



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 5: 1-5

Romans

“Peace with God”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Romans 5: 1-5, Paul writes, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through or Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace and we are certainly reminded of that in this text this morning. We’re reminded of glorious blessings that are given to all of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. We have peace with God, we have hope that cannot disappoint. Father, that is a blessing beyond comprehension and yet we can begin to comprehend it and we can begin to appreciate it and we pray that the spirit of God would minister in such a way this morning that we do that.

What a blessing to know that we have within our hearts the Holy Spirit who Paul mentions in verse 5. It’s been given to us. Your love for us is poured out to us through him and he confirms that love to us. It does much. He has a great ministry within our lives. He protects us, guides us, He teaches us and we pray that His teaching ministry would go unhindered. May He open hearts to receive your truth in the great encouragement that we have from this text this morning.

So teach us this morning, Father. Encourage us with the great truths of your grace and in so doing, equip us for the week to come. We go out from this place into a world of darkness. We go out into a place that is hostile to us, hostile to what we stand for, hostile to you and we are to be your witnesses in this world and so we pray, Lord, that as we study this morning, you would equip us, you would encourage us, you would enable us to go forth and be good and faithful witnesses to the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We pray, Father, for your blessings in so many ways in many other areas of the ministry of this church. We pray for the ministry on the radio and the tape ministries as well. We thank you for the great affect and influence that they have had as tapes have gone across the face of this globe. We pray that you would bless that ministry. You have made great provision for it. We pray it would continue and we thank you for those who have ministered in that. Bless this church spiritually.

We live in a materialistic age, Father, that undermines these spiritual things that is a constant witness against these things and continually says to us in various ways that it is the things of this world that are important, it is the things of this world that lasts and of course, they don't last. And that's a delusion and that's a deception. May we not be drawn away by that, may we be grounded in the truth, the truth of this text and the truth of this great book of Romans. And may we set our hope on the things to come.

May an understanding of that hope that Paul speaks of in this text be firmly grounded in our thoughts. Father, we pray your blessings upon us in the material things of life. We are material beings and we have material needs and we pray for those who are sick, we pray that you give healing of the long list of people who have asked for our prayers. And we pray for them, we ask your blessing to give healing and encouragement. We know those, there are many who are discouraged by difficulties in life and we know that there are individuals from our congregation who are grieving at the loss of mothers, we pray that you give encouragement and comfort there.

And bless us, Father, this evening as we return to this place and remember the Lord Jesus Christ and remember His death for us. May it be a service that is honoring to you and a blessing to your people tonight. Bless us now as we sing our final hymn. Use that to prepare our hearts for a time of reflection, of study, of thinking together

about this great text of scripture. And may it have its good effect upon our hearts. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] John Stott has written that, “The pursuit of peace is a universal human obsession.” I think that’s a fair statement. I think it’s true, but an obsession unrealized. We know that as we look around because what we see in every way is a world at war. Internationally, there are conflicts across the globe. Individually, people are restless and at war within themselves. It’s been that way from the beginning. Isaiah compared the world to a tossing sea. There is no peace he said.

And if we ought to believe some of our scientists, the prospect for the future is even worse because they predict that someday the universe will stop expanding and then collapse in on itself. So even if man were able to establish utopia, according to his own calculations it wouldn’t last. The future’s one of eternal darkness. Mankind can’t make any lasting peace and it can’t offer any long term hope. The only thing that mankind can give is doom and gloom. But into that gloom the bible speaks good news and when we open to Romans 5 we see the best news. Paul promises peace and hope in this warring world and tells us where they are found. They’re found in Jesus Christ.

They are the results of salvation. They are the results of justification. That is the great doctrine that Paul has been setting forth in the Book of Romans and that is what he continues to set forth, the results of our justification in the next verses and chapters. Paul has explained the need that man has for justification in chapters 1 through 3. He has explained the way of justification in chapters 3 and 4, it is through faith and faith alone. And now in chapters 5 through 8 he explains the results or the blessings of justification.

And if I can put the lesson of these five verses very simply, it is this: that because of Christ, we who have believed in Him have peace and hope. We are absolutely secure. Not even the tribulations of life can shake our hope. They only mature us and strengthen our hope and the Holy Spirit reassures us that that hope is real. So the first result of being justified, of being right with God is really the foundation of all of the blessings that follow and that first blessing that Paul mentions is peace.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We can speak of peace, the peace that a Christian has in two ways.

There is the peace of God which is the peace that God gives us in times of distress. It is the calm in the midst of the storms of life. Paul speaks of that very clearly in Philippians 4:6-7, he says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

That is a great promise and that is a promise for every Christian. But that is not the peace described by Paul here in Romans 5:1. This is not the peace of God, this is peace with God and the implications of this peace is that we were previously at war with God. Now that’s not just an implication, that’s the implication of our words, but we can find that stated explicitly one way or another in other texts of scripture. In fact, the Book of Romans really begins on that point. After Paul gives us the introduction to the book, he begins the main section on man’s need with that startling and very direct statement in 1:18, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” God’s wrath is upon this sinful race.

And Paul doesn’t stop there, he goes on later in 8:7 to say that man is hostile toward God, man’s at enmity with God, man’s at war with God. But God is a peacemaker. And He has done what is necessary to end the war by satisfying his righteous justice which is against man due to man’s sin and He has satisfied that in Jesus Christ who bore our sins in our place and exhausted the wrath of God. He died for us so that all who believe in Him receive the benefits of His death. At the moment of faith, the sinner is justified. The sinner is declare righteous; the sinner is forgiven and accepted by God as righteous in His sight and completed accepted. The result of that is peace with God. The warfare is ended.

But it is only ended in Christ. Paul is very clear about that. This piece is through our Lord Jesus Christ and through no one else and in no other way. Whoever has not believed in Him as Lord, as the eternal God, as the true man who died in the place of men, that person is still at war with God. And what that means is that God’s wrath is against that individual. God’s wrath, as we read in John 3:36, abides on him. Presently hangs over him or her. Peace will only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when it is found, or better when it finds us, it is a present and a permanent possession. We have peace now and forever. And what a blessing that is.

You must reflect upon that and consider that and consider what that means because in a world at war, we have peace. And we have the greatest peace that there is. We have peace with the Almighty God. And because we have peace with the almighty God we have the peace of God Almighty. This is what Augustine found in a garden in Milan. It's what Luther found in his study in Wittenberg. The turmoil of soul that those men had known was ended in a moment through faith alone in Christ alone. Augustine wrote in his confessions that at that moment, it was as if a peaceful light streamed into his heart and all the dark shadows of doubt fled away.

That's what God produces. That's what happens when we have peace with God and it does produce, the peace of God. And it is only obtained through faith in Christ. And to emphasize that it is all of Christ and it is permanent possession, this peace with God, Paul states in verse 2 that through Christ we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. This grace in which we stand is our justification. We have our introduction into it by Christ. We are completely indebted to Him for our privileged position of acceptance with God.

This word that he uses and it's translated introduction can also be translated access. In fact, in Ephesians 2:18 and in 3:12 it is translated there access and it speaks of the access that we have to God, to the throne of grace in prayer. Through Christ, we can come to Him boldly, openly at any time. He's opened the door to God and we have access to Him. And so when we have trials and we are anxious as Paul says to the Philippians, we're to go to Him with prayer and supplication and we will have his peace. We have access to the throne of grace. And so this word can be translated access, it is translated that way, but here the word should probably be translated introduction.

It gives a better sense in this context since the word access could suggest that we gain this access by our own initiative and we do not do that. We do not gain access into the privileged position of righteousness with God through anything that we have done. We can't storm heaven. We can't do enough good works. We can't do anything to gain access. Is it all through Christ and so introduction is probably a better way of putting it. Now because of Christ, we stand in this grace Paul says. We stand justified with God. We stand in our privileged position of acceptance with God. We stand before Him as righteous and that makes the standing that we have permanent.

We are immovable in it. We don't fall in and out of grace. We aren't accepted by God one day, one moment and then the next day or the next moment unaccepted by Him. We are firmly fixed in this position in which we stand, immovable. And that security is because Christ has introduced us into that grace in that position, in that relationship that we have with God. He brought us into it and so it is a permanent, a rightful standing that we have. We would not have in any other way. This is the only way we can have it with certainty. It's through Him.

Let me illustrate this. A few years ago, maybe more than a few now, maybe it was back in the 1980s, I don't remember the exact date, but the incident is pretty clear in my mind. There was an incident in Buckingham Palace. A young man somehow made his way into the palace and passed the guards and into the queen's bedroom for a surprise visit. He didn't mean any harm, he just wanted to see his queen. And so he entered the bedroom, he sat down at the end of the bed and had a little chat with the queen. Well, she had the presence of mind to calmly notify the security and they came and they took the man away. He had gained access, but he gained access without an introduction. He didn't belong there and he was removed.

We don't have that kind of access to God. We don't have that kind of position before Him. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been introduced into grace by Jesus Christ. We have justification because of Him. The King has given us access into this grace and so we have a rightful place in God's presence and we are immovable in it. No one and nothing can take us away from it or out of it.

We have an illustration of that in Zechariah 3, a well-known illustration. Joshua, the high priest is standing before the ward and Satan is standing at his right hand and he's accusing him and with good reason. Joshua is clothed in filthy garments. Joshua is presented there as a guilty sinner and sinner is bringing that to God's attention. He's accusing him, he's saying, "See what a guilty sinner this man is." But the Lord rebuked Satan and said, "Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? Is this not one of my children saved by grace and grace alone?" And with that he commanded that the filthy garments be stripped off Joshua and new, clean clothes be put on him. "See," the Lord said, "I have taken away your iniquity from you and will clothe you with festal robes."

Now that's what the Lord has done for each of us who have put our faith in Him. He has clothed us with His righteousness with the righteousness of Christ and

that is all of the accusations. Because all of the sins have been paid for. We are righteousness in God’s sight. We are innocent of all the charges. That’s justification and that is how we stand. That is the grace in which every believer in Jesus Christ has been established and we are firmly established in it. Now because we are secure, Paul says that we have the hope of the glory and that is our future. And that future is absolutely certain. It is sure.

Christian hope is not uncertain. Christian hope is not like our everyday hopes that we have about the weather or about our health. It’s not a wish like our hopes about the Cowboys or the Rangers that so often go disappointed. It’s not that kind of hope. Christian hope is a joyful and certain expectation about the promises of God. It is hope like Abraham had, you’ll remember, as we’ve been studying that Abraham hoped against hope. He didn’t hope against the truth; he didn’t deny reality. He didn’t deny the truth. He understood reality quite well. He knew that all of the circumstances of life were against the promise that God had given him.

But God had given a promise. God had spoken and so his hope was not irrational because it was in God and it was in His word and when God speaks we’re to believe it whether we understand it or not. That’s not irrational because we’re trusting in the Lord God who is the almighty and Abraham knew that. He knew that God could not fail to do what He promised to do. And that’s the nature of our hope, hope in the promise of future glory.

Now what that glory that we hope in will be like is only hinted at. Paul speaks of the hope, but he doesn’t give us a detailed description of it. But we go through the New Testament, we go through the Old Testament as well and we gain some hint, some glimpse of that, the disciples gained a glimpse of the glory of God at the transfiguration when the Lord’s face shone like the sun and His garments became white as light. That was glory. Just a hint of the glory that he has. But it’s a hint of it, got a sense of that. And then the nature of the Resurrection body is seen in the picture that we have of our Lord, what that glory will be like. But again, it’s only vaguely given to us.

John tells us in 1 John 3:2 when Christ returns physically to the earth, we will not only see His glory, but when we see His glory, we will be like Him, we will be transformed, we’ll be changed into that same glory. We will share whatever that is. Amazing glory that we will have and that change, that transformation will make us fit

for the world in which we will then inhabit, the world to come that Christ call the regeneration when He will sit upon His throne. So our present hope includes heaven, it includes the Resurrection and the kingdom to come followed by the new heavens and the new earth which is a world without end.

But again, what it is like is only vaguely indicated in the scriptures with images of streets of gold and gates of pearl where we have crowns and harps. Think about that. The thought of having a harp isn't particularly thrilling me, but the point of all of those images is not to tell us what it's really going to be like, it's to give us a symbol to indicate some basic truths about that future hope, just some basic truths. Gold doesn't rust so the gems and the precious metals with which the city is described as having, they signify the permanence and the opulence, the glory and the richness of the world to come. The crowns and the harps and the songs, they speak of activity and joy.

We were at war with God. What does that involve? I don't know all that that involves. The promise is that we will be active, we will be ruling in this universe. And we will experience unending, ever-increasing joy. That's what songs and harps symbolize, the praise that we will give, the joy that we will experience. Twice in the Book of Revelations we're told that God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Be no more sorrow, there'll be no more sin. The struggle with sin will be over and the more and more like Christ we become, the more we mature in the Christian life, the greater that blessing will seem to us. We'll see that when we come to Romans 7.

Life's a struggle. That struggle will be over when we enter into glory and best of all we'll be with Christ. We will see him face to face and we will be like Him and that will be glory. So many people in this world, in this city hope in what is vanishing before their eyes. They live for the things of this world. They have no hope beyond this brief and sorrowful life. And we can sympathize with that, we understand that because you and I struggle with the same thing every day in our lives, don't we?

The world is full of glittering stuff and we like it. And think of my desires back in high school and the hopes that I had. I set my hope on a 1965 red GTO with a black vinyl top, bucket seats and four on the floor. More than that I'd like to have a Corvette Stingray. Can just imagine what it'd been like to have driven into the high school parking lot in one of those. Could have gotten more dates I think if I'd had that.

Those are the things I had my heart set on. Where are those things today? Where's the GTO today? Rusting out in some junk yard. That's what it all comes to. That's what the things of this world come to. Whatever we might set our heart on, if it's of this world it's going to rust. It's going to fall apart. It's going to come to nothing. If people do that, they spend their life pursuing those kind of things and doing that they chase the wind for 70 or 80 years, then it ends and they go off to judgment forever.

But we have an eternal hope. Paul doesn't merely say that we have it, he writes that we exult in it which means we glory in it. It means we glory in it, we boast in it. Boast, that's a strong word to use. But it's got a significance here because we boast in what we are certain of. A person doesn't boast in what might not happen or what might happen. That's foolish to boast in what might occur. A person boasts in what has already happened, in his or her accomplishments. And that's what Paul is saying. What we boast in, what we hope in is so certain it's as though it's already happened.

In fact, we'll come to Romans 8:30, Paul will describe our glory, our future glory in the past tense as though it's already happened. That's how certain it is and so we boast. We're to have complete confidence in the promise that God will certainly finish the work of salvation He began in His children. And we will enter into an unimaginable glory and blessing. In fact, this text authorizes us to do that. It authorizes us to rejoice, to exult, to boast in that glory to come. We are supposed to do that. We are supposed to be confidence in the future and the certainty of our salvation. Otherwise, we're questioning God's faith in us, questioning His word.

That's what justification gives. Absolute assurance of salvation to everyone who believes. God's work is complete. The end is assured and we are to look forward to it. We're to glory in it. We're to exult in it. When we don't, we show ourselves to be weak in faith with little confidence in God, with little confidence in His promises. And in doing that, we cheat ourselves out of the blessings of life in the present time. That's true, really though, of all of us to some extent.

Charles Hodge has written that we all fall far short of the ideal and as a result, we go limping and halting when we should mount up as with the wings of the eagle. That's how we should live. We all do it though, we do fail, we do fail to appreciate the word of God, the promises of God, the greatness of God who can bring all of this

to pass. “Still,” he wrote, “it is important to know that assurance, to know the certainty of salvation and know that it is not an unseemly presumption to have this assurance. It’s not an unseemly presumption but a privilege and duty.” I like that. I like that statement. It is a duty to glory in the glory to come. It is a duty to exult and boast and rejoice in the future and live for it. That pleases God. That shows our trust and our confidence in Him.

God was not displeased with Abraham when he hoped against hope. That wasn’t considered arrogant. That honored God. That said I believe you regardless of the circumstances because I know that you are faithful. It is the weak believer who does not put his confidence in the Lord, who doubts the security that the believer has. It doesn’t have joyful confidence in their future glory. And in doing that, as I said, cheat themselves out of blessings in this life. But these are the blessings of justification, of being saved, peace with God, acceptance with Him in this grace in which we stand and absolute assurance of final salvation and glory.

“It sounds idyllic,” John Stott writes. And it is. But it’s not easy. It’s idyllic, but it’s not easy. The Christian life is not one of idle comfort. It also includes a hard reality. Paul speaks of that in verse 3 and that is the reality of tribulations. And yet in verse 3 Paul writes that we are to glory in these also. It’s the same word that he used in verse 2. We glory in the glory of tomorrow and we glory in the trials of today.

Now I can’t imagine anything more inimical or more contrary to joy than tribulations, anything more frustrating for exulting and glorying than hard times. That’s what Paul says. And what it means is not that we glory and rejoice in the midst of them as though they are pleasant experiences, but that we glory on account of them. Paul is not giving here a prescription for fanaticism. There’s no pleasure in pain and Christians don’t glory in suffering for its own sake. Tribulations are unpleasant. Tribulations are tribulations.

Paul knew that better than anyone. He suffered terribly all through his Christian life. He tells us of some of his experiences. He unfolds them in 2 Corinthians 11 about his beatings and shipwrecks and his many dangers, his hunger, his thirst, his fever. Paul and those with him knew hard times. Paul particularly though. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:8, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed.” He could rejoice in his afflictions because he knew the results of them, that

they had a purpose. Nothing just happens in a Christian’s life. For the child of God, suffering, afflictions, tribulations are never pointless.

I don’t say that you and I know the point of all of them in detail and the specific purpose they serve, but that’s the assurance we have. Paul explains that. He explains now that suffering is the path to glory in the present time and the path to the future glory. God uses our tribulations to change us, to sanctify us, to make us like Christ. They are one of God’s means to make us useful in this life and prepare us for heaven hereafter.

And so Paul says that we exult in our tribulations knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance. Produces patience. It produces the ability to endure difficulty. Life is hard. And the Christian faces challenges from a hostile world. The only way to learn endurance, to learn to endure hardship is experiencing hardship. It causes us to exercise patience. It increases that. So tribulations bring about maturity. But they do that only if you respond to them in faith rather than bitterness. That’s the way the world responds to difficulty. The world has its tribulations also, but what it does is grumble and curse God.

We’re to respond to those tribulations with faith and we can respond in faith by understanding what Paul is saying here and receiving suffering as God’s fatherly discipline knowing that He is all-good, that He is all-wise, that He is absolutely sovereign. He knows what he’s doing and he cares for us. And it also helps to see His work in the lives of other people, to see how He has been faithful to them, how He has used trials in their lives and to see how they have responded to that. We see that in the lives of the apostles, we see it in Paul’s life. We see it in the prophets, we see it in Moses and many others.

Go through the bible and read about the individuals there and how they’ve responded. The author of Hebrews does that. He gives us that magnificent chapter on the heroes of the faith, chapter 11. He instructs us in examples of faith and godly men and women. And then in Hebrews 13:7, he instructs us to learn from these kinds of people. He says, “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.” Learn from other people. We should do that as we read the bible and in other ways as well. We should look at the lives of other people and learn from them and be encouraged by them.

I gain a great deal of encouragement by doing that, by studying the lives of men like John Calvin, he's one of my heroes. A man who served the Lord persistently and faithfully under the most trying of circumstances. He was a man who had ill-health. He was a diligent student. He began studying theology and then he went on to study law and as a young man he devoted himself to that. He studied all day and late into the night and would sometimes not eat and not sleep and it took a toll on his body so that later on he suffered greatly. He suffered numerous ailments over his lifetime, continual headaches, gallstones and kidney stones, pleurisy that developed into tuberculosis.

Sometimes when Calvin would be preaching, he'd be coughing blood. He had a hard life. He suffered physical difficulties. He suffered personal tragedies in his home, numerous tragedies and attacks from enemies outside of the home. But he continued to minister in the churches in Geneva. Normally he preached twice on Sunday, frequently during the week, sometimes every day of the week. He wrote commentaries. He was in constant correspondence with kings and princes and theologians all over Europe. In spite of his tribulations he never wavered. Cried out to God in his misery and in his sorrow, but he never wavered in his faith.

John Owen was much the same. He's considered the greatest of the Puritan theologians. He wrote the definitive work on limited atonement, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. If you haven't read it, read it. It's difficult reading. It's very profitable though. And he was a prolific writer and preacher and all of that under very hard circumstances. He lived in a time when England suffered political unrest, civil war and then wars and plague and he suffered personal tragedies. He was married and had 11 children. All of them died in infancy or childhood except one daughter. She married, but the marriage failed. She returned home where she died of consumption, tuberculosis.

All of his children, all 11 of them preceded him in death. I don't know how long that took, 15, 20 years or so? He witnessed periodically throughout that time the death of his children. His life was filled with death. That's almost unimaginable. But he and Calvin didn't grumble. They served God with fervency to the end as multitudes have done. As we looked at men who persevered under such trials, it's encouraging to us to do the same. And that's how God makes heroes of out His children. It's through trials, it's not through comfort.

We learn to endure and that results in proven character, what the commentator Sanday and Headlam called, “The temper of the veteran as opposed to that of the raw recruit.” And it’s the veteran that you look to for help. It’s those who have been through those kind of trials that become useful. They’re made useful. They’re the kind of people that can become counselors and comforters. They’re the people you to go to when you’re in need and we’ll all be in need. And so it’s in that way that God prepares us to be useful and minister to His people and to others, to be a help in this world at war.

So maturity is the long result of these tribulations and with maturity, with proven character, Paul writes, comes hope. So we’re back to hope. But that’s not what we would expect. The hope that a person has in verse 2, what we learn from reading the bible would not seem to survive the tribulations that follow. They would seem to crush hope, not confirm and enrich it. But they don’t. They don’t crush it, they produce greater hope because when a person’s faith holds good in suffering, it shows itself to be real and proves that the believer is united to Christ and to all of His promises.

That confirmation and the experience of God’s faithfulness during trials strengthens and increases the hope we have and it increases our desire to enter in that hope. Now I don’t want to be glib about all of this and I think that’s easy to do. This is the text we have, this is the text that I must preach and I think I’m preaching it correctly, but it’s easy to say all of these things and say these things correctly and leave the impression that it’s almost nice to experience trials and tribulations.

They’re not easy. They’re not nice to experience. They crush us. They do. And I know that many of you are going through trials: difficulties in the home of one kind or another, difficulty in a marriage, problems with health, problems with employment, grief, the death of a mother. These things happen. These things are happening in our congregation. I don’t want to be glib. I don’t want to treat it so easily, but Paul is clear. As you receive those trials by faith, God will bless you through them. He will mature you by them and expand your faith and confirm your hope.

So Paul describes a circle. We begin with hope and glory in it and we glory in tribulations because they begin a life-changing process that ends with stronger hope. The hope we have by our knowledge of the promises of God, the promises revealed in

scripture will be reinforced and grounded more deeply in our soul by our experience of faithfulness in trials. The word of God and the experiences of life combined to prepare us for the future. They loosen our affections on the things of this world. They defeat, so to speak. They help destroy the loveliness of the things of this world so that our affections will be loosened from the things of this world and set on the things that last, the things that are eternal, a hope of the glory to come.

That is how we are to be living for the future, for our hope. We live in the present and we are to live helpful and responsible lives in the present. But it's the future hope that gives us the incentive to live that way in the present, that gives us the incentive to be responsible, that constrains wise behavior in the present. The things that we do today in time count for eternity. Now look at the life of Paul, no one understood the future and the hope that he writes about here better than the apostle Paul and no one was more earnest in his life, more diligent in his life. No one lived more earnestly than the apostle Paul did.

He was like Abraham, he was unwavering in his faith and the hope that was promised and he lived in light of it and he redeemed the time and lived responsibly. In verse 5 he reassures us that the hope that we're to be living for, that is the goal of our pilgrimage through this world, that hope is real. It does not disappoint he says. It's not an illusion. In the end it will not prove false. And we know that he says because of the love of God. It has been poured out within our hearts. Now that is the love that God has for us, not the love that we have for God.

If Paul meant that our love for God is the basis of our hope and the reason for our assurance of that hope, then we would have no hope. The foundation would be destroyed, John Murray writes. He's right. It would be destroyed because our love for God is weak, it's mercurial, it's unpredictable and changeable. It grows hot and cold. We're fired up one day to read the bible and memorize scripture and go out and witness and do those things and be a martyr and the next day we're indifferent. Got to watch football. Got to read the newspaper. We got to do this or that or work's too demanding and next thing you know we're drifting off into other things.

We're hot and we're cold, but God, His love for us is unchangeable. It is constant, it is infinite and unconditional. It is the sure foundation and guarantee of the hope that we have. The hope that we have is as certain and as unshakeable and as unchangeable as God's love is. And His love has been poured out within our heart

Paul says. He gives it not in drops but in a flood and it is a constant flood. And the reason we can be sure of that love for us is because of the Holy Spirit who gives it to us and confirms it to us. Every believer in the Jesus Christ has the spirit of God. The moment of faith, your heart was sealed with the spirit. He is there within you. That is an idea that really is beyond comprehension. To think that the reality of your life is that the third person of the Trinity, God Almighty literally, truly lives within you. It's within you.

The third person in the Trinity has sealed your heart. He protects you, He guides you, He blesses you, He brings God's grace to you. That is how we have grace because the spirit of God is the one who brings it to us and one of His ministries in us is to produce in the believer a consciousness of God's blessing toward us, a consciousness that he or she is the object of God's redeeming love. This is the inner witness, the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.

It's very similar to what Paul writes later in 8:16, “The spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” How do we know we're a child of God? Because the spirit of God tells us, not in audible words, but He convinces us of that. Not so much with a feeling, but I think that may be present, but that's a dangerous question that we begin to think, well, I've got to feel a certain way. I've got to feel this joy. Well, we should, that's true. But we don't always do that. It's not the feelings that gives us the certainty, it is a quiet confirmation that the spirit of God simply gives to us. We know, we just know it. We know that having believe we are God's children and we have a real and eternal hope.

That is what the spirit of God does and it's not an unusual spirit. This is not the experience of a few. That's not what Paul is describing. He's not describing some overwhelming experience, some euphoric experience that some Christians do have and that you may have had or you may have. Those things happen, but that's not what Paul is describing here. He is describing the experience of every believer. He applies both of his statements, the Holy Spirit was given to us and the love of God has been poured out within our hearts to the same us. It all applies to us.

God assures every believer in Jesus Christ that he or she, we are His. That He loves us unconditionally, that we have peace with Him, that we have hope that is real and will not disappoint. These are the blessings of justification. We're absolutely secure, now and for all eternity. Not because of us, not because of anything within us,

not because we have such great faith, not because we cling to that hope. It has nothing to do with us and has everything to do with Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross, what Paul describes in 3:21-26, His propitiation, His redemption. He gained us for Himself at the cross, that settled the issue and that is true for every believer in Jesus Christ. He has introduced us into this grace, the position of being completely accepted by God. Nothing can shake that security, not even tribulations. They will come.

And that's why you and I need to be diligent students of the word of God, we need to be preparing ourselves for the day when the storms of life come upon us. They will come, but they will only be used of God to strengthen us in our hope so that we can live confidently in the present, we can live joyfully in the present. We can live usefully for God in the present, every one of us. Now is that true of you? Do you have peace with God and the hope that will not disappoint? Or are you unsure about your future? Are you still at war with God?

If you're trying to live a good life in the hope that by doing things, being an honest businessman or a faithful husband or wife or a good student or just a nice person or if you're living the opposite way. If you are living a completely indifferent life to the things of God, if the things that I've said, the things that Paul teaches here mean nothing to you, you're completely indifferent, what you've set your hope on is that car that you want or that house or that life or that promotion or more money or whatever this world has to offer then you, whether you're seeking to live a life that pleases God by good works and gain His approval or you're doing just the opposite, regardless, you're at war with God.

And you will lose that war. You cannot prevail against the Lord God. But the Lord God is a peacemaker and He offers peace to sinners. But it is peace on His terms. God does not negotiate with men. He requires unconditional surrender. He requires that you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior. But all who do will not be disappointed. So lay down the arms of rebellion, look to Christ, look to Him as savior, believe in Him who died in the place of sinners and be saved. You're forgiven. Enjoy eternal life. May God help you to do that and help all of us to rejoice in what we have, to live lives of appreciation and thanks to God. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your grace. We thank you for this life that you've given us. It's a gift obtained for your people on the cross through the death of your son. That was the price that obtained salvation for us. He redeemed us for our sins. When we were lost, He saved us. So what we have is a gift, what we have is great. We have the glory to come beyond comprehension.

And even in this present life when we have tribulations, we can rejoice in them because they are for our good. We don't understand it oftentimes, but that's the assurance we have and we praise you for that and thank you for that. Thank you for sending your son into the world to die for sinners like us and making us your children. We thank you for all these things in Christ's name. Amen.