

WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD (The Fruits of Faith Part One)

Romans 5:1–5

Key Verse: 5:2b

“...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

What gets you excited? Maybe it's racing to the top academically? Or having a sudden career breakthrough? Or finding that your investment really paid off? Or seeing your favorite sports team win? Or maybe it's as simple as getting to enjoy a delicious meal, getting married to the love of your life, welcoming a new baby, or getting to see family again. Or maybe it's just a chance to have some peace and quiet. All these human joys are gifts to be thankful for. But as great as they are at the moment, they fade so quickly. After the thrill is gone, we're often left with an emptiness, as if the momentary happiness barely happened at all. But in today's passage the Apostle Paul points us to a hope that's so lasting, so transcendent, it not only sustains us through life's trials, it ignites and informs our entire spiritual journey. What is it? It's the hope of the glory of God. But what even is that? Is it real? If it is, what does it mean for us personally, right now? And how could it make any difference in our lives? Paul tells us today that this hope isn't just an abstract idea—it's something we grasp, experience, and anchor our lives in, through faith in Jesus. As we open God's word today, may he open our eyes and our hearts to this glorious hope.

In our Part One study of Romans, Paul explained the good news of justification by faith. To know this good news, we first need to know the bad news of how sinful we really are. Only when we do can we more deeply appreciate the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1). Only then can we be absolutely sure of our standing with God. Now, in Part Two, Paul goes on to his next major topic of Christian life: sanctification. Simply put, sanctification means to be made holy. When we're in our sins, that's not even something we naturally want; we'd just rather stay comfortable. But justification and sanctification go hand in hand.¹ You can't receive Jesus to forgive your sins without also receiving him to change your life. It's really good news that we don't have to live in ever-increasing slavery to sin, and all the frustration and condemnation that go with it. The good news is that in Jesus, God sets us free. Still, we may not be sold. We may not think getting into sanctification, week after week, is going to be an exciting thing. But

¹ As the Reformer John Calvin put it: “As Christ cannot be divided into pieces, so the two things, justification and sanctification...are inseparable.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter 11, Section 6.

think of it kind of like buying a “fixer upper” house. Justification is like closing on the house. You’re told it’s legally yours. But who wants to live in a house full of dysfunction, with bad smells, dust, all kinds of pests, and embarrassing holes? It’s depressing! Sanctification is like going room by room with the Master Builder as he renovates our heart, cleans out the junk, and turns it into a home we love living in. But honestly, sanctification is still confusing to understand, and it doesn’t happen automatically. To help us get into it, Paul first patiently explains the context of it, from God’s point of view.

He starts with something he’s already helped us receive: grace. Did you know, the word “grace” appears in Romans more than in any other book of the Bible—18 times! In chapters 3 and 4 Paul reminded us that we “are justified by his grace as a gift,” and that God’s promise is guaranteed to us on the basis of grace. But now in chapter 5, he takes it a step further. He says we obtain “access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (2a). Grace isn’t just our starting point; it’s our foundation and daily security in Christ. But we so easily abuse this grace, claiming the name of Jesus without any intention of changing our sinful ways. That kind of cheap grace is not the gospel. The true gospel of grace always leads us to sanctification. In chapters 5–7 Paul shows how grace fuels our entire sanctification process, giving us unshakeable peace and radiant hope in chapter 5, breaking sin’s dominion in our lives so we can walk in newness of life in chapter 6, and using the law in chapter 7 to expose our utter helplessness, so we cry out to Jesus our only Savior.

To begin, Paul mentions the fruits of our justification by faith. Let’s read all of today’s passage, verses 1–5. You may think these are just nice-sounding words. In our common sense, we would like to pick out the pretty words and say, “Hey, these are the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience...and so on (Gal. 5:22–23). Let’s move on!” But that’s just skimming the surface. These first five verses are the powerhouse, the engine of Christian sanctification. If we keep reading, we see Paul comes back to unpack these fruits of faith in chapter 8. So it’s good to slow down here and start to digest them. Look at verses 1–5 again. What fruits of faith does Paul mention? They are peace, grace, hope, and love.

Let’s start with verse 1: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This peace is the first fruit of our new relationship with God in his grace—an unshakeable peace knowing that through Jesus, we are declared not guilty. His blood and righteousness become our very own righteousness. This faith gives us real peace, peace with God. But Paul quickly moves on. And as we keep reading, we realize he’s building a progression. Read verse 2a. “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...” These first two fruits of faith, peace and grace, are like a foundation, like step one and step two. Step

one is to stop thinking I'm under God's wrath, and instead, that now I'm at peace with God. Step two is to realize that I am now standing in his grace. It's like we've just walked into this brand new room called grace. The door was closed to us, but faith in Jesus is the key that gave us access. This room of grace is incredible. It's a room we need to spend time in, and soak it up. In this room of grace, we find our skinny little spiritual legs start getting stronger. In this room of grace, we breathe better. In this room of grace, we see ourselves and others with so much more kindness and love. In this room of grace, we feel so much more secure, even if we have no human security.

Then Paul quickly pivots. Let's read verse 2b. "...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is like step three in our new Christian staircase of life. It's truly "a whole new world." In our sin, we couldn't even see the glory of God. But now, in the grace of Jesus, our eyes begin to open. Our hearts even begin to yearn for it. The word "rejoice" here can also be translated as "boast": "...and we boast in hope of the glory of God." What is this hope we boast in? It's our hope in Jesus and his kingdom. It's better bragging rights than any family heritage, any human achievement, any glory of this world. Through his death and resurrection Jesus our Savior and Lord transforms us into children of God and heirs of God. He not only gives us the grace of forgiveness, he gradually transforms us into his own image through this process of sanctification. He gives us the glorious hope to share in his glory, the hope that he is going to redeem all things. He gives us the shared hope to be free from our bondage to corruption and to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The Bible calls this the "living hope."

In general, hope is so important in life. If we have no hope, it's hard to find any meaning in life. Many people come to places like America seeking a brand-new start and a better life. And while that earthly hope is a wonderful gift, it isn't "the living hope." Without Christ, even the pursuit of the American dream can leave families empty and lost in the love of the world. The living hope we have in Jesus is essential, crucial, in living the Christian life, and particularly in our sanctification.

Paul continues discussing how it applies in verses 3–4. Let's read them. Paul has more to say about our sufferings in chapter 8. Here he just introduces it briefly. What are our sufferings? Generally they include all human suffering, including the suffering to survive, the suffering that accompanies physical problems, the suffering of bearing and nurturing and raising children, the suffering of living in a cursed world among sinful human beings, who sometimes can be so hurtful and hard to bear. They are the sufferings of injustice, which is rampant in every time and place due to people's sinful natures. For a Christian, our sufferings are also sharing in the sufferings of Christ. What are his sufferings? No one could ever suffer as Jesus did. But we are all called to share

in his sufferings, which are sufferings to proclaim the gospel, sufferings that go with helping others grow as his disciples. These days I'm reading a good book called *The 'Disciple Investing' Life* by Rod Culbertson. It's a call for all ordinary Christians to follow Jesus in discipling others. "Disciple Investing" is not for specialists, but for *anyone* willing to give up his or her pride and selfishness and just start investing in building up others. As we patiently invest our lives in others, for Jesus' sake, there are real sufferings involved. There's no easy way to do it. But in Jesus we have hope of the glory of God, that God himself can change and transform people into new creations and Christ-like servants.

As we hold onto our hope of the glory of God in Jesus, instead of complaining or escaping, we can build real endurance. Endurance is not just for athletes—it's for all of us, in the midst of all our problems, challenges and hardships. It means not just to "white-knuckle it," or to just "grin and bear it." Here, "endurance" means to eagerly wait for something we hope for, no matter what our present sufferings are (8:25). Enduring with hope is basically patience (2:7). Through endurance we have hope (15:4). Through endurance we grow in God's own endurance, which enables us to live in harmony with one another, even though we are so different (15:5). This hope sustains us as we endure our sufferings, whatever they may be.

Paul says that as we build such hopeful endurance, we build character. This original word was used to describe working with metals, testing to see if they were genuine or fake. So it doesn't just mean nice personality traits. It refers to inner refinement. God sometimes puts us in the furnace fire of suffering or affliction to test us (Zech. 13:9; cf. Isa. 48:10). It's not just to test our faith; it's also to refine and purify our character (Dan. 11:35; 12:10). Dear friends of mine have been going through a fiery furnace of personal suffering. It's hard to imagine what they are enduring. But they seek God's presence to sustain them and bring them through it. Suffering purifies our motives and helps us more authentically glorify God, not ourselves. Ultimately, learning to share in the sufferings of Christ molds us into his image. We live in a culture of quick gratification and obsession with comfort. It leaves us as easily angry and impatient creatures who've got to have our way right now. But as we gain hope of the glory of God in Jesus, we endure sufferings so much so that our character actually changes.

And what happens when we see that? Paul says, "...and character produces hope..." (4b). What an inspiring promise! As we grow in Christ-like character through our sufferings, our hope in him goes deeper, it gets more real, more focused, more vibrant. So, hope gets us started as we begin to endure our sufferings, hope shapes us as we develop real Christ-like character through the sufferings, and ultimately, this endurance and this character produce an even more vivid hope in us, a hope in Christ that no suffering can extinguish. So, to

truly rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we've got to first go through suffering to become more like Jesus.

Paul concludes in verse 5. Let's read it. Paul has been writing about boasting in hope, enduring fiery trials, and having our character tested. Now he's acknowledging a very real human fear. What if we go through all this suffering, hold onto this radical hope in Christ, and in the end, it all turns out to be a lie? The expression "put to shame" means publicly humiliated and devastated because we put our hope in something or someone that ultimately failed us. What if our hope was in a successful career, or financial security, or a human relationship? Those things will eventually let us down. We will feel foolish and ashamed of putting our hope in them. But Christian hope is different. It cannot put us to shame, because it's anchored in an objective reality. What is that? God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. This happens right at the beginning of Christian life, as we accept Jesus and his grace who saves us from our sins. But it continues in our earthly pilgrimage as we suffer for him. God pours his love into our hearts again and again. God assures us that this love satisfies us fully, and that nothing and no one can separate us from it. This is what Paul will unpack even more next week.

When I began Bible study, I was, as young people describe it, a hot mess. Outwardly I was okay, but inwardly I was so sick after having lived in my arrogance and rebellion. I wanted to improve myself through living a disciplined life. So I liked morning devotions, lots of Bible study, and serving in many ways. But as I continued, I realized what an actor I could be, and how sick I was. God put me in the fire of his divine discipline in many ways. He trained me not only as a messenger of his word, but also as a shepherd of people. I've been despised and rejected often. A few times I was betrayed. Often I was made use of and made fun of. I was misunderstood, blamed, and even attacked. There were times I carried a load that I don't think most people ever knew. But God was working within me, to lead me to genuine faith in Jesus, and to rely only on his grace. God also was peeling away my sinful nature like the layers of an onion. There've been many tears along the way, and still are. But I know he's working within me. He reminds me of the peace, the grace, the hope, and the love that he has for me in Jesus every day. He keeps teaching me to live before him, to rely on him alone, and become more like him. It's a journey God is inviting each one of us to join.

Let's read verse 2b again. So, what gets you excited? A fun experience? A relationship? Material progress? Or is it hope of the glory of God in Christ? May God bless us all with the ultimate fruit of faith in Jesus, the hope of the glory of God in the midst of suffering as disciple-makers.