

“Love while at our darkest...”

-Romans 5-
by Pastor Tim Dodson
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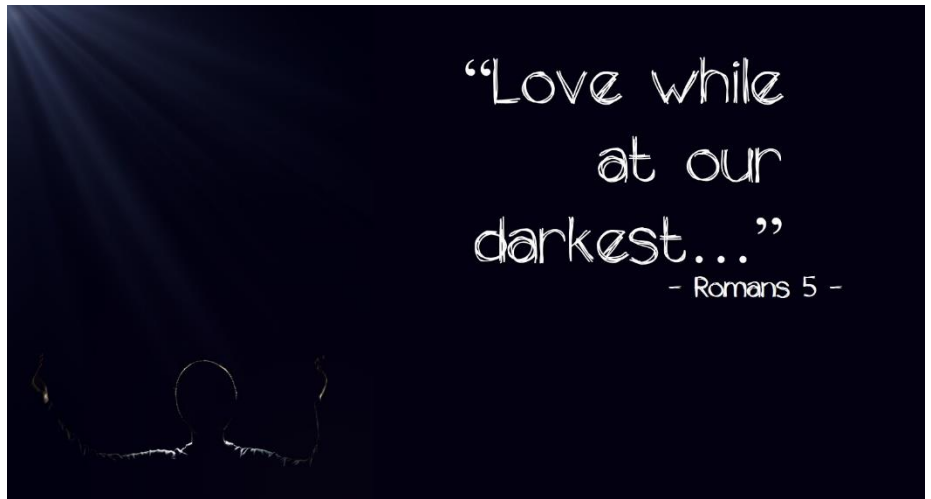
Romans 5: 1 - 21 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in*

which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— 13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 5 comes out of the gate swinging. After all he has said in the last 4 chapters, Paul now begins chapter 5 with the word “therefor...” Or “because of all of this.” “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...*” And if we take the time to let that first sentence flow over us, we will notice the past tense of the language: “*having been*” justified. How stressed out we get and “worker oriented” we become as if it is all still in play. Yet the language is clear. We have confirmed standing...a positional status completed long before we drew our first breath...finished upon that cross 2000 years ago!

How do we know it's a fact? How do we know this is the truth? After all, we certainly have a lot riding on it! According to this passage before us, once we have received that justifying credit to our account, we begin to immediately experience the personal benefits of that new birth. We now have “peace *with* God.” Note the careful language here however...the text does not say “peace *of* God,” though certainly we have tasted of that rare elixir!

But the truth is that the condition of “*peace of God*” changes according to our immediate response to Him, our present state of Holy Spirit relations, and frankly, what side of the bed we got up on that morning! Much of this book is directed toward this reality. Anytime we start banking on how we *feel* and what our present emotional state is to define the facts, we are heading for trouble. Our emotional state is a quagmire of shifting sand...maybe even *quick-sand*! Paul isn't talking about a *feeling* but a rather a *state of being*. Feelings tend to be circumstantial and situational. The “*peace with God*” is firm and forever. Good days and bad!



Coming to understand all of this cannot but leave us all a bit chagrined. For despite what the scriptures clearly confirm, man has been attempting to “appease” our Creator from the beginning of time. Religion after religion all stumble down that same path! That’s what makes Christianity and specifically the Book of Romans such a revelation. Not only do we not *need* to attempt such a useless and hopeless act, but the fact still remains that we cannot ever win such a fight. We cannot ever please God in the flesh, by our own efforts and righteous acts. No, God is much *much* bigger than that and certainly more holy and perfect than our very best days and greatest acts of pious generosity and benefaction. You can run off and live in a monastery someplace but you are still a sinner and you will still sin. **You** can never make peace with God...

But despite our total inability to affect our standing with God by our own efforts, according to verse 2 we still are given access to God and His grace, and with this newfound access we are able to “rejoice!” 1 Peter 1:8 says “*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy...*”

“(We) rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Please note that the word “hope” in Scripture does not carry the stigma of uncertainty that it does today. In this passage, it means “*confident expectation.*” Therefore, in this state of grace, we rejoice in the **certainty** that God will be glorified. Inside of us here and now, and forever in the eternal.

Rejoicing? For some of us that expression seems far away because frankly we are lost in the dark today...

Perhaps throughout the teachings of the book of Romans you have been personally convinced that your sin is too great and too entrenched to be forgiven. Your heart is just too dark. On more than one occasion I have had individuals pour out their heart to me in desperate admission that there is frankly some stuff in their past that is just simply too wicked to be forgiven, let alone ‘forgotten’ as God claims to do in Isaiah 43:25 and Hebrews 8:12. Apparently there are some bodies buried someplace. If there is, I’m not saying that our county judge will forgive unquestionably but the Great Judge says He will!

Then there are those today lost in another kind of darkness. Maybe you are lost today in your personal pain or lost in what seems like an unbearable testing and trials. Maybe you are just overcome by the darkness of life’s difficulties. But here the Scriptures tell us that in this new found state of access to the Father, we “glory in our tribulations.” This is a concept certainly hard to accept in a society that works so very hard to avoid every difficulty and every discomfort. And it is mutually hard to accept that this stuff I’m dealing with can in anyway be personally redeeming and beneficial. All I know is I want out of it.

Certainly mankind wants to feel good, and generally rejects anything short of feeling good every moment of everyday. But not only is that not going to ever happen, Paul tells us here in Romans that we should go so far as to embrace these hits because of what it produces in us: perseverance, character, and hope. And the truth is this is not something we are going to hear about too often in our modern churches! Paul however was not so squeamish.

Nowhere does Scripture promise a pain-free and trouble-free life! But the promise here is not all doom and gloom for because of our “access to the Father” we believers are able to go to God with every issue and lean on Him for HIS care. We don’t like it, but God will not take away every pain and problem in our life, so that we will grow stronger and we *need* to grow stronger!

We are told herein that “tribulation produces perseverance.” The trials that we endure make us stronger. I guess our high school coach was correct... “*what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.*” The truth is that our roots will grow deeper, or we will fall over. The problem with a life absent of trial is that we never mature. Instead, we remain spiritual infants, unable to reproduce or battle for the Kingdom.

In our perseverance, “character” is birthed and developed. The word character in its original has in its meaning the idea of “proof.” When we persevere in the faith, we *prove* our standing in God. Not so much for others, but for *ourselves!* In that proof we then have “confident expectation” of what is to come for us!

That “confident expectation” will not be disappointed. In our new state of redemption, we have access to the *Holy Spirit of God*. This is God in a form that can literally reside inside of us. Thus we are “possessed” by the presence of God.

Note the promise herein: “*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts.*” What could speak more dramatically concerning the profound change in our lives upon rebirth? And what greater test of our salvation can there be? IS the “love of God poured out in your heart?”

Verse 6 says... “*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*” “In due time?” In the *right* time! (as always!) And just when *did* Christ die for us? The NLT says “*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.*” When we were still “without strength” He came. When we were “utterly helpless.” When we were “*still in the dark.*” For those of you suffering in the darkness of trials, He still does that even today. For those still unredeemed, He came *before* we believed and *before* we ever knew Him! He came when we were still blatantly lost and controlled by our sin.

Many folks want to believe that Christ died for them because they are special or because they were righteous. This is the tendency of the overtly Calvinist...the ‘reformed.’ After all, God *chose* me, so I must have some real overt quality, right? Wrong. At the very least there is the idea that they will one day *become* humanly righteous. But the text here is clear: Christ died for the *ungodly*. Remember that Romans 3:10-12 states clearly that “*No one is righteous — not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.*” Human love is given to those who are lovable; but God’s love embraces even the unlovable...

These verses today give us a profound definition of “agape” love. This is not the love of mankind, for we generally love with a conditional love. But agape loves perfectly, unilaterally, and without reciprocation. Thus God does not love you more once you are born again. We just love *Him* more once we are born again!

God “demonstrated His love” for us by sending His Son to die *while we were yet sinners*. Not for a “righteous man”, not for a “good man”, but for a *sinner*. For the man in the dark. Which means Jesus died for the *enemy*. Notice that unlike man, Jesus *proved* His love for us in the most difficult and unlikely of situations. It was not only spoken, He *acted* upon His love. Are we to respond with any less?

Now if Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, while we were His enemies, while still in the darkest of places, what does that tell us about our **current** salvation security? Do we really think that if He *died* for us while we were absolutely lost and unredeemed, that we could be thrown out of the club now that we stand in the light?

If He died for us while we were unbelievers, where do we stand with Him now that we *do* believe? The scriptures tell us clearly that we are now “justified” by the blood shed upon the cross. And being “just-as-if-I’d never sinned”, we are finished, complete, and escaping the wrath that is to come (that which is poured out in the Book of Revelation). What would cause us to be ejected from the game if everything is forgiven?

We are not only redeemed by His death and resurrection, we are even “saved by His life.” “It is the death of Christ which effects our salvation; but it is the life of Christ which sustains it. Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification to make continual intercession for us.”

And what do we get out of all of this on the immediate basis? Verse 10-11 tells us that our friendship with God has been restored and from that we get *joy*. Ah, indeed! A joy that the world cannot give us, and Lord knows we have had two thousand years to give it a good try.

But clearly out there mankind is not happy. He is frustrated and empty, and the ills of society scream out his desperation. He remains in the darkness and refuses to come into the light. John 3:19 -20 says “*God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.*” What a difference we live in now! In chapter one

and two we were judged guilty, and here in chapter five we are partying with the Judge! Jesus bridged the gap between us and God. He opened the door; He tore down the curtain; He let us into His “Holy of Holies.”

5:12-14 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

It is clear that all men are in their natural state are in the same “sinking ship.” We were born with a sinful spirit and thus we sin. We can thank Adam for that. We then must realize that we are not sinners because we sin, we sin because *we are sinners*.

Adam was the “team champion,” a “federal representative.” We sent him out onto the field to represent all of us. He lost, thus all of us lost. Before the Old Testament Law was given, men were *still* guilty, even if there was no law to break. They were guilty *because of Adam*. Our proof of this is that sin immediately brought death, which is a direct result of sin entering into the world and into our lives.

But in verse 15 the real champion steps up! We inherited the *guilt* (though we added to the debt!) from the first Adam and we inherit the “*gift*” from the “second Adam” which is Christ. Neither of these things had anything to do with us. That’s a humbling thought! But no doubt that is exactly the effect that was sought by the designer! We were merely the sideline bystanders at the Olympic weight lifting championship. We cheer, we root for the champion, but we don’t compete. For that was all done on a hill outside of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, when our champion took on the world and won. It was the greatest moment in history. We don’t compete, but we do share the prize! Shared by our champion...shared out of His grace.

And yet the fact remains today that we have such trouble believing in this boundless grace! We search God for direction in our life, but we are afraid to “step out of the boat.” When somebody does, we just think that he is “special.” But he is not, he is just like you and I. He is just a poor sinner, but one that believes in the abundance of grace. We might think it is simply “ego” on his part, but in truth, he simply dares to believe that he has received an outright gift of righteousness. He lives in a state of “no fear.”

Those who will receive this “abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness” will “reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Does this describe your life here on this earth? It can, and it should. We can reign over sin, over Satan, over the world, its difficulties and adverse circumstances. The bumps will still be there, but we can walk out of the darkness and into the light. John 8:12 says “...*Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

“...always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God’s holy people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.” Col 1:12-13

The problem lies in the fact that mankind seems to lack the understanding that he is a *sinner*. The greatest ploy that Satan ever devised was to convince man that they are “ok.” We attempt to weigh sin in terms of *degrees* and *moral severity*. We grade ourselves “on the curve.” Our lives are situationally based.

The judgment came upon *all* men. Meaning across the board we are guilty and condemned. No matter how “good” we fancy ourselves to be, or how moral we imagine that we are. But the “*free gift*” came to “*all men*” also. Not just the saved ones! Not just those who will receive Him!

That is what makes the situation so devastatingly heart-breaking! For Christ died to bring this “reigning in life” to *all* men! The payment has already been made to your account! It is only our denial of such and refusing to accept that payment that will keep you from the reward. This is all that separates us from “justification of life.” A life “just-as-if-I’d” never sinned.