

Michael McGowan

Romans 5:1-11 – *Grounded: Blessings of Justification*

Preached at Trinity CRC

February 28, 2021

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

If you've ever been offered a job...

You know that more goes into the decision than just the salary.

There's something called a benefits package.

It typically includes:

Health care...

Medical, dental and vision;

Paid time off for vacation...

Personal days;

Retirement plans;

And, if you get into the some of the more generous companies...

Tuition assistance, gym memberships, and flexible working hours.

These are all included in a benefits package...

It comes along with the salary when you belong to an organization.

Our passage today is kind of like that...

We're looking at the "Belonging to Christ" benefits package.

We have such a loving and generous God...

That he gives us all of these benefits that are attached to being "in Christ."

And just like it is in any job...

We will not be focused on every single benefit at once:

At points throughout the year, you're probably more concerned with vacation than you are with your retirement account.

It's the same for those in Christ:

Depending on what we're going through in life...

Certain "benefits" will be more relevant to us.

It doesn't mean that they're not all available...

We just tend to lean into certain benefits at certain times.

So, as we go through this benefits package...

Hold onto one benefit that really connects with where you're at today...

And try to lean into it this week.

The first benefit listed in our package is "peace with God."

We can think of this as friends with the CEO.

But, don't think of this as a new relationship we're starting with this CEO...

No, we've actually been a part of his organization before.

In fact, he mentored us when we were first starting out.

He got us the job...

He taught us everything we knew...

And poured a lot of time, energy, and love into developing us.

But we got a little over-confident.

We tried arranging all of our work and clients to think that we were the ones in charge...

That *we* called all of the shots.

We didn't listen to *his* instructions anymore;

We didn't follow *his* vision for *his* company...

And so he had no choice but to let us go.

We broke what was a good start to our relationship...

We burned him pretty bad...

And now we're not on good terms.

Hopefully, you see the parallel here.

When we were created by God...

He put us into this perfect relationship with Himself.

Everything was exactly as it should be:

He was the Creator...

He told us what was good and right...

We knew how special we were to him.

We were the creation.

We let him provide for us...

And we worked in his garden and participated in his organization of the world.

But then we thought we deserved more...

We tried to overthrow his leadership and take control.

We broke the perfect relationship we had with our Creator.

This relationship remains broken—

And will always remain broken—

Except by one way.

God himself—

The CEO—

Makes peace between us.

And that's what he does in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 says, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When we were still cocky and overly-confident...

When we were still trying to take control of his organization...

God did something to set our relationship right.

“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (5:8)

And because of this, we have peace with God.

Maybe this is the benefit you want to lean into this week...

“Peace with God.”

Friends with the CEO.

A repaired relationship.

Because maybe you still view God as an angry boss wanting to exact revenge...

Or an angry parent waiting for you to slip up.

Everything you do and every decision you make...

In the back of your mind, you're waiting for God to “get you.”

Because of Jesus' sacrificial death...

We have peace with God.

Because Jesus died for us...

We are no longer enemies of God.

Instead of the angry boss...

Instead of the angry parent...

We see him as a loving father.

“Peace with God” gives us this image of the father in the story of the prodigal son...

Where the father starts running toward the son with arms wide open...

He sees the son with compassion and love...

And meets him with a huge hug and a kiss.

If this is the benefit you need to lean into this week...

I invite you to spend time in Luke 15.

Meditate on and sit with these words:

“While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was *filled with compassion for him*; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

Use the words of Romans 5:1 as a daily affirmation:

“I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord.”

The second benefit listed in our package is “access to God.” (5:2)

Not only are we friends now with the CEO...

He actually wants to spend time with us.

We think of a CEO in a major organization as someone inaccessible....

They don't have the time to mingle with us little people.

Their office is on the top floor;

You have to get passed the administrative assistant;

And then make it through the two, large wooden double doors...

And that's if you have an appointment.

In the OT this meeting could only take place with God once a year.

The high priest was only allowed in the innermost room of the temple once a year—

On the Day of Atonement—

To meet with God.

Access was restricted to just that one man, one time a year.

But Paul says:

“We have gained access through Jesus Christ into this grace in which we now stand.”

This is the presence we now stand in...

The realm of grace we are currently living in...

Unrestricted access to God.

Maybe this is the benefit you want to lean into the week.

Because maybe you don't *feel* that intimacy with God...

You wonder how God could ever *want* to spend time with you...

Doesn't he (the CEO) have other, more pressing things to attend to?

Maybe it's hard for you to know that you are right now living in the realm of God's grace.

This is a benefit of being "in Christ."

That we always have access to the Creator of the universe.

That he wants to spend close, intimate time with you...

That he cares about every detail of your life.

If this is the benefit you need to lean into this week...

I invite you set aside 10 minutes—

Just 10 minutes each day this week—

To be in God's presence.

Maybe you're good at sitting down in a chair with an open Bible...

Able to connect with the Lord.

Or maybe you need to take a walk around the neighborhood just to pray...

To have an open conversation with God about where you're at.

We may not be able to physically see God with our eyes...

But we are given access to his presence.

Daily affirm that promise/benefit with the words of Scripture:

"Never will God leave me, never will God forsake me." (Heb 13:5)

"God did not leave me, He gave us the Spirit forever." (John 14:16)

Try meditating on the words of Psalm 139:7-10 this week:

"Where can I go from your Spirit...If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

The third benefit we see listed in our package is a strange benefit...

Boasting/celebrating in suffering.

I would imagine that is where a lot of us are at today...

Suffering.

Whether it's from loneliness due to covid restrictions...

Grieving the loss of someone we love;

Watching our dreams slip away with each passing day;

Mourning a broken relationship;

Or living with a physical or mental illness...

All of us are going through some kind of suffering today.

So how do we make sense of this so-called "benefit"?

I want us to use the imagery of forging steel as we think about suffering.

Forging any metal is a process:

A blacksmith takes a piece of metal and heats it...

I mean HEATS it.

For steel to be forged it needs a temperature of over 2,000 degrees (2150-2375F).

Anything less and it's too hard...

You won't be able to manipulate or change its shape.

Anything more and it will melt altogether.

When you forge a piece of steel...

What you're doing is heating it to a temperature where it can be changed...

And to change it you bring out the hammer.

When it's in that correct heating window...

You lay the steel on the anvil and you hammer it.

Listen to what happens at a microscopic level:

Before the steel is forged its molecules are not aligned...

The way they're bound together leaves pores or gaps between them...

This makes the steel brittle or weak...

Likely to break under stress.

Forging heats up the molecules...

And puts them in an active state ready to be rearranged.

Hammering the hot steel actually aligns the molecules...

It reduces the pores or gaps between the molecules...

And makes it so that they're all lined up.

When the steel cools and is ready to be used...

It's able to withstand more stress and is more useful...

It's more durable.

But it doesn't happen without intense heat and a hammering process.

Suffering is like this I suppose.

God uses the heat and hammering of our circumstances...

To rearrange our "molecules."

He shapes us through our suffering...

He causes us to become aligned to his will...

He aligns our spirit with his.

"Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

This benefit in our package says that no suffering is ever without purpose—

It is never wasted pain—

It is always used by God to shape and form His people...

It always leads to hope and confidence in what God can do...

It is always used to shape us into the image of Christ.

If this is the benefit you need to lean into this week...

My invitation is to take time to reflect on your suffering.

Take time to feel the pain of loss.

God wants to use the suffering to shape us...

But it's going to complicate things if we pretend it's not there.

Find someone you trust to process with.

Call one of your pastors.

Call a counselor.

Spend time journaling about those things you feel deep inside of you.

Meditate on the words of our Lord on the cross from Psalm 22 this week:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Here is a man who endured suffering that no one can imagine...

He suffered physical and spiritual separation from God...

All so we would never have to.

Sit with the crucifixion this week...

The ultimate suffering that we never have to endure...

The guarantee that our suffering will always be used by God for our good.

Our final benefit on the list we see is our retirement package—

What we'll call our sure and certain hope.

Christian hope is not the same “hope” as we use it in everyday language:

“I hope I get that job.”

“I hope that girl likes me.”

“I hope that we can see our family this summer.”

This kind of hope is filled with question marks and uncertainty.

But the kind of hope we have in Christ—

The hope in this benefits package—

Is certain.

Without a doubt, it will happen...

It is guaranteed because it depends not on us...

But on God.

And what God promises...

He will deliver.

What does he promise in our retirement benefit?

The sure hope of salvation.

“We will be saved from God’s wrath through Jesus Christ.” (5:9)

Scripture tells us that there will come a final day...

When God’s wrath is poured out against sin.

All of humanity will stand before God the Judge...

And will give account of how they lived on earth.

Those in Christ need not worry...

We are promised rescue from this final day.

Instead of looking at the end as a time to be fearful of...

It becomes a source of our comfort...

Knowing that everything wrong and broken will be set right.

God also promises the sure hope of our glorification:

“We boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God.” (5:2)

Those sins that we cannot seem to overcome now...

The frustration we have over our bodies as they fail us...

And the doubts that are always attacking our faith...

All of these will be put to rest in the end.

Sharing in God’s glory means that the God-likeness we once had is restored...

We finally become human in the sense that *God* intended it...

Fully human...

Unmarred by the death, corruption, brokenness and deterioration of sin.

We become fully able to glorify and enjoy God forever. (WCF Q&A 1)

Maybe this last benefit—

A sure and certain hope—

Is what you need to lean into this week.

Maybe life is too much right now and your heart needs to be set on promise.

You need to know that things will eventually change...

That sin and death will be no more.

You need to know that one day you will be able to enter into God's Sabbath rest.
You are invited to spend time with the words of Revelation 22 this week:

"Now the dwelling place of God is with his people, and he will live with them."

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes."

"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain..."

"For the old order of things has passed away." (22:3-4)

Maybe your affirmation for the week can be the words of Rev 21:5:

"God is on the throne, and he is making all things new."

Peace with God;

Access to God;

Boasting in suffering;

And sure and certain hope...

These are all a part of the benefits package listed in Romans 5.

But they're not something we work for.

It's something that comes with belonging to Christ.

Jesus Christ accomplishes all of this for us...

And all we have to do is enjoy them.

We enjoy them and give God our never-ending thanks and praise.

Amen.