

ROMAN SERIES #15

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on Sunday, March 17, 1996, by the Rev. W. Graham Smith, D.D.

ROMANS 5:1-11

THE BENEFITS OF BELIEVING

Romans chapter 5 is rich with life-changing truth, and Paul is excited as he writes this up-beat passage. Three times in these first 11 verses he says, “Rejoice”! The verb literally means to “boast proudly” or “brag.” There is a note of jubilation in the word. And Paul mentions some things that should get us excited as believers in Christ.

He has just explained what it means to be a Christian, and now he’s going to talk about the results of being a Christian. So, in verse 1 he says, “Therefore. . .” You know that every time you see “therefore” in the Bible you look to see what it’s “there for”! Paul says, “Therefore since we have been justified through faith...” Now what is he doing? He’s summarizing the first 4 chapters of Romans. He’s saying, “Therefore, in light of the fact that God makes us Christians because of what He has done for us in Christ, I’m now going to tell you the benefits of believing! I’m going to tell you the glorious consequences of being justified by faith. Now we’re going to talk about the positive results of being in a saving relationship with God.”

Now there are six key words in these verses, so let’s write them down:

- 1) The first word is “PEACE.”
- 2) Another word is “ACCESS.”
- 3) An important word is “GRACE.”
- 4) Then there is the word “HOPE.”
- 5) And the word “LOVE” is a key word.
- 6) And finally, the word “SAVED.”

Now, the key pronoun in this passage is the pronoun “we.” “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice. “You see, what Paul says in this passage applies to every believer from that day to this.

So what are the benefits of believing for a 20th Century Christian?

1. We have peace with God. Verse 1 — “Therefore since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” Paul is saying, “The war is over. God is not angry with me. God and I are no longer fighting each other. God holds absolutely nothing against me anymore!” That is certainly good news, isn’t it?!

To the Jew, peace was never merely a negative thing; it was never simply the absence of hostility. When a Jew greeted a friend in the street with the word “shalom!” (“Peace be with you!”), he was saying what that beautiful Hawaiian word “Aloha!” means — “I wish the very best for you!” As we said in the previous sermon, peace with God produces the peace of God, which is peace of mind. And this peace isn’t based on our performance, but through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The only lasting peace comes from the Prince of Peace.

2. We have access to God. Verse 2 — “... our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” This word “access” was used in history to refer to having an audience with a king. It was used when one person brought another person into the presence of a third party. Let me illustrate what I mean. During the Civil War a soldier was very discouraged, and he tried for two weeks to get into the White House to see President Lincoln, but nobody would let him in; he didn’t have “access.” Then one day the President’s youngest son, Tad, came out, and he saw the soldier standing there, and he said, “What are you here for?” And the soldier said, “Well, I would like to see your Dad.” And Tad said, “Oh, I can get you in” The son got access to his father for that soldier. That is exactly what Jesus, the Son of God, has done for us. He has made it possible for us to have a ready entree to the very presence of our heavenly Father.

You see, when we have peace with God, we have access to God. This access is not by our works, but because of Christ. Today we don’t have to go through a priest or anyone else to get to God. We can talk to Him directly at anytime. Of course, Satan likes to keep Christians in the dark about this truth; and so often we say, “I’m not good enough to pray and ask God for things. I’m not worthy to ask God for a new job. I don’t deserve to have God hear my prayer.” If you think like that, you don’t understand this principle of “access.” When you became a Christian, one of the immediate benefits you received was 24—hours—a—day access to God — something even better than E-mail! But Satan says, “Think of all the wrong things you did today. You should be ashamed to pray and ask God for blessings.” Look at Hebrews 4:16, “Let us then approach the throne of grace timidly(?)...” “Let us approach the throne of grace scared to death (?)...” That’s not what it says. “Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” As a believer, you have access to God anytime, anyplace, and under any circumstances, with any request. Now that’s what access is. The door is never closed. So we have peace with God and access to God; and then,

3. We have a hope in life. Verse 2b says, “And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Now in the New Testament, “hope” does not mean “wishful thinking.” In Scripture “hope” means “confidence.” “Hope” means “I’m confident that things are going to work out.” And “hope” is essential to living. You cannot live without hope. Doctors will tell you that people who have given up hope don’t recover; and people who have hope get well much more quickly. Now, why are Christians so happy? Because we have hope, and we look forward to a glorious future! No matter what happens; no matter how many problems and trials we encounter, we know what the ultimate outcome is going to be. We have already fast-forwarded to the end of the video tape, and we know that God is going to come through for us.

Now the opposite of “hope” is “pessimism”; and Paul says, “We have hope, and

therefore, we rejoice in hope!” You see, folks, a pessimistic Christian is an insult to God, because what a pessimistic Christian is saying is this — “I don’t have any hope. I don’t believe that God is in control.” But Paul says of the genuine believer, “We rejoice in hope”; and literally the word “rejoice” means to “boast.” So “we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Now what is “the glory of God”? It is the radiant splendor which will in the end be fully displayed. Already His glory is being continuously revealed in the heavens and the earth (Psalm 2:1 and Isaiah 6:3). Two thousand years ago it was uniquely revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord (John 12:23ff; John 17:1ff). One day, however, the curtain will be raised and the glory of God will be fully disclosed. What will happen when Jesus comes again? Look at Colossians 3:4, “When Jesus Christ Who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” That simply means that at the second coming of our Lord we are going to share God’s glory. Why? Because we deserve it? Certainly not. Again, it is due to the boundless grace of God. So, we rejoice in hope because we know the end is going to be OK! Folks, for us Christians, the best is yet to come!

4. Our problems take on a new purpose. We don’t find it too difficult to “rejoice in hope,” but look at verse 3. “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings. . .” Our subject today is “The Benefits of Believing.” Is suffering a benefit to the believer? It certainly is; and here is an exciting principle that is characteristic of a mature Christian. You know you’re mature when you understand the purpose of suffering and you respond accordingly. Paul says, “. . . we rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance. . .” “This word in the Greek means more than “perseverance”; it means the spirit which does not passively endure, but which actively overcomes and conquers the trials and the tribulations of life. Someone said to a fine Christian lady who was undergoing a great sorrow: “Sorrow really colors life, doesn’t it?” “Yes,” she said, “it does, and I propose to choose the color!” And Paul continues, “this perseverance produces character; and character, hope.” The Apostle is saying that our problems are no longer meaningless, because this 4th benefit of believing is character development. Suffering produces character in our lives. You’re going to have problems in life whether you benefit from them or not; but one great benefit of becoming a Christian is that all of a sudden you have the same problems as other people, but the difference is that now your problems take on a new meaning. Your suffering produces perseverance, which produces character, which produces hope. Now it doesn’t seem to make sense to rejoice in suffering. Why should you be happy in suffering? You shouldn’t until you understand the purpose. Paul is not telling us to have a martyr complex.

Notice he does not say, “We rejoice because of our suffering.” Rather he says, “We rejoice in our sufferings.” Never misunderstand the difference between “in” and “because of.” We rejoice in suffering, not because of it. The Bible says, “In everything give thanks. . .” (1 Thess. 5:18), not “because of everything give thanks.” Some people think, “Oh, ‘in everything give thanks’ means, thanking God my child has an incurable disease. Thank God my husband lost his job.” No! To thank God for evil is an insult to God. It means attributing all that is evil to God. God is not the creator of evil, and He never tells you to thank Him for evil. “We rejoice in suffering.” We’re rejoicing about the purpose behind the suffering; about the benefits God can bring out of it. We rejoice not for the suffering, but for the results that the suffering can produce if we respond to it in a godly way. In Romans 8:28, Paul says that “in all things God works for

the good of those who love Him.” He does not say that all things are good; but God can bring good out of all things, even the bad things in life.

Now, what is God’s number one purpose for your life? It is to make you like Jesus Christ. He wants you to learn to think the way Christ thinks; to act the way Christ acts; and to love the way Christ loves; in a word, to have the characteristics of Christ. Now in Hebrews 2:10 we are told that “in bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God... should make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Now the very notion that ever, in any sense, our Lord could have been imperfect, is abhorrent to us. How could He be thought of as falling short of perfection? Let me explain what this verse means. The perfect Son of God has become our perfect Savior, opening up for us the pathway to God. But in order to become that, He had to endure suffering and death. In order to sympathize with us and help us when we’re going through the fiery furnace, He had to enter into the experience of suffering Himself. Through suffering our Lord was made fully able for the task of being the Author of our salvation.

Isn’t it virtually impossible to understand another person’s sorrows and sufferings unless you have been through similar tragic experiences yourself? Jesus has felt our sorrows; He has faced our temptations; and because of that He knows exactly what help we need, and He can give it. Because He went through suffering Himself, He can help us when we go through it. If He learned priceless lessons through His sufferings, won’t suffering also teach us invaluable insights into the purpose of suffering? If we never had problems, we would never know that God could solve them.

The Apostle says that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance character. In Greek, this word describes metals that have been put through the fire to be purified. It means “proven integrity.” Remember the old one-liner, “Please be patient; God is not finished with me yet!” God is working, and He is producing character in our lives. And then, Paul says, “character produces hope.” He’s saying that trials, far from destroying our hope, are meant to increase our hope. Someone has said that “hope is the diploma we receive for passing the test.” How do you become a mature Christian? By going through the fire.

So, we have peace with God; and access to God; we rejoice because we have a hope to hold onto; and we know that even suffering has a purpose, and that God uses even agonizing experiences in our life to assure us that nothing is outside His control.

5. We are given God’s love through the Holy Spirit. How beautiful verse 5 is — “And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit Whom He has given us.” You know, you can put your hope in something that will disappoint you. The word “disappoint” in Greek literally means to “embarrass.” People have been ruined financially by putting their money into some venture that went belly up. Divorces are always disappointed hopes — “To think that I put my trust in that man who betrayed me...” But when you put your hope in God, you will never be embarrassed.

Paul says that God has “poured out” His love into our hearts. Indeed, everything God does for you is an outpouring of His love. How are we made aware of that love? Through the Holy Spirit. As one commentator puts it, “Under the vivid metaphor of a cloud burst on a

parched countryside, what the Holy Spirit does is to make us deeply and refreshingly aware that God loves us.”

Now how can I be absolutely certain that God loves me? In verses 6-8 we have the proof of God’s love. Listen — “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 man, though for a good man 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.”

Paul says, “If you want to know that God loves you, look at the Cross!” That is the ultimate proof. He says, “Most people wouldn’t even die for their best friend. But do you know anyone who would die for his enemy? Christ did that! God demonstrated His love for us by the death of Jesus!” God loved us even before we were believers. We say, “God helps those who help themselves.” But these verses say, “God helps those who can’t help themselves!” He makes three references to our past:

Verse 6: “while we were powerless.”
Verse 7: “while we were still sinners.”
Verse 8: “while we were His enemies.”

Christ did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

6. We have eternal security. What does that mean? It means that once you are saved, you are always saved. Now there are some people who do not believe that, but the Bible teaches it very clearly. Look at verse 9, “Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!” Underline that phrase “shall we be saved,” and let me ask you — is that past tense or present tense or future tense? “Shall” means “in the future.” Paul is saying, “If we have been justified right now by Christ’s blood, don’t you think God can keep you saved?” Paul has just proved in chapters 1-4 that you don’t work for your salvation; and you don’t stay saved by working for it. You’re not saved by grace and then kept on being saved by works.

Now look at verse 10, “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!” In other words, if God has already solved your biggest problem, the sin problem, at the Cross, don’t you think He can keep you saved for the rest of your life? “What does the Apostle mean when he says that “we shall be saved by His life”? He is saying that if the death of Christ was the means of our reconciliation, the life of Christ will be the means of our preservation. For the Jesus Who died for our sins was raised from death and lives, and means His people to experience for themselves the power of His resurrection. We can share His victorious life now and will share His resurrection on the last day.

Listen to what Jesus says in John 10:27-28: “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life.” When does eternal life begin? It doesn’t begin the moment you die: It begins the moment you’re saved. How long is “eternal”? It is forever! “And they shall never perish: No one can snatch them out of My hand.” Once you are in Christ’s hand,

nothing or no one can ever snatch you away.

But someone says, “No one can snatch you out of God’s hand, but you can jump out!” But my question is, “How big is God’s hand?” Is it so little that you can get over to the edge and jump off? No! It’s so big you can’t even get to the edge of it! When we’re saved, we are regenerated; we’re “born again.” Now if you’re “born,” can you ever be “unborn”? Of course not.

Another amazing verse is Hebrews 7:25, “Therefore He (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” Do you realize what that means? Jesus saves “completely” and that word “completely” in Greek (it is actually three words) means “forever.” Now look — “He is able to save forever those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” Jesus is praying for you, and for you to lose your salvation, Jesus would have to stop praying for you, and He will never do that. He lives to make intercession for you. That means that if you lost your salvation, Jesus’ prayers would not be answered, and He is God, and He always prays for what is in the will of God; and because He is praying for you, you cannot lose your salvation.

Is that good news? It certainly is! I may stumble and fall; I may strain the relationship; I may be out of fellowship and miss many of God’s blessings here on earth and many rewards in heaven, but I do not lose that relationship as a child of God.

“But,” you say, “what if a Christian sins?” You understand the difference between relationship and fellowship. Relationship is the standing you have as a son or a daughter in your family. Now, suppose your children were to grow up and reject the Lord and do some awful things; you would still love them, but the fellowship would be broken, and you would grieve. But nothing your children could ever do would make them not your children.

Now God grieves when His children fall into sin. You would think, wouldn’t you, that if you could lose your salvation, you would lose it by committing adultery and murder? Well, David committed them both, and yet he did not lose his salvation. In fact, he repented with bitter tears of anguish, and in his psalm of repentance, Psalm 51, he said, “Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation (51:12). He didn’t say, “Lord, give me back my salvation.” He said, “Restore the joy...” So, when a Christian sins, he doesn’t lose his salvation; but he does lose the joy of his salvation, until he repents and restores the fractured relationship. We have eternal security!

Finally, look at Romans 5:11. Paul says, “In the light of these six marvelous benefits you receive as a believer, how should you respond? He says, Not only is this so, but we also rejoice...” (There is that word again! Paul is on a high. He is excited because he says, “Look at all these benefits!”) “We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received reconciliation.” Jesus, by His atoning death on Calvary, has reconciled *God* to us and us to God.

So why should a Christian be the most happy person in the world? For these 6 reasons:

1. You are at peace with God.

2. You have complete access to God.
3. You have a dependable hope that won't let you down because no situation is hopeless.
4. There's a purpose in your problems.
5. The Holy Spirit fills you with God's love; and
6. You are eternally secure.

Hallelujah!! That's worth rejoicing over. These are the benefits of believing, and we rejoice in God!

AMEN.