn't how this word hope is used in the scriptures.

Hope is a solid expectation, a "definite anticipation."<sup>1</sup> Our hope is not the thing we are wishing for, but what we fully expect for our future. Our Hope is the place we anchor our hearts:

**Hebrews 6:18-19 "so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul..."**

So hope is the place we anchor our hearts, where we look for a promising future.

We can set our hearts on all kinds of unsure and false and unsatisfying hopes: a better future because of better finances. Or better relationships. Or better health. Or an instagram perfect Christmas with family. Or we can hope in the one sure thing: Romans 5:2 says we hope in the glory of God.

What's that?

The glory of God is what was lost in creation and our lives when Adam and Eve fell into sin and death entered creation.

The whole creation was made to reflect the glory of God. We were made to live reflect his wisdom, his goodness, his creativity, his love. He was here among us, the whole world was a paradise temple to reflect the glory of God.

But when Adam and Eve sinned, and ever since, we have all fallen short of that glory.

In Romans 3, Paul wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller, *Romans for You* (Round Hill: The Good Book Company, 2014), 111.

**Romans 3:23-24 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"**

So we sinned, we fell short of God's glory. But in Christ there's redemption. Restoration to the glory of God. It begins with our forgiveness and a restored status as His children that we have now.

But there is still more to come. We are already restored but not yet fully restored. His glory has already come in Christ but not yet fully broken forth into the world.

There's coming a day when everything broken in the world will be restored. Our hope, the future that we know is coming, is a future where all that God's world and his people were meant to be, they will be:

**Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."**

One day, this tarnished creation that is a shell of its former self and only has faint echoes of our glory days in Eden will be restored to that former glory and beyond. The glory of the Lord will fill the earth like waters cover the sea.

Our hope is that one day, the light that has already broken in through Christ, will flood the world, we'll be in a paradise city where Jesus is:

**Revelation 21:23 "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."**

That's our hope, that's our expectation, the full restoration of the glory of God, with the light of Christ everywhere.

The cities of man are broken and tarnished and falling apart. The kingdoms of this world shake and quake and rise and fall. There is no sure future that we can see by looking around. What we see with our eyes gives us little reason to hope.

But there is a competing reality. God made a promise. That one day He will make all things new. Everything around us shakes, but we are receiving a

kingdom that cannot be shaken:

**Hebrews 12:26-29 "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire."**

God is a God who shakes the kingdoms of this world and is to be feared. But we have been justified. So now our hope is that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And notice it says we are receiving the kingdom. Not that we're building it, or restoring it, or making it - we are receiving it. This is a gift of God.

Remember in Genesis 15 when God cut a covenant with Abraham and promised him that many nations would come through Him? It was a one-sided promise, not at all dependent on Abraham. And because we share his faith, we are recipients of promises that don't depend on us at all.

So it's not just that we are dreaming of a better world or striving for a better world, we are receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken in the midst of the shaking kingdoms of this world.

It doesn't look like it. This world is still filled with sorrow and loss. We don't see the promise fulfilled yet. But God is faithful. He keeps every promise.

So we, when the kingdoms of this world shake, when our health shakes, when our jobs shake, when our city shakes - we are thankful that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

This is not just what we wish would happen. This is our hope: our solid expectation.

But in the meantime, we are living in a world where we suffer and lose people and things and health and vigor. But that suffering doesn't diminish

our hope. In some ways it strengthens it. Look at verses 3 and 4 again:

**3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,**

When we hope in something other than Christ, suffering erodes our hope.

So if your hope is that one day you'll be rich, then financial losses, market changes, job losses will all erode your hope as you start to realize that's not your future.

If your hope is that one day you'll have nothing but perfect relationships and a hallmark Christmas by the fire with no tensions and only "God bless us everyone", that hope will erode when some of the broken relationships seem to not be going back together again.

Suffering and loss and the passage of time erode hopes and can lead to bitterness because all other places we anchor our hearts only disappoint.

We can also have some false views of suffering that erode hope. (Keller talks about this in his book *Romans for you*.<sup>2</sup> He made some important observations about suffering that I'll be drawing from here.)

## **False Views of Suffering:**

### **1) Suffering Makes Us Righteous**

There is a Christian masochism that says we need to seek suffering to make us righteous. The more you suffer, the better of a Christian you are, so seek to suffer.

There are different forms of this.

Some people always feel that they need to endure hardship because of shame or guilt. I've done bad things, so when suffering comes, it is God's way of purging me of my offenses.

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Keller, *Romans for You* (Round Hill: The Good Book Company, 2014), 111-114.

But notice how that isn't hope through suffering like Christians have, it is hope in suffering. It is transferring our hope from Christ to our suffering.

Your suffering doesn't save you. Jesus's suffering does.

Some feel that suffering enough is what makes us OK Christians:

There is a certain radical strain of Christianity that says that the work I do for Jesus in helping the least and spreading the gospel must involve maximum suffering to make me legitimate.

If your missionary work doesn't involve a high chance of being eaten by cannibals, you really aren't zealous enough for Jesus. It's because you're complacent. You terrible American Christian.

**RESULT 1:** So if you think you're doing great and embracing enough hardship, you will think you're suffering more and sacrificing more than others you'll feel superior to them. You look for a degree of loss and suffering and doing hard things to make you OK.

And then, your service for your neighbor becomes not about loving people and making necessary sacrifices for their good but all about proving yourself earning something.

If you get around people like this, you get a sense that they are always disappointed in you, or suspicious of you.

They have a superior attitude toward people who have it easier - to the rich, healthy, the successful, the good looking. They must be ungrateful, superficial, not really know Jesus like we do.

**RESULT 2:** If you think your life is not hard enough, you'll always feel like you're not suffering and sacrificing enough and you are a lukewarm sell-out. Because when you were younger you thought you'd be sacrificing and suffering more. You read missionary biographies and they did so much and you just strive to be holy, you pay your bills, you tithe, you love your family, you work your job, you love your neighbor, you volunteer, you spread the gospel, you give to those in need - and it's just not enough suffering and sacrificing, so you feel like a hypocrite when you pray or worship.

Even something as good as getting gifts for people at Christmas can make you feel bad for being able to. You feel inadequate. Because you're not doing enough to justify your existence.

It isn't our suffering that makes us righteous. It isn't the degree of suffering that justifies us and our service. Don't let yourself believe that suffering saves you - it is only the righteous suffering of Jesus that does that.

You don't have to seek out hardship. Seek Jesus. Follow him. Love your neighbor. Move toward need. And there will be opportunity to sacrifice and suffer to some degree.

So the false view that suffering saves or justifies erodes hope - it makes us arrogant or guilty feeling all the time.

A second false view of suffering that erodes hope is that it is all punishment for sin:

## **2) Suffering Is Punishment**

If we believe that we are saved by doing enough good to get to God and that we will be punished for failing, then anytime suffering comes along we will move quickly toward this being God's punishment for our failures.

God has us in a karma system, and now our misdeeds are catching up to us. We are experiencing loss because of our sin.

We don't really believe that God is a good Father. We don't believe that when we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. We think he is storing them up to nail us for them in the future. We are fearful of his wrath and not rejoicing as His kids, so all of our suffering is punitive.

Then suffering won't build our hope. It will erode it - because this will only get worse as the cascades of God's judgment just keep rolling over us into the future.

### **OK, But Doesn't God Discipline?**

Yes, scripture teaches that he does discipline his kids that He loves.

**Hebrews 12:5-13 "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is**

**for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.**

So there is some suffering that God allows to lovingly discipline - to teach us, develop us, or correct us. Some suffering is that. But when we rightly believe God will use suffering to correct us or grow us, there is hope that comes from that belief.

Verse 5 says, "don't be weary when reprov'd by Him."

Verse 12 says, "therefore - lift up your drooping hands, be strengthened by this."

Because it isn't punitive and only restorative, we can have hope in suffering.

We are never experiencing God's wrath and punishment as Christians. We never bear what Jesus already bore for us on the cross. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Our suffering isn't what makes us acceptable, it isn't what legitimizes us, and it isn't punishment.

All of these false views of suffering that erode hope come from a disbelief in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and not through our works.

*Keller writes, "Consider how suffering affects people who are seeking salvation by works. Self-justifiers are always insecure at a deep level because they know they aren't living up to their standards but they cannot admit it. They cannot take confidence in God's love. Since their belief that God loves them was inadequately based, suffering shatters them. Suffering*

*drives them away from God, rather than toward Him. It is when we suffer that we discover what we are really trusting and hoping in: ourselves, or God.*"<sup>3</sup>

If our hope is that in Christ, one day the dead will rise, one day what is lost will be restored, that we receive all of that because He loves us and is gracious and forgives us in Christ, then suffering and loss and even death don't erode that hope, they enhance it.

He says that suffering produces "endurance". This could be translated "single-mindedness" and focus. When suffering erodes everything else we put our hope in, it focuses us on Christ.

Keller writes, "Suffering increases our hope because it removes "rival sources of confidence" (Keller 113) - "Suffering drives us to the one place where we find real hope, real confidence, and certainty: God."

The losses we experience will focus us on Christ - there are times God shakes us so we let go of everything but Christ.

Saint Augustine talked about people who "love this present life; while they ought to hold it cheap . . ." <sup>4</sup> And when we aren't holding this life cheap but treating it as precious, the loss can give us a single-minded focus on Christ.

And that single-mindedness produces character, or "testedness." We suffer loss and in that loss, Jesus is enough. That gives us confidence for the next loss, and the one after that, and the one after that.

We've been down this dark alley before, and Jesus is there. And when we walk through a few losses with eyes fixed on Christ, it gives us a certain resolute, determined joy and confidence in Christ for the next loss.

John Bunyan wrote about hope having a thick skin.<sup>5</sup> And our hope builds a thick skin when we suffer. We become more fixed on Christ, more confident that Jesus is enough.

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, *Romans for You* (Round Hill: The Good Book Company, 2014), 114.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Random House, 1978), 13.

<sup>5</sup> John Bunyan, "Israel's Hope Encouraged"

That's one place the glory of Christ breaks into our world - when we see a Christian endure huge loss, but do so with joy and hope. God looks so glorious when He is enough for a person who is in pain or has lost so much.

John Newton said of a person who suffers well: *"Some Christians are called to endure a disproportionate amount of suffering. Such Christians are a spectacle of grace to the church, like flaming bushes unconsumed, and cause us to ask, like Moses: 'Why is this bush not burned up?' The strength and stability of these believers can be explained only by the miracle of God's sustaining grace. The God who sustains Christians in unceasing pain is the same God -- with the same grace -- who sustains me in my smaller sufferings. We marvel at God's persevering grace and grow in our confidence in Him as He governs our lives."*<sup>6</sup>

Compare that with the times that I've convinced myself that my mild suffering gives me a free pass to not have hope. Yeah, you guys all have joy, but you don't know what I'm going through. So I have a free pass for bitterness and self-centeredness and anger.

I can throw godliness out the window because of what has happened to me. I can sin when I've been sinned against. I have an excuse for my mopiness and joylessness.

**Romans 5:3-4 "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,"**

So we can rejoice even in suffering because of the focus on Jesus it is producing in us. Because of the reminder that we're not living for the kingdoms of this world but for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And that is a promise - guaranteed by God - who has never lost control of history or our lives, even when it feels like it. A God who has proven that His timing is perfect, His plan will be fulfilled, and who has purpose in suffering.

And at the right time, the suffering ends.

**1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself**

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Joni Eareckson Tada, *A Spectacle of Glory: God's Light Shining through Me*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). 7.

## **restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you**

You are suffering. And while you're in it, there is no end in sight, it is out of control. But God has an allotted time for it, and at the end of it, a promise to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

He did that with Jesus, he proved He had a purpose, He proved He has the right timing. So He is a solid place to anchor your hope.

And you can't always discern the purposes of the suffering. But God, in allowing the suffering of Christ to produce more good than anything else ever has proven that He has a purpose in suffering and uses it for His glory.

When you're closest to the situation, you simply cannot see clearly.

*This is why in the NFL the coach has the headset on to talk to a guy who can see all of the action from the booth. He spends a lot of the game talking to the guy up top, and if he's playing the Patriots he's covering his mouth with a piece of paper because they have spies around to read his lips so they can win games.*

*But the point is that the guy in the booth who is away from the action sometimes has the best vantage point and can see many things you can't see from the field.*

When you're suffering through a chaotic situation that makes no sense, you can anchor your hope in God who is in control of the chaos, can see the whole thing, will use even this to form you and glorify Himself, and knows what He is doing.

That was the story of Job in the Old Testament. He suffered a ton, he lost everything, and was never told why. So he weeps and mourns and questions. But in the end God speaks, and in the suffering, Job gets to know God:

**Job 38 1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the**

**foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, 9 when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, 11 and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?**

God is the God who forms the world with his wisdom, establishes all the laws of nature, even telling waves where to stop. He is far beyond us in wisdom and power.

In our times of weeping, God is always doing a thousand things we can't see. But maybe what He wants to do, maybe why He has you here this morning, is so you can hear that He's bigger than you think, He's got this thing under far better control than you ever could, He rules over everything, and when he is done telling this part of the story of your life, he will say, "This far, and no farther" to the waves you're experiencing.

**Isaiah 45: 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. 7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.**

He is a worthy place to anchor our hopes in our suffering. We can hope in God when we suffer.

### **Hope Does Not Put us to Shame**

**5 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 he says our hope doesn't put us to shame. It doesn't disappoint us. We're not people boasting of some pipe dream who will only be ashamed that we got our hearts all wrapped up in it. We won't be put to shame by this hope.

It won't disappoint.

And the way we know that it won't disappoint is that through God's Holy Spirit (who we'll talk more about next week) that has poured His love into our hearts.

This literally says that God "poured out" His love "into our hearts". The word "poured out" is used elsewhere to describe the spilling of wine (Luke 5:37), and the pouring out of the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28). It's a lavish, generous pouring.

J. I. Packer says that God doesn't just do this with "faint and fitful impressions," but, "deep and overwhelming ones."<sup>7</sup>

And when the Spirit gives you the sense that you are loved by God - you're left with hope.

At Christmas we probably all experience the feeling that we wish we could give more to people. Last week I thought of something I would love to get my kids, but it would far exceed our entire Christmas budget. I can't do that, but would if I could because I love them.

There is no limit to what God *can* give to us. And He loves us. So when the Spirit gives us the sense that we are loved by an omnipotent God, how great will the future be that He has prepared for us.

Listen to the hope we have in

**Ephesians 2:1-7 "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body<sup>1</sup> and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places**

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<sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 1993). Chapter 12.

**in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”**

We will experience pain and loss and grief and sorrow and broken relationships here. But God loves us. Which gives us a confidence that in all eternity He will be lavishing on us the riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The future is bright. We have a great hope.

Receive this hope by faith.

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Bulletin Notes:

**Romans 5:1-5**  
**Hope**

**I. A Sure Hope (Romans 5:1-2)**

**II. Hope Through Suffering (Romans 5:3-4)**

**III. A Hope That Won't Disappoint (Romans 5:5)**

**Questions for Small Group Discussion (Some questions adapted from Tim Keller's Romans for You)**

- 1. How are you suffering? How have you recently suffered? Did it focus you on God or self more?**
- 2. How does believing we are saved by grace through faith, not through works, affect how we suffer?**
- 3. How does the bible use the term "hope?"**
- 4. What does it mean that "hope does not put us to shame" in Romans 5:5?**
- 5. How does the Holy Spirit pour God's love into our hearts? What is that experience like?**