

“Never the Same Again”

Romans 5:1–11

Life changing events. The Beaconsfield gold mine collapsed on 25 April 2006 in Beaconsfield, Tasmania. Brant Webb (37) and Todd Russell (34) were trapped in a small work cage for two weeks about 1,000 metres below the surface. A small earthquake triggered an underground rock fall. 14 men escaped, one was killed, and two were trapped.

The miners were able to survive by drinking groundwater seeping through the rock overhead, which they had collected in their helmets. Webb also had a muesli bar with him, which he offered to cut in half and share with Russell. They eventually ate small pieces of the bar at a time, to make it last as long as possible. But Russell later lost a large part of his half of the bar when it fell out of his pocket.

It was a mighty rescue effort. At the 10 year re-union in 2016, it was clear everyone had changed. The miners were never the same again. Webb struggles with ill health and financial hardship. Russell almost lost his family due to mental trauma. Even the town of Beaconsfield has changed. The mine closed in 2012 and now draws up to 40,000 visitors a year. Tourism is booming like it never has before.

Life changing events have life changing consequences.

When we are justified by faith, when we are saved from the wrath of God, we are never the same again. When we are declared righteous by God our lives are radically and forever changed.

In Rom 5 Paul declares that the life justified by God on account of faith in Christ is never the same again. The big idea of verses 1 to 11 is that a life spent in relationship with God is different and precious and special and privileged. Words like peace, hope, glory and reconciliation temper the passage.

Justification through faith is like a new birth and from that time onwards we live and breathe God's love poured out in our hearts.

But there is no naïve idealism. The Bible is realistic when it comes to the cold, harsh reality of life. It doesn't expect that every day our lives will be exciting and thrilling and adventurous. God is not delusional. He knows that our lives are often a struggle and that problems test us and that we are

tormented by sadness and sickness and the injustices that life can dish out. So Paul speaks about our sufferings but he does so through the prism of the gospel.

Living with Christ makes a difference. Living with Christ forces us to confront our burdens as we wander through the wilderness looking forward to our heavenly home. The life justified by faith is never the same again. And it's not the same again for three reasons: (1) we are at **peace** with God (verse 1); (2) we have a sure and certain **hope** (verses 2, 10); and (3) we look at life's **sufferings** in a different light (verses 3-5).

We haven't time to look at every aspect of verses 1 to 11. The words "peace", "hope" and "sufferings" occupy our thoughts this morning.

First, we are at peace with God (5.1). No longer recipients of his anger but recipients of his grace. "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand" (Rom 5.1).

The accomplishment of the gospel. We started Romans with the wrath of God being revealed which wasn't particularly good news. And we find ourselves in chapter 5 with the knowledge that God's wrath is extinguished on account of the Lord Jesus who atones for sins through the shedding of his blood.

How can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? By faith—alone. By asking Jesus to stand in my place. By asking God to accept his Son's sacrifice on my behalf and with that comes forgiveness and new life. The Christian is a person who has entered a new phase of life—an era of peace with God.

But what is this peace which comes after justification through faith?

The nature of peace. When we are justified by faith, we enter into a state of peace with God. It is an objective, legally defined state of peace. To be justified by faith is to move from a state of guilt to innocence. It is to move from a state of slavery to freedom. It's to move from a state of death to life. It is to move from a state of war to peace.

When Paul links the word “peace” with “grace”, as he does in Rom 1.7, he suggests this peace is not something achieved by us but given freely by God. God’s grace, God’s mercy, God’s peace. Once we were God’s enemies, now we at peace with him.

Guilt to innocence, slavery to freedom, death to life.

When we are justified through faith we have the assurance of peace with God. We are no longer God’s enemies but now at peace, shalom, with him.

The word “peace” is easily misunderstood. We need to distinguish “peace with God” from the “peace of God”. The “peace of God”, or sometimes just the word “peace”, is the peace God gives his people to enable us to avoid anxiousness and cope with the concerns of this life. So Phil 4.7 says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”. Or in the OT, verses such as Numbers 6.26, “The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace”.

This is the “peace of God”. The peace God gives us to cope with the fragilities of life.

But “peace with God”, according to Rom 5.1, is our reconciliation to him. God has pardoned us, we are no longer his enemies, we belong to his family . We live in a world where peace is no more than the absence of fighting because no-one really gets along. No-one is reconciled. Countries spend billions of dollars on defence in the name of peace. Peace is what’s left when nations point big weapons at each other.

To be at peace with God is to be reconciled to him. To be able to call God “our Father”. When you were justified by faith you entered a new life—a life of peace with God. You mightn’t feel like that’s the case, you might be suffering and stressed and deflated—or you might be happy and filled with joy. You may be feeling totally unworthy, even useless. Or you may feel on top of the world.

It’s not our feelings which save us—they may even mislead us. As NT Wright says, “We mustn’t imagine that our feeling of being close to God is a true index of the reality. Emotions often deceive”. One can feel at peace with God and not be at peace with God. Feeling spiritual is not a guarantee of salvation.

We are saved by the death of Jesus who atones for our sin and brings us into a state of peace with God—irrespective of the condition of our feelings

I've spoken to many a person who describes their hopelessness and unworthiness and how they feel so low and inferior. And they ask, "Why would God ever want me"? "Why would God ever want to love me"? "I don't deserve to be at peace with God".

And the answer is here in Rom 5.1. For the person justified by faith—for the unworthy person who falls at God's feet and seeks forgiveness through faith in Jesus—here is the promise, you are at peace with God. God chose to pour his love at upon you. You may not feel at peace, you may be highly conflicted within. But the promise is that you have peace with God and access to his ongoing grace because the gospel brings us into a state of peace.

Second, the hope of the glory of God (5.2). Our second word is "hope". Verse 2, "And we boast (or rejoice) in the hope of the glory of God". Justified through faith, peace and now hope.

Hope is a rather weak word these days. We use the expression, "hoping for the best" which implies that we are not very hopeful. "I hope this talk ends soon". Don't be too hopeful! Our world is without hope. People face life without hope. They live each day without hope. They get sick without hope. They face death without hope. Without hope there is only despair and many people live in despair.

John Bunyan said (slide), "Hope is never ill when faith is well". A well faith is a faith in Jesus and his promises which give us a solid hope for the future. Hope in the Bible means certainty. It is a joyful and confident expectation which rests on the promises of God, as we saw in the case of Abraham.

Christian hope is an assured outcome based on God's commitment to love us as we see in verse 5, "And 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" (Rom 5.5).

What do we hope in? "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God". We don't boast about our the future we make for ourselves, rather we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. John Stott says (slide),

And the object of our hope is the glory of God, namely his radiant splendour which will in the end be fully displayed. Already his glory is being continuously revealed in the heavens and the earth. Already it has been uniquely made manifest in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, most notably in his death and resurrection. One day, however, the curtain will be raised and the glory of God will be fully disclosed.

The hope we have is the hope of sharing God's glory. It's the hope of recovering our God-likeness that was lost in the Fall because of sin and that will be restored on the last day. It embraces the renewed universe whose groaning will cease as it again shares the full measure of God's glory. We look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus who will appear with great power and glory and we will share in his glory.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Now I think if we be honest, for most of us this hope is difficult to difficult to imagine. Yet it is our Christian inheritance. If I'm going to a resort I can visualise what my holiday will be like—lots of food, lots of people, swimming pools, quiet reading, time to sleep, beautiful sunsets—I get excited.

But the glory to come can be difficult to understand and so we get less excited and it has less impact on shaping our lives now. I was reading about the ex-American President in the Eternity news magazine, Jimmy Carter, who recently shared the story of his cancer diagnosis in his liver. He had it operated on and "a good part" removed. He then had a scan that revealed four cancers in his brain.

In Carter's words (slide),

So I assumed, naturally, that I was going to die very quickly. And I obviously prayed about it. I didn't ask God to let me live but I just asked God to give me a proper attitude toward death. And I found that I was absolutely and completely at ease with death. It didn't really matter to me whether I died or lived. So I have since that time been absolutely confident that my Christian faith includes complete confidence in life after death. So I'm going to live again after I die – don't know what form I'll take or anything like that, but I have confidence that there is a God and he's all powerful. That he keeps his promises and that his promise is life after death.

These words cannot be said unless there is rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. This world is a pale reflection of the glory to come. We may not fully understand, but we know it to be far better than the

sufferings we endure at the present time. We know, from verse 10, that we are assured of life in the judgement to come.

The hope of the glory of God. The hope of the new creation. The hope of being with Christ. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he said this, “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we may live together with him” (1 Thess 5.9–10).

Third, dealing with our sufferings (5.4–5). The earthiness of Christian living. If justification by faith, peace with God and hope of the glory of God take our eyes us above this world, then suffering brings us down with a thud. Paul goes onto say there is tight connection between suffering and hope. “We boast in the hope of the glory of God”—verse 3, “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And 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” (Rom 5.2b–5).

Paul does not urge us to celebrate our sufferings as we celebrate our hope. There is no joy in suffering. What type of suffering is Paul thinking of? Some say the suffering that comes when we confess Christ and live with him as Lord (e.g. NT Wright & J. Stott). It’s no less than this but it looks to me like Paul is referring to all suffering (e.g. D. Moo)—the sufferings we endure because we are Christians and the sufferings we endure as people living in a fallen world.

The totality of our suffering works in the lives of believers works in a way unlike it does in those without hope. There is a divine rationale behind suffering. First, suffering is the one and only path to glory. It was so for Christ; it is so for Christians. As Paul will soon say in chapter 8, we are “co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (8:17). And then, second, if suffering leads to glory, in the meantime leads to maturity.

The Nicene Council is famous in church history. From this Council we have the Nicene Creed which was written in 325 A.D. It a theological statement of careful proportion. It stresses the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

The Nicene Creed was written by clear-headed, godly men. We tend to forget the theological battles of the past won for us and we are so used to the creed perhaps we think it ordinary. But did you know that of the 318 men who met to form this Council, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye, or lost a hand, or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith?

In your suffering, know that God is preparing you for the time when he will glorify you. In your cancer, in your failing eyes, in the pain of losing a loved one, in the car crash or the raging fire. God doesn't rejoice in your pain and nor should you. But through your unpleasant suffering God is producing perseverance, and through perseverance, he is producing character, and through godly character a hope that longs for the glory of God.

Conclusion

Justified through faith in Christ Jesus. A new life of peace and hope. A refreshed view of our sufferings. Rom 5.1–11 assures us that God is with us. If, while we were God's enemies he reached out to us, now that we belong to him, how much more will he act to see us home.