

April 18, 2021 - Mark Minnella

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Preacher: Mark Minnella

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Morning everyone. I don't have any jokes this morning. We're just going to go right into the passage. Sorry.

So Romans chapter 5 verses 1 through 11, I've entitled the benefits of believing. In our passage today, it begins with a therefore. So we need to take a look at what it refers back to, right?

If there's a therefore, see what it's there for. Everything that we've seen from chapter 3 in verse 21 through chapter 4 in verse 25. In fact, the whole of the book of Romans, beginning in chapter 1 verse 18 through the end of chapter 8, really has one overarching theme, and that is the theme of righteousness.

Righteousness is the key to our relationship with our creator. And so beginning in chapter 3 verse 21, Paul makes the case that righteousness is attained by faith alone, apart from anything else. He uses Abraham as an example, and then beginning in chapter 4 verse 23, he says this. The words, it was credited to him, were written not for him alone, but also for us whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead.

[1:38] He was delivered over to death for our sins, and he was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we've been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patience, perseverance, character, and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given us. 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 person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were sinners, Christ died for us. Since we've now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him?

[2:47] For if while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son. Excuse me. There we go.

How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life? Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Let's pray. Father, our God, we thank you so much for your word. And Lord, it's a great thing that we have your word in our hands.

We can read it. We can study it. We know that it's greater than us. And so as we approach this wonderful passage, Father, I pray that we would draw from it, that we would be encouraged and strengthened, and that we would be able to say that we are more like Christ.

Amen. So the first point I'd like to make is that we have peace with God. Peace with God is a legal standing. It's a permanent possession.

[3:53] It cannot be lost, stolen, or taken away. Notice it says, into this grace in which we now stand. That shows permanence.

Paul uses the word justified. That word is used 17 times in the New Testament, 15 of them by Paul, once by Titus and once by Luke, where he talks about the Pharisee and the tax collector and the temple.

Of the 15 times that Paul uses that word justified, eight are in Romans and five are in Galatians. Being justified before God means the same thing as being saved.

Saved from the lake of fire, born again, being placed into God's family, made a son or daughter of the king. Justified, as I said, is a legal term. It's used in a courtroom, and it means to be declared not guilty.

Paul wants people to know for sure that their salvation can never be lost, never be stolen, or never be taken away. And again, if we look back to chapter four, we'll see that he makes three points.

[5:00] Justification is not by works, it is not by ordinances, and it is not by obeying the law. This is different from the peace of God.

All saved people have peace with God, but the peace of God is a matter of discipleship, sanctification, which is a continual process.

Day by day, hour by hour, as we let the Spirit of God work in our lives, we can experience the peace of God. Philippians 4, 6, and 7, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

You see, here it tells us that we must do something in order to have the peace of God. It's actively working, seeking, praying. That's discipleship. The men have been studying this book.

Is there one up here? Oh, I should have brought one. The men have been studying this book. It's called Salvation and Discipleship by Lucas Kitchen. And we've had some pretty spirited discussions, haven't we?

[6:12] To say the least. And we've even disagreed with a few of his conclusions. We have. I say it's been good because I think we learn that way. We sharpen each other, it says.

But I've always believed that it's very, very important to be able to distinguish matters of salvation from matters of discipleship in the Word of God.

I think there's a lot of confusion created by a lot of well-meaning Christians and others that salvation is a one-time thing and it's a permanent possession.

And yet this relationship that we have with God in terms of him being our father is an ongoing relationship. And we mess that up a lot, don't we? But we confess and we walk with God and we use what we have in our heart, the Holy Spirit, in order to guide us.

And so that's an ongoing relationship. And that's conditional. But salvation, that's unconditional. Point number two. Why and how do we glory in our sufferings?

[7:17] Glory is a Greek word. I'm going to try and pronounce this like, Kaucho, oh my. I don't know. But I wrote it down there so you can, yeah, oh my.

Oh my, oh my. So I don't know much Greek but I studied a guy who does and he says that it literally, this word, it means to glory because of something.

And that's significant here, not in spite of something. You see, you can't just try to get through it. You can't just pray, God, get me through this thing. Make it better. Okay, I pray a lot that way, I know.

And it's wrong. The peace of God is not just to endure hard times. It's not just to look forward to future glory. It's not just to hang on through the storm but it's right now.

Right now. And I'll ask you, have you ever thanked God for suffering? That's hard. But that's what we're told to do here.

[8:17] Have you ever thanked God for suffering? That's hard. It's really hard. Listen to Psalm 32, verse 4. I will glory in the Lord. Let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Are you afflicted today? You see, Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. Now I rejoice in what I'm suffering for you and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church.

That's Colossians 12. 1 Peter 4, 13, he says, Peter says this, but rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

So I like the way this renders. I took this out of the Living Bible and so I'm going to read this out of the Living Bible. I know that's not a translation. It's just a rendering. But this is how the Living Bible renders these verses.

We can rejoice too when we run into problems and trials for we know that they're good for us. They help us to learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us to trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are ready and strong.

[9:39] So then what happens? This is what the Living Bible says. Then when it happens, we're able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well.

For we know how dearly God loves us and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. Isn't that neat?

You see, we can glory because suffering makes us better, stronger in our faith. So here's a question. Looking back over your life, if you've been a believer for a while like I have, when were you closer?

When were you more dependent on God? When things were going really great and everything was smooth or when you were going through some hard times? Daniel called Thursday night and we had a little chat and he was discussing some of his setbacks and frustrations and challenges that he's faced recently.

Many of you know that his apartment flooded and that his hard drive was submerged and he has six years worth of work stored on that. He said, Dad, there's probably a terabyte of information on that thing.

[10:58] So he said that most of Davao flooded and then he told me why. He said, there's a lot of construction going on. Now this is, if you've been in a third world country, this is not unusual, but there's always construction going on.

Okay? They just don't do it as good as we think they should. And so these guys who were doing the construction, they had all the trash sloughed into the canals and it blocked all the canals.

And Daniel said that this fellow that he knows that's an engineer, he took out an ad in the paper and said, hey, these guys are blocking all the canals and the first time it rains, it's going to flood.

And they all said, ah, you're a negative. And they put the guy down and two days later it happened. So pretty much the whole town flooded. It was like a big bath bowl, Daniel said.

So, and it happened very quickly and it messed up his hard drive and the frustration of trying to walk around in water. And nasty water at that. And then, you know, he's been trying to get this motorcycle and he's been very patient about it.

[12:05] So he went and took his test, right? And he said, I took this class, then you have to take a class and you have to take the class to take the test. Well, in the class, they never told me that I had to take a driving test.

I've had my driver's license for many, many years. But I went to get my license and they said, well, you took this class, but you didn't take the driving class. Well, can I just take the test?

No, you can't take the test until you take the driving class. When can I take the driving class? In two weeks. So he said, you know, Dad, this country's really corrupt.

And he goes, and there was one minute there that I wish it was a little more corrupt that I could just pay somebody to get through this. He goes, I just had, like I reached in my wallet and I said, can I pay somebody?

And the guy goes, no. So he's had a really, really challenging time. And so he's still waiting for that.

[13:06] He also told me that the frustration is that while most of the Philippines is open now, that the mayor of Davao, where he lives, well, she won't open the city. And he said, Dad, she just doesn't understand the science.

Where have we heard that before? Well, so she says, you need to be in your house with your mask on and the windows open. So he said, very frustrating.

And I told him, I said, well, guess what I'm speaking on? I have a question for you. In your life, were you closer to God when things were going smoothly or when times were hard?

He didn't hesitate very long. He said, during the hard times, Dad, I said, can you glory in your sufferings? That's hard. So when you go through rough times, can you glory?

Can you rejoice? Wow. Think about that. Point number three, evidence for hope. It says hope does not disappoint. The hope that tough times builds in us does not disappoint.

[14:12] Why? Because God has proved his intention to complete his work in us. Listen to Philippians 1.6. Paul says, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

And then the love of God is poured out in our hearts. You know, every Christian should have some experience of this, to have a deeper inner awareness of God's love for us. Do you know how much God loves you today?

It's not dependent on us. Paul wants us to think the right thoughts about God, but he also wants us to have the right experience with God.

The love of God is poured out in our hearts. You see, God's love is not given to us in a drip. It's not given to us in a trickle. It's poured out in our hearts.

Sometimes I think many Christians, they live if they're just getting a drip here and there. Sometimes I think I live like, like maybe I'm just getting a trickle. We need to wake up and realize that God has poured out his love in our hearts.

[15:22] It's not dependent on what we do. He loves us unconditionally. And then at the end of verse five, it says, the Holy Spirit, it was given to us. John 14, 16 and 17.

Jesus says, I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. The promise of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling Holy Spirit who never leaves us.

Verse 17 of John 14, it says, the spirit of truth, the world cannot accept him because it neither sees him or knows him, but you know him for he lives with you and he will be in you.

Charles Spurgeon, a great man from a past century, said this, the love of God is like light to a blind eye until the Holy Spirit opens that eye.

May the Holy Spirit now be here in each one of us to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts.

Everyone who's a Christian has the Holy Spirit given at the time of salvation.

[16:25] Romans 8, 9, you however are not in the realm of the flesh, but you're in the realm of the spirit, if indeed the spirit of God lives in you and if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

But not every Christian lives in the fullness of the spirit. And so in Ephesians 5, 18, it says this, do not be drunk on wine which leads to debauchery, instead be filled with the spirit.

It's a command. Not every Christian walks in the spirit. Romans 8, 5, those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires and those who live in accordance with the spirit have their minds set on what the spirit desires.

That's discipleship. Beginning in verse 6, we have a description of God's love toward us. In 1988, the Summer Olympics were being held in Seoul, South Korea.

Many of you don't remember this, but I do. I watch the Olympics. I love the Olympics. And so, one of the biggest highlights and one of the most anticipated things of the 1988 Summer Olympics was the 100 meters.

[17:40] Canada's Ben Johnson and the U.S.'s Carl Lewis were the fastest guys around. There was a third guy in there who had the world record before them, and Ben Johnson had beaten Carl the last three or four races.

And this was the Olympics, the biggest stage in the world, and these two guys were expected to light it up. And I remember this well because I was watching it live.

And I said to my wife, that Ben Johnson looks like a bodybuilder. He doesn't look like a sprinter.

Look at the arms on that guy. Well, here's what happened.

Ben Johnson won in world record time. 9.79, smashing the world record. And then three days later, his medal was taken away as he tested positive for steroids.

I was not surprised. Canada was to host the 1988 Winter Olympics in just a few short months. And they were hoping for at least a few medals in the summer games.

[18:46] After the shame and the scandal of the hundred meters, the Canadian hopes were put on a sailor. A man named Lawrence Lemieux, who was competing in his second Olympics, he had trained most of his life for this event.

He was the favorite. And I read that he even lived in his van down by a river for two years. This guy's whole life was focused on this Olympics. He didn't get a medal on the one before. And he was in a different boat. And he was sailing by himself and in a different class. And he was going to be the guy that was going to bring a medal to Canada. He was in the fifth race of seven races. And Lemieux was in medal contention. And in this race, he was in second position. A storm came in and the wind picked up. 35 miles per hour. The waves were 10 to 12 feet high. And he sailed on. He felt the weight of his whole country as he rounded the marker and headed for home.

[19:52] And then something happened. There were other boats on the course. And a team from Singapore that was in a smaller boat, well, their boat flipped over.

And one of the guys was thrown and he was flailing in the sea. And Lawrence Lemieux, well, he had a choice.

You see, he could save this unknown stranger or he could go for the gold and redeem his country. He had trained his whole life for this.

Lemieux saw the man was drowning and he turned his boat off course and he rescued the man. And there went the chance for a medal. He finished the race in 22nd place.

Afterward, the news got out and he was awarded the International Olympics Medal for true sportsmanship. Only 20 of those have ever been given.

[21:00] Canada had their champion, a hero, and they got some respect. He traded his lifelong dream for a man's life. Paul describes the greatness of God's love.

It's love given to the undeserving, given to those without strength, given to the ungodly, to sinners. And just like this drowning man who surely would have died in the ocean, we're helpless to save ourselves.

2 Corinthians 5.21, God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This emphasizes the fact that the reasons for God's love are not found in us.

They're found in him. None of us is deserving. Who are these people? Who are the ungodly? Who are the wicked people that Jesus died for? Well, Paul spent the first two and a half chapters of the book telling us who they are.

It's all of us. It's all of us. We are all those people. You see, at just the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. God sent his son at the right time, at the due time.

[22:13] Jesus' work was done at the perfect time in God's plan. Galatians 4.4 says, but when the set time had fully come, God sent his son. The world was prepared spiritually and economically and even linguistically and politically for the coming of Christ and the spread of the gospel.

In due time, I think, also has the meaning that Jesus died at the due time for us. The Bible says, now is the day of salvation. He died when we were sinners who needed a savior.

His timing was right for us. If you're here today and you're not sure that Jesus died for you, this is the right time. Make up your mind.

Look what it says. He died for the ungodly. That's you and that's me. That's every person. No one is good enough and no one is too bad for the love of Christ. Jesus' death is big enough to save anyone who wants to be saved.

And then it says, God demonstrates his love. Well, how? Well, by offering his son, his holy, spotless, sinless son, to die for people who offended him.

[23:28] When Jesus died on the cross, it's God's ultimate proof of his love for us. The demonstration of God's love is not displayed so much in that Jesus died, but in whom Jesus died for.

He died for undeserving people like us. Point number five, salvation from God's wrath. Romans 2.5 says this, but because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you're storing up wrath for yourself for the day of God's wrath when the righteous judgment will be revealed.

Revelation 14.10, They too will drink the wine of God's fury which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, Go pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on earth. That's Revelation 16.1. Believers are not going to experience the coming wrath of God.

It was poured out on his son on the cross. He poured out his wrath on Jesus so that unworthy sinners like us could have everlasting life.

[24:46] That's the heart of the gospel. Well, we say, well, well, that's a deep subject. And I think it is.

And I believe I've only made a few points this morning. We have peace with God. We can glory in our sufferings.

We have evidence for hope and it's a hope that does not disappoint. We have a great description of God's love demonstrated for us. And we're saved from God's wrath to come.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much, Lord, that you made the first move. We were drowning and you came by.

You pulled us up and you put us on a better path. And you saved us from your wrath. God, we thank you for that. Thank you for your word that gives us assurance that we have everlasting life, not based on anything we could do, but based on what's done and finished.

[25:58] The finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And he didn't just die there. He rose again the third day. He defeated sin and death for us, guaranteeing our resurrection. We thank you for that.

Amen. He beates. leader He ist gold. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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