

Romans 5:1-11 1Lent Sermon 2024

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Through him we also have obtained access by faith into **this grace in which we stand**. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

3Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, 4and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. 5And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

6For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. 10For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. 11And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Romans 5:1-11 2L Sermon 2024

## **This Grace in Which we Stand**

### **Where are we in verse 6: “we”**

Reread vs 6 “helpless and ungodly”

A believer once said to me, “God helps those who help themselves” I was dumbfounded on how to immediately respond because it was the wrong place and the wrong time to talk any further. “God helps those who help themselves” is a quote from Poor Richards Almanac. That person thought it was from the Bible. It has nothing to do with Christianity and everything to do with blatant Deism. Deism is destroyed by one verse in today’s Bible lesson from Romans 5:6.

Because in verse 6 God says, “Christ died for the ungodly.” But it doesn’t stop there, it also says “that we were helpless.” It isn’t a one-time kind of helplessness – it is an all-time helplessness. Ungodly mixed with helpless equals an enemy of God who deserves God’s wrath. We can be tempted to confuse God’s wrath with suffering. But they are worlds apart.

The wrath of God is hell. (9) Hell was created for the devil and his angels but now it is also a place where a person will go who is helpless and ungodly enough to follow his wicked lies and temptation. Normally, naturally we are born helpless and ungodly and because of sin at war with God and enemies. The 4 times bad news that Job got was not the wrath of God but the work of the devil.

If God helped those who help themselves then we would be deists that is, little gods running around being perfect, holy and righteous all by ourselves. If we could be helpful, if we could be godly then it would be our job to get out of hell and climb up to heaven. If we could be helpful, if we could be godly then Jesus was wasting his time. If we could be helpful, if we could be godly then we don’t need to be justified by faith, we don’t need peace with God, we don’t need his blood or his death or his resurrection. If we could be saved by our own goodness and work then, “God helps those who help themselves.”

But God doesn’t help the helpful and godly – he helps the helpless and ungodly. (read vs 6 again) There is a reason Jesus teaches that we need to repent which is another way to say, “**deny yourself.**” The opposite would be to acknowledge ourselves and pretend that we good enough to God, pretend that we can be perfect. Job didn’t – so why should we pretend to be better than Job? How can we pretend that we don’t need Jesus?

When suffering came – Job stood up tore his clothing and then fell down in humility, repentance and worshipped God. “In all this **Job did not sin or blame God.**” But we do. We do when we complain about suffering, we do when we blame God for not loving us, not caring for us, not caring about us. We complain when life is not comfy, cozy – easy-peasy. We can be nothing like Job when suffering comes because we fall into that temptation to think that God is punishing us for something we’ve done.

Jeremiah asks an important question, “**Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do the treacherous live at ease?**” (Jeremiah 12:1) Short term good does not compare to eternal good. Short term ease will end when eternal ease begins.

But then Romans chapter 5 comes along to correct that and build up our faith. The most important thing we need is to have “peace with God.” Sometimes peace with God will be met with war, pain and suffering while on earth. Peace with God does not guarantee peace with neighbors or nature or anything while we live down here. Real, true Peace is found only in heaven after Jesus takes us there. And sometimes I wonder if suffering isn’t a help for us to remember that we don’t last down here – we are not meant to stay here – this life is not all that God gives because God gives so much more.

Suffering can help us realize that we can't stand on our own, that we can't depend on physical blessings alone, that we should not count our earthly blessings as lasting. Some of the believers in the Bible were 'tested' and turned out better for their faith. Joseph was one, Daniel was another, Abraham another...

But the most important among all of them was Jesus who is God/man. God stepped down to our level to save us while we were still sinners and then Christ died for us. The death of Christ justifies us, the death of Christ reconciles us, the death of Christ brings peace with God and hope for eternal life which is by far the best beyond anything good we are given down here.

Christ died for sinners who are ungodly. If we fail to repent then we act godly, if we fail to admit our wrongs then we try to help ourselves. If we fail to admit the blame we deserve but instead blame God – we are unlike Job and too much like Peter telling Jesus what to do. Peter told Jesus that he should not suffer, he should not have to die, he should not have to pay for the sins of the whole world – and that devilish kind of temptation is still spooking around – who help themselves...

Jesus still died for sin-filled Peter. Jesus still died for everyone here today who admits helplessness with perfection and an ungodly life of disappointment to God.

Verse 1 and verse 9 both say 'therefore' that means it is absolutely true that Jesus has justified/reconciled us by faith. It is absolutely true that Jesus has justified/reconciled us by his blood. Jesus' life and death was all done to save us from ourselves and our sins. So now this is another appointed time to encourage you that we have access to heaven by faith into this grace in which we stand. Standing by faith in Jesus can be tough, standing by faith in Jesus will not be easy. Jesus did all the work – now our thankful life to him can look a little rough around the edges as we **“take up our cross and follow him.”**

Jesus came at a perfect time to save ungodly, helpless, imperfect, lost beyond lost people. Jesus is more than good to us, he does to death for us. That's more than ungodly, helpless, imperfect and lost beyond lost people could begin to imagine to do for themselves much less someone else do for them! Jesus gives **this grace in which we stand**.

#### Which we Stand

The Prophet Job wasn't able to stand hearing bad news after bad news rapid fire. God says, **“Job fell to the ground...”** Four counts of a heavy cross were given to Job and caused him to fall to the ground. Job's suffering took him to church, yours can too.

What in your life has felt like rapid fire, has felt like going from the frying pan into the fire or an avalanche of trouble that comes to smother? We sinners know how deep of a hole and how quickly we can sabotage our own lives. We are enemies of God by sin and know for certain that hell is God's wrath that waits for all who do not do what he expects and do what he forbids.

Whether we did it intentionally or accidentally makes no difference. **Sin is Sin is We who Sin**. Tripping, stumbling, falling, how quickly we can make our own lives a train-wreck. The Apostle Paul is inspired by God to start with Abraham in chapter 4 and then move onto Adam and Christ at the end of this chapter 5. Every Bible believer is imperfect, every Bible believer is helpless to a certain degree. Every Bible believer has had moments of ungodliness. So no one, not even the heroes of faith can save themselves – they and we depend on Jesus.

Helpless, godless, and weak need God and his peace and hope. God's gift of peace and hope come from the blood and by faith are given by God to all who are declared innocent/justified in Christ, Jesus.

We have a few of our favorite things. Things like summer, things like outdoors, things like Leo's Butter Pecan ice cream from Kelly's creamery. With the things we like there is also the opposite of those that are things

that we don't like. We don't like hospitals and we don't like cemeteries. As a pastor I needed to learn in a short time to be ok with going to those places because that's where I need to serve God's people who can be there. Normally we only go there if we have to or for the sake of a loved one or friend.

Jesus went somewhere, where we could never go and would have avoided if God expected us to. Jesus willingly walked into immense suffering, pain, and agony out of love to save us from those things. The kind of suffering Jesus endured is worlds beyond any kind of suffering we can endure. And yet, Jesus knows our suffering, Jesus knows our pain, he knows our tears. Not only does Jesus save us but he knows how it hurts, he knows how it feels, he knows just how helpless we are so he came to be more than helpful – he came to be strong because we are weak.

Jesus came to be perfect because we are not. Jesus came to endure God's wrath of hell so that we don't. Jesus came to give his life so that we don't have to give our lives to save anyone or ourselves. **"This grace in which we stand"** is Jesus. This grace in which we stand helps us be confident in our sufferings, patient in our endurance, given tested character which finally produces hope. (3-5) The Holy Spirit brings hope to us by his gift of faith from the blood of Christ who came to save sinners.

Suffering is good and bad.

The suffering of an unbeliever is bad as it is a fore-taste of hell.

The suffering of a believer is good as it is a fire-test of faith.

**Fire-Tested Faith stands in God's Grace.** Fire-tested faith falls down to worship the one who will take us away from all suffering at the end.

Do we naturally focus on the bad instead of the good? Maybe.

So is that why people think that 'bad things happen to good people' ?

We are justified by the blood of God, the blood of Jesus given and poured out 'for you'. This is a gift of God by grace to cause faith that clings to the peace and hope which God provides.

The blood of Jesus brings with it all of God's blessings of peace, hope, grace and life. More than we deserve, more than we can imagine was done by Jesus. More is given **"into this grace in which we stand."** We stand because Jesus comes to pick us up. We stand because Jesus gives us hope and peace to stand in the presence of God and not wilt. We stand because of Jesus – we stand by Jesus. We stand confident of eternal life which gives us confidence to also stand up for the name of Jesus in a daily way.

Would you die for Kim Jong Un? How about Osama Bin Laden? How about Putin? As unimaginable as it would be that we would be willing to die for people who act like that – someone like me (who is just as bad) is someone for whom Jesus did die for. Someone so helpless, so ungodly, so sin-filled is who Jesus died for while we were doing everything wrong – Jesus was doing everything right on/at the cross. His suffering takes away our suffering from an angry God. His death pays the price that we deserved to pay.

There is nothing good that we did that convinced Jesus to die – and everything wrong that we do and are that in the middle of it all Jesus died.(8) **"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** Sinners are saved by Jesus – given hope by faith from the Holy Spirit and can be at peace in our sufferings because when heaven comes to take us, our sufferings will be ended and forgotten forever.

We are saved by the death and life of Jesus – his blood given and poured out for the sins of the whole world. Peace and hope are Jesus Christ who is eternally 'for us'.

God helps the helpless and ungodly. Jesus saves us by his death and resurrection. We listen carefully to him when he says, **"take up your cross and follow me."** Amen.