

Romans 5:1-11

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Date: 18 October 2016

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[0 : 00] So when things are tough at work, or at home, how do you keep yourself going? Let's say! You're under pressure, too much work, not enough time, deadlines, deadlines, deadlines.

How do you motivate yourself? How do you pick up your flagging spirits? Well, you look out of the window and you smile to yourself and you say something like, in five weeks I'll be on holiday. In five weeks I'll be on the beach, dot, dot, dot. In five weeks I'll be in a cottage in Devon, sitting by the fire, reading a good book, away from it all. Or if you're having a really bad week, you think, in 15 days, 3 hours, in 5 minutes I'll be at the airport, flying off to wherever. Isn't that what we do? Why not? I do that. I don't think of escapism. I think that's just simply looking forward to what is going to happen. And so the question is, why do we not look forward more to the future that God has prepared for us? Why do we as Christians, why do we cheer ourselves up thinking about holidays but not of heaven? Do you ever say to yourself, in a few short years I will see God as he really is. I will be with him and with his people, raised from death to life, enjoying perfect peace and joy in God's perfect new world forever. That's something you look forward to, isn't it? No more struggle with sin, no more stress, no more difficult thoughts, no more office politics, no more boredom, no more family worries, no cancer, no separation, no death.

And for God's people, that is as certain as your Christmas holiday. So why don't we look forward to it more? Is it that we think, we don't think it's going to be that great? If so, we really need to read the brochure, don't we, more carefully, the Bible. Because our picture of heaven may well be distorted by second hand ideas that we may have picked up. Or perhaps there's a niggling fear that something is going to go wrong. Maybe there's that fear that we'll not really make it, that we'll arrive at the gates of heaven only to be turned away, that God is going to reject us. So we think, don't we, don't get your hopes up too much. Well, according to Romans 5 verses 1 to 11, God wants you to get your hopes up. God wants you to get your hopes up.

The theme of the passage is summed up by a phrase in verse 2. Through him we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

[3 : 02] God wants you to rejoice in the sure expectation that one day we will see and share the glory of God. God wants you to get your hopes up. And hope does not disappoint. Verse 5. Hope does not put us to shame.

We know, don't we, what it's like to have our hopes dashed. And maybe by a relationship breakdown. Maybe by a failure in an exam. Maybe by the loss of a loved one. By a sat back at work.

And our future hopes are dashed. But our future hope is that the future will be ours. It's guaranteed. Maybe you're thinking it would be nice if things were that certain.

Imagine the difference that that would make to my life. Knowing for certain, for sure, where I was heading. That I could be certain of my eternal future. But can I be sure?

And the simple answer of this passage is, you can be sure because of God's love for us. We can be sure because of God's love for us. That is what guarantees our eternal future with him.

[4 : 09] God's amazing love for us in the present and in the past guarantees our eternal future with him. So firstly, let's see God's love experienced in the present.

Look at verse 5. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been, has been poured into our hearts.

Through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. God's love in that verse, it doesn't mean our love for God. But rather God's love for us. An awareness of God's love for us has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Now this isn't describing everyone's experience. It is describing the experience of those who have, verse 1, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. And this passage describes to you some of the benefits that are enjoyed by those who are justified.

Those who have been acquitted in God's court through faith in Jesus Christ. So do you remember chapters 1 to 3 if you were here? They showed us the need for justification.

[5 : 17] And chapter 3 to 21 to the end of chapter 4 explains to you what is the way of justification. And now chapter 5 to 8 is all about the benefits that flow from justification.

If you do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, these blessings are yours. And one of the blessings that God has given us is his Holy Spirit. If you don't trust in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning alone, These blessings could be yours.

And they would be yours if you trusted in Christ. And one of the benefits is that God has given us the Holy Spirit. And one of the things that the Holy Spirit does is to ensure us of God's love for us. Let me read to you from Romans chapter 8 and verse 16. It says this. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And this awareness of God's love has not been dripped in. It has been poured in. Can you see what that verse says? It has been poured into our hearts.

[6 : 23] That is the word that is used here. So before we are weighed down with a sense of God's displeasure and guilt and fear and judgment, That's what we were from Romans 1 to 3.

But now we are filled with an overwhelming awareness of God's love that he's poured into our hearts. A related blessing is there in verse 1, isn't it? It is, therefore since we've been justified, we have peace with God.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace has been described as the universal obsession. International peace. The search to end international conflict.

Domestic peace. The pursuit of a harmonious relationship in family and in marriage. Personal peace. People longing for it. Within.

But this verse speaks about something far greater than those. It speaks about peace with God. Yet, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our kids love, there's an Australian Christian singer called Colin Buchanan.

[7 : 27] He is very, very annoying. And yet, very, very good. And he has one of the songs on his CD, which you will sing incessantly after you've heard it. Which is this, the greatest treasure in the whole wide world is peace with God.

The greatest treasure in the whole wide world is peace with God. And that's true. Chapters 1 to 3 of Romans describe a war between you and God.

That we as the human race have rebelled against him. And God has responded rightly with righteous anger and judgment. It's a war. But those who've trusted in Jesus Christ, chapter 5, verse 1, now have peace with God.

There's an end to hostility on both sides. God has laid down his arms and so have we. Another way of putting peace with God is that we are reconciled to him.

Can you see that in verse 10? We were reconciled to God. By the death of his son. Much more now that we are reconciled. Verse 11. Much more we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we've now received reconciliation.

[8 : 36] We are not just justified. We are not just in the courtroom declared acquitted. And declared righteous in God's heavenly court. We are now reconciled to God.

We were his enemies. But now we are his friends. More than that. We were his enemies. But now we are members of his family. The greatest treasure in the whole wide world is peace with God.

And until we have peace with God. We will search in vain for peace with other people. And peace in our hearts. The third blessing that we receive in the present.

Can you see it? It is in verse 2. It is grace. It is grace. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

God's grace here is his acceptance and his favour. So again remember where we've been in Romans. We were under his judgement. But we've gained access by faith by trusting in Christ into his grace.

[9 : 47] And that is now where we stand. And so you don't fall in and out of grace. Having obtained access into his grace. That is now where we stand.

We enjoy God's favour and God's acceptance. A little bit behind the times. But I watched the other day The Last King of Scotland. It's a great film about Idi Amin.

Idi Amin was a dictator. Ugandan dictator. And it gives some idea of what it would have been like to have been in Amin's inner circle. Through the experience of a newly graduated Scottish doctor. He's taken in Nicholas Garrigan. Dr Nicholas Garrigan. He's taken on by Amin as his personal physician. And you gain an insight into life under Amin.

From those who were closest to him. He was an incredibly volatile man. And it meant that you were never sure where you stood. So one moment you could be Amin's trusted friend.

[10:46] The next moment you were his mortal enemy. You could never be sure where you stood. You couldn't predict what would happen next. I used to have bosses like that. You just never knew what he'd be like on any given day.

When he came into the office. But God isn't like that. That if we have faith in Christ. We've obtained access into his grace. And that is where we stand. That is where we remain. Well all this is well and good isn't it?

But what about suffering? Because Christian experience isn't just about basking in God's love is it? We know that. Christian experience is not joy, joy, joy all the day long.

And no trouble. Of course. Christian life is full of hardship. Christians face the difficulties of life in this world. Like everyone else.

And on top of that we face opposition from the world for our faith. And we struggle with ourselves don't we? With sin. And we struggle with the devil. So doesn't that rather spoil the party?

[11:51] We look at verse 3. Verse 3 says more than that we rejoice in our sufferings. We rejoice in our sufferings. It's astonishing. Knowing that suffering produces endurance.

Endurance produces character. Character produces hope. For the Christian suffering although it is unpleasant. And it is unpleasant. Can be beneficial. Do you see the chain reaction?

Look at verse 3. 3. We rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces endurance. And as we battle difficulties we develop endurance.

And endurance. Can you see that verse 4 produces character. There's no shortcuts in Christian character. Don't let anyone ever tell you that there are. There are no shortcuts. But over time as Christians persevere through hardships in this world.

So character produces hope. And we grow in Christian character. And we are encouraged and we are strengthened. And we press on more resolutely to that eternal goal.

[12:57] There's a book I was looking at the other day. You know. The second hand bookshop. And it was telling me how I could turn. Well how it could turn an average civvy. Into a lean mean fitness machine.

In just 16 weeks. Based on the training regime of the paratroopers. Now it's abundantly obvious isn't it. I've not done that. But you can be sure can't you. Can you imagine those 16 weeks.

It's painful reading it. Not alone doing it. This pain and the stress. That you put your body through. And I wonder have you ever thought of the difficulties.

That are in your life at the moment. That they are God's training program. To turn you into the man or the woman. That God wants you to be. It's not a complete explanation for suffering.

It's not that. Far from it. But it is a very important dimension. Of Christian character. Christian character and hope. Is like muscle. Muscles grow don't they.

[13:57] As they are put under pressure. And they experience resistance. And Christian character is like that. God's love then has been poured. Past tense.

It has been poured into our hearts. By the Holy Spirit. We enjoy peace with God. We enjoy his grace. And even in our sufferings. We are assured of God's purpose for us. However our present experience of God's love on his own.

It would be too subjective for you to rely on. But God's love is not just something that we experience in our hearts. Praise God we do in the present. It has been demonstrated in history.

So that's my second point. Look at verse 8. But God shows his love for us. In that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. Now how do you measure love? I say to my son.

How much do you love me? This much. That much. That much. It's that much. Is it? But you can't measure love like that. There's no scales. There's not a cheap measure. There's not a thermometer. There is one way I think that you can measure love.

[15:00] I think you can measure love. It's to weigh up the costliness to the giver. And the worthiness of the recipient. Do you understand that? How much it costs the giver.

And how worthy is the recipient. So the more the gift costs the giver. And the less the recipient deserves it. The greater the love. So let's put that test.

To this passage. Firstly the costliness. Of the gifts to the giver. How much did the gift of God cost him? First page. That God shows his love. For us.

In that while we were still sinners. Christ. Died for us. How does the death of Christ show us? God's love. Well how is Christ related to God? Look at verse 10.

For if. While we were enemies. We were reconciled to God. By the death of his son. The language of father and son.

[15:58] Conveys something. Of how much it actually cost God. Romans 8 verse 32 says. He did not spare his own son. But gave him up for us all. That is how much God loves us.

The gift of God. Could not have cost him more. What is the costliest gift you have ever given anyone? I don't know. Those of you who are parents.

Could you imagine giving up your child. To save someone else? And whenever we are tempted. To doubt God's love for us. Where do we look? Do we look at our circumstances? No there is only one place to look.

We look to the cross. And in the death. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. God cries out. This is how much I love you. Imagine my wife and I are on London Bridge.

And I say to her. I am going to show how much I love you. And at that point. I run across the pavement. Jump over the. Whatever it is. The fence. And jump into the towns.

[16:59] And as I fall and plunge into the water. I shout. I love you. What does that show? Well that shows I am nuts. Doesn't it? That kind of thing. What does that show? It doesn't show anything.

It shows I kind of got some mental imbalance. So I don't want to jump into the towns. Let's just imagine. Where I am. Walking over London Bridge. And. There is a big crowd come.

And Claire is accidentally. Knocked over the barrier. Into the towns. And she falls into the water. But she can swim. Unless she can swim. And so I.

Herculean. Jump off the side. Dive into the water. And shout. I love you. As I. Gather her up. And carry her to the side. Because at that point. It makes sense. Doesn't it? It makes sense.

I've risked my own life. My own. Safety. To go into the water. To rescue her. It's demonstrated. How much I love her. That I was willing to do that. Now can you see.

[17:58] That's a very. Very poor illustration. But verse 7. While we were still sinners. Christ died for us. So in the death of Jesus. God has demonstrated.

Just how much he loves you. Because he did not spare his own son. But he gave him up for us all. What then of the worthiness. Of the recipient. Well there's four words.

Aren't there in the passage. That describe us. It says. Verse 6. We are weak. We are ungodly. Verse 8. We are sinners.

Verse 10. We are enemies. It's one thing isn't it. To make a costly sacrifice. For somebody who is dear to you. Or worthy. But imagine. That sort of love for your enemy.

Look at verse 7. For one will scarcely die. For a righteous person. Though perhaps for a good person. Someone might dare to die. But God shows his own love for us. And that while we were still sinners.

[18:54] Christ died for us. God gave up his own son. For unlovely people like you and me. People who were his enemies. He knew everything about us.

The more the gift costs the giver. And the less the recipient deserves it. The greater the love. And it doesn't get any greater. Than the love of God for us.

If we ever worry. And I know that some of us do worry. If we ever worry. That our experience. Experience of God's love. Is just a feeling. That somehow we generated.

Inside ourselves. We need only look to the cross. Because that was not just. A feeling inside of us. And so God's love.

Wonderfully is something. That we experience in the present. But only because. God's love has been demonstrated. In the past. And there is no question. About the extent of God's love for us. So what?

[19:51] Well that is what guarantees our future. That is why we can be absolutely certain. That we will enjoy the eternal future. That God has promised for us. Third point.

Briefly as we close. It's the climax of the argument. Isn't it? God's love. Which is guaranteed. In the future. God's love. Is guaranteed. In the future.

Do you know what an. A fortiori. Argument is. Probably mispronounced that. It's the if. Dot dot dot dot dot. How much more. Dot dot dot.

Let me. Let me. Give you two examples. If you. If you imagine. That. You ran a marathon. When you were. When you were. A sixteen stone. Couch potato. How much more.

Now that you are. A twelve stone. Lean mean. Beach body machine. Will you be able to run the marathon? Them. Or if you felt. I'm overworked.

[20 : 46] In the office. When all the team was around. How much more. Now. Five of your colleagues. Have been sacked. Now. Now look at the. How much more. Of verse nine.

Since therefore. We have now been. Justified. We've been acquitted. In God's court. By his blood. The blood of Christ. Much more. Shall we be saved. From the wrath of God. For if. While we were. And while we were enemies. We were reconciled to God. By the death of his son. How much more. Now that we are reconciled. Shall we be saved by his life. Do you see what he's saying? That's how God treated you.

When you were his enemy. How is he going to treat you. Now you are his friend. Now you are a member. Of his own family. God will not give up on you.

God will not. Give up on you. If he did not. Spare his own son. If he gave up his son. He is not going to. Abandon you now. He will see the deal. Through to completion.

[21 : 44] And any fears. That we have. That things aren't going to work out. Are completely unfounded. God could not. Have given more proof. Of the fact. That he is for us. Let me read to you.

From Romans 8.32 It says. He who did not. Spare his own son. But gave him up for us all. How will he not also.

With him. Graciously give us. All things. The point is. Summed up in the phrase. Isn't it. In verses 9. And 10. Much more.

Shall we be saved. Verse 10. Much more. Shall we be saved. If we will be saved. On the last day. We will share the glory of God.

Forever. Our eternal future. Will be guaranteed. And because it's guaranteed. It's something that you can rely on. And it's something that you can look forward to.

[22 : 40] And it's something that you can. And you should rejoice. In the hope of the glory of God. And we can be confident. Can't we. That our hope. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't going to put us to shame. And that means.

That you have something. To look forward to. Which is better. And more lasting. On the weekend. And you have something. That is better.

And more lasting. Than your holiday. And it means you have something. To look forward to. As the lights draw in. And it feels dark. And it feels miserable.

Therefore. Since we have been justified. By faith. We have peace. With God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray.