

Vicar David Spaude March 17, 2019 Second Sunday in Lent

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him!

Sermon Text: Romans 5:1-11 (NIV 1984)

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 rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given 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 man, though for a good man 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, when 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! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

This is the Word of the LORD.

Dear fellow believers, who are love by God and called to be his holy people,

Bear with me because the good news is coming. God has set the bar for salvation at perfection. But we've fallen short and have failed. We deserve the full effects of God's wrath and punishment. The good news? We have hope. **We'll be saved from God's wrath because of Christ's suffering, death, and reconciliation.** We have the reestablishment of our relationship with God through Christ.

Today's sermon text is from Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul starts by telling them some great news about their relationship between them and God. He says it's a relationship of peace through Jesus Christ (v1). He tells them they stand in grace and have hope of someday receiving glory from God (v2).

(1.) Paul also told the Christians at Rome that they faced *sufferings* (v.3). They weren't alone in their sufferings though. Jesus himself faced them. He suffered in the wilderness being tempted by the devil for forty days and forty nights. He was rejected by men, too. One time Jesus' disciples Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, the great Jewish council, for preaching the gospel. The Sanhedrin asked them, "*By what power or what name do you do this [work]?*" (Acts 4:7). They replied, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified . . . Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'*" (Acts 4:10, 11). This suffering and rejection had to happen to Jesus since Jesus had told his disciples that he, the Son of Man, "*must suffer many things and be rejected*" by many (Mark 8:31). It's really no surprise that Jesus suffered and was rejected. For sinful human nature wants to oppose *Jesus* and what he came to do.

Many Christians had *already* joined or *would* join in the suffering that the Roman Christians would experience. Jesus once told his disciples, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”* (Mark 8:34). The Apostle James was killed for preaching the gospel (Acts 12:2). And the Apostles Peter and Paul were imprisoned for expressing their Christian faith (Acts 12:3,4; Ac 16:23). It’s really no surprise that Jesus’ followers suffered because sinful human nature wants to oppose *those who support* Jesus and what he came to do.

Ironically, the Christians in Rome were to *“glory in”* or be proud of *their sufferings* (v3). How can Christians be proud of their sufferings? When you suffer for Christ, be proud because you share in Christ’s sufferings and look forward to his glory. If you are insulted for the sake of Christ’s name, it’s a blessing because it shows that *the Spirit of glory and of God is on you* (1 Peter 4:13, 14). As Christians the dream we want to come true is to fulfill our calling, part of which is to endure sufferings for the sake of Christ. *“We’re all in this together”* along with Christ, who endured sufferings more difficult than you or I will ever experience in order to save us. We use this good news of salvation to encourage each other during suffering.

Of course our sinful natures lead us to feel *ashamed* of suffering and being rejected as Christians. It’s good for us to hear what Jesus told his disciples, *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels”* (Mark 8:38).

Wow. Consequently, if you feel ashamed of being a disciple of Christ, *“repent and believe the good news!”* There is a heavenly home waiting for you (Mark 1:5)! Then let that good news *dwell richly within your life and in your interactions with others* (3:16). Suffer for the sake of Christ since your sufferings lead to a sure hope of a glorious resurrection. Sufferings are good for you. In fact you can be proud of them. In the end you know you will be saved from God’s wrath because of Christ’s suffering, but also because of Christ’s *death*.

(2) Paul says, *“At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die”* (vs 6, 7). In other words, very rarely will anyone die for someone who has all kinds of legal and logical reasons to expect help and support from others, though there is a *possibility* that someone might die for a person who benefits the common good. Or there is a *possibility* that someone might die for a good cause. *Perhaps* a soldier would dive on a grenade to save his platoon. The point is that one should *not* count on someone dying for them. Yet, Christ went against all these odds. While you were neither righteous nor good and were disgraceful in every way, he died for you out of his love for you.

Christ died because it was necessary for our salvation. We were *“powerless”* (v6), literally helpless and without hope of salvation. Yet, he showed us his amazing love by having his one and only Son die for us. Now we have sure hope that we will be saved and our hope will not disappoint us. We can be confident that we will be saved from God’s wrath because of Christ’s suffering, death, and finally because of his *reconciliation*.

(3) Why does God show wrath – that is, his just judgment for wrongdoing? God demands that mankind *be holy*, that is, without sin (*Leviticus 11:45*), but mankind is very sinful. In fact they are guilty of sin from conception (*Psalms 51:5*) and need to be justified. You can remember what justified means with the memory hook: “Just as if I’d never sinned.” Through Christ’s blood mankind has been declared “just as if they’d never sinned” (v9) and they have been “reconciled” (v10) or brought out of a broken relationship into a mended one. In their former broken relationship God intended to punish them for their sin, but in their current, mended relationship God loves them because they have been justified through faith in Jesus, who died for them.

In the sermon text for today an argument from the greater to the lesser is made with reconciliation as part of the argument. An argument from the greater to the lesser says, if “A,” which is very hard to do, happens, then “B,” which is much easier to do, will *surely* happen. Paul makes such an argument when he says, “[If], when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son,” (that’s the hard part that happened and the easy part that will *surely* happen follows) “how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (v10). God has done the hard part of paying for *your* salvation. *You* can be *sure* he will also do the easy part of taking you home to heaven through faith in Jesus.

Your sin and mine made us dependent on God for salvation and put us in a situation where it seemed like there was no way we would be saved. But since God stepped in and defied all odds, we see that he is an awesome God. Paul even says we can “rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (v.11). We can be confident we will be saved by him from his wrath because of Christ’s suffering, death, and reconciliation. Our God is awesome, not only since he is perfect, but also since he loves us enough to make us perfect and put us in a right relationship with him. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.