

Assurance of Grace Here and Glory Hereafter

Studies in Romans

By Dr. Alan Cairns

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Faith Free Presbyterian Church

1207 Haywood Road

Greenville, SC 29615

Website: www.faithfpc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/faith

...as the only European up here I should take note of the anniversary, the 60th anniversary of D-Day. I lamented that according to statistics so many of the rising generation in the United States don't even know who the combatants were in that awful conflict. I omitted what I had intended really to say and that is that with all the bitterness that is in the world today and especially all the anti American bitterness and bigotry that is in Europe today—and I have to tell you that that is very real—that I think most Americans can hardly understand and grasp just the depth of that anger, that bitterness and that resentment to all things American on the other side of the Atlantic. But on such a day I think that it is good to remember that God raised a generation in this nation that quite literally saved the world. And as I think I speak for many of the—I know the British Europeans who whatever they have been fed by the biased media still have a great deal of gratitude to this nation. Growing up as a little boy I never taught.... I never needed to be taught to be pro American. It was just one of those things that came. It is not that this country is perfect. It is not that it ever has done everything right. If we set that as a criterion for honoring a people we would not never honor anybody, for nobody does everything right. But this nation under God has been used to do a great thing and many of your families have people who fought in that conflict, friends who laid down their lives in that conflict. In our little nation we have the same and we certainly appreciate all that God enabled this nation to do.

We also, therefore, appreciate the current efforts of our men in uniform who are now in many parts of the world and especially in Afghanistan and in Iraq that are laying their lives in danger day by day while politicians fight over their really what are dirty little lines of party advancement and party advantage. We ought never to forget that we are, as some commentators have said—in World War III, a very different kind of war. But we are in a very, very difficult situation and we need to pray that the God who delivered our fathers' generation will deliver this generation as well.

Unless you get any sort of a sky blue tint to your eyes and think that God delivered the generation in the 1940s because they were so much godlier than the generation today, forget it. After the First World War morality in America and in Europe went to the devil. They probably had gone that way a long way before, but publicly the Roaring 20s were just as vile as the drug addicted 60s. And just about everything that is vile and filthy and

immoral in the 60s and 70s was a seed that was sown to come to fruition, but that seed was sown in the 20s and the 30s.

And so that generation, great in many ways as it was, was not saved because of their goodness. It was saved by the grace of God. And we certainly need to pray that the God of all grace will visit us again.

Britain sadly and urgently needs a visitation of God. I think I can say without much fear of contradiction that in proportion to its size the United Kingdom has been a greater force for good in the world than any other comparable part of the earth at least since the days of Christ and yet today it is spiritual wilderness. It is sadly and urgently in need of a visitation of God. The Lord is able.

Europe generally is—and I don't want to get off on what would be a Reformation month subject—but Europe generally is reaping the curse of having bowed the knee to the Baal worship of Roman Catholicism. Europe today is cursed with apostasy and false religion and all that has led to. Countries don't turn their back on Bible truth and not pay the price. And that has happened right across Europe.

But God is able, again. Did he not do it in the days of the Reformers? And he is the same God today.

And don't let anybody tell you, well, we are in the last days. We have been in the last days ever since the resurrection of Christ. That is the Bible definition of everything between Christ's coming or Christ's resurrection and his coming. It is not the millennium as the Amillennialist would have you believe, but that is another story. It is the last days. It is the last days.

I don't know how close we are to the coming of Christ and don't let anybody set you up with the old sucker punch from the Dispensationalists that we have nothing to look forward except the rapture and, of course, before the rapture there is going to be nothing but doom, gloom, badness getting worse all the time. If the Reformers had believed that, they would never have prayed and they would never have stood.

We were just singing a great Sankey hymn, at least the music by Sankey. He said that he came closer to inspiration on that tune than in anything else and I can understand why. It made me think of the great revivals and God moving. Moody and Sankey had believed that there was nothing to expect before Christ came they would never have seen revival. We can see the Lord work and let us give ourselves to prayer that the Lord will do it yet again.

And if it is true, as Gallop's organization says, that between 50 and 60 percent of young Americans don't even know who America was fighting in the Second World War, if that is true, then we have an added reason to pray that God will visit the rising generation in this nation and make them aware not only of their history, but of their spiritual need and certainly visit this land again with a mighty spiritual awakening.

And Mr. Brame pointed out that it was D-Day in more senses than one, that he had been married on this day. I don't know that that is the day I would have chosen to be married, but he got his feet wet anyway and it wasn't at the Normandy beaches. But Don and Amanda Barrett also chose this day to get married and we wish them well. They have stuck it well for all these years. And one of these days peace will break out.

Well, if he could say he saluted and said, "Yes, sir," I can say that, but we do congratulate B and B, the Brames and the Barretts, not the Mike Barretts, the other Barretts on their happy anniversary at this time.

Now let's turn to the book of Romans chapter five as we continue this series of studies in this book. We have been making slow progress, but speeding up a little. This is the 47th study in the book of Romans and that is me going as fast as I can. If I were really doing it in detail we would probably be now at about half way through chapter two. But we are in chapter five and we are reading together again this evening the first five verses. Last week we read the first section of this chapter, the first 11 verses and tonight the first five verses of the chapter.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed.¹

And we will finish at the end of the first clause of verse five for the next, really, commences a slightly different part of the argument.

The Lord will add his own blessing to this reading from his precious Word.

As I pointed out last time we looked at this, in Romans chapter five Paul's theme is the security and the assurance of the justified. Indeed, as I took time to detail last time this theme extends way beyond chapter five and you may in many ways say that the entire argument from this point on is feeding in to this particular theme. This is the major deduction that Paul draws from the doctrine of a free justification. He has been through that doctrine. He has expounded it in detail. He will have other things to add, but he is adding them in this context, that having established the fundamental doctrine, he is now taking time to emphasize the central, great and glorious consequence of that truth, namely the security and the assurance of the justified.

Now the particular purpose of the apostle in the first 11 verses of Romans five is to address this subject by expanding upon and explaining in more detail a statement that he had made way back in Romans 3:23.

¹ Romans 5:1-5.

Remember that I pointed out last study that Paul gives you a list of brief and pregnant statements in Romans three and one by one he picks them up and he expounds upon them and elaborates upon them in the remainder of the book.

Now in this particular section he is dealing with that statement that we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And if you go the apostle and ask him: What do you mean by that? I have no doubt that his answer would be in the form that it is placed here in Romans 5:1-11.

And as we look at this section we will see, I trust, how he explores the consequences of the statement in Romans 3:24, what the work of the Lord Jesus Christ means to believers now and what it will mean for them for eternity.

Now last Lord's Day we began considering this subject of the secured standing of the justified. And I said then that I had a list of points, but I was dealing with the first one only. What we dealt with last week was something that grows out of verse two. And I will have to explain again why am I stating in verse two. It appears to come after what is in verse one. But in actual fact it doesn't. And I don't want to rehash what I said about the tense of the verb, et cetera, but Paul says we have had access, a good translation to take in all the ramifications of the word. But literally he said, "We have had the introduction into grace."

What a statement.

The word is used of introducing a person into a royal presence chamber. It is a glorious word that speaks of God's mighty goodness to us through our Lord Jesus Christ introducing us into the very presence chamber of the King of glory. And in maintaining us—he didn't introduce us for us to leave it again—for, thank God, when you are introduced to your standing in grace you never leave it. That is why our translators rather than use the word introduction which would so easily be misunderstood if it is not explained, it is an introduction that continues in its fruitfulness. Therefore, we are constantly in the presence of the King and that is what our translators rightly call access to grace.

But that fundamental truth should not be missed that Paul is speaking of the secure standing that believers have. And I was pointing out that in Christ believers have a secure, new standing before God.

Now today I want us to proceed and examine these first five verses without repeating all that I said on matters we have already covered. I want us to examine these first five or really four and a half verses to consider the truth that believers are assured of grace here and of glory hereafter. And I hope that we will be able to see something of the foundation upon which our new secure standing rests.

So let me make this point right away, that believers have a secure standing before God because their justification rests entirely on Christ's merits at mediation. Now understand

that. This is vital to Paul's argument, but it is vital to a whole lot more than Paul's argument. It is vital to our grasp of assurance. It is also vital—and I may get around to this just as I either remember or forget to look at my watch—it is also vital to free us up to go after the vilest of sinners even to the point where they are dying in the conviction that salvation is possible.

We have a secure standing because our justification rests entirely on Christ's merits and mediation. Notice how the verse and chapter five verse one starts.

“Therefore being justified...”²

Therefore having been justified.

Notice how it ends.

“...through our Lord Jesus Christ.”³

Now the beginning and the ending of that verse, as far as the central truth conveyed by the words is concerned is the same. The same truth.

“Therefore... through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

They are conveying the identical truth. If you must make a shade of difference what Paul is saying in the “Therefore” is to stress the merits of Christ. And what he is saying in the phrase, “...through our Lord Jesus Christ” is to stress the mediation of Christ. But the merits of Christ are merits that are exercised in mediation. And the mediation of Christ is a mediation that is exercised meritoriously. They are the same truth with slightly different shades of emphasis.

The word “therefore” obviously refers backwards and it is referring back to the verse immediately preceding, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus our Lord whom God raised from the dead.

“He as delivered for our offenses He was delivered on account of our offences. He was raised again on account of our justification. Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I like how the great Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers in his commentary on Romans addresses this therefore. He is speaking of Romans 4:25 here and laying the foundation for all that follows in chapter five. And he says, “Jesus our Lord was delivered up to the death as an atonement for our offenses and then was raised that he might confer on us the fruits of his own achievement, the rewards of his own obedience.”

I think that is as good a paraphrase of Romans 4:25 as I have ever read.

² Romans 5:1.

³ Ibid.

Now I want to read it to you again and then go straight into Romans five.

Romans 4:25 and Chalmers' explanatory paraphrase:

“Jesus our Lord was delivered up to the death as an atonement for our offenses and was then raised that he might confer on us the fruits of his own achievement, the rewards of his own obedience.”

“Therefore we have been justified by faith.”

That is the connection. You know, you could really have no clearer statement of the absolute perfection of the all sufficiency of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ than this. That therefore is telling us that his work for us was entirely effective and it was absolutely successful.

I want you to see that the therefore is emphasizing that there is an assured relationship between Christ's death and resurrection on the one hand and our justification on the other hand. It is impossible for Christ to die and rise again and for his people to fail to be justified. It is impossible for Christ—to use Chalmers' idea—to be delivered as an atonement for our defenses, to be raised in order to confer upon his people the fruits of his obedience and his achievement and for that fruit not actually be conferred. It is impossible. This idea of Jesus dying either with no purpose or with some nebulous purpose, some general hope of doing some good somewhere, somehow, but maybe missing it all together, that is so far from the Bible teaching on why our Savior died and why he rose again. I tell you there is an absolute—underline the word—an absolute and an assured relationship between his death and resurrection and our justification.

What I am saying, to put it another way, what Paul is saying by this therefore is that the perfection and the all sufficiency of the merits and the work of Jesus Christ ensure the application of that work to all his believing people.

In other words, the Lord Jesus not only accomplished the purchase of our justification, he also accomplished the application of our justification. He purchased the work to apply it to our hearts. It is impossible for him to do the work described in the Word of God and to leave its fruits uncertain or unguaranteed.

Another way to put it is that the perfection of his work gives us as believers a solidly based assurance of our standing with God.

You see, I want you to understand this. Our assurance ultimately has to be based not on our tears of repentance, not on the death of our faith, not in the sincerity of our feelings and all those things are important, but our assurance must be based on something that is absolutely impeccably perfect and that is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if what he did is enough, then we are secure. As regards our security, the question we have to ask is never: Have we done enough? For we know the answer to that one. The question is: Has Christ done enough?

And let me ask you to address that today. Has Christ done enough? Is there anything that needed to be done for the deliverance of his people for their redemption and for their justification? Is there anything that needed to be done that he left undone? Is there any part of that work that he left for you and me to finish? Is there anything that was necessary to install us in this perfect standing of acceptance with God? Is there anything in that whole thing that Jesus did not personally do?

Did he do enough?

And, you know, when you look at it that way you will understand why Paul is teaching we have a secure standing before God, because our justification rests entirely on the merits and the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if he is enough, then I can say:

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress.
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With Joy shall I lift up my head.

I said this also is important to understand if we are going to feel free to go to the ungodly.

Let me address a situation that comes up again and again. Maybe you have even heard this stated as an objection. I know that everybody who has ever thought of it has certainly felt it.

Let me give it to you in the form of a story. This is a story from a book written by an English writer of the last... not the last, but a past generation when Christian fiction would have been worth reading. He told a story of a young preacher, probably a Church of England minister, who was sent to a certain small town and took up his work there. He was a very diligent worker for his flock. He lived in a town where a certain doctor lived who was known as the most debauched man in the whole town, an open blasphemer, a wicked drunkard. The only one who had any faith in him—and she never seemed to lose it—was his wife.

One day the young minister was out and this doctor's wife came and she said, "I have been looking for you everywhere. I have been to the rectory. I have been here and there. And I have been looking for you. My husband is dying and he is calling for you."

And immediately something rose up in that young minister's heart. And while he went along to the death bed of that dying, debauched old reprobate—as he thought him—there was something rebelling in him.

“Here he is. He has lived all his life in open wickedness and now he is dying. He wants to escape hell and he is sending for me.”

And so he went. But as he tried to minister to him it was from the lips there was nothing to communicate heart to heart. Finally the dying man says to him, “But parson, does the Bible not say something about being born again?”

The parson muttered and mumbled and the dying man said, “Sir, have you been born again?”

And the clergyman dropped his head in utter confusion and with something that must have sounded like a curse in his ears the dying man said, “You are only pretending. You don’t even know what it is.”

Out the young fellow went. Except for another preacher, no man who did know the Lord who did lead this old dying sinner to Christ.

The young man in speaking of this spoke to a young woman whom he one day hoped to marry and he opened his heart to her and told her all that had happened. And he put it like this. He said, “Does one prayer of repentance at the point of death, does that atone for a life of wickedness and godlessness and sin?”

She it was whom God used to open his heart. For she said, “No, it doesn’t. But Calvary does. Calvary does.”

That is the truth. Here is the basis of our justification. It is not when I prayed the prayer. It is not how I prayed the prayer. It is not anything of a quality of moral greatness or merit in anything that I am or have done. It is that Jesus paid it all. He did enough. It is an all sufficient Christ we are preaching. And that is good news to us all.

If you are in this meeting tonight and you are not saved, I want to tell you. That is the good news. Satan would tell you you are past it. How could anybody like you ever get to heaven? How can you ever atone for the past? How can you ever make up for your sin? How can your repenting and your faith or your believing or your this or your that, how can it ever make up for your past? It can never make up for the past. But, oh, I tell you. Calvary covers it all. Good news for the sinner.

We were singing that hymn, *Free, Free, Free*. What a message. What a message for guilty sinners. Salvation is free. Thank God it is, for if it cost God everything that eternal deity could pay, then certainly you and I could never purchase it. And it is good news for the saints. We have an assurance based on a perfect performance. And that is the performance of a perfect obedience by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then let me move on. Believers have a secure standing because in justifying them Christ gives them peace with God.

Now this little phrase, “peace with God” is a vitally important one. The word “with” here is a preposition that usually means to or toward. But it is also often used to denote personal relationship.

For example, when Paul said in Acts 24:16, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God,”⁴ what he was saying is, “I have a conscience void of offence in relation to God.” That is the meaning. And that gives wonderfully clear sense in the text.

We have peace in relation to God. But as I look at this text, I see it as belonging to a class of New Testament statements that use this particular Greek preposition to paint a word picture and it is the picture of one party turning face to face to another party.

When Acts 2:47 speaks of the disciples praising God and having favor with all the people, the whiff is talking about a face to face relationship. The most outstanding text in this category is John one verse one.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”⁵

The Word was toward God. The idea is face to face with God.

One of the major lexicons of the Greek New Testament says of these texts that they require one to be conceived as always turned toward another one.

Another great commentator says that this is a preposition that has in it the idea of being always face to face with. Here is Paul’s statement then.

“Having been justified by faith we have peace face to face with God.”

We have peace with God. We are turned to him. And he is turned to us. And we therefore live in a face to face relationship with him. And that helps us to determine the meaning of the word “peace.”

In this context peace means not just the cessation of hostilities. Peace means an assured state of acceptance with God so that we have nothing to fear from him and we have nothing to fear from his wrath or from his judgment.

And, you know, that is the real meaning of reconciliation. And I have deliberately taken this round about way to get to the word reconciliation to try to paint the picture that is in the words so that you may get that in your mind. Here we are, who used to be enemies of God, and we are now face to face with God. And we have nothing to fear from God. We having nothing to fear from wrath. We have nothing to fear of the curse. We have nothing to fear about hell, nothing to fear from God or his wrath.

⁴ Acts 24:16.

⁵ John 1:1.

You remember way back in Romans 1:18 launching out on the need for justifying grace Paul says, “[Because] wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”⁶ And he goes on to show the whole world lying in wickedness and the whole world lying under wrath, the whole world condemned by God. What a picture.

You talk about Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones, death, doom, destruction on every hand. This is Paul’s valley of dry bones. The whole world guilty before God. That is how he reaches the climax in the middle of Romans three.

But now here is the final answer to that wrath. What is it? We have peace with God.

It is obvious that this is the opposite of being in a state of hostility or being under attack from another party.

You remember what Jesus said in his parable in Luke 11:21.

“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.”⁷

What does he meant here “in peace”? They are free from attack. They are free from danger. They are free from hostility.

We can say that because of Christ’s propitiation God’s wrath toward us has been appeased.

Romans 3:25.

“God hath set [him]forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”⁸

Some people like to translate that, “God hath set him forth to be a propitiation in or by his blood, received through faith.”

At the end of the day it is the same message in the same meaning. And I want to tell you Christ died a propitiatory death. He died a death that satisfies God’s law. He died a death that satisfies God’s anger against sin. He died a death that took all the fire of divine vengeance and let that fire burn itself out in him. That is what he did.

And by that propitiation God’s wrath toward us is removed forever. Now instead of his wrath being upon us, his face is toward us.

Once we were enemies of God by wicked works, violent, vicious enemies of God. We were not pitiable little creatures. We were violent, vicious enemies of God. We had deliberately thrown in our lot with the devil. We would rather worship Satan than the Son

⁶ Romans 1:18.

⁷ Luke 11:21.

⁸ Romans 3:25.

of God. We would rather serve hell than heaven. We would dethrone God if we could. That was the viciousness and the darkness and the rebellion and the sinfulness of our heart and it remains the viciousness and the rebellion and the sinfulness of the unconverted soul. It is concentrated furious enmity against God. It is where every sinner stands. And that is where we stand.

But thank God by his grace we are enemies no longer. We are at peace with God.

Somehow or other in our hymnal we will correct this—Joan, remind me, dear—in the second printing. Somehow or other we picked up a modified version of Charles Wesley’s great line, “My God is reconciled. His pardoning voice I hear.”

I remember a man coming to me after we had sung that hymn in our Duncannon church years ago. I had been preaching through 1 Peter.

You would be glad to know in those days I was able to do a series right through the entirety of 1 Peter. It took me 13 messages. Things changed when I came to Greenville.

And we sang that hymn and this little man came out. I always... I must say I have to keep a lid on myself because I don’t necessarily feel like responding well to these little people who stick their chests out and they suddenly are great theologians and they know everything and they forget everything they have ever heard. People were being blessed. Souls were being touched. God was moving through the meeting and all he could do was criticize Charles Wesley and all he could do was say, “God didn’t need to be reconciled to me. It was I needed to be reconciled to him.” And he wouldn’t wait for an answer.

That really bugs me, I must say. That really does get under my skin.

But, man, dear, stop for a minute and realize the utter abject folly of such a statement. God is a kind Creator. He is not our enemy. But God as a righteous judge is the enemy of every sinner. Never forget it.

And unless the wrath of God is appeased against our sin, all the repenting in the world will not save you from one of the pains of hell.

My God is reconciled. He is satisfied with the blood of the Lamb. And, thank God, I have peace with God.

And it is not a temporary cessation of hostilities. It is not an armed truce. In fact, it is not a truce at all. It is the permanent removal of the wrath and curse of God and its replacement with his favor, his friendship and his fellowship.

This is the security that justified people enjoy, safe from the wrath of God and granted a full acceptance with him.

But with that security they also have assurance. Theologians and commentators dispute as to whether this peace with God is the kind of thing I have been talking about, God reconciled to us or whether it is a peace that we have in our heart and our conscience.

And I have to say, you know, you can't have one without the other. The security rests in God being turned to us. But the assurance is that our former fear arising from guilt is removed and instead of that fear which his perfect love for us has forever cast out, instead of that awful foreboding of vengeance, we now have confidence that our Lord Jesus Christ has paid the full price for our redemption. Through that redeeming purchase of Christ we have justification. And that is the real answer to the accusation of the devil. And it is the real answer to the fears that arise in our hearts out of distrust for ourselves.

I don't think there is a Christian here who has not come to distrust his own faith and his own repentance.

Have you never been over that ground? Lord, did I believe sincerely enough? Did I pray passionately enough? Did I repent comprehensively enough? Did I even understand clearly enough?

How many times I have talked to people and they have said, "I was saved as a child and I have come to understand things about the gospel now that I never could have begun to understand then."

Satan will use that sort of thing to use your fear and your distrust of yourself to make you wonder have I justifying grace? Have I this standing with God?

But remember that our standing with God lies not in anything that we have done. Forgive the mixed metaphor, standing, lying, but it does not consist in anything that we have done, but on what Christ has done.

Ah, and here is the thing. In what God the Father has done as a consequence of what Christ has done.

Follow me carefully. Christ has done something and as a consequence of what he did God the Father has acted and we have already been over this ground. The word "justification" that we have been considering the end of Romans five, is the decisive act of God in declaring us righteous because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

Romans 8:33.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.⁹

⁹ Romans 8:33-34.

So our standing is assured and secure because it rests on the merits and mediation of Christ. It is assured and secure because in justifying us Christ gives us peace with God. And then let me make this point and it is a very important one as we come toward the end of the passage. Believers have a secure standing because their justification carries in it a certain hope of the glory of God.

Notice this carefully. The second part of verse two.

We... rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed.¹⁰

Now in looking at these verses there are two things we need to do. First we need to define the terms that are used and then we need to put them all together and see how they apply to our general argument.

First of all the terms. Look at the word “rejoice.”

“We... rejoice.”¹¹

That is the same verb that is translated in verse three as glory. We glory. It is the same verb that is translated in chapter two verse 17 and verse 23 as boast, make our boast. This particular verb literally means to talk of one’s self and, therefore, to praise one’s self. That is the meaning, to boast.

But just as in English so in Greek it also carries the meaning of congratulating one’s self. It is speaking of one’s self as blessed or as glorious. And then it approaches the meaning that really gets to the heart of our text. It means to glory in anything that we recognize as the source or the ground of our confidence, our honor or our blessedness.

Now we are getting someplace. This verb “to rejoice” it is not just sound happy. Oh, it is that, but it is a whole lot more. It is a very substantial verb. He is saying we are glorying in something because we recognize that something to be the source and the ground of the honor and the blessedness and the confidence that we enjoy.

Paul is saying we exalt. I think that is as near a full translation as you can get of it. Some like to use the word “triumph” here. And there is the idea of triumph. But it is more joy than victory. It is we exalt in the merits of Christ.

Is that true of you? This is what the psalmist said in one of my favorite psalms I have used hundreds of times in hospital visitation down through the years. Psalm 34.

¹⁰ Romans 5:2-5.

¹¹ Romans 5:2.

My soul shall make her boast [where?] in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.¹²

This is what he is saying here. We exalt in the merits of Christ. We exalt in the mediation of Christ. We express our joy in the secure standing into which Christ has introduced us with all that that means for our present and our everlasting happiness.

That is the word “rejoice.”

Now for the word “hope.” We rejoice in hope.

For some reason or other nowadays hope is a very vague word. It is a very uncertain word. Hope to us is trying to feel good about a situation that really is a lot that tells you you don't have much reason to feel good at all. We are hoping, but we really don't see our way ahead. We are hoping that something might be.

But that is not the New Testament meaning of the word hope. Hope is one of Paul's favorite words. Of the 53 times that it occurs in the New Testament he accounts for 36 of them and 13 of those in the book of Romans alone. In addition, the verb to hope appears 31 times and of those 31 times Paul uses it all by himself 19 times. This is one of his favorite terms.

Why? Because hope in the New Testament is not something vague or uncertain. Hope, while it deals with the future which is unseen, therefore yet unexperienced, hope deals with certainty and hope, therefore, has the idea of confidence.

A modern German commentator put it as well as anybody when he said it is not—and I quote—“the prospect of what might happen, but the prospect of what is already guaranteed.”

That is the New Testament meaning of hope. It is the confident prospect of what God has guaranteed.

As I said, it has to do with the future. But however despite that it gathers its sense of security and assurance not mainly by looking at the future. Oh, it looks at the future and it rejoices. But it gets its security looking backward to Calvary and upward to the throne. That is hope.

And then the glory of God.

Remember we saw in Romans 3:23 in studying that that the glory of God may mean God's approbation or praise. It means conformity to God's holiness. It speaks of eternal glory, what we generally refer to as heaven in the presence of God. It speaks of eternal life and all its sinless fullness in the immediate presence of our all glorious king. That is

¹² Psalm 34:1-2.

the glory of God. But, we are told, we come short of the glory of God. We cannot earn God's praise. We have in the fall lost conformity to his holiness. We cannot attain the glorious beatific vision of God in his heavenly kingdom. We cannot attain to it. We come short of the glory of God.

And yet the Lord Jesus prayed, John 17:24, for his people and he said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."¹³

We come short of it, but Jesus prayed that we may experience it. By indwelling us he guarantees that we will experience it.

Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."¹⁴

As we live on earth we are not sinless. I would to God we were. But, man, we are not sinless. But I will say this. What is happening to us if we are saved?

2 Corinthians 3:18. We are being transformed into his image from glory unto glory.

There is a sanctifying, transforming work going on. But we are not sinless so, therefore, that sanctifying work cannot in itself be the assurance of eternal security. But thank God, though we are not sinless, we are justified. And therefore we have the guarantee of glory.

As Paul says, Romans 8:18, he speaks of the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Now those are the terms. Now let's put them all together and see how this assures believers of their absolute security in Christ.

We make this point. The hope of believers is a well grounded personal assurance of acceptance with God and of final entrance into glory. That is the hope of believers.

I want you to follow me carefully here because I am going to say something that may shock you and it may not. But I want you, at least, to understand what I am saying. This is not a mere assent to doctrinal truth. Oh, we do assent to the doctrinal truth of justification by faith. We do assent to the truth of the glory of God that believers finally enter into. But Paul says we rejoice. We boast in hope of the glory of God. And that word "boast" is an expression of something we personally feel.

Now you have heard it said again and again by well meaning preachers—and there is a time, I suppose, where it should be said as long as it is not carried too far—but you have heard it said again and again, addressing people who are having struggles with assurance and they say, "I don't feel. I don't feel anything. I don't feel forgiven. I don't feel right with God. I don't feel justified. I don't feel." And preachers and maybe you yourself will tell them, "Forget about your feelings."

¹³ John 17:24.

¹⁴ Colossians 1:27.

Now listen to me. That is absolute abject nonsense.

Furthermore, it is just about impossible. Forget about your feelings.

What we ought to be doing is to examine the ground of those feelings. Let's get back to the basis of our feelings and if, as is the case here in Romans five, our rejoicing and our boasting and our expression of confidence is in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, then that is a well grounded confidence.

When I look at myself I want to tell you. I have no ground to boast and neither have you. And this is the trouble when people are saying, "I don't feel. I don't feel. I don't feel." They are not getting their eyes on Christ. They are not seeing the all sufficiency of Christ. They are not grasping that he has done enough. They are not grasping the effectiveness of his work and the truthfulness of his promise. They are not grasping that.

When they take their stand on Christ then they have got a good basis of boasting.

"God forbid that I should glory [or boast], save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁵

But equally God forbid that I should refrain from boasting in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you that is something to glory in. That is something to boast about, what Christ has done.

And as I put all these terms together I have to point out that the hope of believers holds up under every kind of trial. The tests of life, far from invalidating the hope of believers, emphasizes how secure is their standing.

Verses three and four.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.¹⁶

Notice how Paul begins and ends with hope. This confidence is his ongoing theme in this section so that rejoicing in tribulations also is not something different than rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. It is a particular expression of rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

We rejoice in tribulations. The word "tribulation" means affliction. It does not mean minor discomfort. It means serious pain, physical, mental. It means deep, heart-rending affliction. It speaks of every kind of trial and suffering, but especially those endured for the sake of Christ or because we are Christians.

¹⁵ Galatians 6:14.

¹⁶ Romans 5:3-4.

Now Paul says, “We glory in tribulations.”¹⁷

That certainly means that in the midst of tribulation, despite tribulation, we still boast in Lord. See what he is saying? Nothing that happens to a Christian invalidates the gospel. Nothing that you suffer changes what Christ has done. Nothing of your circumstances, the things that get you upset, the things that become so depressive as you concentrate on them, none of those things in any way undermines what Christ has done or changes one iota of the objective truth in the gospel.

“[Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”¹⁸

So in the midst of trouble, what do you do? Think. Think. Think. Christians get into trouble when they refrain from thinking.

Through the New Testament you are commanded to think, to consider, to reckon. These are all things that demand mental processes. But what are you to think? Self pitying thoughts? No. They are always destructive.

What are you to think? Why? No. That is also destructive.

Will this never come to an end? No.

What are you think? Think Christ. Think the gospel. Think of the things you can boast about, what Christ has done, what he is doing and glory in the midst of your tribulation.

But I have to say that to Paul this meant a whole lot more. When he speaks of men who glory in men he speaks of men who glory on account of men. When he speaks of those who glory in the law, they are glorying on account of having the law. When he speaks of us glorying in God, he is speaking of us glorying on account of the God we have. And here he is speaking about glorying in tribulations. And I have to say as I read what Paul writes in other places he really means this.

“I am glorying on account of the fact that I am suffering.”

Now I don’t think Paul liked suffering any more than you do or I do. But he took seriously the words of the Lord Jesus.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”¹⁹

And the comfort makes the mourning well worthwhile.

¹⁷ Romans 5:3.

¹⁸ Romans 4:25.

¹⁹ Matthew 5:4.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”²⁰

Happy? Glorifying?

Like the early apostles in Acts 5:41.

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”²¹

Like the apostle Paul himself in that great 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians verse nine and 10:

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”²²

Now here is Paul’s deduction. Remember he has been praying that God would take away a debilitating physical affliction. It was a hindrance. It was the messenger of Satan to buffet him. Understand what he is saying. This messenger of Satan to buffet him, it was like somebody hammering at his body and at his soul. He was in a fight. He was suffering immensely and he was crying to God.

“Lord, this is hindering me in my itinerant ministry of the gospel. Take it away.”

And his only answer was, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”²³

And Paul, in one of the most beautiful statements of submission and faith in all of Scripture, I can see him bow his head and say:

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory.”²⁴

A minute ago he was praying, “Take it away.” Now he is saying, “[Lord I will] rather glorying my infirmities, [in order] that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”²⁵

Don’t believe the devil’s lie that if you are sick or afflicted or weak or in trouble that therefore God is so angry with you that you cannot be of use to him. God is saying the very opposite to Paul here.

“Paul, I only use broken vessels.”

²⁰ Matthew 5:11.

²¹ Acts 5:41.

²² 2 Corinthians 12:9.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

I want you to understand that. Every preacher I have ever known who was ever used of God in any significant way has first been brought to the place of utter brokenness, self emptying.

“Therefore,” says Paul, “I take pleasure.”²⁶

And I have to confess I find that so difficult to understand. But he says, “I take pleasure in [my] infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”²⁷

The New Testament church in a very different look, outlook on suffering than we have today. But theirs was the right one. We tend to look on suffering as something that God could not intend for us. They looked at it as something that God did intend for them and of their good.

We look at chastisement as God being angry with us. They looked at chastisement as God purifying us, preparing us, honing us for greater usefulness. And that is why Peter in 1 Peter 4:13-14 wrote:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.²⁸

So when Paul says we boast in tribulation he is saying, “Listen. In the midst of tribulation, in the midst of all this suffering I will prove God’s sustaining grace and I will prove his sanctifying grace to uphold me now and to prepare me for greater usefulness here and for glory hereafter.”

I believe that is his meaning because of how he ends.

“Tribulation worketh patience.”²⁹

The word “patience” in English simply means to suffer. It is a suffering. In English—and I say that because of its root. It comes from a Latin verb that simply means to suffer. Patience, therefore, is by us somehow and times thought of a sort of a Stoic acceptance. But that is not the New Testament meaning. It is a very active thing. It means patient endurance. It means constancy.

Tribulation works constancy.

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:10.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 1 Peter 4:13-14.

²⁹ Romans 5:3.

And that patient endurance, that constancy worketh experience. And the word means proof or evidence of fidelity under testing.

In other words, this is God's way of turning an inexperienced recruit into a tested veteran to be trusted in the work of God. And this experience works hope. In other words, when you have gone through all this, far from a driving you from the Lord, the more you consider Christ in the midst of your suffering—and remember he suffered as no one ever suffered, that ours is but for a moment—the more you will be strengthened in your confidence as you prove God. For thank God he doesn't fail us now. And he doesn't fail us hereafter.

As James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."³⁰

The final thing I will say is this. And I like this above them all in many ways, not because it is intrinsically more important, but because this is the end of the story. The hope of believers will never disappoint them. This hope maketh not ashamed.

As Isaiah puts it, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."³¹

Peter quoted that. "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded."³²

Paul quoted it in Romans 9:33. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."³³

Do you see what he is saying? If your hope is in Christ, he will never disappoint you.

I was reading a statement of John Calvin's. A loose translation of it would be, "The issue of the believer's salvation is most certain." I like that. "The issue of the believer's salvation is most certain."

The hymn writer said, "On the golden streets of heaven all men hope to walk some day." But for very many that hope will be disappointed.

I want to tell you if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have repented and believed the gospel and you are justified by faith, then you have a hope that will never disappoint you.

So we enjoy absolute security because our justification is founded on the merits and mediation of Christ. It guarantees us peace with God, his favored friendship and

³⁰ James 1:12.

³¹ Isaiah 28:16.

³² 1 Peter 2:6.

³³ Romans 9:33.

fellowship and it carries with it the confidence that God has guaranteed us to be partakers of his glory forever.

How will I finish? As I reviewed all of this in my study that is the question I had to ask. So what? My mind went to what Paul wrote in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back [if any man gives up the justifying righteousness of Christ, if any man repudiates the finished work of Christ, if any man goes out to meet God on any other basis], my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.³⁴

You are either those who draw back from the righteous merits of Christ to perdition or those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Make sure tonight where you stand, that it is securely, assuredly in Christ, justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in him.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray.

In a moment this meeting will be over. I want us to take seriously the awful and solemn division that we have just read about in Hebrews 10, people drawing back from Christ to perdition, people repudiating Christ hoping for heaven on some other basis, people believing to the saving of the soul. Let me ask you where you stand in this regard? Do you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Is God satisfied to receive you? Has he done so? If not, then you must yet come by faith in Jesus for we are justified by faith. Come and trust in him.

Mr. Brame and I are here to help you in the things of God. We would be happy to do so. Make sure you don't waste the opportunity to flee from wrath into peace with God.

Father in heaven, bless thy Word. Write it on our hearts and use it to the saving of the lost, to the edification and the comfort of the saints, to the strengthening in faith of all thy believing people. Lord, in the midst of all the crises of life, turn our eyes upon Jesus that we may look full in his wonderful face. Lord we pray that however much we may lament ourselves and our own reactions to the circumstances in which we live, oh God, grant that we may never cease to boast of Christ, to glory in the cross. And, oh Lord, even in tribulation grant that thou wilt keep the hope brightly burning before us. We thank thee for the security and the assurance of saints, simple believers in Jesus Christ. Lord, let us live in the joy of that assurance and in its power go out to reach the lost for Christ. For thank God tonight Calvary has made a full atonement.

³⁴ Hebrews 10:35-39.

Hear our prayer and part us now with thy very richest blessing and be the abiding portion of thy blood bought people both this night and evermore. We pray in Jesus' holy and precious name. Amen.