

## Childlike Rejoicing

### Romans 5:1–11 (ESV)

**INTRODUCTION:** The year was 1911. Western civilization was beginning to tremble and soon would quake. All of Europe could feel it. Within three years, Archduke Franz Ferdinand would be assassinated in Sarajevo, and in the months that followed, the entire world would be plunged into a war that was said to end all wars - WW1.

Yet, in such times, there is a particular breed of men who tend to anticipate what is coming. “Those Sons of Issachar, (if you will) who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” 1 Chronicles 12:32.

G.K. Chesterton was just such a man. It was said of Chesterton that he would write one book while dictating another to his assistant.

But from time to time, he would wax eloquent and write a bit of poetry. As he considered the fate of England and the battles that were brewing, he dipped his pen into England’s ancient past - looking and listening for answers.

The poem, perhaps the best of Chesterton’s work, saw England through WW1, then made a resurgence again just prior to WW2. It was said that many of the soldiers knew the poem by heart. It was called **“The Ballad of the White Horse”**.

Through the lens of poetry, Chesterton gazes back into England’s history, to a time when the Roman Empire was falling apart and had departed the British Isles, leaving it undefended. Knowing this, the Danish Vikings began that long journey southward to conquer and pillage all of Britannia.

The only hope was that Alfred, the King of Wessex, might somehow unite all of England to stand as one against the invading Danes. What could unite these dispersed tribes? There was only one thing that might bring them together - Christianity. That was the defining difference that set the inhabitants of the British Isles apart from the worshippers of Thor and Odin.

In a moment of inspiration, Alfred remembers a book his mother would read to him, a beautifully illustrated bible with an image of Mary holding the Christ child. It was then that it happened - Mary appeared.

Now, keep in mind - I am a Baptist, we aren’t allowed to speak to Mary, and what I am reading is poetry, not Holy Scripture. Chesterton was not even a Catholic at this point in his life, so please keep all of that in mind because it serves our text well today.

Mary appears, and Alfred hurls the only thing of value he had at her feet, the Alfred Stone - a glorious ruby. Then he asks his question: Alfred says: "Mother of God," the

wanderer said, "I am but a common king, Nor will I ask what saints may ask, To see a secret thing.

He's referring to the great mysteries of the faith, things like understanding the trinity or the incarnation... Mary replies to him, "The gates of heaven are lightly locked, We do not guard our gain, The heaviest hind may easily Come silently and suddenly Upon me in a lane.

In other words, those deep things of the faith are lightly guarded; they are open to all who truly seek. What question then will Alfred ask of this heavenly vision? All he wants to know is whether they will win. If he is going to all of this trouble to gather an army and wage war, will it be worth it in the end?

Mary's answer was perfect - "The gates of heaven are lightly locked, We do not guard our gold, Men may uproot where worlds begin, Or read the name of the nameless sin; But if he fails or if he wins. To no good man is told."

So, she says, I won't tell you whether you will win or lose, and don't fight for that reason - fight because it is the right thing to do, whether you stand or fall.

Then, so much happens, it's a powerful poem, but Alfred does gather the tribes, he does defend against the Danes, and at the Darkest point of the battle, it is as if the meaning of Mary's words began to visit him in a vision... of a little child building a castle in the sands of the sea.

You've been there, some of you this week have seen children at play on the island, building sand castles, complete with towers and turrets, motes, and missiles. Knowing full well, the castle will not stand by morning. Some wave will overtake it, or some brute will step on it. But, nevertheless, the little fellow works as if it will stand 1000 years.

Chesterton is suggesting that the key to Christian victory is not doing what we do because we know we will crush the opposition, but rather because it is the right thing to do. Working FROM JOY.

**The poem ends with Alfred Victorious, and this is how Chesterton leaves it:**

*And this was the might of Alfred,  
At the ending of the way;  
That of such smiters, wise or wild,  
He was least distant from the child,  
Piling the stones all day.*

*For Eldred fought like a frank hunter  
That killeth and goeth home;  
And Mark had fought because all arms  
Rang like the name of Rome.*

*And Colan fought with a double mind,*

*Moody and madly gay;  
But Alfred fought as gravely  
As a good child at play.*

**NOW - that was longer than my typical introduction. But it captures so perfectly what Paul is saying in Romans 5:1-11.**

**CONTEXT:** Remember, for 4 chapters Paul has argued that there is no difference whether we grew up in the shadow of the synagogue, or were raised on the knee of some pagan, Jew and Gentile were alike equally lost, depraved, hopeless. Then came those glorious words of **Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)**

*21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe..*

GOD has done this thing - Ayh Recokahan - A Reckoning has occurred. God has judiciously declared the GUILTY as INNOCENT by becoming both the JUST and the JUSTIFIER of all who believe.

NOW - we come to some application of this glorious doctrine....

**TEXT: Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)** 1 Therefore,

In other words, because of all of the things I've said in the previous 4 chapters, or for us, the previous 8 sermons.... THEREFORE....

## **1. Rejoice in Your Position**

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is this peace? Let me warn you not to make the common mistake of reading it as a mood, a tranquil feeling in the chest. Paul does not say ***we have the peace of God***; he says we have ***peace with God***.

There is the PEACE OF GOD that is more experiential, but that is not what Paul is referring to here. Here he is speaking of an actual peace WITH GOD.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Remember the story of the flood, how Noah beheld the rainbow in the sky? That bow had previously been a war bow pointed toward the Earth in order to destroy it. But now that the bow was hung on the wall of the cosmos as a reminder that God will never again destroy it with a flood. So, don't freak out every time it rains... can you imagine the PTSD Noah's family had? I would also add, before you turn that symbol into something to excuse perversion, be reminded that God does have other weapons at his disposal and another destruction is coming, not of water, but of fire.

But this has no bearing on the one who has been RECOCKED Righteous by faith...

<sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand,

This is not a pardon handed to a prisoner at the door so that he may now wander off alone. It ushers him in. We have been brought, through Christ, into the very presence of God — and not cringing, but standing; standing in grace as in a settled place, clothed with the righteousness of Christ Himself. Grace is not the doorway you passed through once. Grace is the ground you now stand on, and it will not give way beneath you.

The only proper response to knowing that is verse 2b....

2b. and we **rejoice** in hope of the glory of God.

Rejoice knowing that RIGHT NOW, as CLOSE TO HELL as you can ever possibly be, is rejoicing. But might I remind you who rejected the son of God, there is no other sacrifice - if you refuse His atonement, you are at this very moment as close to Heaven as you will ever get.

*Rejoice in Your Position - Justified....*

## **2. Rejoice in Our Process**

<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we **rejoice** in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

Paul does not say we put up with our sufferings; he says *we glory in them* — in the very midst of them, while the pressure is still on.

**James has the audacity to say in James - Consider it joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials? Why on earth would we do such a thing?**

Glory in our suffering... *like that little child glories in the great difficulty of raising a tower of sand! Why? Notice Paul's **circular argument**.*

<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

We rejoice in suffering, which produces endurance, which develops character, which produces hope... which is the very thing that got to rejoice in the first place!!!

<sup>5</sup> 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 first - note this is speaking of GOD'S love for us, rather than our love for God. We are the **object**. God is the **Subject**. In other words, it is **HIS** love being poured into **OUR** hearts.

**A QUICK GREEK NOTE:** The verb “poured” is *ekke-chutai* (ἐκκέχεται), the perfect passive of *ekcheō*. It does not mean trickled, or sprinkled, or measured out by the drop. It means poured out lavishly, flooded, drenched. God has not been stingy with His love toward you. He has flooded the heart of every believer with it, by the Holy Spirit, who is Himself the down payment guaranteeing all the rest. Tim Keller often points out that this is the order of the Christian life: first peace with God as a legal standing, and then the love of God flooding the heart as a living experience.

Now, this next part is a bit difficult to explain. You see, there are some things that we simply must “**TAKE BY FAITH**” that it is so, even though there is a plethora of evidence to the contrary. So one might say we must simply believe that God’s love has been poured into our hearts, even though we have no practical, tangible evidence of this being true. **HOWEVER**, that is not the way Paul has constructed this phrase at all. Rather, he speaks of something that is **REALLY** available to every single believer.

So one might say - this is not the sort of thing that we might deduct by simple reasoning, then assume it is so. **RATHER**, this is the sort of thing that we actually encounter.

When do we encounter it? Often, I might say, very often, it is in the midst of our suffering. A real visceral sense in which God actually pours our His love for us, into our heart.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I saw this week that a great earthquake occurred in the far east - when that happens, everyone runs for cover because there is a likely chance that a **TSUNAMI** is coming. Well, that is the idea here - when life gives you an earthquake, if you are ready for it, if you are open to it, God will send a **TSUNAMI** of his love into your heart.

Joy unspeakable - and full of glory.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A dear young man in our congregation was suddenly taken from this world this week in the very prime of his life. His family is obviously devastated and mourning his loss. But Paul tells us, if you let him, even in the midst of that horrible catastrophe, God will visit you. An earthquake has happened and the tsunami will come.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Jonathan Edwards, who testified that of the first great awakening, that the love of God came over them in wave after wave, until they were melted under the glory of it and felt their very physical frames almost ready to collapse. I don’t know if you have felt that in a real visceral way, but I have, and I hope to again and again.

*Again, is this because we are a mighty people worthy of such things? Absolutely not!*

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.

Ok, so get that into your mind as thoroughly as you possibly can - Christ died for you on your worst possible. It is impossible to adequately comprehend the totality of your depravity in the eyes of a Holy God. And in that moment, He set His affection upon you, died for you in Christ, and reconciled you unto Himself, attributed the righteousness of Christ to your account, and declared you as His very child!

Verse 9 is for that poor soul who can't seem to get a peace about his standing before such a God.

<sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, **much more** shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> 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.

The risen Lord Jesus stands as a Shepherd counting the sheep He purchased with His very blood - NOT ONE, NO NOT ONE, will slip into Hell while He stands watch.

**Rejoice in Your Position** - Justified....**Rejoice in Our Process**, this circular process of grace that deeps our roots season after season....

### **3. Rejoice in His Promise**

<sup>11</sup> More than that, we also **rejoice** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

You see, the biggest challenge to walking is that joy is the threat that it may be lost. What if we somehow depart from the faith? But don't you see - that's none of your business, if it were your business you would likely depart the faith... but it's HIS Business. He who started the good work will complete it!

**Paul has made it clear -**

- Christ died for the **ungodly**.
- Christ died for **sinners**.
- Christ died for
- .
- Therefore, we shall certainly be saved.

So the only possible response is REJOICE in God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

#### **Job 20:5**

that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the **joy** of the godless lasts but a moment.

Yet they will never fully satisfy, and the pleasure they do bring will be short-lived unless your heart is fully at home in God.

**Psalm 16:11**

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

**Job 8:21**

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of **joy**.

**Psalm 21:6**

Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the **joy** of your presence.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** Now, have you experienced the grace of God as described in Romans 1 through Romans 4.... If you have, ***THEREFORE - REJOICE***

So what is Paul saying?

He is telling us that the Christian life is not lived by calculating odds. It is not lived by peering into tomorrow trying to discover whether we will ultimately succeed.

Alfred never learned the outcome before his battle. Neither do we. God has not promised us an easy road. He has not promised us earthly victory. He has not promised us that every castle we build will still be standing tomorrow morning.

**But He has promised something far better.**

- He has justified us.
- He has reconciled us.
- He has poured His love into our hearts.
- He has given us His Spirit.
- He has removed His wrath.
- He has secured our future.

**And because those things are settled forever, we are finally free to live like children at play.**

- Not careless children.
- Not foolish children.
- But children who know their Father is watching.
- Children who know their inheritance is secure.
- Children who know that even if the waves come in tonight, the kingdom they belong to cannot be shaken.
- So build.
- Serve.

- Give.
- Witness.
- Suffer well.
- Raise your children.
- Preach the gospel.
- Stand for truth.
- Love your neighbor.
- Fight the battles God assigns you.
- And do it all with joy.

For the same Christ who endured the cross for the joy set before Him now reigns at the right hand of the Father, and one day every labor done in His name will be gathered into a kingdom that shall never pass away.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith...  
Rejoice.