**Love From Above**

**Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)**

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We’re in Romans chapter 5, in a series on Atonement. We just worked our way through Good Friday and Easter. We’re asking the question: What just happened? So for three weeks, we’re in a short series. We’re in Week number 2, asking, what just happened? What was this that took place on the cross? Pastor Ritch looked at Romans 3 last week, talking about justification and what that means. Today we’re going to move into reconciliation from Romans chapter 5. What is it that just took place? We’re going to consider some blessings of the cross. I think it’s worth our time to think about these blessings.

***1*** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ***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.* ***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.*

***6*** *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* ***7*** *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—****8*** *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* ***9*** *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* ***10*** *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* ***11*** *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

War is terrible! It’s the absence of peace. It’s a hostile break in relationship between two groups. There are weapons, battles, imprisonments, death. Man is fighting fellow man. War is terrible! Throughout history, it has been a very real part of human existence, even today. In the last two centuries, the globe has known two conflicts big enough to be called world wars. Even in the decades that follow, even though there wasn’t the same kind of active fighting, the tension between some nations was strong enough to be referred to as a cold war.

There were physical representations of the break in relationship all over. One in particular was the Berlin wall. It was a concrete barrier separating a nation down the center. In a powerful moment in the last century, that wall was torn down. The city was opened for citizens to pass freely. It was a moment that was celebrated. It carried with it a hope of world peace. But for all our aspirations and hopes, that peace has eluded us. At the fall of the wall there was a song that arose from a band. It became the unofficial anthem and signaled this reunification, this peace and hope. The writer said that he was calling for peace. He was inspired by what he had seen back then. He said it was a moment where the whole world was looking into a peaceful future. Just two weeks ago, that same band was playing their song. As they did, they changed the lyrics and the words that referenced some of those historical events, citing that the peace that they had hoped for is not the reality. They said “It’s so sad to see what’s going on and so many people are dying every other day. It breaks your heart. It’s really sad.”

The planet is filled with suffering sinners at war with one another. The short-lived nature of the fragile peace and reconciliation we fight to secure reminds us that the ideal for which we hope remains always in question. So much so that sometimes, people give up. There is all this sin and all this suffering. Is there any hope for peace? That same question is asked by many on even a smaller scale. Family members, spouses, siblings, church members are at war with one another. Relationships are broken. People are separated and divided. Without belittling the horror of actual armed conflict, we can still acknowledge that sin and suffering are not distant realities. They are right here in our own midst. We ask, is there any hope for peace?

The global climate in which the church emerged was plenty complex. There were new churches forming and they faced similar questions about peace. One church in particular, sort of the geo-political center there at Rome, found itself facing its own kind of tension. Jew and Gentile had come together as followers of Jesus and they were facing conflict over Old Testament law, over how to follow Jesus amidst pagan religions and pagan governments. The tension outside the church was impacting the church within. This is a group that Paul had never visited, but he cherished nonetheless. He wrote a letter to this church at Rome offering an answer to these questions about hope, about unity, about peace. These were answers unlike any other.

He explains that within a church even as diverse as the Jews and Gentiles in Rome, there is hope for unity because a far greater war, a far greater divide, a far greater and more unthinkable peace has actually already been accomplished. Romans describes that man’s main problem is not war with one another, it’s our war with God. It’s a war that he describes in detail in chapter 1. It’s a war against God’s rule, defiance against His law, which is a law that condemns us all. Before God, we stand guilty. We rebelled against Him in sin and are condemned as a result. There is no gap, no break in relationship more profound than this.

But Paul’s main message is that God did not leave us in that condition. This gap, this break, God has addressed Himself in the most surprising way. It’s what Paul calls the good news of the Gospel. It’s the greatest message the world could ever receive and desperately needed. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God as a man, to offer Himself in our place to pay the wages of our sins through His death on the cross. He made payment. That is the word atonement. He did that so that by grace He could offer the free gift of His righteousness and life to all who trust Him by faith. This is the message that Paul is not ashamed of.

**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.

It’s the power of God! Because of Jesus, sinners who stand guilty before the law of God can be justified. They can be declared righteous and innocent simply through faith. It’s not by working to achieve it on their own. We’re trusting in what Jesus has accomplished in His work. The chosen Christ who came and died for our sins rose from the dead. He gives a resurrection that offers hope to all. It’s hope of having a right standing with God. This kind of righteous standing has profound implications for suffering sinners. Even in this vertical hope that we now have and is offered through Jesus, there are implications horizontally and vertically in every way. There are implications about our relationships, about reconciliation, about peace.

In chapters 6 and 7, Paul is going to address the issues of sin and the law. He’s going to talk about the problems that are involved here. But they’re encased in the beauty and the hope of God’s work and the future glory that awaits in chapters 5 through 8. So here, we’re just getting a taste of that future glory and hope even in a world of sin, a world under the law. There is actually something else that God has accomplished. This is what just happened on the cross in the atonement. We’ve looked at justification and today we look at reconciliation. What has been accomplished? These are words that Paul has given to sinners suffering in the dark that offer a door of hope.

Where do we turn? There is this suffering. There is this sin around the globe and in our own homes. We have these longings for peace, for unity, for reconciliation. Paul’s answer is nothing brings suffering sinners through the door of hope like embracing the blessings that God gives through the cross. Nothing brings suffering sinners through the door of true hope like embracing the blessings that God gives through the cross. This is where you will find hope, trusting in God’s love there. It opens the exact door of hope. This is the blessing that suffering sinners so desperately need. This is where we go to see what God has accomplished on the cross through Jesus. It’s a wonder we’re celebrating no matter how hard the times are that we’re suffering. The blessings that flow from that accomplishment burst into our world of darkness with the rays of hope. There are blessings beyond our wildest imagination.

So what are they? What kind of blessings has God given? This morning we’ll try to work our way through seven. We’re talking about blessings, so why not try to work our way through a number of them? So we’ll look at seven blessings that are unleashed through the cross.

**#1 Peace With God: Your War With God Is Over (1)**

The cross ends your war with God. For those who trust in Jesus’ work on the cross, your war with God is over. Is there an Amen for that? (Amen!) Your war with God is over!

***1*** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We have freedom from distress and hostility. We have harmony. We’re at peace.

When we do premarital counseling for couples and they’re planning for the wedding, there are a lot of different stressful moments. There are stressful moments for planning for the ceremony. But there is this one moment that often happens where they’re getting ready for the reception. Sometimes they have a meal and they have these tables and they do these things called seating charts. (Laughter!) Why are you giggling? These seating charts are sometimes stressful because of this thing called dynamics. There are relational dynamics. What is that? Over time in life and then even being married and working through, you realize there are a lot of dynamics. There are situations where certain friend groups separate or where parents divide or where friends break up or co-workers are no longer together. There is just not peace. There is distress. You can’t sit at the table together or you can’t be near so and so. Think about the pain that is caused by that lack of peace.

Then think about the glory days when individuals actually make peace and then all of a sudden there is a family meal or a wedding or an event and actually everyone is at peace and able to be together. That kind of joy, you see it when nations are actually declared to be at peace and then citizens can travel across the borders. Now we’re no longer afraid of danger, of threat, because we’re at peace. The presence of peace is wonderful on a personal level and an international level. But nothing compares to the wonder of peace when it occurs at the spiritual level, being at peace with God. This is what just happened. The cross ends our war with God. Paul explains that this is the Gospel that he has been describing. It’s the good news of what has happened. He uses the word “therefore.” Based on everything we’ve been talking about, what Jesus did, now we’re justified before God by faith. Because of that, now we have peace.

Look at the blessings that we have here in the peace. Look at the nature of this peace. If we’re going to describe it, what it is, in context, it’s not just the absence of distress. We’ll say it’s the presence of favor. It’s not just two parties that are no longer hostile and estranged. It’s more than that. It’s this Hebrew idea of shalom, of being favor-inclined towards another. It’s longing for the well-being or the prosperity of another. Favor-inclined is the nature of peace.

It brings us into the subject of Paul’s focus here, which is the dimension in which this peace is enjoyed. Where it happens is not merely individual. This is relational. This peace is about relationship. It’s not just an internal feeling. It’s actually a relational fact. We have peace with God. This is not just a feeling, an inner sense. This is not just a pleasant personal impression. It’s actually a favorable relational declaration. The war is over! It’s not just merely that God is no longer our judge. It’s that now He is our Father. He looks on us with favor. We read that we have peace and we see that Jesus does more than secure a truce that brings us out of danger. He brings us a peace that now brings us into favor.

When our kids were younger, sometimes they would disobey. They would do something they knew they weren’t supposed to do. They would grieve us as parents. They could tell. They would ask this question. They would say, “Are you happy at me?” Think about the benediction or the wish for peace spoken in

**Numbers 6:26** the LORD lift up his countenance on you and give you peace.

We’re talking about the smile of God. This is the kind of wish, the peace that is offered. This favor is what Paul says we have. That’s what just happened. How does that happen? How is that possible? We dare not approach it lightly. There were some teachers in Jeremiah’s day who were just flippantly throwing around “Peace, peace.” God said

**Jeremiah 6:14** They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.

They’re just saying it. But just because you’re saying it doesn’t mean that it’s so. How is peace actually accomplished? The way that this peace happens, how it’s determined is through Jesus.

*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This peace is Gospel-oriented. It’s possible through Jesus. Our war with God is over because He atoned for our sin. We’ve been justified. His blood covers us. This Jesus that Paul mentions here, you see a few components of His identity that he touches on. One is His divine nature. You see He is our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that Jesus is God come as a man. He was born of a virgin, outside the sin of Adam. Jesus is fully God and fully man. So then He is able to actually fulfill the distinct role. Paul says Jesus is Christ. Christ is the formal title that He is the Anointed One, the Chosen One, the Messiah that was promised to come to save us from our sins through His sacrificial death in our place. It’s what Paul summarizes actually in the letter to the church in

**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.

That’s what Jesus has done in His distinct role as Christ. Right there you see the beauty of the direct significance that He is not only God and Christ. He is close. Paul calls Him

*our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Do you see the significance? Paul includes himself. As a sinner himself who had been opposed to Jesus, now he has actually been reconciled to God and he says Jews and Gentiles there at Rome, all of us together, this is the way that we now have peace with God. He is our Lord. He is not some distant deity. His death was for us. The basis of this peace, the declaration here that occurs, he says

***1*** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,*

We’ve been declared righteous. God says that we are right. His righteousness has been imputed to our account. God looks at us and sees the goodness of Christ. How do we receive that? By faith we believe it. We trust that God has given us this gift by grace. We trust His promises. He said He will save us. We trust Him. It’s not something that we strive after or work to gain on our own merit or self-righteousness. No, this is the gift of God. It’s a promise that the charges that formerly stood against us no longer remain because we’ve been declared innocent. We are justified because Jesus paid.

Now, what greater hope for peace and unity is there than the hope that the greatest divide, the greatest separation, the greatest war that will ever take place has been brought to an end? The cross ends your war with God. When you trust in what he has accomplished through faith, your war with God is over. Peace is yours. Jesus gave His peace to us. He took on our distress so that we were declared righteous, free of guilt, clean. He suffered. He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf. He was considered dirty and unclean. He knew the heart of the Psalmist who cried, “God, why have you forsaken me?” so that we can know the favor of God to His beloved Son. That is what just happened. Cherish that. If you’ve trusted in what Jesus has accomplished on the cross. Then on the basis of this verse and promise, I can say you have peace with God. The favor of God is yours. Don’t undervalue that. Cherish that.

We dare not chase after a feeling of some kind of internal impression when we have the fact of the declaration of the peace of God. We can lay down our weapons of unrighteousness and our tools of self-righteousness and we can trust in the gift of His righteousness. What a blessing! We have peace from God. One of the ways that we honor that peace is seeking to be a people of peace and a people who are peacemakers. Jesus said

**Matthew 5:9** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

We long to be a part of making peace even in this broken world. Praise God! I can testify and I know you know many people who have sought to be peacemakers. In our church family, there are many who take on the hard task of seeking to be peacemakers at their own cost and expense sometimes. But also, we can say pray for couples and families and people that you know where there is not peace, where there is brokenness. Pray for that. They long for peace. As you pray, remind one another of the peace that we have with God and His power to bring peace. He can bring peace and we’re a people in need of that peace. God is the kind of God who does that. We have peace with God.

**#2 Access Into Grace: Your Restrictions From Grace Are Gone (2A)**

The cross removes what formerly were our restrictions from the realm of grace.

***2*** *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand,*

We have access into this grace. God’s grace is given and His arms remain open. Now we actually stand or live in or dwell in this realm that is not under law, but grace.

In our neighborhood, we go on walks. They have these different signs. I saw a recent one that said “Welcome-ish.” (Laughter!) What kind of welcome does God give us? What kind of access do we have into His presence of grace? For this church in Rome of Jew and Gentile, it was not a small question. They would have had different access even in terms of their own citizenship and their own identity. If they were to go to Jerusalem, there was prevention of access into the temple if you were a Gentile. You would be in danger. Even for the Jews, there was that veil in the temple that would have denied access. There were places they didn’t have clearance to visit. Access would be denied. Look what happened now because of Jesus’ death on the cross. We have access now. It’s continual. It’s ongoing. We belong into this place of grace. We’ve been brought in. Here now we stand.

This idea of grace is where God is. It’s at His throne. This is where we are. We’re no longer under the law, but under grace. We belong to Jesus and now grace is not just some past act that we remember. It’s not even just a gift that we have received in some way in the past. No, it’s the realm in which we dwell. It’s the place we stand. Because of Jesus, this is enabled by Christ. We have obtained access by faith through Him. God made this abundantly clear. What just happened when He died on the cross and said “It is finished,” is that temple veil from top to bottom was torn, only by God. A way was made. Access was granted. God made a way. The dividing wall of hostility, He broke down. Now we have access into grace. It’s not just an on and off theoretical access. This is where we live. We live in the grace of God.

There are times where we’ll have meetings. It will be kind of a serious meeting. I’ll be with Pastor Ritch and we’re talking. But do you know who has access into that meeting? His family, but especially his grandkids. If his grandkids call him or his grandkids walk in, the meeting is over. (Laughter!) They have access. They have a special kind of access that even other people don’t have. Others will be told, “I’m sorry. He’s in a meeting.” But if it’s his grandkids, they get access. There is something beautiful about that. It reminds me about the access that the Son has with the Father. Jesus has free access into the throne room of God and Jesus has made a way now that we enjoy that access as children. The book of Hebrews says

**Hebrews 10:19–23** Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

We’re going to draw near into that access. We can stand in the grace He has made. Praise God that sinners and sufferers such as we, from all kinds of backgrounds and walks of life, we’re the ones who have access. There is nothing special about us and everything special about Him. We have access into grace. This is where we stand. Embodying this kind of atmosphere of grace and of welcome, do you think that would give hope to suffering sinners? May it be so here. May we be the kind of place that offers a full welcome into the grace of God. We have peace with God, access into grace, and

**#3 Hope For the Future: You Have A Hope Worth Celebrating (2B)**

The cross creates this joyful anticipation of what is to come. Verse 2 says

*and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

We have hope for the future.

This past summer, I stepped on a basketball court and I was looking for a few moments to just relive a bit of the glory days. I got out there and before I began to play, I prayed this short prayer. “God, keep me safe. Keep me humble.” Five seconds in, something snapped. I was limping for months. It was one of the quickest answers to prayer that I’ve ever had. (Laughter!) It was a reminder that my body is not the same as it used to be. A lot of people think about this moment where they get this thought or this question. Are my best years still ahead of me or have they passed behind? Sometimes I have thought I can get it back. I have stuff going on. I still have things ahead. But there is that lingering realization that maybe some things are gone. There are some losses that we encounter that will be irreversible.

There are people who are going through deep pains. I talk with some of you who are sharing some of those moments of suffering. There are pains where there is loss in life; loss of mobility, loss of a spouse, loss of a child. There are pains that you cannot recover in this life. You say, is there hope for the future? Are there things to look forward to? For those who trust in Jesus, you better believe there is. It is a hope actually worth celebrating because for the Christian, the glory days are always ahead. We can rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Look at this hope and the response it provokes. He says what we do with hope is we rejoice in it. We boast or exult in it. Because you actually look back and you see we can’t boast in ourselves. We can’t boast in anything in this life. In fact, we had fallen short of the glory of God. We had nothing to boast in. But now we can. We can rejoice. We can exult. We can boast in the hope of the glory of God. Christian hope is actually such a sure thing. We can celebrate it already. It’s a done deal. The future reality that we anticipate here is the glory of God. Jesus has done what we could not. We who had fallen short of the glory of God, now we are actually welcomed into His glory with Him. He has accomplished it. He has risen from the grave. Now He stands in glory and He is welcoming us home, into that new resurrection life. We’ll share in the glory of God. That’s what we have to look forward to. You see, before, we didn’t have that hope. But Paul says in

**Ephesians 2:11–13** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

We have a joyful anticipation of what is to come. That’s a hope worth celebrating. We have a hope for the future. Glory awaits! There are lots of hopes in this life that end up being broken and it’s easy to get discouraged. It’s easy to lose our hope and to start to wonder if there are things to look forward to. There are trials that break our bodies, that break our bank accounts, or they shake our relationships or our dreams. There are the kingdoms of this earth and all the things that get shaken and broken, and we have grief over these things. But sometimes what God is doing is shaking our hands loose of the things of this earth so we can grab hold of the thing that cannot ever be shaken. That is hope in the future.

If you want to be encouraged, take some time and go talk to a church family member who has recently lost something significant. Talk to someone who is going through suffering who is coming here and who is still singing the praises of Jesus. For sure, it has not been an easy thing. They’ll often tell you, “I didn’t ask for this trial or this suffering.” But I’ll tell you what. They often have a much clearer hope in the future that is often much clearer than the rest of us. If you want to see what clear hope looks like, talk to them. Praise God for those of you who are grabbing hold and clinging to that hope. It’s what the rest of us need.

Nothing brings suffering sinners through the door of hope like embracing the blessings that God gives us through the cross. He gives us blessings of peace with God, access into grace, and hope for the future. You may say, “That’s great. There is hope for the future, but what about today? I have pain right now. I’m hurting right now. What just happened in the cross is that it gives

**#4 Meaning In Suffering: Your Suffering Serves A Purpose (3-5A)**

There’s a point. It has meaning.

***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,*

Suffering serves a purpose. It has a point. One of the common biblical examples of purpose in suffering is the example of childbirth. I have a sister and then my brother’s wife, recently they gave birth. So our kids have new little cousins. They’re excited about seeing pictures. Our daughter has been getting older and she kind of observed a bit of that process. You can see her mind kind of thinking and she is asking her aunts questions. She’s trying to think about this idea of pregnancy and childbirth. You can see her eyes just trying to process. She said, “Why does anyone want to do this?” (Laughter!) Kids ask easy questions, don’t they? Among many reasons, we can say a simple one is that there is the blessing of a child. The suffering is designed and intended to have a point at the end.

There is a purpose that even though there is pain, there is hope. There is even joy in the midst of the trial because I know that there is a purpose in the end. I think that’s part of why Paul draws on this analogy to describe the Christian life, especially in chapter 8, when it comes to meaning in sufferings. We need to rehearse the realities of this meaning in our minds. We can face the pain. We can actually face it with joy. Paul says

***3*** *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings,*

We know there is meaning. We can rejoice. There is something God is accomplishing. There is something that He is doing. I don’t mean to make that trite. I just want to say that some people are facing suffering and we need to remember that there is meaning in it. It’s not to no point or no purpose. Some of that meaning is given to us. We can know a bit of that purpose and we can appreciate it because there is a mindset, there is some reasoning, a flow that Paul shares with us. There are some compounding understandings that help us appreciate it. He says suffering strengthens us to trust God more and trust God longer.

*knowing that suffering produces endurance,*

It’s a kind of patience that we persevere, that we stick to it. Suffering actually comes just like the seed that is sown, the Word of God. It gets some root and then it comes up. There are some seeds that come, but then the suffering and the heat and the trial that actually destroys that plant goes away. But know that to those who are genuinely rooted in Christ, suffering is actually going to produce the kind of strength and endurance that is needed. It’s dangerous if we don’t have that kind of endurance, in fact. That endurance, as the suffering comes, it strengthens us to trust God. As we do that, we endure. He says that trusting God longer,

***4*** *and endurance produces character,*

That trust in God, that endurance produces character. Character is that idea of proof, of tested proven value. It’s that we actually are growing and becoming more like Jesus. If we just go through suffering and come out the same, then sometimes it’s not serving its purpose. The point is that we actually become someone different. We become more like Christ. So here is what we’re doing. We’re actually becoming more like Jesus. He is producing character within us as we endure, trusting God. This godly maturity increases our hope in heaven. It deepens and increases. He says

*and character produces hope,*

This is what Paul describes in other places in the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians is a big one, that people who are suffering are enduring. As they are enduring, they are growing in their character. As they grow in their character, they are increasing their hope for heaven. They’re asking Paul, “Tell us a little bit more about heaven. We want to hear more about heaven.” This is what suffering does. This hope that is now deeper in heaven is well-placed because there is nowhere more secure.

***5*** *and hope does not put us to shame,*

Your hope in this life, your hope in all these things, that hope will sometimes disappoint you. You will bank on it and then you will be put to shame. When you put hope in heaven, it will never be put to shame. You will never be disappointed. It’s the most secure place you could put any kind of hope. Praise God! Suffering actually deepens that hope. Walk with someone who is going through suffering and you will often see someone who has a deep hope in heaven and there is a blessing that comes from that.

Our suffering serves a purpose. There is meaning in it. For those who trust in the work of Jesus, our suffering has meaning. It’s not easy. Jesus has walked that path already. He suffered on our behalf and He says all His followers will suffer in some way. Yes, there is suffering in terms of just living in life. There is suffering in our own trials. But there is a particular form of suffering that is unique to Jesus’ followers, and that is persecution. It’s when people push against you for making the right choices to follow God. That kind of suffering in fact will be endured. He says it will bring blessing to you.

**Matthew 5:10** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

There is hope there.

Paul, when he walks through in Romans chapter 8, he talks about the hope that we have. The Spirit testifies within us that we’re children. He says that

**Romans 8:17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

We want that future glory, but that’s through the road of suffering. This is how we walk together. He says

**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.

Don’t even compare it because that glory is great. He says the way that we wait for it is the same kind of way in which

**Romans 8:22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

We’re waiting for that day. We’re longing for that hope. We don’t see it now, but we wait for it with patience. This is what God is doing. We trust that He is working all of these things. Like I said, it’s not in a trite way. Just know there is meaning in the suffering. He is working all these things and He is doing it to conform us to the image of His Son because we have a future day we’re awaiting. Suffering serves that purpose. So we let suffering do its work. We ask God and pray to God as people are walking through those trials and try to walk with them.

Remember though, this is what has happened. We have peace with God. We have access into grace. We have hope for the future. There is meaning in suffering. Then also

**#5 Love Within Our Hearts: God has given you Himself (5B-8)**

The cross floods your heart with the love of a God who has given you Himself.

*because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* ***6*** *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

On the mission field, there were times when the electricity and the water would go out. So we would be trying to do life without power and without water. But at one point, someone came and they said we could put in a Boer hole. We didn’t know what a Boer hole was. They would drill down in your own yard in the water table and you would get this pipe. Then you could have water anytime you want. My dad loved it! Before, he was like, “Watch the water. Don’t water the yard.” Then all of a sudden he was like, “Water the yard all the time.” Sometimes the kids would leave the water on and it would just flood the yard. It would happen overnight and dad would be like, “Who left the Boer hole on?” No matter what was happening in the city, we just had gushing water.

God talks about the love of God that actually has been placed within us. It’s been poured out. It is now the source within. It is overflowing. There is nothing keeping it from us. This is the source. It’s within. God has given us Himself. His love pours out into our hearts. We see that it’s God’s love. It comes from above. This is the love of God. It’s not our love for God, but it’s God’s love given to us. It’s known within. It’s poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is the one who has been given to us. He now indwells us and He is the seal and the guarantee of God’s work and His promise of the love, past, present and future. Now here is God giving Himself to us. He is actively at work producing His love. It’s a love from which we can never be separated. It’s a love that comes from above and is experienced within, yet it is beyond our expectations.

Sometimes we imagine that the God of the Old Testament is some kind of different God. We think He is some kind of monster or mean God and we need to hide from Him. So we’re thankful that Jesus came and He is gentle and sort of a different kind of God and He can kind of force God’s hand because He died on the cross. He kind of puts us at a truce with God. But that’s not how Jesus describes God. He teaches us to view Him as He does, as a heavenly Father. You see, we forget that the cross was God’s idea. The cross is not man’s idea for coercing a truce with a reluctant God. It’s a loving God’s idea for securing peace with rebellious sinners. This love is from above. Christ died for us. We so often go to John 3:16 in remembering

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

This is love beyond our wildest expectation. This shocking death took place where God sent His Son. Paul says

***7*** *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—*

This is a human expression. It will be hard to find someone willing to die for someone like this. But look at for whom Christ died. Christ died for the ungodly, for the weak, for sinners. Christ died, most shocking maybe as you really think about it, for us.

**Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—

**Galatians 4:4-5** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.

This is what God accomplished. God has shown us His love and floods our heart with His love. We realize He is a God who has given us Himself. For those who trust in Jesus’ work on the cross, His love is within our hearts. Jesus gave Himself, sacrificing Himself and His righteousness in exchange for the suffering that was due to our wickedness as His enemies. He gave His own Spirit that is now indwelling in us, pouring His love into our hearts, overflowing with love. The love of God is undeserved.

Praise God for some of you who are just enraptured with that love and take time to marvel at that love. We think about Mary and Martha and it’s very easy for some of us to get caught up with our love for God. We’re doing all kinds of stuff and running around. We have to do this for God. We love God so much that we’re going to do this and we’re going to do that. Look at Mary. What is she doing? She’s just sitting there. Mary is enraptured with God’s love for her. Sometimes we can just take a moment, take a breath and say God wants me to take time to recognize His love for me in Christ. He doesn’t need the work of my hands. He wants the worship of my heart. Praise God for His love and praise God for so many of you who are willing to take time to marvel at the love of God and to be stirred by His love and then to sing and to celebrate and to share Gospel truth. We hear each other. We need that because we need hope. We know that nothing brings suffering sinners through the door of hope like embracing the blessings that God gives through the cross. He puts love within our hearts through His Spirit.

**#6 Freedom From Dread: God’s Wrath Is Not For You (9-10)**

***9*** *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* ***10*** *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

Through the cross we have freedom from dread. God’s wrath is not for us. There is this thing that is called diplomatic immunity. I think it was in 2003 that there were a number of people from other countries that would drive around. I think it was over in New York. They would get parking tickets, but they had diplomatic immunity, so they didn’t have to pay parking tickets. They didn’t worry about it. They kept parking in the wrong spots and racked up millions of dollars in parking tickets. But they weren’t afraid. They had immunity, so they weren’t afraid of that. It’s not so with us, right? If you park somewhere and you see that ticket, you feel the dread. “I’m going to have to pay.” What we see here is that Jesus has paid and now that wrath is not for us. There is no fear. We have freedom from dread. We have an appropriate reverence for God, but it’s not dread. It’s not the horror of wrath. We’ve been fully covered by His blood.

***10*** *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,*

Now that we’re children, do you think He’s not going to save us and carry through what He has begun by His grace to the end? He will as a loving Father, care for His children. He has made peace. We’ve been reconciled. We’re not enemies. We’re children. He will finish what He started. We do not need to dread judgment. That’s what Paul gets at in Romans chapter 8. He says

**Romans 8:31–39** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We need not dread Him. He is our Father. That’s a comfort. Yet as we go to Him as Father, Peter would remind us

**1 Peter 1:17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

We have a reverence.

**1 Peter 1:18-19** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ,

**1 Peter 1:21** who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

So we still rest in God, but we rest knowing that we have His love. Nothing brings suffering sinners through the door of hope like embracing the blessings God gives through the cross. He gives peace, access, hope, meaning, love, freedom, and last,

**#7 Joy In Relationship: Your Relationship With God Is Now Guaranteed (11)**

The cross guarantees us relationship forevermore. The Spirit has sealed us and now we are reconciled to Him.

***11*** *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

We have received reconciliation. We are the ones who are able to rejoice and rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ because of Jesus. He has accomplished this. It’s totally accomplished! The worst is behind us. The best is yet to come. We have not just been rescued or reconciled transactionally. We’ve been reconciled eternally relationally. Now that we have this reconciliation, that the love of God is ours and we are His, we look forward to relationship with Him forever. This kind of hope is the kind of hope that can’t just stay put. Paul would say in

**2 Corinthians 5:17–18** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

Now that God has done this, He says I want you to go and I want you to bring this reconciliation to others.

**2 Corinthians 5:19-20** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

This is what God is telling you. I’m talking to you from God.

**2 Corinthians 5:20-21** …We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Be reconciled! This is the ministry that Paul and the apostles brought and we’re commissioned to go and bring this hope of reconciliation to a world that doesn’t even know often that they’re at war with God. That peace and reconciliation, these things are offered as a gift of grace. They don’t even know what just happened. So we go and we share. Praise God for those of you who are bold in sharing and being ambassadors. Keep praying for people who are doing that. I know many of you were last week.

You have neighbors or family members or friends that you’re trying to invite, that you’re trying to share the Gospel with, that you’re trying to think about how do we share this hope, this message of reconciliation? We have college students who are going. We have people sharing on campus tomorrow and Tuesday. Pray for them. Pray for God to reach down and open someone’s eyes to what just happened so that they would recognize the love of God that is available through Jesus Christ and that they would understand what has been given, the door of hope in this world of darkness. Nothing brings suffering sinners through the door like embracing the blessings that God gives through the cross.

Look amongst nations, within churches, even families at war. Where do suffering sinners find hope? It’s the same place where sinners find hope before a holy God. It’s at the cross of Jesus Christ. It’s the flood of God’s love from above. There a door of hope stands open to any who would enter and believe.