

**“LIVING LENT as People of the Resurrection: PRAISE”
Romans 5:1-8**

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 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.
3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** 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.
6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.
7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person,
though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.
8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
9 Since we have now been justified by his blood,
how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!
10 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!

Introduction

Whenever a Bible passage begins with the word “Therefore,” you should ask or know what the therefore is there for! “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,” writes Paul to the church in Rome. This book of the Bible, often known as the letter or the Epistle to the Romans, is the fullest, most coherent explanation-proclamation of the message of Jesus in the New Testament.

In the first 4 chapters or sections of his letter, the apostle Paul outlines the enormous problem of human sin and lostness, followed by Jesus’ death on the Cross to save us, and personal faith in Christ as the sole condition of his acceptance. God’s Word makes it plain that all people, every person is sinful under the just judgment of God, and can be justified solely through the redemption found in Jesus Christ – by grace alone, through faith alone. Hold those three things in your mind and heart as we continue the conversation in Romans 5: Sin, Salvation, and Faith. That’s what the therefore is there for.

I. Peace, Access, Hope: Praise God (vs. 1-2)

A social researcher named Brene` Brown spent six years trying to measure, control, and predict emotional stress. At the end of that research, Brene` Brown herself had an emotional breakdown. “The physician could not heal herself.” She revealed this in a 2010 TED talk to an audience of 500 people and later told a friend that she had probably destroyed her career. When she found out that about 15 million people saw it on line, she said she might as well crawl up and die. That number is up to 25 million today.

Why did so many pay attention? Why did so many tell their friends, “You have to see this”? Well, Brene` soon realized the power of vulnerability and embracing our imperfections. The fear of being disconnected either personally or professionally is a major factor in emotional breakdown. Her TED talk revealed the healing power of someone saying, “Me, too!” to what you are going through, what you are struggling with. Feeling like you are not pretty, smart or slim enough; being abused or abusing? With an “expert” like Dr. Brown saying “Me, too,” many people found a help in their own lives. Her website is brenebrown.com.

“Therefore,” writes Paul about his own freedom from guilt and shame. This is what Paul would post on his website: “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 in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” Praise to the Lord!

Notice the verb tenses specific or implied. “We have been justified... We have gained access... both by faith... we have taken our stand” (past, perfect tense; “It is finished,” cried Jesus; nothing more is needed). “We have peace...” (present; we live now in the sphere of God’s grace; “the peace of God that transcends all understanding”). “The hope of the glory of God... We shall be saved” (future; actually being in the present of the Lord! A joyful and confident expectation that rests on the promises of God. How glorious!). Praise to the Lord our God!

Do you know and understand what Jesus has done, does, and will do for you? For us? “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor/scholar John Stott writes how “the pursuit of peace is a universal human obsession, whether it is international, domestic, or personal.” Summing up how the Bible offers peace, as here in Romans 5: NO GOD? NO PEACE! KNOW GOD! KNOW PEACE!

II. From Suffering to Hope: Praise God (vs.3-5)

Then Paul writes something quite surprising. “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,” in our tribulations, in the opposition or even persecution of a hostile world. Jesus warned his disciples that they would have trouble in this world (John 16:33). Paul warned new Christians that they would go through many hardships (Acts 14:22).

But why “glory,” why rejoice in them? Well, there is a divine rationale behind suffering. You and I know this to be true of the normal course of human development. “Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” There’s a song that begins: “I don’t have to know you to know that you will go through hard times; it’s just part of life.”

“We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of

salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.” The song continues, “But God is able; more than capable; he is faithful to the end – to finish what he started.”

Suffering can be productive – responding not with anger or bitterness but if we live through it knowing our Lord is at work. And remember that our Lord and Savior suffered criticism, rejection, painful abuse, and even death. Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 13:16; 15:20).

The last few sermons have mentioned sheep as an analogy for people. Here’s another one. From staff to sheepdog, shepherds have tried to keep sheep from straying or being attacked. A more recent method is the metal, hoof-proof grid built into the ground around the sheep’s territory.

But in Yorkshire, England, one of the sheep laid down and rolled over the grid. Other sheep followed. And soon the entire flock was in neighborhood gardens eating flowers and food of local residents. The shepherds eventually gathered them up and returned them to their pen. They escaped again!

Friends, when the barriers of trouble or testing or opposition confront you, don’t try to escape them. Find the Lord’s purpose in them and even face them with joy. God is developing your perseverance, character, and a confident hope in Christ. God’s love will never give up on us.

Parental love is almost indispensable for the healthy emotional development of a child. The love of a spouse or friend is marvelously fulfilling. To be sure of God’s love brings even richer blessings. Joy, peace, freedom, confidence, self-respect.

III. Being Powerless to Being Saved (vs. 6-10)

“You see,” writes Paul, “at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... 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!”

However bad things are in our fallen world and fallen lives, God supersedes all with the amazing grace found in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in our place, on our behalf.

Look at how God’s Word describes us before grace alone, faith alone in Jesus. We all, each of us, “powerless, ungodly, sinners, even God’s enemies.” And yet it says, “Christ died for us.”

In 2013, Time magazine had a cover headline that read: “Can Google Solve Death?” Google’s CEO announced a new division known as Calico to be dedicated to health and aging issues and to solving the problem of death. In September 2014, it was announced that Calico, in partnership with AbbVie, would be opening up an R&D facility focused on aging and age-related diseases, such

as neurodegeneration and cancer. Initially, each company would invest \$350 million, with an option for another \$500 million later on. Calico also announced a partnership with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and 2M Companies regarding drug development for neurodegenerative disorders. Last year, the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard announced a partnership with Calico to “advance research on age-related diseases and therapeutics;” and further partnerships with the Buck Institute for Research on Aging; and then with QB3 based on researching the biology of aging and identifying potential therapeutics for age-related diseases; and with AncestryDNA based on conducting research into the genetics of human lifespan.

Why would these companies invest millions to deal with life’s most absolute certainty: death? Aside from capitalizing on their investments, they want to help people cope with disease, suffering, aging, and dying.

I know a better answer. Why spend so many millions on the problem of dying? Because if we can deal with the pain and the uncertainty and the grief of dying, it will change living. The problem is not really solving dying. The real problem is the problem of living.

Conclusion

The title of this sermon series is “Living Lent as people of the resurrection.” The apostle Peter wrote to the church how “He himself (Jesus) ‘bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’ For ‘you were like sheep going astray,’ but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (I Peter 2:24-25).

Living Lent as people of the resurrection, we praise God who demonstrates his own love for us; his love, mercy and grace in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray together.

From Psalm 34: “I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.” Amen.