WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Romans 5:1–11

Key Verse: 5:2b

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

Have you ever felt like just curling up in a corner and dying? Like there was no point in even trying anymore? Life in this world can be hard. We all face problems, big and small, in our personal lives and in the world: The drain of sickness, the loss of death, the pandemic’s uncertainty, deep social divisions, the anger and violence, gross inequities and injustice, economic anxieties, shallow relationships, and on top of it all, our own embarrassing flaws and failures. In contrast, today’s passage uses some astonishing words. Peace. Grace. Joy. Hope. These four words are so beautiful, like soothing rain on parched ground. They’re universally needed, for sure. Somehow they all seem related. But are they real? Yes! God’s grace in Jesus gives us real peace, joy, and especially, hope. It’s a hope even for the total nobodys of this world. It’s a new outlook, a new way of thinking, about ourselves, our situation, about this world and the future. Having this new outlook, this new hope, is what living by faith in Jesus is all about. It’s what makes all our struggles and sufferings in Christian life so worth it. Paul says we can have this hope even while we’re going through all kinds of problems. How can it be? May God open our hearts and speak to us through his living words today.

Read verse 1. Paul begins, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith…” This is a quick summary of all Paul has been saying in chapters 1–4. And it marks a turning point in Romans. From now on Paul gets into what living by faith in Jesus actually looks like. He makes a powerful statement in verse 1b: “…we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But this is more than just personal peace; it’s peace with God, peace in our relationship *with him*. We were under the wrath of God due to our sins, and we were hostile to God. But through our Lord Jesus’ death on the cross, God’s wrath is turned away from us, and our rebellion toward him ends. Peace with God isn’t just a feeling—it’s our faith, because of what Jesus did for us.

At the end of today’s passage in verses 9–11 Paul describes this peace as “reconciliation.” It gives us a healthy spiritual confidence about our relationship with God, an assurance that we have nothing more to worry about. Western civilization has been described as “the age of anxiety.” People worry about all kinds of things, both real and imagined, things now and in the future. But by faith in Jesus we have nothing to worry about, because we have peace with God.

Paul emphasizes “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He repeats “through Christ” again in verses 2 and 11. Apart from Christ there’s no real peace; there’s only ourselves, other people and the uncertain world. But through Christ we can experience real, lasting peace which doesn’t change based on the situation.

Verse 2a reads, “Through him we have also gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand…” This further describes the change that takes place when we accept what Jesus did for us. Paul again repeats “by faith” and says it gives us access into God’s grace. Faith is like our ticket in to this amazing new world of grace. What grace is Paul talking about? It’s the grace of God that justifies us as a free gift, that redeems us and sets us free from slavery to sin (3:24). It’s the grace of God that assures us that all his promises to us will come true (4:16). Paul’s going to say more about this grace later on in this chapter (5:15,17,20,21). Later he especially mentions that this grace of God is not at all dependent on our works, our performance (11:6). But here he describes the grace of God as something we stand in. That’s such an interesting word picture. It’s like a new life foundation. To live by faith means to grab hold of this grace of God and build our lives on it, to stand in it every day as a rock solid foundation.

Read verse 2b. “…and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Paul also repeats the word “rejoice” in verses 3 and 11. The Greek word can be translated as “boast” or “talk about.” Here, “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” What does he mean? It’s his major theme in chapters 5–8. In chapter 8 he’s going to say much more about it. Simply speaking, it means the glory of God which will fully restore all of creation, including us. We’ll no longer fall short of God’s glory, but finally be conformed to the image of his Son and be fully glorified (3:23; 8:29,30). This is what heaven is really all about—God’s restoration. For now, it’s our invisible hope that we wait for with patience (8:25).

Hope is a big deal in our lives. Our hopes can be near-sighted, or they can be long-range. We can hope for a delicious meal, or to be with somebody we love, or we can have a bigger hope, such as seeing things change for the better in this world. Most of the time, though, having hope seems futile. Once a little boy famously defined hope as “something you know *isn’t* going to happen.” But Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” To have hope, we need faith. Paul says that living by faith in Jesus gives us this amazing hope of the glory of God. This hope is “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul,” and we need “strong encouragement to hold fast” to it (Heb6:18,19). It’s “a better hope…through which we draw near to God” (Heb7:19). Like our spiritual father Abraham, in hope we need to believe even “against hope” (4:18). This is why we all need Bible study, so that, no matter how hopeless things may seem, we can be encouraged to live with this hope (15:4). Moreover, we need the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can “abound in hope” (15:13). We no longer look at the world through the lens of doom and gloom, as if everything is all going to pot. We no longer look at people as impossible to be changed. We no longer look at ourselves as washed up and useless. We no longer worry about our children or grandchildren as if all they will experience is pain and suffering. It’s a beautiful thing to live with hope of the glory of God, the God who can change the world, change people, change the future and change us.

Read verses 3,4. Hope of God’s glory enables us to rejoice even in our sufferings. Without God and his glory, suffering is meaningless and devastating. But with God and his glory, all kinds of suffering can produce something good. Paul especially focuses here on how God uses suffering in our lives to mold us into people who look more like Jesus. Do we see our sufferings like this?

Modern society is full of all kinds of conveniences that aim to make life pain free. We put dirty clothes in a washing machine, dirty dishes in a dishwasher, food in a refrigerator, freezer or oven, we use vacuum cleaners and cars and planes, and some even have an epidural to deliver a baby. With all kinds of ease and comfort, though, people can become weak—too weak to endure any suffering. When there’s something to enjoy, something free, they show up in droves, but as soon as there’s hardship, they disappear so quickly. But without endurance, the show stops in our growth, both as human beings and as Christians. We need endurance, not pointlessly, like Forest Gump running cross country for no reason, but to grow in character. Suffering and endurance are what produce real character. There’s no shortcut, no easy way to it. If we’re constantly avoiding suffering and complaining about it, we cannot but remain as shallow people. But the more we see our sufferings from God’s point of view, and rejoice at what he’s doing, the deeper we grow. Paul says in verse 4 that it’s this depth of character that produces hope in us. When God starts producing Christ-like character within us through our sufferings, it’s a real source of hope, both for us and for others.

So how can we have this hope? Read verse 5. Some people hope for something but are put to shame because it never really happens. They just remain standing there, empty-handed. But the hope of the glory of God in Christ never puts us to shame. Why? Because God doesn’t leave us empty-handed. He gives us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s presence and work within us makes our hope not just words or talk, but real and genuine. When we believe in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit as a gift, and of all the things that he does for us, above all else he assures us of God’s love. In fact, he pours God’s love into our hearts. It’s a great spiritual experience every believer needs to have. The word “pours” literally means it’s like a permanent flooding of God’s love in our hearts.

But as we all know, there can be great experiences and then, there is cold reality. In the midst of sufferings of all kinds, including suffering for our faith, how can we be sure of God’s love? Read verses 6–8. God’s love is more than a feeling; it’s a fact. The fact is, Christ died for us. He died for us while we were still weak, still ungodly, still sinners. He didn’t wait for us to clean up our act and then die for us; he died for us when we were at our absolute worst. Wow! God’s love is so different from human love. Our human love might lead us to make some sacrifices for others to some degree. But when they’re being obnoxious and totally bad, we’re out, we’re done. But Christ wasn’t “done” or “out,” just because we were wretched. He died for us at just the right time—when we were completely helpless and ugly and unworthy, and all we could do was just trust him. Living by faith means holding onto the fact of God’s love for us in Jesus each day, no matter what’s going on, how much we fail or what hardship we face.

Living by faith in his love helps us see the future differently, too. Read verses 9,10. Paul again repeats that we have now been justified, but this time he adds “by his blood.” Our assurance of salvation isn’t based on our zeal, our efforts, our faithfulness, our fruitfulness, but on the blood of Jesus shed for us. Faith in his shed blood is what gives us a right standing with God, and it’s what is going to get us into heaven in the end: faith in his blood, nothing else.

But our ultimate hope is not just the peace, or the grace, or heaven itself. What is it? Read verse 11. Our ultimate hope is God himself. He becomes our very great reward, our soul’s true satisfaction. This is what it means to live for his glory, to have hope in God alone. Again, we can have this hope only “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He alone reconciles us to God in such a way that we actually rejoice in God, we actually are on his side and want to be with him most of all.

In today’s passage Paul teaches us that living by faith in Christ not only gives us a right standing with God; it also fills us with peace, grace, joy, and hope, no matter what we’re going through. What a beautiful life it is! Are you living that life? Are you full of God’s peace, grace, joy and hope? Is the hope of God’s glory what motivates you each day? Is that what people around you really notice? That’s why some translations of today’s passage say “Let us have peace with God” and “let us rejoice in our sufferings.” May God help us live out our faith in Jesus practically so that this hope, the glory of God, can fully inspire us and make us a blessing.