

Rest Through The Raging Sea

Base Text: Romans 5:1-5

Romans 5:1-5 English Standard Version (ESV)

Peace with God Through Faith

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith[b] into this grace in which we stand, and we[c] rejoice[d] in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Have you had a moment or a season that cuts through the present busy-ness; the myriad of responsibilities of work; obligations and endless to-dos, and the rhythms of your life? The moment when everything stops and you are faced with suffering. Sheer overwhelmed, baffled, and speechless.

HG Spafford & The Backstory of It Is Well:

In 1874, a lawyer by the name of HG Spafford received the wire that he could not have planned for. "we heard the sad news of the loss of the French steamer, "Ville de Havre," on her return from America to France, with a large number of members of the Ecumenical Council, whose meetings had been held in Philadelphia. On board the steamer was a Mrs. Spafford, with her four children. In mid-ocean a collision took place with a large sailing vessel, causing the steamer to sink in half an hour. Nearly all on board were lost. Mrs. Spafford got her children out of their bunks and up on deck. On being told that the vessel would soon sink, she knelt down with her children in prayer, asking God that they might be saved if possible; or be made willing to die, if that was his will. In a few minutes the vessel sank to the bottom of the sea, and the children were lost. One of the sailors of the vessel, while rowing over the spot where the vessel disappeared, discovered Mrs. Spafford floating in the water. Ten days later she was landed at Cardiff, Wales. From there she cabled to her husband, a lawyer in Chicago, the message, "Saved alone."

"Mr. Spafford, who was a Christian, later had the message framed and hung up in his office. He started immediately for England to bring his wife to Chicago. Mr. Moody left his meetings in Edinburgh and went to Liverpool to try to comfort the bereaved parents, and was greatly pleased to find that they were able to say: "It is well; the will of God be done."

Can you imagine having that kind of faith at the end of a traumatic moment - that God is faithful and present even in the unexpected? It is well. How counter cultural!

Spafford is pointing to the refrain of our passage this morning, namely that because of our standing in our faith, God is working within us a hope for all seasons, constructing a Sturdy Ship for Rough Waters.

Let's recap on the past few weeks of looking to Christ for our of rest. Throughout this series we have seen a theme that we are constantly weary. Weary from life, our failed systems, our disappointments, our anxiety. Some of the weariness is self inflicted, some happenstance, and perhaps even some disposition.

We saw throughout this series on rest,

- The theme of Joyful Contentment

 - Pragmatic Leisure to earn our rest

 - Hedonistic - pursuit of pleasure

 - That God gives us a deep and joyful contentment in him as our true rest

- A failed theory of life

 - What happens when these go off the rails?

 - What if God was promising us more than a system and giving us everything we really need - himself?

- Anxiety and Rest

 - How do we rest when there are an infinite amount of things to be concerned about?

 - He cares for us even in our anxiety

- Hamster wheel

 - Sabbath is to be kept holy: what is holy in our lives pours out of us. Is the Sovereign provider of all good things holy in our lives?

This morning we are going to look at rest in the midst of suffering. We are going to walk through our response, our hope, and our true rest.

Suffering has many layers. But the one constant that we do see in scripture, is that suffering is not promised to pass us by. We think of Christ, we think of the loss of family and friends, the loss of children, and the greater effects of the fallen world around us.

Let's consider for a moment our typical responses of suffering and the lies that we may believe in the moment.

Responses to suffering:

Lie that we believe:

Escape	<p>Maxim: Keep calm and carry on. My suffering isn't happening. If I ignore it it's not there. Ex: We are suffering through a season of health issues. We retreat from our community and we are constantly trying to distract ourselves from our hurt.</p>
Exaggerate	<p>Maxim: The struggle is real. Chip on the shoulder My suffering is everything. It's my badge. My identity. Ex. We are suffering and we need everyone to know. As we have seen in previous weeks, we often treat angst this way. We are anxious on finances, the next meeting with our boss. We even see this in suffering where we jump to the idea that we are alone and this is the end.</p> <p>Do you always feel that things are bad or never as good as they could be? Do you often complain about or bemoan your circumstances?</p> <p>The key indicator is a lack of hope.</p>
Minimize	<p>Maxim: Get stuff done I can outpace, out work, out hustle this. What I'm going through is not a big deal. Ex. Do you feel like in suffering it's dangerous to let people into too many details? Do you feel like a burden if you show too much of your struggle?</p>

We see in culture that we should rely on ourselves to overcome life's adversities. Each of these responses point to the overwhelming preference of self-reliance. In each response we are trying to be self-sufficient and exert control over the situation. And, we find ourselves alone and struggling to bear the burden of our suffering while trying to save face.

What if our responses to suffering weren't based upon our self-reliance? Paul is using this passage to point us to a deep faith that is found in the hope of our salvation. The effects of the already but not yet. The realization that God is faithful to His promise that he is redeeming this broken world and is making all things new.

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

Firstly, we see the word therefore. This is alluding to the chapter before where Paul builds on the greater theme of Romans that our Righteousness, our perfect standing in front of God, comes from God himself because of Jesus.

In chapter 4, Paul references the faith of Abraham in Genesis 22:17. Abraham, known as one of the fathers of faith, was given an unbelievable promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven and as the sand on the beach. He is called to leave his land and trust a God that had just revealed himself. This is amazing because God only revealed himself in the Old Testament in a rare and small number of cases. Abraham's faith is also given to him as a result in his trust in God and ultimately

the eventual coming in Jesus. Hope beyond hope and trusting that God would be faithful, Abraham left his homeland and God blessed him with all that was promised even beyond his own lifetime.

Paul is showing that our standing is given to us from God himself. Already we are being rescued from our futile efforts of self reliance. Out of this gift, Paul continues to show that we are at peace with God through this gift of right standing through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul uses the words “justified by faith”. This is the legal declaration of our peace with God.

“As a result of being justified by faith, we are, in the old phrase, in a state of grace, surrounded by God’s love and generosity, invited to breathe it in as our native air. We realize that this is what we are made for; that this is what truly human existence ought to be like... “

This is critically important because God is showing us that the sturdy ship in which we stand is himself. Paul is showing us that the hope of all things rests in Christ who grants our standing with God. That we are on a journey with God to reflect His glory for his renown. God is relentless in his mission to prove this.

Paul uses this language elsewhere to describe this hope within us.

- Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27)
- Transformed “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18)
- Here but not yet (Rom 8:18; 2:17; 4:18)
- Character that we stood the test (Job 23:10)

In each of these passages, Paul is pointing us to God’s track record of faithfulness as well as the assurance that He will make all things new. Again this “already and not yet” message. Even though we sit in the midst of a broken world we have his promise of restoration.

Our peace with God and right standing with him, gives us a foundation for rest.

Paul continues to build on our true and primary assurance with verse two.

2 Through him (Jesus) we have also obtained access by faith[b] into this grace in which we stand, and we[c] rejoice[d] in hope of the glory of God.

Our greatest hope is God’s glory for our good. Nothing else meets that level of assurance. We can rest in Him because he is relentlessly at work for his glory. God’s pursuit of his glory drives our assurance. It is the source of our confidence that he is in control and sufficient in our journey with him. This hope and standing are the oars and rudders of our ship.

NT Wright puts it this way: "When we stand there in God’s own presence, not trembling but deeply grateful, and begin to inhale his goodness, his wisdom, his power and his joy, we sense that we are being invited to go all the way, to become the true reflections-

of-God, the true image-bearers, that we were made to be. Paul puts it like this: 'we celebrate the hope of the glory of God'. This is the glory that was lost through idolatry and sin (3:23). When we finally inherit this glory, the whole creation will be set free from corruption and share our new-found freedom, the freedom to be our true selves at last (8:21)."

His glory is inextricably connected to his goodness. He is constantly creating, constantly renewing, constantly bringing justice. Where do you see his redemption in your life and the lives of others?

We see this elsewhere in scripture, where we have been given standing with God and he is our peace.

Hope that doesn't disappoint us (Ps 22:5; 25:3; 20 ; Isa. 28:16; 2 Tim. 1:12)

How has your hope disappointed you in the past? Think of this another way, who else has let you down more, mismanaged your expectations, or even given you false hope after false hope more than yourself. We could argue that our track record of self sufficiency is limited at best.

Again Paul is showing us the hope beyond hope; that when we don't have the strength to move, words to say, thoughts to comprehend; we are given an endless well of hope in our sovereign king and we stand in his grace. We are able to stand because he is present and he gives our strength to stand through the spirit's work. We have been given access to him and not only that we see the eventual hope that His glory will be revealed in his redemptive work of all things.

Notice that our standing, our righteousness, our hope; root us in the faith that God is present and that ultimately that there is a greater glory coming.

What a grace that we can't and that we don't have to carry our burdens of suffering alone!

3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Building on the foundation of our standing in relationship to the God universe, that we are held, sustained, and empowered through the Spirit by the work of Jesus; Paul gives us insight into what God is cultivating within us for the seasons of life.

First, he opens with the idea of rejoicing in our suffering. Paul is pointing us to the facts that because our hope is shared with God's work of the renewal of all things; we can rejoice in suffering because our suffering is not meaningless and it has an end. God is accomplishing something through our suffering.

Did he cause our suffering? No. Am I saying that God can use our suffering for our good? Yes. Consider Paul's life. He was shipwrecked (twice!), left for dead, starved, imprisoned, and beaten. However, he's never left alone. Never left to figure it out. Never left to pick himself up. What keeps him going? Vs. 1-2. That the God of the universe is at work, much of this work is unseen, and still being accomplished.

This hope that propels him in each missionary journey to keep pushing towards making God known among the gentiles. Although he doesn't have anything else, he has God.

If he dies, he gets to see God face to face. If he lives, he sees God's glory as a result of his obedience to reflect and project God's glory and the message of the gospel. The guy is unstoppable and unphased.

Paul shows us that the spirit works within us to build and prove our faith for life's many seasons.

How does the spirit do this? Paul continues to list out the results within us from the spirit.

Suffering -> Endurance
Endurance -> Character
Character -> Hope

Let's think about endurance. We may also think about that word as perseverance. The ability to continue when it doesn't seem possible. From endurance, we are shaped with the repetitive patterns of character. Our default responses are changed from reflex, to the muscle memory and past experiences in seeing our faith tested and proved over and over. This drives us to the hope that God's track record of faithfulness has no end.

Why? Paul ends that all of this ends with a hope that does not put us to shame. He's taking us back to the understanding that our faith is not wishful thinking. It's not peace that comes from the right incantation of words or even the right framework for our lives.

Paul is showing us that God is with us and is cultivating a greater glory within us by giving us himself and renewing us because He loves us.

The hope of glory. Actively working within us, knowing our pain, present through it all. We see Christ as the ultimate High Priest to bring us to God.

Have you seen this person of resolve before? Have you seen this person that is able to look at the roughest storms and all the while have a calm about them that God is present and at work no matter the outcome?

Our city group participates with other South City Groups to spend time with a neighborhood called M2. In many ways, this has been more of a blessing to City Life than

I think we know. In the neighborhood, there is a woman named Yolanda whom many of us have grown to know. She has been suffering through an aggressive autoimmune disease for some time. She's bound by oxygen tanks and is often gasping for her breath when her body is weary. She has been to many doctors, has endured many treatments, and is under constant care from a team of skilled nurses.

Yolanda is a living example of what Paul's describing. When you talk to her, she tells you of her deep affections with her savior. She tells you of how God is at work within her, and through her in her own neighborhood and family. She prays with bold prayers that God will move mightily and will continue to make himself known. Through healing or otherwise.

This is the resolve that Paul is pointing out. Our assurance that our past, present, and future are secure in our King and that his spirit is at work in transforming us into the image of Jesus.

Given this vision as outlined by Paul, how do our responses to suffering change?

Response is defeated by the truth that:

Escapism is defeated by the truth that	Jesus is our high priest that he is present with us. I don't have to run and I can trust that God is present and at work (v.1) I don't have to run away from this because he is there and sustaining me through this season by His spirit.
Exaggeration is defeated by the truth that	Our sufferings are real but we have been given a greater assurance and hope in God; who is working to bring an end to all suffering (v2 & v.4)
We don't have to minimize because	I can trust him despite the severity. Paul is showing us that our hope in Christ has not, is not, and will not lead us to shame. (v.5)

Notice that Paul builds the argument that our standing with God is the starting point for us being made into the image of Jesus. If there is no transformation, then this seems to be wishful thinking. If there is no right standing with God, then we are talking about legalism.

Does this allow us to look the other way in the face of suffering and put on a happy face that this will all work out. Let go and let God? Not quite. The point is not just letting go. Notice that Paul ends this passage with the refrain that we are given the spirit because he loves us. The spirit stirs our affections, points us to evidence of grace where he is moving, and ultimately is active in building the bows of the sturdy ship of faith as outlined in this passage.

Our call this morning is obedience; it's actively trusting him, the resolve in faith that God will be glorified, and we can rest in the assurance that God will accomplish that work for our eventual good through relationship with Him.

Do you find yourself angry or frustrated in your singleness? Would you ask the spirit to exchange your anger for a greater hope that God is faithful? Do you find yourself skeptical of this type of rest while dealing with the loss of a parent? Would you ask the spirit to make these words true for you this morning? Do you find yourself wondering if God is this faithful and you have not yet tasted that He is good? Would you ask God to reveal himself and cultivate these truths for you this morning?

As a final note on the passage, notice that Paul uses the words we/us. What if this resolve that God has given you is not only meant solely for your own hope but as a reflection of God's glory for others to see? Our faith is not a vacuum of quiet contentment. Much like we are not left alone, God is also cultivating a greater faith within us to reflect his glory through us and be used by him to show his care for those in our lives.

When I was in 8th grade, my step-mom was given a diagnosis that we did not understand. She had battled lupus for much of her life and now was facing a form of cancer that was wreaking havoc within her already fragile immune system. Throughout a 5 year battle with this disease, our family was taken through a roller coaster of treatment plans, dark moments, and glimmers of hope for permanent remission. Laura was a treasure to be around. She was funny, direct, and had a huge heart for those around her. Even in her toughest moments, she found ways to serve others in her treatment groups, bible studies, and relationships.

Throughout my time with her, I witnessed this hope of glory established. Not always perfect but there was a pattern that Her resolve and faith pointed her and those around her to God the sovereign King, the source of her affections, and her greatest treasure.

I remember the day that she passed away and we were given the responses that were mentioned at the beginning, from very well meaning individuals. I remember the temptation to believe in anything that could explain away the disease. That it wasn't as serious as we were told by doctors. I even remember the tension of praying similarly to the Spafford's that she would be healed.

Laura found her hope in the unshakeable standing that she received in Christ and ultimately she gained everything in the king that can be trusted even throughout the rollercoaster of her final years. Not only that but her life reflected this resolve and served as a beacon of God's glory and faithfulness for others.

This vision of resolve and rest in the assurance of her faith has been such an example for my life. It's helped me to see God's faithful and gracious pursuit of his people in all seasons.

Currently, my wife and I have seen our fair share of suffering in the community of our small group. Throughout this year, we have seen loss of children, long steady illness, and even struggle to believe in the gospel. Throughout many conversations, the spirit is gracious to point us to the greater hope in God's redemptive work even though we don't

see resolution. We see him deepening our trust, we see him bringing a peace when it doesn't seem possible. We see him stirring our affections to press into each others lives and point us back to the gospel message that God saves and redeems. This is our rest. That he is at work even when don't see it. Like the Spafford's, we see the counter cultural response of resting in the God who is relentlessly working for our good.

If you are suffering and don't know the hope that Paul has laid out this morning, I would pray that you would taste and see the Lord's goodness. That you would be able to experience what Peter lays out later in the New Testament.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”
1 Peter 1:8

That even though we can't see the full picture of what God is accomplishing, that we would trust that He is establishing His glory for our good.

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self[d] is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Our hope as a consequence of His glory:

Paul is showing us a unique vantage point of the gospel. That God's presence, sanctification, and resolution through our suffering is purchased through God sending His son to live a perfect life, to be sacrificed to pay the ultimate price of sin, and to be raised as the assurance and guarantee that His justice is definite and supreme.

Do you find yourself in a season of shame that you can't handle the weight of anymore? Would you ask the spirit to reveal those in your life who can point you back to the true hope of your rest?

Do you find yourself thinking of those around you in a desperate state of suffering but don't have the words to say? Would you pray that God would give you a glimpse of his glory that you could take to point them to this assurance.

Our good is in God's glory. Our good is in the sure future of God's renewal of all things. He is at work and is relentlessly bringing his kingdom to end all suffering, wipe all tears, bring ultimate justice for the innocent. We can rest in this sure future.

God's will is His glory and our faith is a byproduct of that reality. Nothing to earn, and freely given to receive.

He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. -1 Thessalonians 5:24

What a grace that we are not left in our suffering without the hope of our reigning King, community, or resolution!

May the Holy Spirit through the work of the gospel point our wayward hearts to the source of our true rest, raising within us a resolve and contentment, as we are being made into Christ's likeness for the good of ourselves and others, and to be a reflection of His glory despite the state of the waters around us.

To end our time, I wanted to share a puritan prayer from a collection called the Valley of Vision. I pray that it would spur your affections towards our King and that you would rest in the grace that has been poured out for you.

Christ was all anguish that I might be all joy,
cast off that I might be brought in,
trodden down as an enemy
that I might be welcomed as a friend,
surrendered to hell's worst
that I might attain heaven's best,
stripped that I might be clothed,
wounded that I might be healed,
athirst that I might drink,
tormented that I might be comforted,
made a shame that I might inherit glory,
entered darkness that I might have eternal light.
My Saviour wept that all tears might be wiped
from my eyes,
groaned that I might have endless song,
Go forth, O conquering God, and show me
the cross, mighty to subdue, comfort and save.
Valley of Vision - Christ Lusters At Calvary