

Lesson 48 at StudyRomans.org

Romans 5:1, Continued

Romans 5:1 — Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first word “therefore” in verse 1 tells us that, while we may have a big chapter division in our Bibles between this verse and the previous verse, there was no such division in Paul’s mind. Verse 1 is the logical conclusion of the previous verses.

And what did the previous verses tell us? They told us that we can be right with God without living a flawless life. They told us that God has made a system of faith based on grace so that we are guaranteed the ability to obtain the promised blessings despite our inability to perfectly obey God’s law.

So what now, Paul? What is the logical conclusion of what you just told us about the grace of God? Is it this? -

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we are to live lives filled with anxiety and worry. We are to constantly doubt the love of God. We are to forever worry and fret about whether we are really saved. We are never to have any rest because of constant anxiety about the sin that remains in our lives. We are to be filled with regret over what we have done. We are to walk around in constant fear of death and the afterlife because we can’t really know where we are going.”

Is that what Paul said? No, it is not at all what Paul said. Instead, Paul said, “therefore ... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Not worry. Not anxiety. Not doubt. Not restlessness. Not regret. Not fear. But peace. Therefore we have peace with God through Christ. That is the logical conclusion of everything Paul just told us about the grace of God and the faith of Abraham. Peace.

And Jesus told us the same thing.

Matthew 11:28-30 — Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We can have peace with God! That is the gospel of Christ! We can have peace with God — not wrath, but peace. And what was the price of that peace? The blood of Christ was the price that was paid for that peace.

Colossians 1:19-20 — For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of his cross.**

We know that Paul suffered many persecutions in his life, and that Paul was involved in many disputes, both in the church and out of the church. And we might think that Paul lived a life of constant turmoil and anxiety as a result. But he did not. Paul was at peace with God. But how? How could he be at peace with all of that turmoil and persecution? How could Paul be at peace given what he had done in

his former life? How can we understand such peace? The answer is that we can't. We can't understand it. It surpasses all understanding. Listen to Paul:

Philippians 4:6-7 — Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

That peace that surpasses all understanding — that peace, perfect peace — is the very first blessing that Paul names here on this list of blessings that we have because we have been justified by faith. We have peace.

Romans 5:2

Romans 5:2 — Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

What do we have if we have been justified by faith? Verse 1 said that we have peace with God. Verse 2 adds two more blessings to the list: we also have access and joy. Let's look at each of those blessings.

The first blessing in verse 2 is access. "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand." What is this access?

The first thing we can say about this access is that it was not available under the system of law. Faith provides access; law does not. Faith opens a door that is forever closed under a system of law.

But a door to what? Access to what? Verse 2 says that we have obtained access by faith **into this grace in which we stand**.

This access is access into the grace of God. And verse 2 tells us that our access to that grace comes through Christ by faith. Jesus opened the door, and we pass through that door by faith in Christ. And what is on the other side of that door? The grace in which we stand.

And how was the door opened? Paul answered that question in the first chapter.

Romans 1:16 — For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for **it is the power of God** for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The gospel of Christ is the power of God for salvation. The gospel is the power through which God opened that door — and there was no other way for it to be opened. If there were some other way to open that door, then Jesus died for no reason. Paul tells us that elsewhere.

Galatians 2:21 — I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, **then Christ died for no purpose**.

And, yes, we often hear people today tell us that there are many paths to God. But anyone who ever says that is also saying something else — they are also saying that Jesus died for no purpose. Why? Because if there were some path to God that bypassed the cross of Christ, then why couldn't we all just take that other path? And if we could all just take that other path, then Jesus died for no purpose. That is what Paul says in Galatians 2:21.

The cross of Christ demands that there be no other path to God. The cross of Christ demands that all of the other religions of the world are false religions. The cross does not just suggest that they are false; the cross demands it. There are not many paths to God — there is one and only one path to God.

John 14:6 — Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Access to God and to the grace of God is through Jesus and only through Jesus. Anyone who ever says otherwise is calling Jesus a liar and is saying that Jesus died for no purpose.

And note that verse 2 says that we are **standing** in God’s grace. What does that mean? I think that word “standing” tells us several things.

First, that we are standing tells us that we are alive. Paul told us in Romans 1:17 that we live by faith, and Paul also tells us that we are made alive by the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:4-5 — But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ — by grace you have been saved.

I am not standing when I am being buried with Christ in the watery grave of baptism, but I am standing when I come out of that watery grave of baptism to walk in newness of life. That I am standing tells me that I am alive.

But second, I think that word “standing” in verse 2 also tells us something about our access to God — something that Paul describes elsewhere.

Ephesians 3:11-12 — This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have **boldness** and **access** with **confidence** through our faith in him.

We do not just have access to God, but we also have boldness and confidence. We are not slinking through that open door — we are instead walking through that door with boldness and confidence. Why? Not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus has done.

Yes, we are bold, but our boldness comes from Christ. Yes, we are confident, but our confidence comes from Christ. Yes, we are standing, but we are standing because of Christ. The writer of Hebrews also tells us that.

Hebrews 4:15-16 — For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

It is only because of Christ that we can draw near to the throne of grace with confidence. Our boldness comes from Christ. Our confidence comes from Christ. We are standing because of Christ.

So far, we have seen the blessings of peace in verse 1 and access in verse 2. The next blessing we see in verse 2 is joy. “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” What does that mean?

We all know what it means to rejoice. The question here is why. Why are we rejoicing? Paul says that we are rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. What does that mean? I think it means several things.

First, it means that we have the hope of seeing the glory of Christ at his appearance.

Titus 2:13 — Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of **the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**.

But second, I think it also includes the glory of the gospel — the mystery of God's plan that is now revealed.

Colossians 1:27 — To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of **the glory of this mystery**, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And third, I think it also includes our hope of sharing that glory.

1 Corinthians 2:7 — But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for **our glory**.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 — To this he called you through our gospel, so that **you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

1 Peter 5:4 — And when the chief Shepherd appears, **you will receive the unfading crown of glory**.

And so, given that we will see the glory of Christ, that we have been given the glory of the gospel, and that we will share in the glory of the Lord when we receive an unfading crown of glory — what should be

our response? Joy! What other response could there possibly be? Of course, we rejoice in the hope of that glory!

But what about the here and now? Right here and right now, we usually see more suffering than glory. And that was certainly true of the Apostle Paul. We know the persecution and the slander that he faced, and we know that he suffered from a terrible thorn in the flesh. But another thing we know from Paul is that, whatever we are suffering here, it is nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed.

Romans 8:18 — For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul tells us that. And Paul tells us even more in the next verse.

Romans 5:3

Romans 5:3 — More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

Yes, we are to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and yes, our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed, but Paul takes this a step further. He says that we rejoice in our sufferings. He gives us two reasons to rejoice: we rejoice in our hope (verse 2), and we rejoice in our sufferings (verse 3).

That is what Paul tells us, and Paul knew all about suffering. Jesus told Ananias that he had called Paul to a life of suffering.

Acts 9:16 — For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

And Paul had suffered, as he very often tells us.

2 Corinthians 6:4-5 — But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 — Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Philippians 3:8 — ...For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

And not only had Paul suffered for the sake of Christ, but Paul in his former life had caused others to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Acts 26:10-11 — ...I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

And so we know that Paul understood persecution and suffering like few others ever could. Paul was not just an armchair Christian who wrote lessons about suffering. Paul was out on the battlefield expe-

riencing the suffering himself. Paul was an expert when it came to suffering.

And so what does this expert on suffering tell us about suffering? Paul tells us that we should rejoice in our suffering. That is not the usual response to suffering, but that is the response that we should have.

Why? Paul answers that question. We should rejoice at our suffering, not because of how the suffering feels, but because of what the suffering produces. This suffering comes with benefits, and we should rejoice because of those benefits.

But before we look at those benefits that suffering produces, let's ask another question about the suffering itself — what kind of suffering is Paul talking about here? I think it certainly includes suffering due to persecution, but what else does it include? Does it include suffering due to illness? Does it include suffering due to accidents? Does it include suffering due to my own bad behavior?

Peter has something to say about that last category.

1 Peter 4:15-16 — But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

But I think Peter's point there is whether we should be ashamed of our suffering. If I suffer as a murderer or a thief, then shame is the appropriate emotion. But if I suffer due to persecution for the sake of Christ, then shame is not the appropriate emotion. And, as Peter tells us, we shouldn't be suffering for our bad behavior in the first place.

But what if we do, as Christians, suffer due to our bad behavior? For example, what if I go to prison as a murderer, but I am converted while there? I continue to suffer because of my bad behavior as I continue to serve my sentence, but now that suffering is endured as a Christian rather than as a murderer. Is that suffering excluded from what Paul is describing here? And what about the other examples — illness and accidents. Is that suffering excluded? Is it only persecution that gives us these benefits, or can we get these same benefits from other types of suffering?

I think we can get a definitive answer from the life of Paul. Just a moment ago we looked at two lists from 2 Corinthians describing the things that Paul had personally suffered. And what did those lists include? They included many things that were not persecution (or at least not directly persecution): calamities, sleepless nights, three shipwrecks, adrift at sea, frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers. And, of course, we know that Paul also suffered from a thorn in the flesh.

And, as for whether suffering due to bad behavior is included, think for a moment about one of the items on Paul's list: sleepless nights. Why couldn't Paul get to sleep? What caused his insomnia? Was it perhaps due in some part to the regret he felt due to the things he did before he met Christ? We know that Paul still thought about that past behavior (Acts 26:11), and we know that he still thought of himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Was that at least partly why Paul twice included "sleepless nights" on his lists in 2 Corinthians?

When it came to his suffering, Paul cast a wide net. That is what we see in those lengthy lists that we read from 2 Corinthians. And I think Peter also cast a wide net. Yes, Peter separated our suffering as a

Christian from our suffering as a thief when it came to whether we should be ashamed of that suffering — but Peter included both under the umbrella of suffering.

And perhaps the particular phrase that Peter uses in his description answers our question here: suffering as a Christian (1 Peter 4:16). Whatever sort of suffering I endure, if I endure that suffering as a Christian, then I see no reason to exclude it from what Paul is telling us here. And especially so if that suffering can produce the benefits that Paul is about to describe.

In short, Paul cast a wide net when it came to his own suffering, and so I think we should do that as well. I might suffer due to persecution, or I might suffer due to an illness or an accident, or I might suffer due to my own bad behavior such as by serving a prison sentence or from regret — but the issue is less why than it is how. It is less why I am suffering and more how I am suffering. Am I suffering as a Christian? Am I viewing that suffering through the lens of God's word? Am I reaping the benefits from that suffering that Paul is about to describe?

Let's move now to those benefits. That is why we are told to rejoice in our suffering — not because of the suffering itself but because of the benefits we gain from that suffering. What are those benefits?

The first benefit on the list is endurance. Paul tells us that suffering produces endurance. What does that mean, and how does that work?

Well, sadly, I suspect we all know what that means because we have all experienced it — some much more than others. The more we suffer, the more we endure, and the more we are able to endure.

But, some might say, what choice do we have? What else can we do but endure? If we are suffering, and if that suffering continues, then is endurance really an option? Don't we have to endure it?

Again, I think Peter helps us here. If we are looking at those who suffer as a Christian, I think we are likewise looking at those who endure as a Christian. I think the "as a Christian" part should be understood given how Romans 5 began — "since we have been justified by faith." Paul is talking to Christians here, and so Paul is describing those who suffer as a Christian and those who endure as a Christian.

And I think we can also see that from the Greek word translated "endurance." That word is not describing a grim endurance, but instead that Greek word is describing a cheerful or hopeful endurance. The Greek word includes, not only the act of enduring, but how we endure. In fact, that Greek word is found 32 times in the Bible, and the KJV translates it as "patience" in 29 of those occurrences. The ESV often translates it as "steadfastness." And, elsewhere, Paul uses the same Greek word when he points to Jesus as the perfect example of this endurance.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 — May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the **steadfastness** of Christ.

While we may not have a choice when it comes to enduring suffering, we do have a choice when it comes to how we endure that suffering. And I think what Paul is telling us here is that, the more we suffer as a Christian, the better we become at enduring that suffering as a Christian.

But what is the difference between enduring some disease as an atheist versus enduring that same disease as a Christian? The difference

is Christ. The difference is the suffering of Christ. The difference is what we can see at the end of our suffering. The difference is the meaning that we can find in our suffering. The difference is the cross of Christ. The difference is the resurrection of Christ.

The cross of Christ reminds us that suffering is an inescapable part of this life, and the cross of Christ gives meaning to our suffering as we share in his suffering.

Philippians 3:10-11 — That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The world sees suffering as meaningless, but a Christian never views suffering that way. Our suffering is not meaningless because Jesus gives it meaning. We share in his sufferings. We become like him in his death. Why? So that we may attain the resurrection of the dead. That is what Paul just told us, and that explains how we suffer, not as the world, but as a Christian.

For the world, suffering is meaningless — but not for a Christian. For the world, suffering is hopeless — but not for a Christian. For the world, suffering is experienced with a grim endurance — but not for a Christian. For a Christian, our suffering has meaning, our suffering has hope, and our suffering is experienced with patience and steadfastness. And that is all true because of Jesus — the suffering servant and our perfect example of suffering.

Isaiah 53:3-4 — He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and

we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

And so endurance is the first benefit that we get from suffering as a Christian. Our suffering produces endurance. And what does our endurance produce? Paul tells us that in the next verse.

Romans 5:4

Romans 5:4 — and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character. What is character?

The Greek word translated “character” really means more than just the English word “character.” The Greek word describes a tested character, a tried character, a proven character, and an approved character.

And how does endurance produce this sort of tested, tried, proven, and approved character? Simple. Our endurance is evidence of our character. Our endurance shows us our character. Our endurance of suffering is the test that produces our tested character.

Many people claim to follow Christ, but they quickly drop away when they face suffering. Jesus describes such people.

Matthew 13:20-21 — As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in him-

self, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

What does Jesus say about such a person? He says that such a person has no root in himself. He is like a plant with no root — a plant that quickly shrivels up in the heat of the sun. We all know such people. They are fine with being a Christian up until the first catastrophe hits — and then they blame God and turn away.

That is what Job's wife wanted Job to do in Job 2:9 — “curse God and die!” But Job did not do that — instead Job endured. In fact, when James describes the patience and the steadfastness of Job in James 5:11, what word did James use? James used the same Greek word that we find translated “endurance” right here in Romans 5. Job did not curse God and die, but instead Job endured. And that endurance produced the tried and tested character of Job.

And so what can we say about the type of person who follows the example of Job rather than the example of Job's wife? Someone who patiently endures that tribulation for the sake of Christ? Someone who suffers but who does not fall away? How can we describe someone like that?

Didn't Jesus just tell us in Matthew 13? The best way to describe such people is that they have roots! Like the other plant in Matthew 13, they also experience the heat of the sun, but, unlike that other plant, this plant gets nourishment through its roots. This plant is not on rocky ground, but is firmly planted in the good soil. This plant has been tested, tried, proven, and approved. That is the character produced by patient and steadfast endurance.

But what does that tested and tried character produce? Paul also tells us that here in verse 4. Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

“How do they do it?” How many times have we asked that question and heard that question as we are standing next to the casket of a faithful Christian? “How do they do it?” How do those outside of Christ ever live through the grief and pain of losing a loved one? How do they keep going to that gravesite with no hope of ever seeing that person again and with the only thing they see in their own future being their own casket? How do they do it? It’s a good question because I don’t know. I don’t know how anyone could do that. Paul elsewhere describes such people.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 — But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, **that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.**

And there is our word — **hope!** “That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” Those who are outside of Christ have no hope. And if they have no hope, then it must be true that they had no patient steadfast endurance and no proven and tested character. Why? Because if they had those things, then they would have hope. That is what Paul is telling us here — the patient endurance produces the proven character, and the proven character produces the hope.

And, of course, that endurance, that character, and that hope are experienced only in Christ. Paul is talking to Christians in Romans 5. The patient endurance is the endurance that follows the example of Christ and that shares in the suffering of Christ. The proven character is the character that has deep roots in the good soil described by

Christ. And this hope is our hope in Christ — our hope of the resurrection from the dead to enjoy eternal life in the presence of God. That endurance, that character, and that hope are only for the faithful people of God. That endurance, that character, and that hope are available only in Christ.