

Therefore...

Romans 5:1-11

Rev. Jeff Chapman ~ August 30, 2026 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church

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¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through 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. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For 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! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-11, NIV)

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So, here's where we have come so far in Romans. Paul spends the first couple chapters making us aware of our desperate need for God's grace.¹ Then he spends the next section declaring how God has provided a way for us to receive the grace we need, specifically through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.² To review from last week, and to emphasize this point, we are saved only by the pure, unmerited grace of God through Christ. However, that grace must be received by us through faith, the means by which that generous gift is manifest in our lives.

I recently heard this illustration which I hope helps make all this clear.³ The practice of skitching is popular with skateboarders. Skitching is a combination of two words: skating and hitching. A skateboarder cannot stand on his board and go up a steep hill. Gravity won't allow it. But if he hitches a belt or rope to the back of a car going up that same hill he will cruise right to the top. Grace is like that car. It has the power to take us where, on our own, we cannot go. Faith is like that belt that hitches us to the car. It has no power in itself, but allows us to access great power. It's not a perfect analogy, but I at least showed a little love to whatever small skateboarder population might be among us today. It's also a reminder that this leaves no room for boasting. As Paul makes clear all along, we are simply unworthy recipients of a generous gift that is not coming to us because of any goodness or accomplishment in ourselves. That leaves this gift open to anybody who is willing to simply hitch their belt to the car! We are saved by grace alone, but through faith alone.⁴

The beginning of chapter 5 then begins with the word, "Therefore...". As many of you know, whenever you see the word "therefore" in the Bible you need ask what it's there for. In this case, it's there to signal that Paul is about to tell us the results of all this. We need grace. God, through Christ, has provided grace. Though faith we access that grace. Now what are the results of all this? In Paul's words, **"Therefore, since we have been justified [by grace] through faith, we have peace with God, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."**⁵ Peace with God. That's the result. In the skateboard analogy, that's what's at the top of the hill!

To understand what this means, let's define the word peace. In our day the word is often used in reference to the absence of something, usually conflict or noise. Warring nations stop fighting and achieve peace. A mother with three young kids finally gets them all down for a nap and gets a little peace and quiet. Most people in the world want these things. Who wouldn't? But biblical peace is so much more, so much more that

¹ Specifically Romans 1:18-3:20

² Specifically Romans 3:21-4:25

³ I'm borrowing this from Tim Keller, "Faith and Grace," *Gospel in Life*, August 21, 2026. Listen at <https://podcast.gospelinlife.com/e/faith-and-grace/>

⁴ Martin Luther once declared, "We are saved by grace alone, but not by grace that remains alone." In other words, faith must follow!

⁵ This and all biblical citations are from the New International Version (NIV).

when you understand biblical peace you realize that *everybody* in the world wants this sort of peace. Because this peace isn't only about the absence of something undesired, like conflict or noise, but also the presence of something deeply desired. The Old Testament Hebrew word *shalom* best captures this. *Shalom* is hard to translate, but essentially is about wholeness, well-being, and harmony. The translation I like best is "flourishing." Who do you know in this world who wants to flourish? Everybody wants to flourish!

Mostly *shalom* has to do with relationships, flourishing relationships. The Greek word translated *peace* here in Romans has, at its root, the verb "to join." Think about two people who are not at peace. When that happens, it's always because some sin on the part of one or both of them has broken the relationship. Sin destroys their "joining", their unity, their peace. For the relationship to once again flourish, something then has to happen to fix what has broken the unity. Imagine I am unfaithful to my wife. I sin grievously by breaking our marriage vows. As a result, there is no longer peace between us. Not only is the relationship broken, but all the benefits of that relationship are compromised, our friendship, our intimacy, our mutual goals, even our shared living space. If the relationship is ever going to flourish again, somebody has to deal with the sin. Either I have to somehow make it up to my wife, which leaves me with a great debt I may never be able to fully pay. Or, she has to forgive me, which puts on her a great and burdensome debt to pay. But one way or another, somebody has to pay the debt.

This is where we have come so far in Romans. Our sin has left us not only separated from God and his blessings, but has left this massive debt separating us that we can never pay. But the gospel declares that God paid the debt himself in the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus brings peace! That's why the angels declared peace on earth at his birth.⁶ It's why the first word Jesus speaks to his disciples after he appears to them at the resurrection is "Peace!"⁷ It's why the Old Testament named Jesus the Prince of Peace.⁸ Now, because of Christ, the thing which was dividing us from God has been removed, meaning that there is now peace in this relationship between us and God. And notice the verb tense. Paul doesn't say that we *will* have peace with God. *He says that we have it now!* We have gained full access to God and his blessings, not a visitors pass that will expire at some point, but the adoption as sons and daughters that allows us eternal access to the favor and blessing of God. If you have hitched yourself to the

freely-given grace of God in Christ, then all is well between you and God, now – today! – and forever.

Sounds idyllic, right? It is. But Paul anticipates your objection. If all is at peace between us and God, not some day but today, then why is life still so hard? It's a fair question, and Paul is ready to answer it. He doesn't avoid the reality of suffering because the Bible never avoids the reality of suffering. This is the age old problem, and the reason why many people walk away from God. If God is the God you just described, full of grace and love for us, willing to sacrifice everything to make peace with us, then why is there still such suffering in the world, even among, sometimes *especially among*, his own people? But when people use suffering as a reason to turn away from God, don't let them off the hook. So you walked away from God because of the problem of suffering; now what? You still have the problem of suffering in this world, except now what resources do you have to face it? Now your only way forward is to numb yourself against it as best you can? Suffering is a problem for the atheist just as it is for the Christian.

But far less for the Christian, and Paul here shows us why. To be clear, the suffering he is referring to here is probably a very specific suffering. The word doesn't mean general hardship, but more specifically the hardship that comes as a result of faith in Jesus. This is the hostility that Christians will likely face in this world because of our association with Jesus. Jesus himself warned us that this sort of suffering was coming.⁹ And Paul wants to teach us three things about that suffering when it comes.¹⁰

First, he wants to be clear that such suffering is a *pathway to glory*. He even says we should "**glory in our sufferings.**" When you follow Jesus as his disciple in this world which rejects him, you are bound to face hardship because you are going against the grain. Jesus did, so why shouldn't his followers? To follow somebody means to go where they go. But though the path of discipleship inevitably involves suffering, it also inevitably leads to glory. Crucifixion leads to resurrection and is, in fact, the only way to get there. So though we don't ever celebrate our sufferings themselves – that's masochism! – we can, and should, celebrate in the midst of them because they remind us that we are on the pathway that Jesus traveled, and that pathway ultimately leads to glory with Christ.

⁶ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." – Luke 2:14

⁷ See John 20:16,21,26.

⁸ See Isaiah 9:6

⁹ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." – John 16:33

¹⁰ I'm indebted here to John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (InterVarsity Press, 1994), 141-142.

Second, suffering is also a *pathway to maturity*.

Everybody knows this if they just stop and think about it because it's true in every aspect of life. Think of playing a musical instrument. Do you think Eunice got to the point of being able to effortlessly and beautifully play the piano without prior years of suffering through countless hours of practice? No pain, no gain. Yet we live in a world that wants everything immediately, even maturity. People want gain without pain. But it's just not possible. God knows suffering is going to come. And so out of love he makes use of the suffering of this life to grow us and mature us, from perseverance to character, and from character to hope. As Dostoevsky put it in *Crime and Punishment*, "Pain and suffering are always inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart. The really great men must, I think, have great sadness on earth."

Finally, suffering is a *pathway to assurance*, specifically assurance of God's love. I understand that may be contrary to what many people think, people who have concluded that the suffering in our lives is actually evidence that God does *not* love us. But imagine somehow God shielded us from all suffering in the world, much of which is self-inflicted. If your life was always easy, always comfortable, if you always got exactly what you wanted, would you conclude, as a result, that God loved you? I doubt it. You'd probably just ignore God altogether. In fact, hardly anybody comes to God when life is all unicorns, butterflies and rainbows. Even Jesus said at one point that it is very hard for rich people, people who have everything they want, to find the kingdom of Heaven.¹¹ Why would such people even look for heaven if they have deceived themselves into thinking that they have found everything they ever need on earth?

It's in the hard places in life, the places where we run out of options and don't know the way forward, it's in those places that we reach out to God. It's also where we meet God and discover that he is not a God who stays above the suffering and keeps his hands clean, but is rather a God who has come down into the pit of suffering in our world. He knows it. He has endured it himself. He endures it with us. How many of you here this morning could stand up front and give testimony of how you experienced the love of God in very tangible ways in the midst of some of the hardest seasons of your life? We could testify all day!

All this helps us understand why Paul declares here that suffering ultimately leads to hope. Or, put another way, this is why we can remain hopeful in the midst of

suffering and hardship, especially when it comes as a result of our association with Jesus in this world. But to be clear – and this is key! – hope is not wishful thinking. That's another word we have cheapened in our day. We say things like, "I hope that it won't rain on Saturday and spoil the wedding." Brides and grooms talk like this all the time. But they don't know. It may rain; it may not rain. We can try and be optimistic and cross our fingers, but it's ultimately uncertain. That's not biblical hope. Biblical hope sounds more like this: "I hope the sun will come up in the morning." Imagine saying this in the darkest part of the night when there is no sign of the sun anywhere. Is that wishful thinking? No! That is *confident expectation*, which is a better definition of true hope. Even though there is only darkness now, you confidently expect that it's only a matter of time before a sliver of light streaks across the eastern horizon.

If you have hope like this, and maybe *only* if you have hope like this, the darkness of life can be endured. Viktor Frankl was the Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor who is most famous for his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. While he suffered in Nazi concentration camps, enduring more hardship than most of us can even imagine, he discovered that even though circumstances can strip a person of almost everything you cherish, nothing can ever take away your freedom to live with hope. That's yours to either keep or give up.

Frankl came to this conclusion after simply observing his fellow prisoners. Many lost hope, came to believe that nothing good was ever going to come. And once they gave up in their spirits, their bodies would quickly follow. The loss of hope was usually a fatal blow. By contrast, other prisoners, even those who were physically often much weaker but who retained a confident expectation for what was to ultimately come, sunrise after a dark, dark night, they were often the ones who persevered and survived. As the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."¹²

What is the source of such hope for us? How can followers of Jesus remain so confidently expectant even in the face of hard circumstances which every day threaten to undo others? This hope can't be based on circumstances of the moment, because all circumstances will inevitably change, sometimes in an instant. And it certainly can't be based on our moods and feelings, which are also wildly subject to change. So what is the foundation of such hope? How can we live today, even

¹¹ "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." – Matthew 19:24

¹² Source unknown

when things are hard, with the confident expectation that the peace of God in which we now stand will one day be fully realized, that the flourishing of shalom will one day be all that remains?

Paul gives the answer in verse 5 when he declares, **“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”** Once you have placed your faith in Christ, the very Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, comes to take up residence in your life. The Spirit within you has many jobs, but one of them is to constantly remind you of God’s love. Paul says here, in fact, that God’s love is poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit. Later in Romans 8:16 he declares, **“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”** In that same passage he says that this is the reason we can cry “Abba!” when we call out to God. Literally, that’s “Daddy!” It’s the address a child uses when that child feels tender intimacy with her father. My two grown daughters still call me Daddy sometimes. I love it. I’d be concerned if they addressed me formally as “Father.” Can’t you see that Paul is telling us here that the Holy Spirit wants to remind you constantly that the peace between you and your Heavenly Father is so secure that you can come to him as Daddy. His love for you is absolutely secure, meaning he will not fail to do for you what he has promised to do for you.

But how can we be so confident, even if the Holy Spirit is reminding us every day? Paul tells us in the following verses, which are some of the most beautiful verses in the whole letter of Romans. He writes, starting in verse 6,

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.

“Demonstrates” is probably too weak a word. “Proves” is a better word. This is how God *proves* his love for us which is the foundation of such confident expectation: *He died for us*. But not just that, he died for us when we were his enemies. Paul piles on here. He calls us “ungodly” and “sinners.” Later in verse 10 he uses the word “enemies.” It’s a word that implies deep hostility and hate. It’s the word Jesus used when he referred to Satan.¹³ This isn’t just passive neglect, ignoring God,

but active disregard for his majesty, his moral order, and his covenantal claims, making us absolutely deserving of his wrath. This is our state of hostility before God, and, according to Paul, we are “powerless” to get ourselves out of it.¹⁴

You see, if we were good people, even generally decent people, maybe God would die for us because we were worth dying for. As Paul points out here, even *we* might be willing to do such a thing for somebody else. It’s rare, but people do sacrifice their lives for people they consider worth dying for. But who dies for an enemy? It’s unheard of! Commentator John Stott points out that the essence of love is self-giving, and the degree of love can be measured by both the costliness of the gift given and the worthiness or unworthiness of the recipient. In other words, if I give a very costly gift to my child whom I care deeply for, that is love, but it’s not the greatest love. Even dying for your child might be, in some ways, a selfish act, because you would rather give your life and save your child than live your life without your child when you knew your death would have saved her.

The most precious thing you have to give is your life. If you give your life for an enemy, a person who in no way deserved such a gift, especially from you the one he hates, then the love you have for him is the most priceless love of all. The more the gift costs and the less worthy the recipient, the greater the love.¹⁵ Paul’s point is that God’s love is the greatest love of all because he does what nobody else is ever willing to do, which is to give up what is most precious for those who are most unworthy. **“While we were sinners, Christ died for us!”** Do you want to know what God is really like? Look at Jesus. Specifically, look at Jesus dying on the cross for people who hate him. *That’s* what God is really like. That’s the degree to which God loves us.

Think carefully with me, because here we now arrive at the heart of the message.

Imagine that God died for us because we were good people, in some way deserving of his sacrifice. Can you see how shaky a foundation that actually is? What if we’re not good enough? Or what if we stop being good enough? And how will we ever know if we are good enough to merit such a gift? Said another way, if God loves us because of something *in us*, then the attention shifts from Christ to us. Aren’t we then the ones who are to be praised? Writer Richard Lovelace describes the results of such a misunderstanding this way,

¹³ See Matthew 13:39 and Luke 10:19.

¹⁴ If you need to review all this, go back to the first part of Romans where Paul painstakingly details our need for God’s grace.

¹⁵ Stott, 144

We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christian life. Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace.¹⁶

Do you see what he says? If we believe God loves the lovable, then one of two things will happen. We may come to believe we are lovable, deserving of such love, and then in “falsifying the record” we will become self-righteous. Such people are marked by pride, fierce defensiveness, and a critical spirit towards others. They have to be, because they have to justify themselves! It all depends on them. But the other possibility is that we come to believe we can never measure up to being lovable enough and so eventually find ourselves overwhelmed by discouragement and apathy. Such people are marked by guilt and shame. I will never be enough to earn God’s love for me.

But – and here is the gospel – if God does in fact love the unlovable, and goes to the greatest extent to prove it with the greatest sacrifice, then we are set free from both pride and shame, set free to enjoy the spacious freedom that comes when we make our hope not in our loveable-ness, but in God’s love. We can also hope that the God who has already gone to such extents to save us will certainly not stop now! That’s Paul’s point in the final section, in what might be called his “how much more” argument. In verse 10 he declares, **“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!”**

In reflecting on this passage, commentator N.T. Wright uses the illustration of a mountain climber to help us understand. Imagine you struggle a long time to climb up a sheer rock face (imagine El Capitan in Yosemite!) and, against all odds, you make it to the top of the mountain. You’re not likely then to give up when, at the top of this vertical wall, you are now only faced with a leisurely stroll on a grassy and level path that leads to the summit itself!¹⁷ Do you see his point? If God has already done the hard part, sacrificing himself for his enemies, why would he not now do the last easy bit by bringing those who have made been made his friends home – and not just his friends, but his beloved

children! If God would do such a thing for us when we were at our worst, imagine what he will do for us now when we are, through Christ, at our best!

It’s good to remember that salvation for Paul is always past, present and future.¹⁸ In the past we were saved from the *penalty* of our sin. As Paul says here, we now stand firmly in the peace of God. We are forgiven.¹⁹ But now in the present, we are continually being saved from the *power* of sin. He speaks about this when he brings up suffering, and how God is at work in us transforming us day by day into people of godly character.²⁰ But one day we will be saved from the very *presence* of sin.²¹ That’s Paul’s point in his “how much more” argument. Some day the God who has done the hard part will do the easy part by bringing all this into complete fulfillment, total flourishing for all time. The best is yet to come. The best you. The best me. The best us. The best world. The best everything. And it’s all as certain as the sun coming up in the morning, maybe even more certain.

That’s the “therefore,” the brilliant result of God’s grace, received in faith.

Therefore, as Paul tells us in verse 11, we can now boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we can and should eagerly share this good news with others because it’s not just good news for us, but good news for everybody who will hitch their belt to the bumper!

Therefore, Christ now enlists us to join him in seeing his kingdom established in this world, meaning he will work through us in the simple but repeated acts of kindness and sacrifice we offer to those around us every day, loving as we have been loved.

Therefore, we can now live free of pride and shame, because both are terribly out of place in the Christian life.

Therefore, we can rejoice even when we suffer, not rejoicing *for* our suffering, but *in* it, because we know that it is a pathway leading to glory, maturity and assurance.

Therefore, we can live with a foundation of deep and unshakable peace that is rooted not in our loveable-ness but in his unconditional love.

¹⁶ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (InterVarsity Press, 1979), 211.

¹⁷ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 1* (Westminster John Knox, 2004), 88.

¹⁸ I’m helped here by John Stott, 146

¹⁹ See also Ephesians 2:8

²⁰ See also 1st Corinthians 1:18 and Philippians 2:12

²¹ Paul goes into great deal about this in Romans 8:18-39

Therefore, we can also know enduring hope, a hope that enables us to live each day in confident expectation that the God who has already done the hard part, will most certainly finish the easy part.

All praise, all glory, all honor to Christ, and to Christ alone.

Amen.

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The Next Step
A resource for Life Groups and/or personal application

1. Read Romans 5:1-11 again. What do you notice? What stands out to you?
2. Paraphrase what you think it means to be “justified through faith” (verse 1).
3. What benefits does Paul list as the benefits of being justified through faith? Focus especially on verses 1-5.
4. What does it mean to have peace with God? Do you feel that you have peace with God today? If so, what is the source of that peace? If not, what is standing in the way?
5. How are suffering, hope, and God’s love interconnected? Or are they?
6. Share a testimony from your own life as to how God has used suffering or hardship in your life to lead you down a pathway that led to either glory, maturity, or assurance of his love for you.
7. Focus on verse 8. What is Paul telling us here? Eugene Peterson paraphrases this verse in *The Message* this way: “But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.” Is that a good interpretation of what Paul is saying? Why or why not?
8. What tone of voice do you imagine Paul is using in verses 9-11. What is the main thing he is trying to communicate?

Table to Table: A Question for kids and adults to answer together.



*Why does God love us?
When did God start loving us?
Does God’s love for us ever change?*