

## INTRODUCTION

Today I want to talk about, “A Foretaste of Glory Divine.” Romans, 5:1-5 is really like a breath of fresh air. Many of you know Paul Long. His wife, Teddy, was buried just one week ago. She learned she had cancer last August. She was quite a fighter, but she went downhill pretty fast the last few weeks. Just a few hours before Teddy lost the ability to communicate with her family, they gathered around her bed in the bedroom at their home, and they read Romans 5:1-5. After having read it, it gave Ted the assurance and the confidence that it was okay to go to sleep in the arms of Jesus. It gave to that family the strength and dignity they needed to face the next few hours. They know what a powerful passage of scripture this is. If you are not aware of it, this is one of the greatest passages in all of the word of God.

“Therefore, since we have been [*past tense*] justified through faith, we have [*present tense*] 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 rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

### I. GOD'S PARDON FOR MY SIN

This is a very personal passage of scripture, and if you are listening to me today, and you are a born again believer, I just want to share with you three great blessings God has given to every one of us. First of all, I want you to notice God's pardon for my sin. We read about that in verse 1. “Therefore, since we have been” (past tense) “justified, we have peace with God.” We all have this “sin” problem. That's what he has taken the first four chapters to teach us, that we are all sinners by nature and by choice. But, God in his great love and grace has said, “Listen, I know you are a sinner, but I am willing to pardon, to forgive your sin.”

#### 1. My past – justified!

Notice a couple of things in this verse. My past and your past, if you are a Christian, the word is justified. That is something that has already happened. That phrase, “we have been justified,” speaks of the point in the past, in time and space, where you put your faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. You heard Steve Breed talk about when he was nine years old. That was the point at which he was justified. From that point onward, God looked at him and looked at every sinner who has been saved and said, “You are justified.” You say, “Well, now, that's a Bible word. I still don't completely comprehend it.”

Do you remember back in the dark ages before we had computers? Remember before word processors, we had these old things called typewriters? Kids, you will see them in museums these days. On typewriters you had to justify the margins by counting the spaces. Today, the computers just set the margins and they justify the text automatically, but back then we had to count the spaces to justify the margins. What did that mean? That meant the margins were even, straight. So, when God, who is holy, looks at us who are sinful, and he says, “Okay, you are

straight with me. Your sinfulness and my holiness have reached an agreement.” That’s what the word justified means. It means God looks at you and says, “Hey, you’re not guilty anymore.”

I heard an interesting story about a man who bought a Rolls Royce automobile in England. He ferried it across the English Channel, and he started on a tour of Europe. He drove all around Europe and then drove down into Italy. He was in a little town outside Rome when, of all things in a Rolls Royce, the engine blew! Well, he got on the telephone and called Rolls Royce, and said, “Well, the engine on my car blew. What are you going to do about it?” They said, “Don’t worry. We’ll take care of it.” They put two mechanics on a jet, flew them first class and shipped a brand new Rolls Royce engine to Rome. Those guys went out there and within twenty-four hours had replaced his engine, and he was on his way again. A few weeks after that, he got to thinking, “I wonder if I owe them any money, because I’m not sure about the warranty or anything like that.” So, he wrote a letter to the Rolls Royce Company, and said, “I had this car problem. Do I owe you any money?” He received a very terse reply from Rolls Royce that said, “Dear Sir: Because of the reputation and character of Rolls Royce automobiles, we have no record of your car malfunctioning.” In other words, they said, “It never happened. You don’t owe us a penny. It never happened. Don’t worry about it.”

The amazing thing is when God looks at you and I, sinners, and we have put our faith in Jesus Christ, he looks at us, and do you know what he says? “I have no record of any sin in your life.” Isn’t that good news? Because the Bible says, “He has taken our sins and put them behind his back. He has separated our sin as far as the East is from the West.” He says, “I have forgiven your sins and I remember them no more!” That’s the good news! I have been justified with my past. But, there’s something else.

## **2. My present – peace with God!**

In the present tense, my present, right now, I have peace with God. (that’s why the preposition is important) There is a thing called the peace of God. In Philippians, 4:7, Paul says, “The peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds.” There is this inner tranquility or serenity God can give us. That’s what Jesus was talking about in John, 14 when he said, “Peace I give to you.” But this is not talking about that kind of peace. Some people think you never do have that kind of inner tranquility and serenity this side of the graveyard.

Maybe you heard about the lady who, when her husband died, thinking they had a good deal of money stored up, took the little money she had and invested in a tombstone for her husband. On this really nice tombstone, she had “Rest In Peace” inscribed. When they started looking at his estate, they realized not only did he not leave any money, but he was in debt. He had incurred a lot of gambling debts and made a lot of bad investments. She was actually quite broke. She scrounged up a little more money and she had some more words added to that tombstone. It said, “Rest In Peace” and then she added, “Until I Come.” Some people think you won’t ever have peace until you get into a cemetery. Well, I have good news for you. You can have the peace of God this side of a cemetery when Jesus is in your heart. Having said all of that, this is not referring to that kind of peace. This is talking about something else. Peace with God. Do you want to know what that means? Let me refer you to probably the greatest book ever written on

the topic. It was written by Billy Graham in 1953 and entitled, *Peace with God*. Let me read you a couple of sentences from his book.

“The greatest warfare going on in the world today is between mankind and God. People may not realize that they are at war with God, but if they don’t know Jesus Christ, their Savior, and if they have not surrendered to him as Lord, God considers them to be at war with him.”

My friend, if you have never put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are considered an enemy of God and you are not at peace with God, you are at war with Him.

In church when I was young, about 4- or 5-years-old, I didn’t really listen to the sermon very much. I would sit next to my Mother, and I would look through her Bible because she had one of those old Bibles that had some really neat pictures in it. I would just sit there and go from picture to picture. I can remember to this day the very first picture in her Bible. It was a picture of Adam and Eve being driven out of the Garden of Eden. What an impression that made on my young mind. Here were the gates to Paradise, the Garden of Eden. Behind the gates you saw a bright light signifying the glory of God and you saw two warrior angels, cherubim, with swords in their hands as they were guarding this gate. You could see two figures being cast away from the Garden of Eden, bent in sorrow and shame and sin, Adam and Eve, as they were being driven away from Paradise. That is the biography of the human race. Because of our own sinfulness, we have chosen to walk away from God and in our own sinfulness God declares us to be at war with him. But, God loves us and that’s why he sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross so when Jesus died on the cross, God was reopening the doors of Paradise, and he was saying, “Come on back! Come on back!”

That’s what repentance is. You are going one way away from God, and when you by an act of your will turn and start moving toward God, that’s repentance. Until you do that, you are at war with God, but once you do that, you have peace with God. Isn’t it great to know that not only, past tense, justified; present tense you have peace with God? That’s the pardon for our sins.

## **II. GOD'S PRESENCE FOR MY STRENGTH**

### **1. I have direct access to God**

Notice another blessing: God’s presence for my strength. God’s presence is available to me every day so I can find spiritual and emotional strength to live life. And we see that in verse 2. Look at Romans 5:2 again. “Through whom” here’s the key “we have gained access.” The first thing I want you to notice is that I have direct access to God. You and I have direct access to God if you’re a Christian. You say, “How did that happen?” Look at Ephesians 3:12. “In him” that is Jesus “and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. What I am trying to say is because we are believers we can walk right into the presence of God. The word literally means to be ushered into the presence of royalty. You and I through Jesus Christ can be ushered into the very presence of God.

The sad thing is in the Old Testament time, people did not have direct access to God. Go with me for a minute to the Temple in Jerusalem. There was a small Temple and it was divided into two sections, the Most Holy Place, and then there was a curtain dividing everything else from the Holy of Holies; that was the presence of God. The sad thing is very, very few people could approach God.

As a Gentile in Jerusalem, you could walk up on the Temple Mount, but there was a fence, and you couldn't go any further. Only Jews and Israelites could proceed past that point. You were stopped by that boundary. If you were a Jew or an Israelite, you could go a little bit further. Sorry, ladies that was as far as you could go because then there was the Court of the Women and you couldn't go beyond that point. If you were a man, you could go a little bit further into the Court of the Israelites. However, if you weren't a Priest there was another boundary. You could go no further. Only the Priests could go further. There was the Court of the Priests that surrounded the Temple proper. Now, not even all the Priests could go into the presence of God. Actually, only one Priest, on one day a year, Yom Kippur, could lift that veil and go into the Holy of Holies.

The good news is when Jesus died on the cross, he was saying, "No more boundaries. No more fences." In fact, most of you who know your Bible, know what happens. When Jesus died on the cross that thick veil, that curtain, was ripped in two. It was as if God was saying to all of us, "Hey, you don't need sacrifice. You don't need a system. You don't need a Temple. Through Jesus Christ, you can have direct access to me.

You say, "Well, how sad for those people in the Old Testament." Friend, there are a lot of people today who still haven't caught on to that. There are some people today who think you have to go through a priest to get to God. You don't. You have direct access to God through Jesus Christ, who is our High Priest. Some people think you have to pray through Mary or one of the Saints to have access to God. You don't. Through Jesus Christ you have direct access to God. God in his holiness says, "You approach me and I'll treat you like one of my children." But, it's not based upon who we *are*. It's based upon who we are *with*. We're in Jesus Christ. If a stranger came to your house and came to your door, would you invite them into your home? Would you let them sit down at your table? Would you let them sleep in your home for as long as they wanted? You say, "Well, I don't know about that."

Let me tell you about something that happened in my house a couple of weeks ago. A couple of weeks ago a guy came to my front door whom I never met him before. And, do you know what? I welcomed him into my home. I said, "Come on in." We let him stay in the guest room for as long as he wanted. He sat at our table, and he ate as many meals as he wanted. Not only that, we fed him the best we had. We gave him the run of the house. In fact, we said, "Make yourself at home." I even let him drive my car. You say, "Well, there has to be a little twist to this." Well, there is. Some of you know I have a daughter off at college. She brought this guy home with her. She has been dating him. He's a great guy. Still not good enough for my daughter, you understand, but because he came with her, and because she brought him into our presence, I want you to know even though we had never met him before, we said, "Make yourself at home."

The same is true with the Lord Jesus. Through Jesus, we are ushered into the presence of God. Although we are sinners by nature and by choice because of Jesus, God says, “Make yourself at home. You can approach me with confidence and freedom any time you want to.” That’s a great, great blessing!

## **2. I have future anticipation of glory**

Not only is there strength for the present, but there is strength for the future, because number two, I have future anticipation of glory! Are you still looking at Romans, chapter 5:2? Look at the last part of verse 2. It says, “and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” now, that’s talking about the future. That’s talking about how one day when we die, it’s going to get even better.

A few years ago I was preaching in a jail. I like preaching in jails, because you have a captive audience. They don’t get up and walk out on you there. I was preaching a salvation message about going to heaven. I noticed there was one old guy sitting back in a corner with his arms crossed and a scowl on his face. After I finished he came up to the bars and said, “I want you to know, I don’t believe in all that pie in the sky bye and bye junk!” I said, “Well, what do you believe in?” He said, “I believe in getting everything you can here and now.” So, I said, “Okay, you don’t believe in pie in the sky bye and bye, you believe in pie in the nasty now and now.” He said, “That’s right!” I eyeballed him there, and I said, “Well, it doesn’t look like you are getting much pie right now, buddy.” (You know, you can do that when you have those bars separating you can say a lot of things) He said, “Well, you’re right.” I proceeded to tell him as kindly as I knew how saying, “Listen, in the Christian life you do get the pie in the now and now because Jesus said, “I have come that you might have life and you might have it more abundantly right now” and he also said, “In my father’s house, there are many mansions”, the beautiful thing about the Christian life is you get it now and you get it now. You get your pie and you get to eat it too.” I said, “The most tragic experience of life is to go through life and miss the pie now, and to miss the pie in the sky bye and bye.” Paul was so excited about it; he uses a strong word in verse 2, that word *rejoice*. Trust me, it’s not the typical word for rejoice. It is a word that means to shout for joy. Paul says, “Every time I think about heaven I just shout for joy!

## **III. GOD'S PATTERN FOR MY SUFFERING**

Number three—and this is God’s very, very practical pattern for my suffering. Verses 1 and 2 are doctrinal, but verses 3, 4 and 5 are practical. Paul wrote it because he knew the Christians in Rome were suffering just as there are Christians in East Texas who are suffering going through tough times. Paul was trying to say, “Listen. God has a pattern that you need to understand as it relates to your suffering.”

I admire women and men who can take a piece of fabric, put it down on a table, and then can take a dress pattern and put the pattern down on the fabric and cut out along the dotted lines, and then sew it together, and have a beautiful garment. That’s a miracle to me! I want you to know that I could never do that. What God is saying, “Upon the fabric of human suffering, I have superimposed my Biblical pattern, and if you will understand what I am trying to do, the result will be something beautiful if you just don’t mess it up.”

## 1. The process

There are a couple of things about God’s pattern we need to talk about. First of all, I want you to notice the process you go through. Rejoice! It’s the same word I just said. It means to shout for joy. The sad thing is so many Christians today look miserable. I’m convinced the reason so many Christians look miserable today is because they *are* miserable. You have heard me say many, many times “In life, suffering is inevitable, but misery is optional.” It really is. Suffering is something you don’t have to go looking for Amen! It is something that is going to come looking for you.

In spite of this, the Bible says, Rejoice in and through your suffering. Let’s notice this process. First of all is the word, suffering itself. It all starts with suffering. This word is the word, *thlipsis* in Greek which means the pressing of olives or grapes. It’s an onomatopoeic word which means it sounds like the sound it describes. Listen to this. Can’t you hear grapes or olives being crushed? *Thlipsis*. It means is, that in your life and my life, there are a lot of things that would pressure us, put us under stress, difficulties. By the way, do you really want to know what’s on the inside of you? You watch what comes out when you get pressured, when you get squeezed really tight. That’s what is really there on the inside. The sad thing is, there are a lot of us who are suffering and have suffered, but how many of us are rejoicing in that suffering?

John Steinbeck, one of the greatest American authors, wrote, “East of Eden.” In that book, he describes a woman. When I read this description of one of his characters, I said, “Hey, I know that woman. She’s in our church.” He describes a person who is basically a miserable person. This is what he wrote describing one of his characters.

“She was a tight, hard little woman. Humorless as a chicken, with a dour Presbyterian mind” (We’re going to substitute Baptist there) “Baptist mind and a code of morals that pinned down and beat the brains out of nearly everything that was pleasant in life.”

Do you know someone like that? Don’t look around. But, do you know somebody like that? They almost glory in their misery. They think the more miserable they look, the more spiritual they are. As I have said before, they develop a Baptist, holy look, about half dead and half mad, “I’m so spiritual because I’m miserable!” No, friend. The Bible says, “You’re going to suffer, but just don’t experience misery. Instead, rejoice in it when it happens! Paul says, “Rejoice, in your suffering. You say, “How can I do that?” Well you have to understand the process.

### a. Rejoice! Because suffering produces perseverance

Suffering is not good! But the process is valuable. Under suffering write the word *perseverance*, because that’s what suffering produces according to this passage. Perseverance is that quality that you have that makes you keep on being faithful. You don’t quit, you don’t stop obeying God; you keep on doing the things God has told you do in spite of your suffering. Now, I have to make a real qualification and distinction here, so please don’t miss this. Not all suffering is alike. Some suffering, in life, I call it self-induced, or self-inflicted. You should not rejoice in that suffering.

If you put your finger down on a block of wood, and then chop it off, you're not going to say, "Well, praise the Lord, I'm suffering. No, that's not scriptural, that's sick! There are some people who, by their own rebellion and sinfulness, are suffering the consequences of self-inflicted suffering. This does not apply to you. This applies to the vast majority of you who are suffering because you have been faithful to God, or you are suffering over things over which you have absolutely no control whatsoever. When you are going through something like that, your first response ought to be perseverance, don't let go. Hang in there.

Did you hear about the two frogs? Kids, you will like this little poem:

Two frogs fell in a can of cream  
Or so I've heard it told.  
The sides of the can were shiny and steep  
The cream was deep and cold!

"Oh, what's the use?" Said frog number one.  
"It's fate. There's no help around.  
Goodbye, my friend. Goodbye cruel world.  
And weeping still, he drowned!

But, frog number two was of sterner stuff  
He dog-paddled in surprise  
And, kicking, he wiped his creamy face  
And dried his creamy eyes.

"I'll swim awhile at least," he said  
Or so it has been said.  
"It really wouldn't help the world  
If one more frog were dead."

An hour or two, he kicked and swam  
Not once he stopped to mutter  
But he kicked and he swam, and he swam and he kicked  
'Til he could hop out on top of the butter!

For you "citified" You churn cream, and it makes butter. I like that old frog just kept on kicking, and kept on swimming until the cream turned to butter, and he had a way to get out. I admire people who display perseverance in the midst of suffering, and they keep on being faithful, and keep on being faithful, hang in there, and if you do, God will make a way.

### **b. Rejoice! Because perseverance produces character**

Here's the third step in the process. Suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character. Please remember the whole point of what God is trying to do is develop our character. As I have said so many times, you are probably sick of hearing it: God didn't save you to take

you to heaven. God saved you to conform you to the likeness and the image of his son, Jesus Christ. The only way he can do that in my life, sometimes, is to cut away some things in my life that aren't like Jesus, and that is painful. You go out on the streets of East Texas or anywhere in America and you ask the people, “What do you want out of life?” The number one answer is, “I want to be happy.” You have to remember God is not as concerned about my happiness as he is developing my character. He will use whatever tool and method it takes to develop my character and your character. Suffering is one of the greatest ways to develop character.

When things are going great and everything is happy, and everything is running smooth, your character doesn't develop. You're coasting then! You've heard the little poem that says,

I walked a mile with laughter,  
She chatted all the way  
But I was none the wiser  
For all the things she had to say.

But, I walked a mile with sorrow,  
And not a word said she.  
But, oh, the things I learned  
When sorrow walked with me!”

### **c. Rejoice! Because character produces hope**

It's these times of suffering that God develops our character. If you know that is his pattern, you can rejoice. The final product is hope. Character produces hope. That's the final product God is trying to create in us. Hope is the ability to say, like the apostle Paul did in Romans 8:28, “I know that all things work together for good.” All things are not good. Plenty of bad things happen, but all things work together for good. That's hope. That's the process.

### **2. The product: Receive God's love**

Now, number two not only the process, the product. God is trying to produce something in us and it is the realization of his love. So, we receive or realize God's love. Look at Romans 5:5, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” That phrase “poured out” is spoken of a river that overruns its banks. God wants our hearts to overflow with His love.

The problem is, when it comes to God's love, some of us are so stinking selfish, we want some of it ourselves. “Here's my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord.” We just say, “Fill my little cup, Lord.” What He wants to do is fill our hearts to overflowing until our love splashes out and touches other people. You and I are blessed. God said, “You are pardoned, justified. You can approach me. You can have my presence any day of the week, any time you seek me for strength.” He says, “When you suffer, follow my pattern and it will develop something positive in you.” The great thing about the Christian life is it gets even better!

## **CONCLUSION**



Her name was Martha. She was 77 years old, and she called her pastor to come and see her. He sat in the living room, and Martha said, "Pastor, I talked to the doctor yesterday, and he informed me that there is a new tumor he is unable to treat. He says I probably have only about six more months to live." The pastor said, "Martha, I am so sorry." She said, "Don't be sorry. I've lived a good, long life. More of my friends and family are in heaven than there are down here. But, pastor, I do have a strange request to make. I want you to preach my funeral, pastor, and then, when they lay me out in the casket, I want them to put my old, worn Bible in one arm and in my other hand I want to hold a fork." He said, "A fork?" She said, "That's right, a fork." She went on to say, "This is how I want you to explain it."

I have been to so many church socials and dinners through the years, and you know when you sit there and you eat, and the host or the hostess or the servers come and take away your dishes from the main meal, sometimes they will say, "Just keep your fork." Do you know what that means? That means dessert is on the way. And you know at these church socials, it's not sugar free Jell-O, it's a seven layer cake or cherry pie, or apple pie, or peach cobbler. Anytime, somebody says, "Hold on to your fork," it means the very best is yet to come" She said, "Pastor, at my funeral, when those people see that fork in my hand, I want you to tell them what it means. It means, "She's lived a great life, she's loved Jesus all of her life, and he has blessed her. But, I want you to declare to everybody there at my funeral that fork is there because she believes the best is yet to come!"

A Christian can't lose. Right *now* we have forgiveness of sin, abundant life, and the grace of God, and *then* the glory of God.

## OUTLINE

### I. GOD'S PARDON FOR MY SIN (1)

1. My past – justified!
2. My present – peace with God!

### II. GOD'S PRESENCE FOR MY STRENGTH (2)

I have:

1. Direct access to God

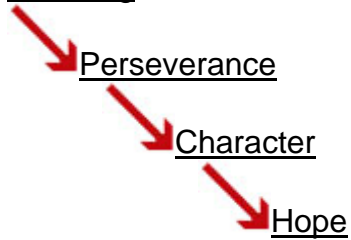
In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. *Ephesians* 3:12

2. Future anticipation of glory

### III. GOD'S PATTERN FOR MY SUFFERING (3-5)

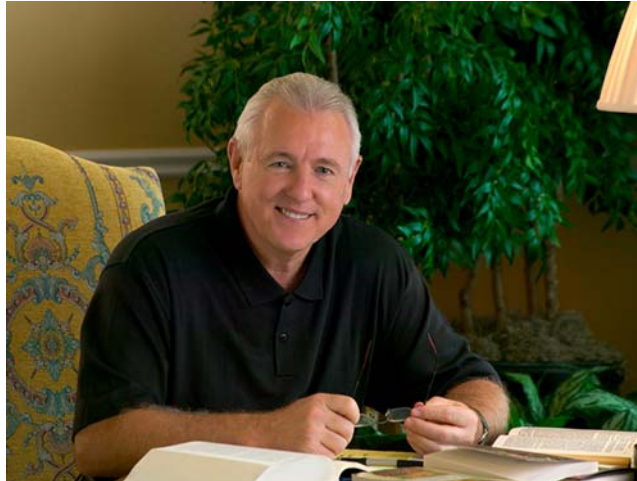
1. The process: Rejoice because:

Suffering



2. The product: Receive God's love

My  overflows!



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes