



In our scripture today Paul is addressing the practical, day-to-day changes that come to any person who's been justified by faith. Follow his logic:

- Everyone is doomed because of sin (Romans 1:18-3:20)
• Salvation is freely given to everyone who accepts Jesus by faith (Romans 3:21-4)

Paul takes the next step in his logic by describing how life should be different after salvation comes. His meaning is clear: a Christian shouldn't act like they did when they were dead in their sin (Romans 5). Let me illustrate this.

In 2005 Showtime produced a documentary about Ted Rodriguez called "Reversal of Fortune." Ted was a homeless man who lived under a bridge in California. He described his average day as "survival." He'd collect cans and bottles which he'd take to the recycling center in order to earn about \$25 per day. With this money he'd buy food, cigarettes and beer for the day.

The film shows Ted doing his daily dumpster-dive when he finds a briefcase amongst the rubbish. He stops to brush it off and opens it up slowly and finds that it is stuffed with cash. A note atop the money reads "What would a homeless person do if he were given \$100,000?" Shocked and in tears, Ted comes to the realization that he is the recipient of a significant amount of money.

As the documentary continues, we see the answer to this question play itself out: What would a homeless person do if he were given \$100,000?

Ted struggles to adjust to his new identity. New behaviors like sleeping in a bed, shopping at a grocery store, cooking healthy food and using his money wisely are counter-intuitive. Although he has full access to leverage his money to change his life, he continues to think and behave like a homeless man. He misses the time when he slept under a bridge and had the simplicity of thinking of his bike and collecting recyclables.

The movie ends just six months after Ted found the money in the dumpster. All of the money is gone and Ted has nothing to show for it. It's a heart-breaking story. As I watched it, I found myself pleading with Ted to stop living like his old self and access the opportunities the money gave him. But he couldn't shake his past.

Paul is addressing a similar topic in Romans 5-8, "What would a great sinner do if they were freely given the righteousness of Jesus Christ?"

Would they still allow themselves to live under the power of sin?

- Complaining?
• Stressing out?
• Indulging in sexual passions?
• Would they still be selfish?
• Would they pass judgment on others?
• Would they hide behind the masquerade of pride?
• Would they keep acting like their old self?

or

- Would they break free from their past and live a different life?
• Would they feel peace in their heart?
• Would they be so confident of the power of God's love that they'd possess supernatural boldness?
• Would the trials of life easily roll off their shoulders?
• Would they love others lavishly like God loves them?

Romans 5:1-11 shows us that the normal life of a Christian breaks free from the past. Just as Romans 1:18-3:20 held up a mirror to show us our sin, Romans 5-8 holds up a mirror to show us who we are now—clothed in the righteousness of Christ. As I'm reading, let's identify the changes I'm talking about.

Therefore, since we have been justified through 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. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 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.

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

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For 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! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

As these verses describe the life of a Christian, although there are over 11 descriptions given, Paul lumps all of them under four main descriptions:

- Peace with God
- Boasting in the hope of the glory of God
- Boasting in sufferings
- Boasting in God

The Christian has Peace with God

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1).

The peace that's being described here is the relational peace that the Christian has with God. In Romans 1-3:20, the relationship between God and humanity had no peace. It was severely broken like a compound fracture. Romans 1:18 tells us that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people. Romans 2:8, for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. Romans 3:21 says, *"But now ... righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."*

Because of this righteousness, 5:2 goes on to describe a scene that helps us understand the peace we have with God, *"through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."*

"... have gained access ..." in Greek describe the process of being ushered into the court of a king and then being introduced to the king. This is a privileged place of honor. Normally, people bow before the king to show respect but in this scene with God, what is the person doing? Standing. Why? Because we are not quivering in fear before God, bowing low in hope that we'll escape his wrath. We're not like my new puppy who rolls onto his back for a belly rub. These are positions of insecurity.

No. Instead, we are standing, dare I say standing proudly with our shoulders back and our head held high because the righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us. Jesus' righteousness is so thorough and complete that although we're aware of our sin and our shortcomings, when the holy King of the universe looks at us in his courtroom, he sees the perfection of Jesus instead of our sin.

Based on that, we should stand proudly in God's presence. Jesus has given us full access to that! Peace, sweet relational peace, now describes the relationship between God and the Christian. As Paul describes it, this is the normal state of mind for someone who'd been justified. Shake your past and live your righteousness.

Building on this foundation of a relationship of "peace with God" Paul now describes three different ways the Christian boasts. This is a strange thing to say since Romans 3:27 told us there was no place for boasting. But this boasting is different. Boasting in a person's individual goodness has no place. But here in chapter 5, the three boasts represent the attitude the Christian has regarding God. It's like we're bragging on God and on what God has done on our behalf. This is like a person would brag about the success of a sports team because they attended the school 10 years ago. They haven't done anything to contribute to the team's success. Yet the brag to their friends as if they did.

The Christian Boasts in the Hope of the Glory of God ... we boast in the hope of the glory of God (v. 2).

This phrase is describing a person who is confident and eagerly expecting that one day they will share in God's glory. As exciting as this sounds, this needs some clarification. Does this mean that God will be sharing his unlimited glory with us? No.

We must limit ourselves to the promises of scripture, as we learned last week. The scriptures tell us that we'll share in God's glory in two respects: Our bodies will someday be in the likeness of Jesus. *"Jesus will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"* (Phil. 3:21). Our moral character will be in the likeness of Jesus. *"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son"* (Rom. 8:29).

This is what the scriptures tell us about the glory we will participate in after our physical life comes to an end. Do you see how we can boast in these transformations even though we're not there yet? Let me try to describe how this works itself into our daily life.

I have an on-going problem with good-decision-making righteousness. Basically, this means that I am convinced that I make good decisions. Better decisions than anyone else. Unless you agree with my decisions and then you simply validate how good I am at making decisions! This is a character flaw I'm working on. So when my wife Cassie asks me to take the compost trash from the kitchen to the bin outside, I am bothered. I think this is a bad idea. The bag containing the disgusting, juicy, stinky compost trash has to be dumped into the compost bin outside. I hate that! I tell her this makes the inside of the bin disgusting. And she says, "who cares. Just close the lid." I care; it's gross. I want my trash cans to be clean!

I can boast that I will share in God's glory and my moral character will be fully conformed to be like Jesus one day. That hope fuels

my spiritual growth now and frames my expectation of change that will progress until I reach heaven.

Having this peace with God and looking forward to sharing in God's glory are wonderful benefits, but they're lofty ideas. As we move to the third benefit our justification brings, Paul comes "back to earth" to show us how our circumstances relate to this hope of glory. He addresses an inescapable part of life—our sufferings.

No matter what precautions and plans we take in life, no matter how hard we've worked to be healthy, wealthy and comfortable with friends and family, something will inevitably ruin it. It's not that God removes our sufferings; he doesn't. But he gives them significance. They're a vital part of His process of building our beautiful character. Because of this ...

The Christian Boasts in Suffering

Not only so, but we glory (boast) in our sufferings because we know that ... (v. 3).

In essence, Paul is saying, "not only do you have good-feeling benefits but joy is possible for you even during the darkest periods of your life." This seems counter intuitive, I know. But it's a theme that's repeated throughout scripture. The Christian doesn't rejoice **for** their sufferings. That's masochistic. Some people do rejoice for suffering; they need to feel punished or they use suffering to show that they deserve God's love. These are Biblically incorrect. Instead the Christian rejoices **in** suffering. Meaning that while the trials themselves bring pain, God gives access to joy in the midst of the pain. The Christian looks through the suffering to the promises of God.

In his book *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* Tim Keller said, "Christianity teaches that, contra fatalism, suffering is overwhelming; contra Buddhism, suffering is real; contra karma, suffering is often unfair; but contra secularism, suffering is meaningful. There is a purpose to it, and if faced rightly, it can drive us like a nail deep into the love of God and into more stability and spiritual power than you can imagine."

The method of this stability and spiritual power is described in verses 3-4: Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; character produces hope. What a privilege we have to experience our sufferings differently because we've been given the righteousness of Jesus. Our sufferings no longer have power over us. We've been rescued from such a petty experience. Now we're shaped by the love of God and his method of using sufferings to chisel away our rough spots. This gives us a radically different approach to our hardships in life.

It's so radical that Paul takes verses 5-10 to prove his point that God redeems suffering and isn't out to hurt or punish his people. His logic goes like this: If God loved you when you were his enemy, of course he'll love you when you are his child. You

have no need to fear his punishment. You have no need to fear that he'll forget about you. You don't have to fear that the hardships are more than you can handle. God's love has been poured out into your heart. The Holy Spirit lives inside of you. All of the punishment you deserved because of your sin was poured out on Jesus on the cross. You are saved from the wrath—forever! While you were once his enemy, now you are brought into intimate fellowship because of the resurrection of Jesus. Live in confidence and boast in that! Don't give suffering the power to revert back to your old ways.

The fourth and last benefit to the Christian's life given here is:

The Christian Boasts in God

Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (v. 11).

To understand this last boast, it's important to understand the use of the word "now." The aorist tense of this word means that an action is affecting our present "now" and was fully completed in the past. This means that our reconciliation—our relationship of peace with God (the first benefit) and friendship with God—is a state of being that's been fully completed in the past and it affects every moment in our lives now.

Here's what it doesn't mean: "We also boast in our bosses through whom we have now received \$50 Starbucks gift cards." There are two problems with this concept: You can lose the gift card before you spend it and, once you spend the \$50, the card is useless. While it describes your "now," it isn't secure. It's passing.

As Paul describes this last benefit of being justified by faith, he's saying, "you can boast proudly and confidently, with the highest assurance in God because he's forever sealed your relationship with him." While a non-Christian is in a state of enmity with God, the Christian can boast because they are an insider with him.

While a non-Christian views God through a veil of utter mystery, the Christian can boast because they know God. Through Jesus' righteousness, the Christian is invited into the presence of the holy God of the universe. They can talk with him like a friend. When we read the Word, the Holy Spirit speaks his truth to our minds. Imagine what would come from putting these four benefits into action. The life transformation would be all-consuming! I'm going to end by describing how each one of these benefits brings change to our lives.

We've been given peace with God

Sometimes I get angry. I've been asking the Lord why that is. There are a lot of complexities to anger but a lot of it relates, at its core, to peace with God. For example, when I was walking my new puppy recently and he stopped for his third bathroom break on our 10-minute walk around the block, I was furious. Why? Because I decided that my dog's behavior was unjustified; it was

wrong. One bathroom stop is fine. Two could be understandable. But three! Unjustified. It's beyond wrong; it's inconceivable. And I'm stuck dealing with his inconceivable actions. That makes all of us angry. Anybody tracking with me?

How does peace with God affect this, you might be wondering? Profoundly. A person who's been given peace with God, a Christian, has been forgiven for all of their inconceivable actions. The more you're aware of this, the more humility you possess, the less angry you are when other people or your dog do something that's wrong. For the Christian who's fully living with the benefit of peace with God, every time they encounter the shortcomings of others, they'll think to themselves, "I'm just like that and even worse." When you think this, you can't get angry at them any more.

We boast in the glory of God

Sometimes my evaluation of myself is determined too much on how well or how poorly I'm doing. For example, if I'm in a good zone, I'm feeling really great about myself. But if I'm struggling with past demons, saying hurtful things or acting selfishly, I get down on myself. What's going on here that relates to boasting in the glory of God? I'm framing my opinion about myself based upon my good or bad behaviors. That's not living with the benefit of boasting in the glory of God.

When we boast in the glory of God, we frame our identity around what God has done—made us righteous in Christ—is doing. He's growing us spiritually, and has promised to do in the future—give us perfect glorified bodies and moral character in heaven. When I'm accessing this benefit, I don't ride big swings of ups and downs based upon my behaviors. I have a security to my identity that supersedes my behavior.

We boast in suffering

Sometimes I resent my hardships. When my wife suffered from depression, I was more frustrated by the inconvenience to my life more than I was empathetic. I just wanted the suffering to end, immediately! That's not living with the benefit of boasting in suffering. To boast in suffering means we have the perspective in our minds that all of it is developing perseverance, which is building character, which is building hope, and Jesus is always intimately close to those who are suffering. It's the attitude that says, "Oh, this is hard but I can endure through the strength of Jesus and live victoriously, despite my hardships."

We boast in God

Sometimes I try to impress people with my new watch or my skill at leading meetings or my family's skill at hosting in our home. Instead, when we boast in God, while we can acknowledge that we do things well, we make less of that and more of God. Our mindset is like John 3:30, "*he (Jesus) must increase and I must decrease.*"

What does this look like in your daily life? "You'll never believe what I learned about God this morning as I read my Bible." "I'm a big mess (you fill in the blank with your examples). It stuns me that God would love me and save me." "I used to think that about God too but then I learned that's not who God is at all."

At the beginning of this sermon I asked, What would a great sinner do if they were freely given the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Each of you will answer that question by the life you lead. My hope and prayer for you today has been to inform you of what's possible and inspire you to live it.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.