

OUR HOPE OF SHARING GOD'S GLORY

Romans 5:1-21

Lesson 5

Key Verse: 5:2

“... through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

1. Peace with God (1-11)

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." To be justified means to be forgiven our sins; it means that we have a right relationship with God. Once we were God's enemies (10). We were ungodly sinners (6,8), and objects of God's wrath. We were powerless to help ourselves (6). But when we were in this helpless state, God demonstrated his love for us and sent Christ to die for us, his enemies. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have been justified by his blood and reconciled to God. We are no longer his enemies; we are his precious possession, his own children.

The peace we have in our new relationship with God changes our lives. First, the foundation of life changes. "We have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." (2) God's grace becomes the foundation of life. Once the foundation of my life was my own feelings and ideas; I depended on myself. This was a seemingly strong foundation, but actually it was very weak and shaky. Now, I stand in God's grace. I can only depend on him. I must listen to and obey his word by faith, and build my life on a foundation of rock.

Second, the destination of life changes. When I was living as an enemy of God, the destination of my life was hell--but I didn't know this. I thought I had no direction. I was like Cain, a restless wanderer. Now, my destination is the heavenly kingdom. I have hope of sharing in the glory of God, and I rejoice in this hope. Abraham seemed to be a wanderer, for he lived in tents and moved from place to place. But he was not a directionless wanderer. He was a pilgrim going toward the heavenly city, whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:8-10). I follow in his footsteps.

Third, following the new destination is the new hope. Once my hope was in education or in money or the things that money could buy or in people or in some job or title or position. These are all things that perish. Now I rejoice in the hope of sharing the glory of God. Furthermore, this hope is a sure hope that will not disappoint me. It is a hope that is backed up by God's love. It is confirmed by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in me.

Fourth, and directly related to the hope of sharing God's glory, I have assurance of

salvation. "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him. For if when 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? God loved me and saved me when I was his enemy; how much more he loves me and will complete that salvation now that I have become his precious child. My salvation does not rest on my changeable feelings, but on God's strong and sure grace and love. I cannot depend on my own faithfulness, for how unfaithful I am! But God who promised is faithful. Because of this, I can have assurance of my salvation. No one can snatch me out of the Father's hand.

Fifth, I can rejoice in all circumstances. 'Rejoice' is mentioned 3 times in verses 1-11. First, I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; but not only this, I rejoice in suffering. This seems like a strange thing to say. How can anyone rejoice in suffering? This American culture is built on the idea of avoiding suffering as much as possible. Most people seem to be primarily interested in pleasure seeking. But one who is at peace with God learns to rejoice in suffering. Why is this? It is because God uses large and small sufferings to train us in faith. When we trust God and know that he loves us, we can have a positive attitude toward suffering. Then, when we suffer, we can learn perseverance; perseverance produces character. Many people don't seem to know the meaning of perseverance. When things become a little difficult, they just quit or walk away. So people become weak and sick and easy prey for demons. If one learns overcoming faith, then he grows in the character and mind of Jesus. He can have real hope--hope that does not disappoint because it is hope in God's promises, not hope in the world. As we grow in the character of Jesus, God pours his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. When God's love fills us, we stop becoming beggars for love, and become people who can give love to others. How joyful our lives become.

But our greatest joy is joy in God himself. Verse 11 says, "not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." God promised Abraham, 'I am your shield and your very great reward.' The Levites were not given any land in the promised land--they were promised that God himself would be their inheritance. The Catechism says that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. When this joy in God is in our hearts, then suffering draws us closer to God and the closer we come to God, the greater our joy. People who spend their lives seeking pleasure find that all the things they thought would bring them pleasure only bring them heavy burdens and meaninglessness. Worldly pleasure turns to dust and the imagined joys of a worldly life turn to hell. But joy in Jesus is real, and it is forever. The things men seek to quell and assuage their restlessness and give them peace become trouble and distress; but the peace that Jesus gives is real; it is in the heart and soul and it lasts forever.

2. In Adam, death; in Christ, life (12-21)

One person is very important. One person can change the course of history for a family, a campus, a city, a nation and for the whole human race. Adam was a man who changed the course of human history into a downward plunge toward destruction. Jesus also changed the course of human history. Jesus' death and resurrection is not only the turning point in the life of one individual person who believes in him, it is the turning point of human history. Verses 12-21 is a summary of what Paul has been saying about the universal problem of sin and the universal solution in the gospel in 1:18-5:11. Through this brief summary of history, Paul explains how sin came into the world through the disobedience of one man Adam. When Adam listened to the voice of his wife and disobey the word of God and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, the order of creation was broken. Sin came in to rule and sin brought death. When Adam sinned, all humanity was infected with the sickness unto death. All mankind followed Adam down the road that leads to destruction. From Adam to Moses there was no law to expose sin. But even when sin is not called sin, it still leads to death. Sin spread to all mankind and brought death to all the race of Adam. In these days, people try to call sin by some other name. Psychology finds excuses for sin; pragmatism rationalizes sin. But sin is sin and it's consequence is death.

Jesus Christ was a new beginning for the human race. He is the starting point of a new humanity. His obedience to death on the cross for the sins of the world opened the way to heaven and to a new life for all who believe in him. Through his death, all men can have life. His blood, offered to God as a sacrifice for sin, justifies sinners who believe and brings peace with God. The problem of sin can be solved in no other way than through Jesus. People who accept God's free gift of grace are transferred from the kingdom of Satan, where sin and death reign, to the kingdom of God, where God rules by his grace.

Everyone is either in Adam or in Christ. If we are in Adam, we are under the power of sin and death. If we are in Christ we are under the reign of grace. When we have access to and stand in the grace of God, we rejoice in our hope of sharing God's glory. Our citizenship is in heaven and our inheritance is there. In Adam, all die; in Christ, all are made alive.