



Gospel Hope

Romans 5:1-5 | Feb 23, 2020

This passage marks a transition to part 2 of Romans. Chapters 1—4 were about “Justification by Faith.” Now chapters 5—8 are about “Transformation by Grace.” In this section Paul describes the blessings of justification and their principle implications for our lives. And it all starts from our standing in grace. The whole of the Christian life—past, present, and future; in good circumstances and bad—is enveloped in hope, founded on grace, and pumped full of love.

PAST: Having been justified by faith we now enjoy peace with God. The war is over; our rebellion has been overcome (in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone) so God’s wrath is no longer raining down on us. A new situation has been created.

PRESENT: We have gained access into grace, in which we now stand. The verb for “gaining access” means “introduced.” Like when you’re introduced to someone very important, or given entrance into a space you could not have entered on your own. Jesus has ushered us into the throne room of God the Father. But not just for a brief audience. We now *stand* there. We can live there. We can approach the throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy and find more grace to help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

FUTURE: “And we boast [rejoice and revel in] the hope of the glory of God.” The ultimate end of our justification now will be glorification later (Rom. 8:29-30). We will behold God’s glory, and that “beatific vision” will transform us so that we *share in that glory*. To know God’s glory, and experience own glorification, will yield eternal joy and wonder that we cannot even comprehend now.

But what gets us from here to there? What is the path?

Suffering. That’s why Paul says, “Not only do we boast in the hope of the glory of God, but we boast in our sufferings.” We rejoice in them, like CrossFitters and “Insanity” exercisers who revel in workouts that are harder than their abilities to perform. And why do they do that? Why do they put themselves through such hardship and then boast about it, even reveling in their failures? Because it’s making them stronger and fitter, of course. The benefits outweigh the costs.

How much greater are the benefits of our spiritual training through suffering? “We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17). “Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Paul describes the virtuous cycle of suffering: Hardships produce perseverance. Staying power. “A long obedience in the same direction” as one writer put it. And perseverance yields character or “testedness.” That is, genuineness and authenticity; like gold refined in the fire; like steel tempered through heating and cooling. And character produces nothing less than more hope, more vital optimism that God’s good plan for our lives is being worked out in this present circumstance.

Our hope in God will never prove to be foolish and misplaced. It will never put us to shame. And we know this because God’s love has already been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We know who we are in him. We know what He’s about in our lives.

Discussion Guide

1. Read Romans 5:1-5 from three different translations, just to round out the flavor of the message.
2. Talk through the blessings of justification by faith:

Peace with God

- Have you ever been at “war” with a human enemy and somehow later found yourself at peace? Tell the story. What changed the situation? What insight does this lend to our understanding of having peace with God?
- Have you had a personal experience of being at peace with God? (We’re not talking here about the peace *of* God keeping you from worry and fear—as wonderful as that is—but actual peace *with* God.) What does it mean to you that there is no more wrath, no more condemnation raining down from heaven upon you?

Access and Standing in Grace

- What are one or two places you’ve entered, or people you’ve met, that you were given access to by the merits of someone else? Have you ever been “introduced” into some place you could not have entered on your own?
- How is this a good analogy of our relationship with God?
- What does it mean that we not only have an introduction, but an ongoing standing in grace?

Hope in the glory of God

- When you imagine seeing God—not by faith but by sight—what do you imagine seeing? What do you think that experience will be like?
 - When you think about the future, glorified *you*, what do you imagine to be different about you then from what you are today? What are one or two things that you hope will be true of you that are not very true of you yet?
3. How does suffering take us toward this great end goal? Explain the process of Romans 5:3-4 as if you were explaining it to a new Christian. Then illustrate it from your own life. How has this virtuous cycle found expression in your life?
 4. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 and break down Paul’s experience of growth through suffering. How did it work for him?
 5. What does Romans 5:5 mean in real life? It seems that many Christians believe that God’s love has been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, but fewer actually feel it. Is this something only or primarily to be believed—or is it something to be experienced?
 6. Pray Romans 5:1-5 into each other’s lives. Prayerfully appropriate these truths so that the buoyancy and joy and certainty of Paul’s tone in this text will be yours!