

ROMANS 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we<sup>a</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we<sup>b</sup> boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we<sup>c</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, while 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! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

“I HAVE JOURNEYED, THRU THE LONG DARK NIGHT  
OUT IN THE OPEN SEA, BY FAITH ALONE, SIGHT UNKNOWN  
AND YET HIS EYES WERE WATCHING ME.

THE ANCHOR HOLDS- THO THE SHIPS BEEN BATTERED.  
THE ANCHOR HOLDS- THO THE SAILS ARE TORN.

I HAVE FALLEN ON MY KNEES AS I FACE LIFE'S RAGING SEAS,  
THE ANCHOR HOLDS IN SPITE OF THE STORM.”

THOSE WORDS, WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE FIRST VERSE AND  
THE CHORUS OF THE HYMN: “THE ANCHOR HOLDS”,  
COMPLIMENT THE MESSAGE OF TODAY'S EPISTLE READING.

PAUL'S WORDS FOUND IN ROMANS CHAPTER FIVE FOLLOW HIS  
PROCLAMATION ABOUT THE JUSTIFICATION WE RECEIVE  
THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR.

IT IS THIS FAITH THAT IS THE ANCHOR OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE  
FOR BOTH TIMES OF SMOOTH SAILING AND STORMY WEATHER.

THE APOSTLE'S WORDS FOUND IN TODAY'S READING,  
HOWEVER CAN BE AS TROUBLING AS THEY CAN BE  
COMFORTING.

FOR MANY CHRISTIANS THE DECLARATION TO BOAST OR  
REJOICE IN SUFFERING IS DIFFICULT TO HEAR, AND EVEN  
HARDER TO FOLLOW.

IT MIGHT HELP TO REFLECT ON THE MEANING OF THE WORD  
“IN”. IT IS USED IN THE PASSAGE AS A PREPOSITION.

AND THE SECOND MEANING OF THE PREPOSITION “IN”  
ACCORDING TO THE DICTIONARY IS: “A PERIOD OF TIME  
DURING WHICH AN EVENT TAKES PLACE.”

THIS DEFINITION POINTS TO THE FACT SCRIPTURE DOES NOT  
SAY WE REJOICE OR BOAST BECAUSE WE ARE SUFFERING.

INSTEAD, THE BETTER UNDERSTANDING IS WE CAN BOAST AND  
REJOICE IN THE LORD AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD,  
EVEN WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING.

ANOTHER THING ABOUT PAUL'S MESSAGE THAT IS GOOD TO REMEMBER IS THAT HE SPOKE FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

INDEED, SINCE BECOMING A CHRISTIAN AND AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST HE ENDURED BEATINGS, AND HAD HIS LIFE THREATENED MORE THAN ONCE.

HE WAS REJECTED BY HIS FELLOW PHARISEES AND MANY OTHERS.

AND DUE TO HIS PAST PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS HE HAD TO PROVE THE TRUTH OF HIS CONVERSION TO OTHER BELIEVERS.

PAUL WAS SHIP WREACKED ON TWO OCCASIONS, AND IMPRISONED TWICE, THE SECOND TIME ENDED WITH HIM BEING EXECUTED.

SO, THE APOSTLE WAS NOT OFFERING PLATITUDES, BUT EXPRESSING HOW HIS LIFE WAS ANCHORED IN CHRIST, NO MATTER WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO OR AROUND HIM.

PAUL'S BOASTING THEREFORE, IS IN THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE GIFT OF SALVATION JESUS EARNED ON BEHALF OF ALL PEOPLE.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY: WE ARE IN A COURT ROOM WHERE A FINAL JUDGEMENT IS BEING MADE ON OUR LIVES.

GOD ALMIGHTY IS THE JUDGE, AND THERE IS NO JURY, SO THE JUDGE WILL DECIDE THE CASE.

THE PROSECUTOR HAS JUST PRESENTED THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR GUILT AS SINNERS.

THE EVIDENCE IS STRONG AND WELL BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT.

WHILE WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR SOME OF OUR SINS-THERE IS NO DEFENSE.

WE KNOW WE ARE GUILTY AND AWAIT THE PROCLAMATION OF JUDGMENT.

THEN WE HEAR THE JUDGE'S DECISION: "GUILTY, BUT-IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE FORGIVEN! "

YES, OUR DEBT TO GOD IS PAID BY JESUS, WHICH IS THE FOCUS OF THE PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE CHRISTIANS OF ROME.

JUSTIFICATION, IN CHRISTIAN TERMS MEANS MAKING SINNERS RIGHT WITH GOD BY REMOVING OUR SIN.

IT IS THE ACT BY WHICH GOD, THROUGH HIS SON, BRINGS HUMANS BACK INTO PROPER RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

THIS GIFT NEEDS ONLY TO BE SINCERELY RECEIVED, AND ONCE IT IS -PEOPLE ARE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD, WHICH PAUL DESCRIBES AS BEING JUSTIFIED.

THE PRIMARY EFFECT OF OUR JUSTIFICATION, WHICH IS PART OF OUR SALVATION, IS THAT JESUS MAKES PEACE BETWEEN WE WHO ARE SINNERS, AND OUR HOLY GOD.

PEACE- IS AN INTERESTING WORD. MOST OF US PROBABLY REMEMBER THE 1960'S WHEN "PEACE" WAS USED AS A GREETING.

WELL, THAT WAS NOTHING NEW-A COMMON GREETING WHEN JESUS LIVED ON EARTH AMONG JEWS WAS "SHALOM"-WHICH IS PEACE IN HEBREW.

THE DESIRE FOR WORLD PEACE IS A COMMON DECLARATION AMONG PAGEANT CONTESTANTS AND OTHERS. IT IS THE SUBJECT OF A NUMBER OF SONGS AS WELL.

BUT WHAT ALL OF US OFTEN FORGET IS --WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED FOR WORLD PEACE TO BECOME A REALITY.

WORLD PEACE BEGINS WITH JESUS MAKING PEACE BETWEEN US AND GOD, AND PEOPLE EMBRACING THIS RELATIONSHIP. IT IS ONLY THEN THAT OTHER PEACE CAN FLOURISH.

TRULY, WE CANNOT HAVE A REAL OR LASTING STATE OF PEACE IN THE WORLD BETWEEN PEOPLES OR NATIONS, UNLESS AND UNTIL WE ALL RECEIVE THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

THIS STATE OF PEACE WITH GOD OPENS THE WAY FOR THE SECOND BENEFIT WE RECEIVE FROM CHRIST, WHICH IS-ACCESS TO GOD THROUGH GRACE.

IN SOCIETY AND ELSEWHERE ACCESS IS IMPORTANT-IT IS SOMETHING OFTEN FORBIDDEN EXCEPT UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.

WE HAVE ALL SEEN SIGNS THAT SAY: “MEMBERS ONLY, NO ADMITTANCE, OR EMPLOYEES ONLY.”

SPECIAL BADGES ARE NEEDED TO GO BACKSTAGE AT CONCERTS OR INTO LOCKER ROOMS AT ATHLETIC EVENTS.

EVERYONE WHO USES THINGS LIKE CELL PHONES, TABLETS, COMPUTERS, ETC. KNOW ALL ABOUT PASSWORDS THAT ARE NEEDED TO LOG-IN TO THE DEVICE OR CERTAIN INTERNET SITES.

JESUS IS OUR ACCESS INTO ALL PLACES FORBIDDEN TO THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE PEACE WITH GOD.

HE INVITES THOSE WHOM HE HAS SAVED TO FEEL FREE TO USE HIS NAME WHEN APPROACHING THE THRONE OF THE ALMIGHTY.

IT IS A POWERFUL INVITATION, BECAUSE, AS JESUS STATED ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD SEVERAL TIMES, -“I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.”

IT IS LIKE A PERSON TELLING US WHEN WE CONTACT SOMEONE ELSE TO USE HIS OR HER NAME, WHICH GIVES THE ONE WE CONTACT NOTICE WE ARE SENT BY SOMEONE THEY KNOW.

THIS IS LIKE WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE NAME OF JESUS. IT IS LIKE A PASSWORD THAT OPENS THE GATES OF HEAVEN AND MAKES OUR PRAYERS LIKE INCENSE.

OF COURSE, IT IS NOT SIMPLY SAYING OR PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS THAT MATTERS.

IN FACT, WE DO NOT ACTUALLY HAVE TO SAY THE NAME OF JESUS FOR EVERY PRAYER.

INSTEAD, WE ARE CALLED TO PRAY TO GOD IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

TO SIMPLY SAY “IN CHRIST’S NAME” OR SIMILAR WORDS WITHOUT KNOWING JESUS IS MEANINGLESS.

WHAT GIVES US TO ACCESS TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, IS BEING SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN SAVED AND JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST.

TODAY’S PASSAGE ALSO FOCUSES ON HOW JESUS JUSTIFIES US, BY DYING ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SAKES.

SCRIPTURE REMINDS US THAT THE WONDER OF THIS ACT IS FOUND IN THE FACT THAT JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US, WHEN WE WERE STILL REBELLING AGAINST GOD.

INDEED, JESUS ONLY DIED FOR THE SAKE OF SINNERS-SINCE THEY WERE AND ARE THE ONES WHO NEED HIS SACRIFICE.

IT IS OUR RECONCILIATION WITH GOD, THE SAVIOR PROVIDES THAT IS THE KEY TO EVERYTHING ELSE.

THIS IS WHY SCRIPTURE SPEAKS ABOUT BOASTING ABOUT CHRIST AND THE GRACE OF GOD AND ALL ITS BENEFITS, AND NOT OURSELVES.

PAUL’S LETTER TO ROME ALSO REMINDS CHRISTIANS THAT IT IS IN THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE THAT PEOPLE OFTEN GROW IN WAYS THEY OTHERWISE WOULD NOT.

EVERYONE IN LIFE EXPERIENCES SUFFERING- IT IS NOT PLEASANT, AND ALMOST EVERYONE WOULD LIKE TO AVOID IT WHEN POSSIBLE.

BUT THE THING THAT CAN BE HELPFUL WHEN SUFFERING HAPPENS IS THAT--WITH GOD’S HELP IT CAN STRETCH US TO NEW HEIGHTS.

THE IMAGE OF ATHLETES IN TRAINING PUSHING THEIR BODIES MORE AND MORE IS OFTEN USED AS AN EXAMPLE THE BENEFIT OF SUFFERING.

OF COURSE, I THINK WE WOULD ALL AGREE THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WILLINGLY PUSHING OURSELVES TO THE EXTREME, AND BEING PUSHED AGAINST OUR WILL.

INDEED, SUFFERING OUT OF CHOICE IS A LOT DIFFERENT THAN SUFFERING DUE TO EVENTS OR ILLNESS WE DID NOT CHOOSE.

THE KEY TO THE MESSAGE HOWEVER IS THAT WHAT EVER ELSE HAPPENS TO US-NOTHING CAN CHANGE THE PEACE WE HAVE WITH GOD AND THE GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND.

HERE IS WHAT SOMEONE ELSE WROTE ON THE SUBJECT:  
"CHRISTIAN HOPE IS CENTRAL TO OUR FAITH.

HOPE RESTS IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE IN OUR SUFFERINGS.

BECAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE WE CAN LEARN TO ENDURE OUR SUFFERING WHICH PRODUCES CHARACTER, WHICH PRODUCES HOPE...."

THE WORD THAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTICE IN THIS STATEMENT IS "LEARN."

THIS IMPLIES THAT ENDURANCE, CHARACTER, AND HOPE ARE NOT AUTOMATIC.

INSTEAD, LIKE MANY OTHER THINGS IN LIFE WE HAVE TO TRY AND FAIL AND TRY AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL WE DO ACTUALLY LEARN IT.

THIS IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER-BECAUSE WE ARE NOT ALL ON THE SAME SPIRITUAL LEVEL.

EVEN PAUL DID NOT LEARN TO BOAST AND REJOICE IN SUFFERING IN AN INSTANT, HE LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE.

THIS MEANS THAT THOSE WHO DO NOT VIEW SUFFERING IN THE WAY THE APOSTLE DID SHOULD NOT SEE THEMSELVES OR BE SEEN BY OTHERS AS POOR CHRISTIANS.

THEY ARE SIMPLY GROWING AND LEARNING ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN PACE.

THIS IS PERFECTLY ALRIGHT, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE ARE NOT IN COMPETITION WITH OTHERS IN OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

BUT WHAT CHRISTIANS DO HAVE IN COMMON IS THE GRACE AND PEACE JESUS MADE POSSIBLE FOR US TO RECEIVE THROUGH FAITH, BY HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

LET US PRAY:

HEAVENLY FATHER, HOW WONDERFUL TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE PEACE WITH YOU, THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

WE ARE GRATEFUL HE WILLINGLY TOOK THE PUNISHMENT THAT WE DESERVED, SO THAT WE COULD HAVE PEACE WITH YOU NOW AND FOR ETERNITY.

WE PRAISE YOU THAT OUR HOPE IS BASED ON NOTHING LESS THAN THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, WHO CANNOT AND WILL NOT DISAPPOINT US IN GRACE AND LOVE.

THANK YOU THAT YOUR GRACIOUS LOVE HAS BEEN POURED INTO OUR HEARTS IN GREAT MEASURE THROUGH THE INDWELLING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

MAY WE LEARN MORE EACH DAY ABOUT YOUR GRACE AND LOVE.

GRANT US THE ABILITY TO GROW IN OUR ENDURANCE AND CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER; SO WE MAY TRULY BE FILLED WITH HOPE IN ALL YOUR PROMISES THAT ARE SEALED IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS OUR SAVIOR, IN WHOSE NAME WE PRAY. AMEN.

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BUT NOTICE, SCRIPTURE DOES NOT SAY WE REJOICE OR BOAST BECAUSE WE ARE SUFFERING. INSTEAD, THE BETTER UNDERSTANDING IS WE CAN BOAST AND REJOICE IN THE LORD AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, EVEN WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING.

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AND WHEN IT COMES TO GROWING FROM SUFFERING, THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT-AND WE ALL FIND ENDURANCE, CHARACTER, AND HOPE AT OUR OWN PACE. IT DID NOT HAPPEN EVEN FOR PAUL, IN AN INSTANT.