



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

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Benefits of Being a Christian- (Romans 5:1-11)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I remember, like it was yesterday, my first day at Northview Community Church about 11 years ago. I was hired as the young adults pastor and I had travelled from New Zealand to take that position. My church in New Zealand was very different than the church here. It was small, I was the teaching pastor there for about five years and in those five years, the only time I had ever gone out to lunch at any point, or any meal at all, that the church paid for was the last day I was there and they took me to McDonald's for breakfast. My office was also in the corner of my bedroom. The church itself didn't have any offices so we worked out of our houses. My little kids would run in and interrupt me all the time. In the corner of my office was our bed was right next to it, so, you know, a lot of naps, two book shelves, and all the rest of my books were just in boxes so there weren't a whole lot of extra benefits to working there. It was a great church, I loved it, but not a whole lot of occupational benefits where the church or the business is providing you certain resources to do your job. When I first came to Northview that was one of the things I immediately noticed. But coming from where I was I didn't assume that that was going to be the case. In fact, the first day that I showed up, the executive assistant said that she's going to meet me in a room in the offices and I sat down.

This room was quite large, it had a couch in it and it had a desk there, a big grey one with a computer, and a phone, and a couple of other things on the top of the desk. So I didn't know what all that stuff was doing there and so I sat in this little chair on the side that looked like it was a place for visitor to this office to sit. I had my bag on my lap and she came in and looked at me oddly and she sat behind the desk and started telling me about the church and about all the things I was going to see and she was going to give me a tour and do all sorts of stuff and she said, "Before we start, though, why are you sitting over there?" and I said, "Where else would I sit?"

"Well, behind the desk."

"Why?" She said, "Because it's your desk."

"What? This? My desk?"

"Yeah, this is your office."

"I get an office?"

"Yeah, you get an office and the computer is yours and this phone is yours and this other stuff that's there."

"Ooooh" [looking around amazed]



I remember going home and I had all this stuff in a bag and I dumped it out on the table and I said, “Honey, look! Look what they gave me, this is amazing! This is the most amazing place ever!”

Sometimes the benefits of a thing, we’re not aware of them. We come to faith in Christ, if you’ve been a Christian all your life or if you grew up in a Christian family, you don’t ever stop and think about what are the extra benefits of being part of that community. There’s extra benefits to being part of a community like Northview for our pastoral staff. Likewise there’s extra benefits to being a part of the Christian family and to being a Christian. But we get so accustomed to living the life that we live and facing the challenges that we face as Christians. We’re told repeatedly from outside the church that to be a Christian is to face a life of difficulty and hardship and nobody really will like you and increasingly so in the secular world, and so you better just buckle down and face it. But we don’t, in the light of that, stop for a few minutes and think, “But wait a minute. This is actually quite a blessing.” We have remarkable blessings for being Christians. It’s what Paul actually is trying to argue when he gets into Romans chapter five. He wants to take the diamond of the Christian faith and he wants to keep turning it because you’ve grown old and you’ve forgotten how great this is. What are the benefits of being justified by faith? How does God view you? What is your relationship with God like now? What should your future hold? And should all of that knowledge have some effect on the way that you view your suffering today? These are all the kinds of questions that he’s dealing, right?

This passage is great, in fact, Romans 5-8 is some of the best verses in the Bible. I wrote my Master’s Thesis on them and, in my life whenever things go sideways, I always come back to these. You will love studying these verses over the next few months here at Northview, okay? I promise you, at the end of it our hope is that you will see your faith in a light that maybe you never have before.

The beginning of Romans is about hope/lessness, this section, all about hopefulness, which is a good thing. So, in Romans 5:1-11, we’re going to learn three things from this passage, all about what the benefits are of being a Christian, okay? One benefit is that we have peace with God. A second is that we have a perspective on suffering. And a third is that we have a hope that won’t disappoint.

1. We have peace with God,
2. We have a perspective on suffering, and
3. We have a hope that won’t disappoint.

Let’s start in Romans 5:1, talking about the fact that we have peace with God. Here’s how these verses read.

“Therefore... [Note that, right? What we’re about to read is based on an argument that has already been going on. We’ll talk about that in a second.] ...Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... [Notice, not just that we don’t feel peace with God, even though you should feel peace with God, but your feelings should be based upon your knowledge of it. It’s a fact, you have, as a Christian, peace with God] ...through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”



Look, Paul piles up phrases on top of each other sometimes when he's writing- especially in Romans- it's like theology on theology on theology. So the best way to handle it is it to break it down a little bit. So, let me pick out a couple of phrases of particular importance.

[We Have Peace with God]

"Having been justified by faith, [What does that mean?] *we have peace with God*" Well, you have to go to the "therefore" to find out what that's there for, so we're going to go back. Romans 1, Let's look at Paul's argument up to this point in this book. Romans 1:18,

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness."

In other words, what Paul's saying is, "Let's just start with the accepted fact among lots and lots of good people." And by "good" we mean people who see themselves in a good light and think that they're relatively moral that we all agree that there are Hitlers in the world. And they don't just run countries, sometimes they steal things when the fires have gone through and the people have left. There are thieves who don't care about you, who blatantly just balk at the laws of the land and the laws of God, who murder, who hate, who have no problem with their racist thoughts. There are people like that in the world. Increasingly so, we know more and more about them because of the internet. "They," says Paul, "stand under the judgement of God." The wrath of God is being revealed against all the wicked people. And we, who see ourselves as righteous (and most people I'm speaking to see themselves as the righteous, or the people who think of themselves as good people because we're not Hitler) We say, "Yes! That's right! That's good", that God should judge those people who are wicked and mean, and awful, and doing those terrible acts. They should, "Get 'em God!" "Those guys out there!" The problem, of course, is that Paul turns the tables in Romans 2:1. Listen to what he says:

"You, therefore"... [Now, here you're expecting the "you, therefore" to be the bad people, and that he's still talking about the bad people, but he's not!] ..."You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else... [What!? Wait a minute, I thought we were talking about those guys, why are you talking about me now? I have no excuse, why not?], ...for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things."

Yeah, I know you don't do them so outwardly, yet they flaunt the laws and they act in ways that are just repulsive in so many ways. But, in your heart, those same kinds of repulsions are there, right? I mean, they murder, but you hate. You just do it quietly because you're a little bit afraid of what would happen if everyone knew that you hated like that. They commit adultery, but you lust after people. That should sound familiar, right? This is the argument Jesus is making, that if you lust after a woman in your heart it's the same thing. "No it's not!", yes it is! What they do openly, you do quietly. What they have the guts to do physically, you do just in your mind. So, look, if you're going to blame them for all of what they're doing and the thoughts that lead to it, then you better turn that finger around,



mister, because it should be pointed at you as well. You're guilty of the very same things. So, if the wrath of God is on *them* for their thoughts and actions, what should happen to you? Romans 2:5,

“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed.”

When we were studying Romans 1-3 last year, we wanted to call it *‘It’s all Your Fault!’* because that’s the message. Listen, the world is a mess because of human sin. And that’s just not a concept, that’s you’re human and you’re a sinner and I’m human and I’m a sinner. And, what do human sinners deserve from a holy, righteous God whose ruined His world? Wrath. That’s what Paul’s argument is. Everybody- I don’t care what generation you are, I don’t care what your background is, I don’t care what gender you are, I don’t care any of it- you are *all* under the wrath of God. He is your *enemy!* Unless there’s somehow, a way for you to become his friend. But, in order for that to happen, someone would have to pay the righteous requirement of the law, they would have to take the penalty in your place, and who could possibly do that? [This is where you get the Sunday School answer, right?] Enter Jesus. And, some of the best verses in the Bible are in Romans 3:21, Paul says,

“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ... [The whole Old Testament has been pointing in this direction, we just didn’t see it!] ...This righteousness... [this right standing before God] ...is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. ... [It’s not based upon your ethnicity, it’s not based upon anything but faith] ...There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all... [regardless of who they are and their background, because of their faith in Jesus] ...all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

That is crazy talk. It’s so crazy that God, the God of the universe who stands over against you as your enemy, actually saves you by killing His son for you. There is so many images that can be used to try to describe it, but maybe this one will help. Do you like justice movies? You know which ones I’m talking about? The “I have a particular set of skills...,” those kinds of movies where something bad happens to a good guy and the good guy, or his family, decide that they are going to take arms up against their oppressors and they are going to run down the bad guy. The whole movie is basically them, you know, it starts with a travesty happening, the wicked acting horribly against the righteous, and then the righteous ones saying, “Uh, I’ve had enough,” and they put the bandana on their head and the guns and they go. The whole movie reaches a climax at the end where you’ve got the guy ready to shoot the dude at the end, the good guy has finally cornered him after chasing him all this time, they have an epic battle, and then he wins in the end. That’s the justice when our hearts feel like, “Yes, justice was done here!” I know that Mennonites aren’t supposed to like this, but you watch these movies, right? [laughter] Here’s the thing about the Gospel of Jesus, what Paul is describing here. It’s basically this story line where the wicked, meaning all of us, have blatantly affronted and offended God and we have stuck our middle finger up at him and we have spit on him and we have wronged his world and we were running away from him. He’s put the bandana on, and he’s got a particular set of skills, and he’s coming after all of us and he gets us at the end and he wins (quite



easily, in fact) the great battle against us and he's ready to lay his wrath upon us and he... points it instead at his son, on your behalf. Now that's a scandal. We totally deserve it and, instead, he kills his son so you might live.

The point that Paul is getting at here when he says, "You have peace with God," is you are no longer an enemy, you are his friend. The God of the universe, who you used to stand over against, is your friend. I said that there were a couple different phrases in there, though, that I wanted to point out, okay? So, we have peace with God. The other one is in verse 2,

"...through whom he have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand..."

So, through Jesus, we have gained access into this grace. That's a great little phrase. We have *gained* access.

A number of years ago, I was in Chicago with Ezra Okoti—who is our campus pastor up in Mission. A Kenyan guy, if you have not met him before— and another friend. We were there, the three of us, and we were at a conference and we were enjoying the sights and sounds of Chicago. It was about 11:30 one night and we were headed back to our hotel and we were walking along the Magnificent Mile— which is Michigan Avenue. It sort of goes right through the middle of Chicago. It's where all the shops are and the great restaurants. There are great restaurants everywhere in Chicago, but particularly the Magnificent Mile is where all the tourists go—There was nobody on the street though. It's a very wide street and there was nobody on the street and a very wide sidewalk. Except, there were these police officers who were standing about 20 feet apart facing away from the street toward the sidewalk watching as we went by. There is nobody else on the side of the street. So, we passed by one, two, three of them, stared at them and said, "Hello, hello, hello," and finally we got to the fourth one and it was a big, black guy and I went right up to him and I said, "What is going on here? Why are all you guys out here?" He said, "You need to back up." [backs up a step] "So, what's going on here? What's taking place here?" He said, "Well, President Obama, in his motorcade, is about to pass by. He's been in town for the last couple days and we are here to make sure that he is protected."

Now, this guy kept looking at Ezra the whole time, right? Obviously, right? [laughter] So, he kept looking at Ezra all the time and he told us to back up and then he told Ezra, "You need to keep going back." He actually had Ezra against the wall. It's so bad. Like, he's got Ezra against the wall and he has Ezra stay there. The other two, we were standing there and...have you ever seen the motorcade from the President of the United... like, it's huge, it's huge. I mean, you have military personnel out in the front, you have police officers in front of them on motorcycles, you have police cars surrounded his car, you have the limousine followed by some armoured vehicle followed by whatever. We found out that there were five different motorcades that were going around the city to just confound anybody who might want to do something.

It is very, very difficult to access important people. If you want to go see your favourite star on the red carpet at the Toronto International Film Festival, which is happening, it's not going to happen. They



have body guards around them. They surround them. Those are the stars. The President... you don't just push aside the cop and walk up and go "Wassup Obama?" It doesn't happen. Now, if that's the case with people of important stature in our world, what do you think the case is with God, holy and exalted? And, if you need a picture for how far apart from you He is, you just need to look at the temple. It was built according to His rules so that the people of Israel would always be reminded that there is a Holy of Holies in which He dwells and you don't get to go there. If you're just an average Jew and you want to go into the temple, well, you might be able to go to the outer courts but that's it, that's as close as you get to come. The High Priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of God was, once a year and if he messed up any part of his duties in there, he would die on the spot! God is not your buddy! He's not your pal! You don't just walk up to him and shake his hand and give your opinions on the way he's running the world. He is high, exalted, transcendent, better than you and me. Which is why this is so crazy! Listen to the language.

"Through [Christ] we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."

"Get out of the way, cop! Obama [knocking on limo door], how you doing? Give us a hug." The writer of Hebrews has a line that says that we "boldly approach the throne of grace with confidence." What?! If you are a Jew and you're hearing that and you know about the temple and you how far away God is, "What, we *boldly* approach the throne of grace with confidence?"

President Lincoln, the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln who oversaw the United States during one of the toughest times of its history, right, the civil war. His son, Tad, was a precocious pain in the bum. He was horrible around the White House, he was terrible. He'd have places, apparently, apparently, I don't know if this is true, but they apparently have places in the White House where he etched his initials into all sorts of places. He used to build—this little guy, he's like six or seven years old— he used to build these big forts with all of the chairs in the White House. Right, important, like the chairs that were antiques and stuff, he'd just lean them against each other and he'd have these massive tunnels and forts and he'd order around all the servants, and people who worked there, to guard different things so that he could construct his own play world. He used to slide down the banisters, I mean, just a really precocious little boy.

Well, there was a room in the White House where the cabinet, meaning the President's advisors, used to sit while they were making big decisions. So, President Lincoln and his advisors during this time were, of course, trying to figure out the civil war and racial relations and these sorts of things and having these important meetings. Outside the door were usually armed guards because it wasn't a very safe time, right, to be President of the United States even just in the White House. Well Tad Lincoln used to walk in and he would push aside the armed guard, he'd go into the door, and he'd yell "Daddy!" With all of these important men sitting around the table, "Daddy!" Lincoln used to stop every meeting, whenever his son came in, "What?" "I lost my truck!" Lincoln would stop the meeting, have all of the cabinet get up from their seats, and go look for the truck. They'd find the truck and then they could go back to their meeting. See, there's a benefit, an access, that a son has to his father regardless of his father's stature. And, you are sons and daughters of God. You've gained access into this grace in which we didn't have. Any thought that you have in your mind that God is somehow your



enemy, should be dispelled if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not stand over against you, He stands only and always for you. Things might be happening in your life and you're thinking, "Oh, I don't have peace with God!" We have it. We've gained access. It's the truth.

[We Have a Perspective on Suffering]

That's the first point, now here's the second. We also have a perspective on our suffering. Here's the objection to everything I just said. Those are really nice church words. We have peace with God, gained access, all that stuff... it doesn't always feel that way does it? If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus, if you're a Christian, sometimes it feels like God is not your friend. It feels like he's your enemy because he can control the circumstances of life and in this world and he often times allows, brings, things into our lives that do not look friendly. Yes? If we are asked, in that moment, "Hey, do you have peace with God?" "Hmm, I wouldn't call this a peaceful relationship." But, we have a perspective -- it's interesting that Paul immediately goes to this subject, it's almost like he knows what's going on in your mind. Okay, we have peace with God. It doesn't always feel like it, so let me tell you what you should do with this suffering. Here you go. Romans 5:3,

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,... [if you ever underline words in your Bible, you should probably underline the glory one there. I'll tell you why.] ...We also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Here's why you should underline glory: the word means boast. We should *boast* in our sufferings. You know what a boast is. If my team beat your team, "Oh, In your face! I'm the best! And by I, I mean my team, but I'm the best! In your face." If I'm playing basketball against you and I go through my legs one way and then I cross back over and you fall over and look like a fool and I pick the ball up and go "Ha!" and put you Youtube... aha, boast! Paul says we should *boast* in our sufferings. Hmm, you do that, do you? This dude's crazy, because I don't know anybody who says that. So, in other words, when suffering comes, we should say, "Yes! Suffering!" Why? Here's his argument then. Has he piqued your interest? Why on earth would I have this perspective on suffering? Well, he gives you his argument and it's really simple, really straightforward,

"...we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance [produces] character; and character [produces] hope."

Okay, let's take those together. Suffering produces perseverance. You know, of course, that faces difficult circumstances makes us able to face them better in the future. My nephew is working as an early insurance agent and I found out this summer that he has been making cold calls all of the time. That's all he ever does, makes cold calls. I said, "How's that going for you?" He's like, "Ya, okay. So, the first day I went home and wanted to throw up. I've heard words used in ways I didn't know that you could use them. I've had people hang up on me, yell at me, scream at me because I'm making these cold calls to businesses. I've had people lecture me for like five minutes regarding how important and valuable their time is. I went home and I just wanted to quit." "Well, did you?" "No, I came back." Then, he says, "As time has gone on, I've learned, actually, that I can do this. I can take



that kind of suffering. I can face it and it's gotten less. I mean, there is still the same amount, it just doesn't feel like that much." Yah, suffering produces a kind of perseverance. If you have kids and you have three or four children, you know this. Right, because the first child you're like, "Whoa, just don't move anywhere and don't touch... are you touching that? Don't touch that. Here, let me take this hand and this hand and I'll hold these until you're eighteen and then, at that point, I might be there still." But, when the third child is there, you're like, "What you got there? Looks like a snake. Meh" [walking away] "Dad, Sophie's on the cliff!" "How high is it?" I mean, it's because you've been through it now. Things just don't worry you quite as much, although the cliff might have to worry you, right? I mean, but you've been through it all and you've faced it. The suffering of child rearing has built in you a kind of perseverance. You didn't give up and so, because you didn't give up, you're persevering. Some people give up when suffering comes on them. Some people just give up. That's not who it's talking about here, this is talking about people who suffer and continue. It builds perseverance in you when you face an affront from someone who blames you for being a Christian and says, "You're this and that," or you face suffering generally in your life, but you say, "I'm not going to give up on God because I know him to be true and I know I have peace with him," and you keep going. It builds perseverance.

And then that perseverance builds character. That's a good word. That character, that word actually means "a battle tested-ness". It was a word that was used in the ancient world of like old military veterans; crusty, old soldiers. It builds that kind of stick-to-itive, "I am not moving," kind of character. My parents lived in an area on Whidbey Island— which is just east of Seattle—and their house overlooked the sea and next to their house— a couple houses down— was this piece of property with just forest on it. I used to go for a walk around there along the edge and then back through the middle. When you'd walk around the edge, one of the things you would notice is all the trees have very few leaves on the windward side. That's because the wind was always blowing and they just blew the leaves off, it had some on the other side. They would bend in the wind, but you'd look down on the bottom and they had these huge trunks and they weren't going anywhere. But, the further in you walked beyond those that were open to the wind, the smaller the trunks got and the more spindly the trees. Some of them had actually fallen down in a couple storms. Facing the wind builds a big trunk. [placing hands on hips] I've faced a lot of wind. [laughter]

My wife was complaining, as she went into church one day, to this guy. His name was Graham. Graham had a lung condition that made it so he had to cough all the time, he would cough up all sorts of stuff. He had it since he was a child. They told him that, "You'll never be cured of it and you'll probably die from it." In fact, he was one of the oldest living guys in New Zealand with this particular illness. He can't sleep well because he always feels like he's got a cold and he's always got to cough stuff up. So, my wife was walking in next to him to church one day and she was like, "I am so tired. I wasn't sleeping well last night because I have had this horrible cold for the last week. It's awful! Do you know what I mean?" And he smiled and she said, "I'm so sorry. You must get really tired of people like me complaining about our piddly little problems when you are facing this sort of situation every day." And he said, "You know what? I don't actually. You're just not used to it. When you have to face something over and over and over again and you continue through with it, it builds in you a kind of character that means that you are not going to back down just in the face of some of these



little problems. And even though when you were young they seemed really big, they're not so big anymore and you're not going to stop following Jesus just because it's hard." Suffering develops perseverance and perseverance develops character and that character then develops hope. That's an interesting phrase, right, because how does that work? How does character build hope? The hope we talking about it hope for eternal life and hope that we will be with Jesus forever. "What does that mean?" I'll try to explain it by way of illustration.

My son and I were driving back from Saskatoon last year at this time and we entered into Google Maps "Home" and it gave us five options from Saskatoon to get home. One was through the States, I thought, "Ah, that's a little long." One was the one was the came, but one of them was a way that looked really interesting, it sort of went by a river and it looked quite nice and so we went on this journey. For the next four hours, we saw one car, and we had no idea where we were. In fact, my gas was... there was no gas stations, no anything. The gas was going down and down and down. Finally, on our little GPS, which was cutting in and out because we were out of service, there was this little place, this little town. I can't even remember the name of it. We thought, "Oh, surely there is gas here because my light has been for the last while. Surely, oh God, let there be gas there." There was no gas in this town. There was a Catholic church and nothing else. Then Google said, "Take the next left." So, we get to the left we are supposed to take, I look down the way and it's a bridge, a rickety old one lane bridge that goes on to a dirt road that goes up, apparently to Abbotsford...the dirt road [frustration]. What are we going to do now? My son is like freaking out, "[Panicking] Oh, we are lost in middle of Alberta. We are in Alberta, right Dad?" "Yah, I think so. I don't know." What do you do? Well, you got to keep going and pray, "Oh, God, please help!" So about three kilometres down the road, there is a sign on the side of the road that says "Drumheller- 27km." I was like, "Drumheller! That's like the dinosaur place. Yes, yes, yes, yes. They've got to have gas, right? Right? Dinosaurs, gas, those goes together. Yes!" Nobody has ever been happier to go to Drumheller than me at that moment. So, what happens here? There was a hope that was produced by seeing a sign on the side of the road that told me I was on the right path to my desired destination.

Look, what Paul is trying to argue is, "How do you know that you are a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? You say you have faith, but you're life often doesn't match up to your professions. How do you know that you are headed toward eternal life with God?" And his answer here is when you see suffering produce perseverance, perseverance produce character, and you keep going and that gives you hope. You glory by that sign. You say, "It's happening! Christ is being formed in me! I didn't know it was happening, but it is happening because of the suffering. Awesome suffering."

Maybe an illustration might help at this point just to wrap that whole thing together. You ever lift weights? Clearly I do, no. You have in your mind, "I am going to become huge and have a six pack and go to the gun show. I'm going to be... a lot of ladies will like it." So, you go to the gym and you start intentional suffering because that's what it is, right? You're lifting the weights and nobody is going, "This is a lot of fun. I love this." So, especially when you start, it hurts. It hurts your arms, it hurts every part of you, especially the next day. But you think, "No, no. I have a vision in my mind regarding what it is. There is a hope there. So I'm going to go back." So, this suffering produces a kind of perseverance in you, you are not giving up. The more you do it, the more you do it, this



perseverance starts to build a kind of character in you. By character I mean a definition. You walk by those mirrors which are everywhere in the gym and early on when you are doing this you are like, “Don’t look, don’t look,” but as the character builds, you’re like, “Oh, yes. [posing in the mirror] I like that.” Suffering produces perseverance and perseverance produces character and you stand in front of that mirror and there is that hope that wells up inside of you because you know that you’re on your way to the desired destination. That is what suffering will do for you and you can glory in it. You can say, “I know it’s not a happy thing, but it has purpose in my life.” Listen, if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you do not have this. Suffering is just a thing that happens to you. But, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has a purpose for it in you. That’s amazing.

[We Have a Hope That Will Not Disappoint]

We have peace with God. We have a perspective on suffering. Here’s the last one: We have a hope that won’t disappoint. I’m going to quickly go through Romans 5:5-11. I’m just going to read through it and make the big point here.

“And hope does not put us to shame... [means that it won’t disappoint you. We have lots of disappointed hopes, all right. We put our hope in all sorts of things that don’t come to fruition. This is not like those. This hope will not let you down. Why not? Well], ...because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us... [Okay, talk more about the love, Paul. Alright, how much love does God have for you?] ...You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

He didn’t look across the landscape of the world and look for all the people who were going to be a really good member of his team and then pick them out and think, “Oh, good Christian, good Christian, good Christian...” No, you were a *sinner*, you were *powerless*, you were *weak*, you were *nothing*, and you *hated* God and he chased you down and killed his son for you that you might live forever with him, while you were *wicked*. Imagine, then, if that’s what he does while you’re wicked, what he’s going to do while you’re his child. If that’s the way that God acts towards his enemies, how do you think he’s going to act toward you now that you are his son or daughter. That’s Paul question, verse 9,

“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

If that’s what he’s done in the past, what do you think he’s going to do for you in the future? Listen, Christian, do you think that he’s somehow going to give up on you? Because I actually think that a lot of Christians, their viewpoint on these matters is that God’s got a little bit of buyer’s remorse with



you. You know? He bought the product not completely knowing its flaws and, now that he's got it, he's looking for the nearest Costco to take it back.

I say that because I have a friend who does a lot of counselling. He's a pastor. He spoke to a guy whose wife just up and left him. He was counselling this guy whose wife just up and left him. This guy's story was really sad. She just woke up one day and she said, "You know what? Here's the thing: When I married you, I didn't know about what you are like, and the more I have learned about what you are like, the less I want to have to do with you. Had I known back then what I know now, I would have never married, I would have run from you." My friend told me, he said, "Jeff, I actually think that's the way a lot of people feel in their relationship with God. That God, as he's gotten to know them, I mean he's saved them, yes, because he is loving- but, as he's gotten to know them now, they're a little bit worried that, 'Oh, he might actually just cast me aside because, I know me, and I'd cast me aside.'" And yet, Paul's argument here, all the way through Romans 5-8 and especially here is like, "No, that will never happen! There will never be a moment in your life when you are not the apple of God's eye. He knew you were wicked. He knows all of the trash, all of the stuff you hide from everyone. He knows all of it and he still loved you. He still chased you down. He still killed his Son for you. How much more then, being sons and daughters, will he do for you?"

My friend Steve was a missionary. They adopted a child in Africa. They have four daughters with blonde hair and blue eyes and one little African girl. When this little girl came to their house, the first year was real tough. She used to get really upset when she was ever corrected. She would go to her bedroom and sob, just uncontrollably sob. Steve finally got to the point where he went to her room and he'd open up the door to her bedroom and he'd kneel before her, hold her hands in his hands as she's sitting on the edge of her bed convulsing, and he'd say, "You need to slow down, slow down, slow down. Why are you so sad?" And she'd look up at him and she'd say, "I'm just worried that you're going to give me back." And he'd say, "Oh, oh. You don't understand. We *chose* you. You'll always and forever be mine." And that's the Word the the Lord to every Christian every where. You will always and forever be mine. Psalm 103:10-11:

"The Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him."

Amen? Let me pray for us. Lord, what do I say? My prayer, Father, is that you'd take puny words from a puny guy, here, and that you would touch our affections for them. These are truths in your eternal plan. These are truths, they exist, and yet, we don't feel it all the time. So, God, I pray that you would take those things and you would help us feel it. Convince us in our minds, help it flow into our hearts, and may you be glorified by the product. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.