

# Romans 5:1-11 - Boasting in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning, Church. Good morning. The reading is taken from Romans chapter 5, reading from verses 1 to 11.

! And it says this, Therefore, since we have 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.

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 perseverance. 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 has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Jesus died for the ungodly.

[ 1 : 13 ]     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 still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him?

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?

Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Amen. Thank you so much, Yvonne, for reading for us. We are in a series in the Book of Romans. If you're here visiting, that's probably useful for you to know. So it will be a help to you if you've got a Bible in front of you, so you can follow on as we walk through those verses.

[ 2 : 32 ]     I'm going to pray and ask the Lord for his help as we look at this passage together. Let's pray. Father, we do want to ask that you would be at work this morning by your Spirit.

We thank you that the words that we are looking at are your words to us, for us this morning. So we pray that you'd help us to think clearly, that you'd help us to have tender hearts, that you would put away distractions from us, that we might hear your voice and respond in obedience and faith, as we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, if you've been with us over recent weeks, as we've been working our way up to Romans chapter 5, you'll know that we've been thinking about justification by faith.

Justification by faith. Justification by faith is at the heart of the Christian gospel. It is the declaration by God that an individual is in the right with him.

That individual, they are justified. They have nothing to fear before me. They are not guilty. They are righteous in my sight, says God.

[ 3 : 45 ] Now, we found over recent weeks that God makes that declaration about an individual not on the basis of their works, not on the basis of what they have done. Now, Paul's been really clear with us over and over again that nobody is declared righteous on the basis of what they have done or not done.

What we have done and not done is enough to declare us unrighteous, unjustified. Instead, we've discovered that the works of justification are done not by us, but are done by Jesus on the cross.

It is the cross of Jesus Christ where the justifying power of God comes, as God in Christ stands in our place, the innocent one in the place of the guilty.

It is as if the father looks at the son on the cross and sees his sacrifice there. Your sin counted on him and looks at you and declares you righteous in his sight, justified by faith.

We've then heard that this declaration of not guilty is received not through religious works. We don't receive justification by intellectual pursuit. It's not that we reason it out and think it out for ourselves.

[ 4 : 58 ] We don't receive it by an emotional experience either. No, we receive justification by faith. Faith which is an empty hand that's turned from its self-confidence and places its confidence in Christ alone and says, there's nothing I can do.

I trust in you alone to declare me not guilty before God and receives the benefits of his work on their behalf. That's justification by faith. That's the center of the Christian message.

And what we find as we come to chapter five is that Paul is still talking about it. Look down at the passage. Verse one, we have been justified through faith, he says. Verse two, we have gained access by faith into this grace.

Verse nine, we have now been justified by his blood. So justification by faith is still the center of this passage. But instead of explaining it to us, which we've already done and he's already done, instead what he's going to do now is show you how this doctrine, this truth works out in real life.

He's going to, if you like, road test it, giving it a shakedown to see if it really works. This week on my day off, I went to the motorbike show at the NEC in Birmingham.

[ 6 : 17 ] And I was on the Royal Enfield stand looking at this new bike that they just released for the show. And I was talking to a guy about it. It was a brand new electric bike. And he was telling me all sorts of amazing things about this bike.

So you can, before you go out on your ride, you can on your mobile phone, set the settings of the ABS and the suspension so that you can just, you know, dial in your ride even before you've gotten on the bike.

And it was amazing. You unlock the bike with your phone. And so if you don't have your phone with you, you know, you can't ride the bike. No one can ride the bike without you. And then it notifies you if the bike's moving and someone's trying to stick it in the back of a van or something.

I was, I mean, I was blown away. It's incredible. This sounds unbelievably brilliant. And so then we were looking at the bike and then it comes out, he has to put a pin number in, right?

And he puts a pin number in and nothing happens. And then he puts a pin number in again and nothing happens. And you could see the guy starting to get a little flustered. You know, I've told you how amazing this bike is and it won't boot up.

[ 7 : 18 ] And so it didn't. So there you go. And it was a little embarrassing for him. Now, in a sense, what's going on in Romans chapter 5 is Paul said, listen, I've told you how brilliant justification by faith is.

Justification by faith is incredible. You know, who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want to stand before the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the God who made us, and to be declared by him righteous, justified, through nothing that you've done yourself, but only as a gift received by faith?

Who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want that? But now, if you like, he's putting his pin number in and he's road testing this. Does it really work? Does it really work? And he gives you three tests.

The first one is this. Guilt. Guilt. This has been a big issue right from the off in Romans. Guilt is something we know all about. I don't need to explain it to you, do I?

We feel it even when we're on our own at home. You know, we ponder the things that we've done, the places that we've been, the things that we've seen, the words that we've said. You know, guilt can keep us awake at night. It can make us avoid contact with people, hide in the shadows.

[ 8 : 23 ] You don't have to be a Christian to experience it. It's experienced by young people and old people alike. And Paul's point in Romans has been in chapter 2, 15, for example, that an internal sense of guilt really is a reflection or an echo of God's verdict on us.

It's our standing before him echoed internally. So we feel guilty internally because we are, before God, guilty externally. But notice how justification by faith meets that challenge.

Look at verse 1. What does he say? Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what he says. Justification by faith means we have peace with God. Notice it doesn't mean that we can have peace with God or we might at some point in the future have peace with God.

Rather, he says, no, right now, having been justified by faith, you have peace with God. There is no problem between you and God.

[ 9 : 34 ] Verse 2 explains it as being standing in grace. It's as if our feet are in a circle that is labeled mercy and forgiveness and grace. Nothing is held against the people who stand in this circle, he says.

These are the people I have no problem with. We are at peace, he says. I'm sure that, like me, you don't have to think very hard before you can find something to feel guilty of.

Maybe it was a missed opportunity to witness to somebody. Maybe it was a word you spoke in anger that you can't take back. Maybe it's a lifestyle that's damaged those around you.

Perhaps it's a pattern of behaving that felt irresistible at the time, but now is just a great burden that you carry. And Paul says, no, justification by faith meets that challenge by bringing you in the present right now peace, standing in a circle of God's forgiving grace.

How does that work, right? You need to acknowledge, don't you, that no other relationship you have is like that. If you get angry with a friend, if you falsely accuse them, if you withdraw from them, you are unlikely to have peace with that person.

[ 10 : 46 ] If you steal money from your parents, you are unlikely to be at peace with your parents. Because each offence needs to be worked through, each conflict's resolved. When you offend somebody, they're shocked, aren't they?

I didn't know you had that in you. I didn't know you were capable of that. You're worse than I thought. But it's not like that with God, is it? Justification by faith through the cross of Jesus Christ brings a permanent peace because God is not learning about your sin.

He's not learning about your sin. He knew it all along and has paid in full the moral debt on the cross. You and I are shocked by our sin, aren't you? I'm shocked at my seeming inability to obey God, to walk faithfully with him, to think rightly, to behave in a way that's right.

But God is not shocked because he's not learning about me. He knows me. And he's paid already for my sin, even ahead of time, while I was still a sinner, verse 8.

Perhaps it was like this when you were little. Maybe you went to the beach with your mum, right? You went to the beach with your mum. You had absolutely no intention of going into the sea. I'm not going to go into the sea.

[ 11 : 59 ] The sea is cold. I'm not interested in going into the sea. And so then when you get to the beach, you decide, well, I'm just going to play at the edge of the sea, right? I'm going to run away from the waves as they ripple in across the shore.

And I'll be able to dart away. It'll be fine. I'm not going to get in the sea. I'm not going to get wet. And, you know, before long, right, your shoes are wet. And then before much longer, your trousers are wet as well.

And the sun's gone down. It's no longer fun playing in the sea. And you walk up to your mum and you're crying. I'm cold. I said I wouldn't go in and I've gone in. And I'm soaking wet and I'm miserable.

What does your mum say? I guarantee she would say something like this. I knew this would happen. Here's a towel that I had in my bag.

Here's a spare pair of trousers that I had in my bag. Here's a spare pair of socks. I brought them. Here's a pair of shoes. I brought those too. And you look at your mum and you say, how did you know?

[ 12 : 59 ] And she goes, I just knew. I knew this would happen. And then there's a sense in which in Romans 5, it's exactly like that with the Lord. We are shocked by our sin.

I had no intention of doing that. I had no intention of going there. Oh, I knew you would. And I've paid in full for all of that.

You're at peace with me. You stand in my grace and my mercy. I know you completely. And so if you're a Christian today, if you have received by faith justification from the Lord Jesus by trusting in him, then you can't disappoint God.

Not because you're sinlessly perfect, but because when he called you to himself, he knew all about you already. And for reasons known only to himself and only explicable by his love, he has chosen to stand you in grace so that you have and will have and do have now peace with him.

Come, he says. I knew this would happen. Remember my grace in which you stand. Leave all that behind. I don't know everybody's situation. Well, I know some of them, but I'm sure there are people in this room who need to hear that.

[ 14 : 12 ] Perhaps you're crushed, feeling like you've let God down. Maybe you think you're a terrible Christian. Maybe you think that the best solution is just to hide in the shadows. I'm going to arrive late at church.

I'm going to leave early. I just hope nobody talks to me. Nobody asks me what I've been doing this week. Well, justification by faith says that trusting in Christ, you have peace with God.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ. And it cannot be taken away by your works because you did not receive it through them. That's the first challenge. Second challenge, suffering. Look down where we left it off in verse two.

And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we glory in our sufferings. Because we know that suffering produces perseverance, 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 has been given to us. Now, I'm going to ask you to work hard just for a few moments, just to think carefully about how these sentences work.

[ 15 : 16 ] The first sentence there is a summary. We boast in the hope of the glory of God, he says. Look at what's going on, right? This is a rejoicing. This is an expressed confidence in future hope.

The future is amazing. Look at where I'm going. Look at what's before me. I'm boasting in the hope of the glory of God. Look, God's greatness and glory.

That's my destiny. That's where I'm going. That's my hope and my confident expectation. And what you need to see next then is that Paul essentially repeats that same idea. He repeats the word boast in the next sentence in verse three.

The NIV translators, for reasons best understood by themselves, I don't know, they have translated the word glory. But it's really the same word. It's boasting here, too. But notice it's not boasting in hope.

What is it? Boasting in suffering. We glory in our sufferings, he says. Now, that's strange, isn't it? Hey, look. Look at all these terrible things that are happening to me.

[ 16 : 15 ] Isn't it brilliant? Well, why is he suggesting that? Well, notice how it works. It's because in his mind, boasting in suffering is essentially exactly the same as boasting in hope.

How so? Well, read on. Because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope. You see, this isn't boasting despite suffering.

You might understand that, mightn't you, right? People can do that. You know, life's pretty hard now, but I've got some things to look forward to. So I'm going to ignore the pain. I'm just going to get on with things. It's not that. More than that, it's that suffering itself is such a factory of hope.

Suffering is a hope producer, if you like. And the production line goes, what? Suffering, perseverance, character, hope. That's how it works.

Now, you know that, don't you? Suffering builds hope by forcing us into this prayerful reliance on God. A reliance which perseveres because it shreds itself of any self-confidence and has put its hope in God alone.

[ 17 : 24 ] You know, when life is very hard, when you can't go on, when the pain, be it physical or emotional, is completely overwhelming, you collapse into God, don't you? And that kind of perseverance produces character.

Not as in godly characteristics. It's not so much here that suffering is teaching you life lessons, right? Making you a better person. Suffering does do that, doesn't it?

But that's not Paul's point here, I don't think. Rather, the word here, character, means a kind of provenness. It means a proof that it's real, that you are the good soil of Jesus' parable.

You are tried and tested and proven. And that provenness, he says, produces hope. Because it shows you that you are not what you were. You've been changed.

Justification by faith has made a difference to me. And this is the key to this. Look down at verse 5. Why is that? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[ 18 : 23 ] In other words, right? Suffering produces perseverance, character, and a certain hope because we're not on our own in the suffering. But because through justification by faith, God the Spirit comes to dwell in us as a taste of what's to come.

Let me try and give you an illustration so that we can all catch up a little bit. Imagine it like this with me. Imagine that you're a soldier on the front line. And you're fighting in the trenches. Your bombs are raining down.

Mud is stuck to your boots. You're constantly cold. You're perpetually hungry. But in your pocket is a picture of your beloved girlfriend. And written on the back of the picture are the words, we will marry when you come home.

And as you look at it, you realize, don't you, this is what I long for. And the more that the bombs fall, the more you look at the picture. The colder it gets, the more you long for the warmth of her embrace.

And that's it here. We don't have a picture in our pockets of God, do we? But we have God by his Spirit dwelling in our hearts. And even as we suffer, as the bombs and tirades and coldness of suffering and pain and emotional difficulty and relational breakdown and fights and quarrels and struggles, as they rain down on us, well, we take the picture out of our pocket and go, this is what I long for.

[ 19 : 55 ] This is who I long for. I realize that the blessings of health or wealth or success, those aren't real treasure. Those are flimsy delights. There's another one gone blowing up. Treasure with God is what it is.

Being with God, the God who is with me now by his Spirit, is a taster of the glorious treasure that will be mine. It's perhaps worth pointing out just at this point that actually this is a Bible theme.

The idea that we can rejoice in the midst of suffering because of what it teaches us about who God is and how it makes us long for glory is something Jesus says as well. He says this in the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

[ 20 : 59 ] Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. I am sure that the frequency of these reminders in scriptures mean that our tendency is to forget this, right?

That's why it's written over and over again. Good theology in many ways is preparation for suffering, isn't it? And so perhaps for you this morning, maybe you need to hear this especially.

That the grief, the loss, the abuse, the poor health, the emotional trauma, the neglect, the poverty, the persecution, the relational hurt that you've experienced. All of those, because of justification by faith, comes with the presence of the Spirit.

All of those things are a factory of hope. And so perhaps this morning, maybe you just need to take the picture out of your pocket again. Just have another look at what's set before you.

[ 22 : 06 ] I'm going to be with the Lord. I'm going to be with him who dwells in me now by his Spirit. There's nothing better than that. I stand in grace, and I will be with my Lord, even as he's with me now.

So that's the second test, suffering. Guilt, suffering, third test, death, death. There's no doubt, is there, that death is a scary prospect. I don't think we'd be thinking straight if we didn't think so.

Everything in us as humans is repelled by the idea why so many efforts are put into avoiding it. But in the Bible, death is not the end of life. It is the beginning of eternity. Eternity is set in the human heart so that the Bible says that everyone who ever lived will live eternally, either in the joyful presence of the God who made them or excluded from his gracious presence.

And that eternal fate, we're told, is sealed at death. No second chances. No purgatory. Now, we've seen in Romans so far that justification by faith is the verdict of the day when we stand before God, received now, ahead of time.

So justification by faith is us receiving the not guilty verdict of judgment day, even ahead of that day, so that we might know today that we're going to be safe then.

[ 23 : 28 ] But in the end of the section, Paul basically asks, how can you be sure? How can you be really sure? How can you know that justification by faith is solid enough to last you on that day? Listen to Paul's answer, verse 6.

He says, We were his enemies.

We were joining him with a crowd shouting, crucify, crucify. Who would die for wicked people like that? Nobody, says verse 7. If you saw a small child fall into the canal, you might risk your own life and jump in after them to drag them out and put them on the side.

You might do that. If you saw a man stab a child and then fall into the canal, you would certainly let him drown. But God's love is seen in the cost of justification against the backdrop of our wickedness.

God dived into our sinful world to give his life for undeserving sinners like us. The highest cost paid for the least deserving. Now, if that's what God did for us, this side of eternity, if he reconciled us to himself like that, if he did that while we were sinners, so now that we're friends, don't you think that now we're his friends, he'll bring us into glory?

[ 25 : 06 ] Verse 9. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath, this future judgment, through him? 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?

This is the greater to lesser argument that we were looking at with the kids. If you can lift a sack of potatoes, you can lift a potato. If you died for sinners, don't you think you can bring friends to glory?

Of course you can. The work has been done. The effort has been made. The big barrier has been jumped. So the hymn writer can say, no guilt in life, no fear in death. This is the hope of Christ in me.

So there it is, right? Justification by faith in the real world. You struggle with sin and guilt. We suffer and we die. Justification brings peace for the guilty.

Suffering becomes a factory of hope. And we know we'll be safe when we die. Because God has done the greater thing for us. Let me just say as we close, one of the great concerns of the Bible is that you and I, left to our own devices, will forget that.

[ 26 : 19 ] We won't build our life around it. But the danger is that you listen to a sermon like this and you think, do you know what, I've learned nothing this morning. And that might well be true. I don't purport to stand up here and tell you stuff you've not heard of before.

Mostly, most of what I say, if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you'll have heard many times before. But the danger is not that you don't know it. The danger is you forget it.

So what in the passage is the activity that Christians are doing? They're doing it three times. I think, maybe there's one exception, but I think it's really the only action that we're doing in the passage.

What is the action that we're doing? Boasting, right? We're boasting. We're boasting in hope in verse 2. We're boasting in suffering in verse 3.

We're boasting in God in verse 11. This is what you are to do in the light of justification by faith. Shout about it. That's what you're to do. Shout about its benefits.

[ 27 : 20 ] Shout to yourself as much as you shout to anybody. I have hope. My suffering is proving my hope. I am at peace with God.

I have nothing to fear before him. You could perhaps put it this way. God wants you to preach to yourself every day these great truths of the gospel. So that you hear them not just from me on a Sunday in a brief slot, but all the time.

I stand in grace. I have hope in life and death. I belong to God. He's my friend. I'm reconciled to him. I will meet him.

And I'm to boast. Boast to myself and to others at what Christ has done. Let me pray. And then we'll stand and sing as we respond.

We'll just take a moment to pray in our own hearts.

[ 28 : 24 ] We to respond to something that you've heard. Heavenly Father, it is astoundingly brilliant that people like us can have peace with you because of what you've done for us.

It's even perhaps more incredible that the suffering of our lives are not destroying us, but are factories of hope.

And we live and die with this great confidence that you, having done this great thing of sending your son to die for us in your great love and mercy to us while we were your enemies, that now as your friends we shall be safe eternally.

Lord, I pray that you'd impress these things on our hearts. Pray, Lord, just especially, maybe someone's learning them for the first time today. We pray that you might open their eyes to put their trust in Jesus and receive these great blessings, even as we pray in his name.

Amen. Amen.