

Hope for the doubting

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Date: 03 June 2018

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[0 : 00] My wife, Tamindi, this morning reminded me, when you come to the pulpit, don't shuffle your papers around.

It's a habit we all enjoy doing, shuffling. It looks important. Let us pray. Lord, you have given us your son so that we, your under-deserving children, may have life.

Life eternal to see you, to live with you, to worship you forever. This morning we ask that as we learn from your word, you will rekindle in our forgetful hearts the riches of your love, the depths of your sacrifice for sinful men, and to move our hearts to hear and understand and to accept your plan for our lives.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. For the first four chapters of Romans, the Apostle Paul was strenuously explaining what he meant by righteousness.

And in essence, he described God's character as righteous. And he first uses that word in Romans chapter 1, verse 7.

[2 : 13] I hope you keep your Bibles open at Romans 5 this morning, but I will just say this. For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed.

God reveals his own character. But Paul speaks here not only of a future blessing in heaven, but the hope which the Christian finds on earth in the midst of trials and tribulations.

And this message of hope is truly sweet. He has been telling the Romans about the need for justification.

It's a big word. And I was trying to find an illustration for justification. And I think I found the perfect one.

Last week, I was in court with three women who had been found with 100 grams of amphetamines.

[3 : 34] They were facing the death penalty. And as I was preparing this, I was saying to myself, that is what they need.

And I'm sure that's what they yearn for. A judge that would tell them that you have done no wrong. And that you can go home free of the penalty that ought to fall on you. The death penalty. That's justification for you and me too.

The penalty that ought to fall on us as sinners removed. And God telling you and you, you are free of the penalty.

We are all familiar with our utter failure to produce righteous lives. Jews and Gentiles.

[4 : 47] We have failed. And we have all sinned. That familiar verse in Romans 3, isn't it? All have sinned.

And fallen short of the glory of God. Thus all of us are under the divine sentence of condemnation. And God's righteousness is expressed in his condemnation of sin.

It is not a good thing for sin to be overlooked. Sin needs to be punished. And we have a good God. A just God. And God's character is expressed in his revulsion of sin and his clear condemnation of sin.

[5 : 56] And it will be revealed in the final eternal judgment of man. It's a scary thought to walk around with the potential of the penalty of sin hanging over your head like those three women who are sitting in prison now waiting for trial.

I don't know what is going through their minds. But what is going through the mind of a person who walks around with the sure penalty of sin on his mind?

God poured out his wrath against sin on his son, Jesus Christ, who died in the place of you and me.

Then God's anger and justice was satisfied and appeased in Christ so that he is able to save everyone who believes in his son, Jesus Christ, and who receives his salvation.

So now we turn to Romans 5, verses 1 to 11.

[7 : 33] Turn with me first to verses 1 and 2. We have now had a clear picture of justification. Having expounded the need for justification, the apostle Paul proceeds to tell you the blessings of justification.

Not just at the end of time, but now. In verse 1, Paul talks about peace with God.

What does peace with God mean? If you open the newspapers or your iPad or your iPhone, almost every day you will hear of the efforts for peace.

Isn't it? It seems to be such a desirable thing. International peace, domestic peace, trade peace, personal peace. But what does peace with God mean?

Peace with God means the end of our hostility, our hostility towards God and his hostility towards us.

[8 : 55] It's very, very precious. To be in a state of war is bad. To be in a state of war with God is disastrous.

So peace with God, which came with a price, the price of Christ's life, ought to be a very precious and desirable thing.

After that peace is established, God is able to deal with you graciously.

God's anger to you has been averted, has been, as it were, moved aside so that God can deal with you with grace or favorably inclined.

The one who has peace with God can breathe a sigh of relief. The war with God is over. Peace has been declared.

[10 : 06] It came through Jesus Christ, who was delivered to death and was raised again.

This is the heart of the peace which the prophets have been foretelling. And in fact, if you remember that famous line in Isaiah, Jesus Christ described as the Prince of Peace.

That is the peace that is offered to us. Let's move down to verse 2. Paul says that we now stand in grace.

A standing in grace obtained by faith in Jesus. You see, justification opens the door so that God can deal with men on the basis of grace.

Not on how good we have been because as we agreed earlier, none of us, not one, can deliver a righteous life of ourselves.

[11 : 26] All have sinned. But the change of status from an enemy of God to one who stands in grace with him, a dramatic change, a dramatic change, was brought about by God himself.

And we have to remember this. No one can bring this about except God. We are mere beneficiaries or enjoyers of that peace.

Now, there is no uncertainty about our peace with God. Our justification and our continuing sanctification cannot fail because it is based on something immutable, unchangeable, the finished work of Christ on the cross.

The job has been done. First, justification leads us into grace. And some translations talk about leading us into the presence of grace.

Now, I don't know how many of you regularly turn up at the Agong's palace for a visit. I've never been there.

[13 : 02] But the language used in this verse talks about us being led into the presence of God's throne room.

We are led into the presence of God's throne room. We have no right to go there on their own. Not only we have an introduction to grace, we get a chance to continue to stay in God's throne room forever.

God's throne room is justified believers don't just have an occasional encounter with God's grace. They have a permanent relationship with God in grace.

We don't fall into grace and fall out of grace. grace. Isn't that a wonderful and gigantic and a majestic offer of God to us who were his enemies?

peace. And verse 2 also talks about the hope. The hope of the glory of God.

[14 : 24] This is an interesting word and Pastor Brian and I were discussing it some time ago. You see, the Christian hope of glory is not like saying I hope I strike the lottery or I hope it won't rain tomorrow.

Here, the word hope is translated as I am sure. So the Christian hope of glory is a Christian assurance of glory.

So God's promises to us are very special. But can they be trusted? In numbers we are reminded that God is not human that he should lie.

Our God is a promise keeper. so we can have a joyful and a confident expectation which rests no less than on the promises of God.

Sure promises. Our hope, our ultimate hope is the glory of God which is already we have a glimpse of it today.

[16:03] We see the heavens, we see God's creation around us. But one day that curtain will be raised and we will see God's full glory.

It will be total perfection. Thus far we have seen that the Apostle Paul talks about justification justification in three ways.

One, the past forgiveness of our sins. Two, our present standing in grace as a privilege.

And three, the hope of glory as a future inheritance. So justification comes to us in three parts as a matter of illustration.

Past forgiveness of sins, present standing in glory, and a hope of a future inheritance. Isn't that fantastic?

[17:17] In verses three to eight, Apostle Paul goes on to talk about peace.

Now we hardly, we hardly need to be convinced to rejoice in times of peace and prosperity. But now Apostle Paul comes up with what appears to be a contradiction.

What does he say? verse three, not only so, but we also glory in our suffering because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope.

Verse five, 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.

God, Paul talks about in our present circumstance, we may face tribulation and trials, but we are to glory in them.

[18:38] Now, when Paul talks about suffering or tribulation, he's not using the word to mean your usual aches and pains, your disappointments, your fears, your deprivations, he's talking about the suffering that God's people will face and must expect in the last days.

Jesus reminded us of that too when he spoke to his disciples. I have told you these things, John 16, so that in me you have peace, in this world you will have trouble.

In this world you will have, not may have, you will have trouble. And Paul calls us to be ready and how we are to face tribulation.

What should be our attitude to tribulation? We can be tough, put up a stiff upper lip, but that's not what Paul is talking about.

Paul calls us to remember that there is divine rationale behind suffering.

[20:16] Paul calls us to remember that all of God's resources are more than sufficient to sustain us in adversity and difficulty.

He goes on to say that suffering is the only path to glory. It was for Christ, so it will be for Christians.

As Paul later expressed it in Romans 8, he says, we are co-heirs with Christ. If we indeed share in his sufferings, in that we may also share in his glory.

So it was for Christ, it will also be for Christians. suffering produces perseverance or endurance or staying power.

We could not learn endurance without suffering. I have coffee with a retired military commando about three, four times a week.

[21:33] he often tells me and recalls the time he was in training. Seven days in the jungle, no supplies except his gun.

Living on the fish caught in the stream and the leaves they could pluck in the forest and how the men used to murmur among themselves quietly how nice to be home.

But he said one thing, one week in the jungle, no bath by the way, it toughened them. Suffering produced tough men, tough soldiers.

So it does for Christians. Suffering produces endurance. endurance produces character. And it's not just character as in personality.

It's the quality of a person who has been tried and tested. My commando friend, you should hear him speak.

[22 : 57] He's about 60, but nothing phases him. Any problem, he say, we can do it. He said, I have done, I've been through the tough times.

Likewise, Paul is saying, perseverance produces character. character. The last link of that chain of suffering to perseverance to character is hope.

But what is the hope that we Christians hold on to? We don't gain self-confidence by persevering in tribulation.

Tribulation generates in each of us a confidence in the God of our justification.

We gain confidence and stand amazed at his working in us and in our circumstances. promises. It reminds us of God's character and brings assurance that our hope will not be disappointed and our hope will not fail.

[24 : 33] Now, where is that hope based on? That hope is based on the work of Christ. The work of Christ is a historical event.

It cannot be changed. It's a sure event. Let's trace Paul's argument. The sequence of chain reactions from suffering to hope.

Then he says in verses five, and hope does not disappoint. It never will. hope because hope that we have as Christians is based on a fact, not an illusion.

How can we know this? That hope started way back. The love of God for his creation.

love unlimited that he gave his son to redeem his enemies. That event has never been nullified.

[25 : 54] So the reason our hope will never let us down is that God will never let us down. and his love never gives up on us.

And this happens in two ways. His love has been poured into our hearts to it was given when we were powerless to save ourselves.

So Paul sees the cross as an absolute unchanging demonstration of proof of God's love for you.

The cross is the proof of God's love for you. Take some time to take it in.

The cross is not some distant historical event. It is the proof of God's love for you. love and his love lies in the combination of three factors.

[27 : 22] God giving himself to us even to the horrors of a sin bearing death and doing so for his undeserving enemies.

Can you see the whole plan of redemption is God's initiative and you and I sit back and enjoy it. And we are justified instead of having this hangman's noose just few feet from us it has been removed.

Removed permanently. let's move down to verses 9 of Romans 5.

The shed blood of Jesus Christ assures us that God's wrath against us has been removed. The penalty for sin has been paid and we no longer need to fear divine condemnation.

[28 : 41] We are saved from the coming wrath. Now the basis for this assurance is found in verse 10. Let me read.

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 be we be saved through his life.

The death reconciled us. On our last day what's left except glory?

so where is your boast? We are free to enjoy the benefits of his life.

Where is your boast? The work of Jesus Christ on Calvary is the basis of every spiritual blessing.

[29 : 53] The prerequisite and basis of all spiritual blessings is justification. That is the foundation of all the blessings.

And I pray this morning that your heart may be enlightened so that you may know that there is hope for you.

there is hope now and there is hope in the future in the glorious riches of his inheritance in the saints.

Christ's work is the basis and is also the assurance of the certainty and the security.

it's guaranteed those blessings. Brothers and sisters let us boast in him who justified us while he was we were still his enemies and who gives us a permanent hope an unshakable hope hope that we will meet him in glory.

[31 : 22] This is not just a walk while waiting for death. Our life now is a walk while waiting for eternal glory.

The best things are yet to come. God bless you.