

Faith, joy and suffering

Delivered Sunday, July 26

Introduction

- This morning I want to share from our reading in Romans
- So much that can be said - but I want to talk today about three connected things: faith, joy and suffering
- We are living in the hour of Christ returns.
- There will be difficult times ahead
- We must hold on to what we have believed.
- I'm going to work my way through the opening verses of Romans 5, sharing thoughts along the way - then come back and make two applications

Exegesis

Rom 5:1 *1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*

Have been

- Past tense
- Once and for all Jesus paid the price for sin
- There is nothing left to be paid

made right

- Our account has been wiped clean
- There is no longer record of our sin
- The law - which once accused us, has been fulfilled
- There is no longer any law that remains to accuse
- Jesus' death satisfied once and for all the law's requirement for payment

because of faith

- So here is the key - we have to believe in, trust in the payment Jesus made
- He paid it all, but we receive it by faith.
- Paul is presenting a righteousness that comes by faith. This is the message or the entire book.
- Paul asserts: **Rom 1:16-17** *For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. 17 This Good News tells us how God makes us*

right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

- We are made *right in his sight* by faith from start to finish. There is no other way to be righteous. There is no other thing required for righteousness
- See again **Romans 3:22-25a** *We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

- This is the core: *People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood!*
- Do we believe this? Today - are you right with God? If you think yes - why? If you think no - why?
- What does our faith rest in? Mine rests on the blood of Jesus Christ!!

peace with God

- We are now at peace with God. We were once his enemy, but now have been reconciled to him through the blood of Jesus Christ!
- There is no longer anything that separates us from God.

Because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us

- We are here today to remember what Jesus has done
- His sinless life and sacrificial death in our place
- Jesus paid it all!

(2) Because of our faith

2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

- Again our faith in Christ's provision
- This is what is under attack
- This is what I need to remind us of

Christ has brought us into this place of undersized privilege where we now stand

- Jesus paid it all
- We believe in his blood as payment
- We stand here justified before a holy God
- We don't deserve it
- We stand in this blessed place!!

- See **Psalm 32:1 (NIV)** (1) *Of David. A maskil. Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*
- That's us!

Confidently

- Rests not on our performance but on Christ's provision
- The enemy wants to put our eyes on ourselves
- The old hymn *On Christ the solid rock* opens with the line *My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness!*
- I have confidence before a holy God - because of Christ's perfect provision

Joyfully

- When I realize that it doesn't depend on me - that Jesus paid it all there is joy!!
- When I realize that my sins are forgiven and that I am right in His sight
- This joy isn't based on circumstances in the moment, but it comes as we look forward to the day when we will (because of Christ) share in the glory of God!
- That should be our confidence and our hope
- See how the Galatians lost this
- See how the church today is in danger of losing it too!

3-4 - Rejoicing in troubles and trials

SUMMARY

- So far so good. A great reminder on communion Sunday:
- We've been made right with God through faith
- We have peace with him
- We stand as sons and daughters in his presence
- We look forward to sharing in his glory

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.

TRIALS AND TROUBLES

- We can rejoice - it is something we can do
- A choice
- **Note:** *when we run not if we run*
- We will have troubles and trials
- Jesus said **John 16:33** *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*
- We are experiencing times of difficulty - they should not surprise us
- Neither should they steal our confidence or our joy

- Instead they are opportunities for joy!

THE PROCESS OF STRONG CONFIDENCE

- Trials and trouble are not accidental
- They are permitted by God to strengthen us
- He hasn't abandoned us or forgotten us. He is preparing us and strengthening our confidence
- We must learn to hold fast to our faith - we can't let these tough times shake our confidence
- **Illustrate Asa:** Our reading from Saturday included the story of how Asa stood his ground against an army who outnumbered him 2 to 1. Asa was a good king, and was serving the Lord... yet he faced this trial. Through it - God brought victory and revival for the nation!
- **Truth:** God has allowed us to go through these things right now. The reality is that things may get worse instead of better. We can't quit or give up! We
- **Note:** Things may get worse going forward!
- We cannot let these difficulties defeat us
- **Romans 8:35-37** (which we read on Friday) says *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*
- Jesus died in our place - and rose from the dead - because God loved us.

- These things don't mean that God doesn't love us!
- **Rom 8:38-39** *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- If our confidence is waning, the Lord allows testing to strengthen in!
- It's time to dig in!!
- We've come too far to turn back now!! We can't quit.

5 No disappointment

5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

- Here's what it boils down to: this hope in Christ's provision and our share in his salvation and eternal reward will not disappoint us!!!
- **Illustrate: Broken flash** looking for a flash - about \$400 new, found one on EBay and got it for about \$100. Got it and it didn't work,... and no refunds... and to have Nikon fix it - about 150. I was disappointed by the promise. God's promise won't be a disappointment

We know he loves us... because of the Spirit

- Here's the final thought - God has given us a little taste of heaven - by giving us His Spirit
- He is the deposit that guarantees His promise
- Renting a new place: you put up a deposit - indicating you're going to fulfill your part of the contract.
- See **2nd Corinthians 1:21-22** *It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, 22 and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.*
- He is the "engagement ring" if you will. It marks us as "His".
- See **Ephesians 1:13b-14** *And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.*
- We know God will keep his promises - because he has given us His Spirit
- His Spirit reminds us of His love
- When we look to God - and think about His love... and believe it - that's the Holy Spirit - revealing that truth to us

Application - Are we living by faith in his blood?

- Do we really believe Jesus paid it all?
- If so, where's the joy??
- In the book of Galatians, Paul understood someone had eroded their faith in the blood of Jesus - because they no longer experienced joy
- They were now trying to earn salvation - and that never works!
- In the previous chapter - Paul talks about holding on by faith - using the example of Abraham.
- See **Romans 4:18-25** *18 Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” 19 And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. 20 Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. 22 And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.*
- The longer I live, the more I realize I’ve failed the Lord
- The temptation is to become discouraged, etc.
- Now with trouble and hardship it would be easy to think God isn’t really taking care of us - or that he’s angry with us.
- No!! I will hang on to the promises of God. I will not waver in my faith!