



15 Discipleship & Suffering
Romans 5:1-5
Sunday April 28, 2019
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

-

Let's pray and ask God to change us through the reading of His Word!

We are going to now begin what is considered to be the second movement of the book of Romans.

The book is divided up into four movements:

1-4 is how the Gospel reveals God's righteousness. - we spent the last 3 months of the first movement, and really 1-4 springs us into 5-8 showing us how God's righteousness actually turns us into people here and now who can live renewed, Gospel-transformed lives.

so **5-8** is how the Gospel gives us new life, and is the movement which Paul introduces us to the Holy Spirit. Though there is a large shift between chapter 4 and 5, Romans 1-8 really works together and is really ALL necessary in order for us to fully get a grasp on JUSTIFICATION.

9-11 is about how Jesus fulfilled God's promise (or his covenant) with Israel...

which is going to be a headful when we get there...

and:

12-16 - is about how the Gospel is what will ultimately unify the church.

-

So we are entering into this second movement, and its a highly PRACTICAL movement of thought that teaches us with quite a bit of clarity,

that the Gospel really does turn us into people who truly can impact the world for the better. Its going to be a fun movement... so let's just dive right in

Romans 5:1-5

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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.

-

Paul begins his second by movement by saying: “since we have been justified by faith” - basically giving us a summary of the first four chapters of Romans...

BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED...

BECAUSE of everything that he just said about the Gospel and the glory of God and the image of God and the list of sins that everyone finds themselves on, proving that we all need God to declare us righteous...

Because God did declare us righteous... by faith... notice that key word... justification is not automatic, it has to be initiated by faith... which Paul walked us through all of that earlier...

so... embody EVERYTHING that we learned for the last three months... as Paul arrives at his THEREFORE.

THEREFORE - BECAUSE OF THIS...:

NOW WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

This could not be more important and if we spent the entire service on this one line, it would be worth our time...

It breaks my heart to see a person accept the Gospel message but have it never really click in their life. If you think that you need to get RE-SAVED every time you come in to church... then it hasn't clicked. If every time you fall, you think that you need to start the entire process all over again... it has not clicked. And that is how a lot of us live. Like every day God is waiting to toss us out... and then we have to beg Him to take us back again.

Paul says in 3:23-24 that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God, but are JUSTIFIED by the grace of God, as a GIFT - through the redemption that is in Christ.

if you think that God gave you this GIFT - but that He is just waiting on the edge of his seat to take back what He has given you... then you do not understand it at all... and you will live your life as if it was never given to you in the first place.

And the reason that it matters so greatly, that this actually CLICKS... is because eternity is the source of anxiety for many, and it robs them of their lives, experiences, and friendships today. If you are always worried about what will happen later, you will never be who you are supposed to be today...

which means that people who YOU are supposed to reach will not be reached today... people you are supposed to help will not be helped today... people you are supposed to feed will not be FED TODAY... and places that you should be bringing THE LIGHT OF JESUS TO, will remain in darkness today because you are debilitated by your own lack of understanding of the Gospel.

So Paul starts this second movement by saying: since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

BECAUSE WE ARE JUSTIFIED... WE HAVE PEACE.

Paul is taking care of the main thing first... and you will see with what he does here, why this is so important as a foundation.

The word Paul uses here is “peace” (Greek: *eirēnē*) - (Hebrew: shalom). - THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT... The word peace, particularly in Hebrew means WHOLENESS. It means to be complete.

I was talking to a friend of mine who works in church planting, and he was telling me about how his church planting network, like most church planting networks and churches... are ALL ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP. They would hold conferences in which they would say WE ARE ALL ABOUT MAKING DISCIPLES...

DISCIPLES.
DISCIPLES.
DISCIPLES.

If we aren't making disciples... we are failing... that's the great commission, GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND MAKE DISCIPLES!

But then one day, someone asked the question: well wait a minute...

what does a disciple look like? Particularly... what does a Disciple of JESUS look like?

and nobody really had an answer... “a follower of Christ” ?

“follow me as I follow Christ”?

“a person who does what I do? Who I am training?”

“a person who is fully dedicated to Christ, who reads their Bible every day, who prays, who fasts”?

all of the generic answers.

and it sent them on a journey in which they spent the next 18 months trying to discover the answer to that question... WHAT DOES A DISCIPLE LOOK LIKE? and the conclusion that they ultimately came to was "wholeness." - and where that may sound like a strange way to define something as important as discipleship... it really illuminated something to me about why we are here in the first place, and IT IS NOT to turn a bunch of original, creative people into a bunch of cookie cutter replicas of each other.

It is more about looking at one another, and asking questions like "who are you? WHO AM I???" and what is it that you can do that I can't? and what is it in you that is PREVENTING YOU from doing what you are supposed to do???" and what is in me preventing me from being who I am supposed to be?"

The Discipleship process is all about leading one another toward wholeness... its like: okay... Jesus saves me... NOW WHAT?

unfortunately... for many people, its like... cool... "thanks Jesus, but my life is still a mess, my family is a disaster!" "I still don't know how to manage money" "I am still angry all the time" "I am still worried about every little thing that happens" -

the question is, "what does it look like for the Gospel to actually take a hold of EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE?" so that you can reflect back on your day and think "my marriage is awesome! I LOVE COMING HOME TO MY KIDS... Jesus has been working in my home and its incredible..."

"My relationships are being reconciled... I am becoming a more forgiving person... I am learning to apologize when I know that I was the source of hurt in another person..."

"I am learning the VALUE of all people... people who are not like me, and people who are just like me... People who have committed crimes that I can't even IMAGINE COMMITTING... I am seeing the world and its members as people created in the image of God, who Jesus thought were worth DYING FOR"

“I am learning that it is OKAY to be different, and it is OKAY to disagree! but it is NOT okay to be hostile, harsh or mean...” Because loving my neighbor means loving the person who believes differently than I do... acts differently than I do,

it's that path to becoming who you are supposed to be.

That is SHALOM.

and PART OF wholeness is having the assurance of knowing:
We don't have to worry about what will happen to us... we have the fullness of life that is found in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying “justification” - being declared righteous... it happens SO THAT we can actually BECOME THE PEOPLE GOD HAS DESIGNED US TO BE... and WE WILL NEVER BE THOSE PEOPLE WITHOUT IT...

but because of it... wholeness can actually be a reality.

But watch this:

The word “anxious” - the anti-peace - is the Greek word “*merimnaō*” - and it means “to be in pieces” - it means “the world is supposed to be one thing, but somebody broke it. It's in a million pieces and very far from what it should be. Typically people are anxious when they want to be in control but they realize that ultimately so much is out of their hands.

In our minds... things are supposed to be one way... and instead they are another.

In the entire sermon the mount, Jesus gives the longest of all his treatments to anxiety... He spends the most words telling us NOT to be anxious because it robs us of being the people we are created to be.

So the Greek word for anxious means to be in PIECES.

But the word peace (Greek: *eirēnē*, Hebrew: *shalom*) means to be whole.

What Paul is trying to say here is basically that... most people live their lives in pieces. Anxious because they can't control the things that they want to control in this life, and they are even more uncertain about the next one.

But that reminder of justification... that confidence to know that God has declared you and I to be righteous, and that when the scales of our lives are finally weighed we will not be standing on them alone, but Jesus will be standing next to us and that our lives will be judged BY HIS LIFE... because of that reality, we have peace with God. We don't have to worry. We can live confidently knowing that the God of all grace will do what He does.

Because people who have peace are far more effective for the Kingdom than people who are in pieces.

WHOLENESS IS POSSIBLE.

You can be a person who wakes up every day and is happy to be alive... you can be a person who wakes up every day, even when you know it is going to be challenging, and remind yourself "I have an incredible purpose, and if I don't do it, who else will?" -

every day is training ground. Every day is another step in the process... And we can let our challenges debilitate us or we can let them springboard us into who we were created to be.

So then in verse 2, Paul says:

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.

the word "access" - another translation would be "an introduction" - is a Greek word ("*prosaḡōgē*") that literally means: to approach, or to "bring to"

but the thing that is fascinating about this word is that it was actually the word used to describe a harbor that a ship comes into.

So after a long journey, this was a docking point... this was the place where you had the assurance of knowing “we have arrived safely” - its an anchor point.

Now... AFTER Paul gives us that anchor point... after he shows us that it is our faith that will grant us access to this place of knowing that we can rest in the security of Christ Jesus... that we don't need to be in pieces... that we have peace to know that God is on the throne and that He will make things right...

IT IS THEN that Paul begins to get into this bit about **suffering**.

and for many of us, this is where the whole thing falls apart.

But this is where this “wholeness” thing really clicked for me... This is where it comes into play... Disciples of Jesus are people who are being made more and more into the image and likeness of Christ every single day...

the example that Christ gave us with His very life was not one that was always easy or in some cases EVER EASY... but it is whole, and that wholeness is not shattered when it gets hit.

I think of what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15 when he encourages us to be steadfast and immovable... always abounding in the work of the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58) - THE CONCEPT IS THAT we are so solid IN WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST... that we are not moved when we face opposition. We don't break easily.

Hebrews 12 speaks of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken... and how the THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN are the things that will remain...

and that is the Kingdom of Heaven... that is why we exist, to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.

So even though God meets us in our messes... and even though God can use us even when we are a mess... ultimately God wants to do something in us, that makes us whole... gives us peace that passes all understanding

(Philippians 4:7), and when the world falls apart, our hearts and minds are guarded and we still are able to remain, as Paul writes in Philippians.

-

Remember (what we studied during our introduction) about the city of Rome, and the world that Christians there were up against. Trials were something that they would have grown accustomed to. Life was hard.

THEY NEEDED TO KNOW WHO THEY ARE if they were going to handle any of it.

So what Paul says is that when you experience trials, as hard as they may be, those trials produce endurance (Greek: *hupomonē*) (who-pom-en-nay) ... which is also an important word, it is one of the words we translate as “patience” but it means more than just patience or the ability to wait out difficult times.

You can cower patiently, hiding out and waiting for the storms of life to pass by you, which is what a lot of us tend to do... But that is not what Paul is talking about here.

There was a controversial interview that the governor of Kentucky did a few months back, about the snow storms that hit this winter, and about how they canceled so much school for so many days straight. I know here in Detroit it was a whole week straight and it was so cold that the only thing to do was cancel... emergencies like that do exist... but Kentucky is quite a bit South of us so I don't know exactly what went on down there...

but He was highly criticized for what he said and I do think, especially with kids we have to think SAFETY FIRST so please don't come up afterward and tell me “what about the children?”... but what he said did make me think a bit. I am totally paraphrasing this, not quoting him... but he was frustrated that after several days they were still canceling school every day, and he said something along the lines of:

“when we tell people to bunker down at the first sign of a storm, we are sending the message that whenever life gets hard, the response should be to cower in a safe space and not move forward with anything.”

Obviously there will be extreme circumstances like a polar vortex that should force us to slow down for a little while... but what he was trying to say is actually what this Greek word is saying, and what I got out of it was this:

It is enduring THROUGH the trial that teaches you how to live in a world WHERE storms DO exist.

or maybe we could say it this way: It is COURAGE during the hard times to keep going.

That is what produces character.

Here Paul uses the Greek word “*dokimē*” (dock-e-may) which actually is sometimes translated as “experience” -- and means “tried character” or TESTED... - it is character that has been developed as it has been put to the test. It is someone who survives when their character is truly tested.

But just like with the visual we got about the harbor that described the word for “access” - we have a visual for “*dokimē*” (dock-e-may) as well.

The word “*dokimē*” (dock-e-may) was actually used to describe metal that would be put in a fire (Barclay) - which gives us a fantastic image for what Paul is saying here...

Proverbs 17:3 says “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests the heart.” -

A crucible was a pot that held metals allowing you to put them under fire... you put silver in the crucible and then put the whole thing into the fire. The crucible would hold up in the heat while even the metals inside of it would melt.

When the silver would come under such extreme heat, the dross (which is basically just this mass of impurity mixed in with the silver) - would separate from the silver, so then the silver smith could pull the whole thing out, scrape off the dross and what was left was a purified piece of silver.

the outcome is that something is made “pure” - the Greek word for “pure” (*katharos*) means “purified by fire” -

What the Proverb is saying is that we find out an awful lot about what is in your heart based on what happens when the fire gets turned up...

The fire actually BRINGS OUT ALL OF THE POTENTIAL IN THE SILVER... it illuminates the bad so that YOU CAN ELIMINATE THE BAD.

and that is the image you get for how character is tried... “*dokimē*” (dock-e-may)

And character produces hope...

Why?

I will give you my theory, which I feel is pretty grounded... but this is one of those conversations that has been going on forever... God... WHY IS THIS THE PROCESS?

Think about the people who are met with circumstances that seem hopeless. We all have a threshold as to what we can handle before we break. We all have a breaking point... but it seems like certain people break right away, and others seem to be able to handle just about anything that comes at them.

There is a Hebrew word, the word “*rachab*” which is used to describe space... ground that we stand on, but the word actually means “to grow wide or to enlarge”

David uses the word in his Song of Deliverance from Saul and His army when he says these words “You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.” (Psalm 18:36, 2 Samuel 22:34)

And the way the word often is used in the Bible is in such a way that shows us that as you overcome things in your life, that ground begins to expand. So for David, by the time that he was writing these words, he found himself in a very difficult place, hiding from the King and his armies who wanted to kill David... but David had already by then watched God pull him through circumstance after circumstance. Giant after giant... and so now he is saying "God... you provide a foundation for me... and its getting wider... and I won't slip. I won't stop trusting you... I know who you are."

Your territory begins to expand, as your capacity expands. We know that is what happened to David.

We also get the word in Genesis when Isaac is trying to build wells and the Philistines keep coming and plugging them up.

and Isaac names the wells these different names to describe the resistance that they are facing while trying to dig the wells... one was named "Esek" - meaning "contention" - they dug a well... the Philistines contended with them and plugged it.

the next well they name "*sitnah*" meaning hostility, *sitnah* is where we get the word "Satan" from - it was just the constant resistance. Isaac was trying to get water for his people... but the enemy resisted them every step of the way.

Finally, he names the last well "Rehoboth" *saying* "surely, the Lord has made room for us here" - "made room for us" is the Hebrew word "*rachab*" - and it only came after Isaac persevered time and time again in what God had called him to do even though it was hard and very strongly opposed.

So for Isaac:

There was opposition.

There was enmity, and hostility... and resistance...

Then suddenly, there was space.

and what you don't see during the opposition and the hostility is that God is actually using those moments to prepare you for what will ultimately be the opportunity that He has called you to.

Most of us view discipleship as reading books together. And books are good... but sometimes life is the only teacher that can ever prepare you for what you will face, and as important as information and knowledge is... if we are going to reach the world for Jesus we have to be able to expand our capacity for loving the undeserving, to walking down challenging roads... for our own disappointment... for failure... for opposition... we have to learn what it means to KEEP GOING by being forced to decide "am I going to keep going?"

-

I will use myself as an example: I grew up in a large church. When we moved to California, we worked for a large church...

But when we went to New York, we spent four years working as hard as we could at a church plant, with the expectation that the same thing that we had in Los Angeles was going to happen in New York...

because all we had known was the BIGNESS of the churches we were a part of... we weren't around when those places were planted... watered... we weren't there for some of the ups and downs... the growing... the losing people, gaining a few more... slow building that took place.

and where amazing things happened there during our time in the city, it didn't explode the way that we expected that it would in the time frame we were there. I still believe it will and is growing, they just opened a second campus in Brooklyn.

But we had one of the best teaching pastors in the world in the pulpit every week... we had a worship pastor who travels the world with the biggest worship leaders - we had Dawn and I running creative pushing out content every week and working on things that it seemed like nobody else was doing... we served the neighborhood relentlessly.

but the walls we faced were not scalable in our own strength and growth didn't look the way we envisioned it when we gave up our lives in LA to go out there.

Seeing how hard it can be to build a church before we actually came here was an important foundation for us before we got to Detroit... experiencing a taste of that difficulty made the challenges less explosive to us because by the time that we got to Detroit, we no longer lived under the unrealistic expectation that everything is automatically BIG.

or take for example, a little bit of our journey:

When we lived in Rockaway Beach, we were two houses from the Ocean when Hurricane Sandy hit... it displaced us for over a month.

At the time, I am not sure that we could have taken much more.

When we moved from Rockaway Beach to Brooklyn, we applied for probably 40-50 apartments and were denied by every single one of them before finally finding someone who would rent to us because of our family size and our small income... it was two months after we moved OUT of our apartment at the beach that we finally moved IN-TO our apartment in Brooklyn. In the meantime we were just bouncing around between friends and felt like we were such a burden to everyone, and it went even longer than our displacement from the Hurricane.

But the whole time, as hard as it was... something was expanding inside of us.

When we moved to Detroit, we moved here without anywhere to live - it actually took us SIX MONTHS before we found the house we have now, and just rented a month to month spot before that...

first, we actually stayed in an air bnb a couple blocks from here that at the time was only \$11 a night... AND WE WERE SOOOO GRATEFUL TO HAVE SOMEWHERE TO GO, but there was a reason it was \$11 a night.

We shared it with some guy who lived there full time. It was just our family, and some random guy who also lived in the unit, sharing the kitchen, the bathroom, the living room and our family piled into a room.

I won't get into details, but we weren't used to what that particular place was like.

It really was true that we could only go uphill from there.

When we got our house, we had to tear the ENTIRE thing up and rebuild it... it was basically like living in one bedroom at a time until we could open the rooms up... and it went on for several years and even though it has gotten much better now, it still to a degree is going on...

now... if we had just moved straight from the suburban life we started in, with a two car garage, three beds and two baths... into the living situation we had when we first moved to Detroit... odds are we would have ran away within a few short months of our journey here and the story would have ended before it barely even got started.

But trials were an unexpected teacher, laying a foundation that would prepare us for the work that we needed to do in the community that God called us to. And even though it's been hard, we don't live as if we have no hope... that is why we keep going.

Because we have HOPE that God will use the small acts of love done by a few faithful people to do something that changes peoples lives for eternity. And we have been seeing Him do it... and we know He will do it again, and again as long as we keep allowing those moments to expand our capacity.

Think about it. If you have never seen God bring you out of a circumstance that you know you could NEVER get yourself out of...

then the sky falls down on you... are you going to have hope that God will bring you out? Are you even FAMILIAR with what it looks like to see hope work in a broken situation?

There is a reason that people lose faith when their world falls apart... because they are so used to things just working.

and they are left empty because they filled their tanks with the illusion of a perfect world where nothing bad ever happens and when it returned void they gave up on the entire thing because they had NO CLUE how to respond to something not going exactly the way they had planned.

OF COURSE YOU WILL FEEL WHOLE if nothing ever goes wrong... but God wants you to have wholeness, even when it feels like the world is falling apart.

if you were sold the lie that your life is going to be a butterfly garden and if you just have enough faith, you will never have to face pain, or experience loss, or get sick... the moment one of those things happens your FAITH CRUMBLES.

BUT IF YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE CRUCIBLE... and you have seen what God can do, when He puts you through the fire, then He, like that silversmith, comes and separates the impurities from that which is pure... and you begin to FORM YOUR LIFE around the way that God has moved in your life...

what that teaches you is that there is hope. There is hope that God will show up in this circumstance... BECAUSE GOD SHOWED UP IN THE LAST FIVE CIRCUMSTANCES and each one felt a little more impossible which only meant that God had to show up in a MORE MIRACULOUS WAY...

that is hope.

That is why I believe that out of tried character comes hope.. because when you have been tried, and you see God show up... you begin to learn... GOD ALWAYS SHOWS UP.

and because of the Gospel... because God has met you right where you are... you can live your life with wholeness even when it seems like the world is collapsing on you.

Don't worry when you hit the wall. You need to keep pushing... that wall exists to be overcome. The walls exist to show you that you can in fact get over them... that God Himself will bring you through...

-

THE REASON THIS IS SO IMPORTANT... and why I believe that Paul inserted this strange bit about suffering HERE, right after the mic drop justification moment... is because WE MUST NOT VIEW JUSTIFICATION AS: "our lives are going to be easy now..." OR "our lives are not going to experience pain anymore..."

no... its more like this: our lives have a Kingdom Purpose Now. Our lives have AN ETERNAL PURPOSE NOW. Our lives have a mission now.

We are redeemed for a purpose... and its a much bigger purpose than just getting to Heaven and it's a much bigger purpose than a life of comfort.

Most people define discipleship as teaching people to do what they do... but if you have a bunch of people who have never faced anything... felt anything... what are you reproducing? it's an illusion that nobody can live up to.

I believe that discipleship is more about teaching people how to live in a world that NEEDS THEM.

How to bring Jesus to the parts of our communities that are in pieces...

How to live our lives in such a way that, IN CHRIST, we are whole.

Wholeness doesn't come overnight for most people... because life is a journey... and sometimes it's a crucible... but the end result a tried character.

and a tried character produces hope. As we are built up into the people God has created us to be, we begin to view the world differently. Through

the lens of hope... through a perspective that says “if God can do it for me, He can it for anyone - He truly is the HOPE OF THE WORLD.”

-

and then this last line is just incredibly important:
hope does not put us to shame.

Hope does not disappoint.
Hope will not leave us empty.

And Paul gives us the reason:

(v5b) - “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” -

this is our introduction, in this Gospel, to the Holy Spirit.

and it comes in the form of an image of “life giving water” being poured INTO US. (Anchor Yale) -

in John 7, Jesus talks about how OUT OF OUR HEARTS will flow living water (John 7:38) - and John specifically says there that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit... I love the description of the Spirit... as a flow... as something that can be poured out... as something that can just drench you in all that He is.

The Holy Spirit here is our strength when we are weak - he fills us when we feel empty...

There are certain areas of our lives that, if we are honest... if they are ever going to be whole... it is going to take the Holy Spirit pouring the love of God into that area of our lives.

and only because God is who God is... can we ever be who we are.

and in our weakness... when we can’t muster up any more hope in our own strength... hope still doesn’t disappoint... it still doesn’t return void... it still

doesn't leave us empty... BECAUSE THE HOLY SPIRIT just keeps filling us.

One of the things that I love so much about God is the fact that He has given us this commission.... Go... make disciples... Go... teach people how to be who they are supposed to be in this world... who they are supposed to be in their families... who they are supposed to be for their communities... but even when Jesus gave them that task... that commission... what does He say?

I AM WITH YOU, even to the end of the age.

I am always with you. I am with you when you are suffering...

I am with you when you are smiling.

When you understand what God has done for you, not just through Jesus but also through the Holy Spirit... you realize that as broken and lonely as some days may feel... you are not alone.

You can throw discipleship in the ocean if you think it can be done without the Holy Spirit. The mission is too big... God is moving in such a way that **ONLY GOD HIMSELF CAN MOVE...** so as we take communion today, and we remember the body and the blood of Christ... I want to encourage you to take a few moments and invite the Holy Spirit to do what **ONLY HE CAN DO** in your life this morning.

I believe that God truly can change a whole lot by a few faithful people... but only if they let the Holy Spirit do the heavy lifting... that is why He is here... lean on Him this morning... invite Him into all the areas of your life... invite him into your suffering... invite him into your pain... invite him into your victories... invite him into your mundane... simple, daily existence. **INVITE HIM INTO YOUR RELATIONSHIPS...** invite Him into your quiet times, and your devotions and your marriage and your classroom.

invite Him as you disciple one another, and find wholeness in every area of your life... and just see what kind of a follower of Jesus you become.