

Romans 5:1-11

In Islam, the Quran says a lot of nice things about both Jesus and Mary his mother, but absolutely denies the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Surah 4:156-157). Why would that be? Something about the cross makes the world nervous. Even in our Christianized culture we have a “Good Friday”, but it slips by almost unnoticed as people think first about Mardi Gras, then later, eggs and bunnies.

From a biblical perspective the cross is, well, *crucial*. In Romans 5:1-11, Paul gives us ample reason to focus on it and fully understand its meaning. We can summarize it concisely as follows:

We can have hope, regardless of circumstances, by comprehending the cross of Jesus.

- I. Our hope is based upon our awareness of the love of God. 5:1-5
- II. God's love is demonstrated in the cross of Jesus Christ. 5:6-11

- I. Our hope is based upon our awareness of the love of God. 5:1-5

A. Peace with God, the grace of God and the hope of God's glory (5:1-2)

- i. 5:1 *We have peace with God* The whole human race has been at odds with God since the moment of the fall of Adam. Sometimes this reveals itself in open rebellion, but often it's far more subtle. We don't always agree with Him. We worry about what He's thinking and doing. Thoughts of God are not peaceful thoughts. We don't trust Him, and may even feel He's out to get us. We are afraid of God, because our thinking is wrong. Later in Romans we'll read:

Romans 8:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

- Jesus removes the enmity caused by our carnal minds. We now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God is no longer at odds with us.

- ii. 5:2 *We have access.* What does it mean to *have access* to God's grace?

Illustration: In the OT book of Esther, Esther was a Jewish girl who became the Queen of Persia. A plot arose within the the government of King Ahasuerus to kill off all the Jews in the empire. So Mordecai, Esther's cousin, sent her a message asking her to go before the king to tell him of the plot. That was not a simple thing, even for Queen Esther.

Esther 4:11 (NKJV) “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.”

Esther would be taking her life in her hands to come before the king. This is the position we would be in as fallen sinners before the Most High God. His absolute holiness, perfection and power would be too dangerous for us to come near – far more dangerous than it was for Esther to approach the king. But what happened in Esther's case?

Esther 5:2 (NKJV) So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

Esther was spared the wrath of the king, because she found favor in his sight. We, though unholy and unjust in and of ourselves, have found grace or favor in the sight of a just and holy God – because of Jesus. Jesus is a bigger and better king than the king of Persia – and we never have to wonder if He's going to hold out that scepter to us. We are always welcome in His presence. In fact, we now stand in His grace – and that is cause for great rejoicing, cause for hope.

iii. *We rejoice in hope* Hope = desire mixed with expectation.

“Hope is a complex emotion made up of a desire for an object; and an expectation of obtaining it. Where either of these is lacking, there is not hope. (Albert Barnes)

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Our hope is (that is, we both desire and expect) to one day share in the glory of God. That's where we are headed as believers in Jesus Christ. We can confidently rejoice in that expectation, but we're not there yet.

iv. Glory is for later; hope is for now.

- **Thought check Q & A:**

Q Peace, grace, hope. How do we know we have peace with God? Why do we have access to God's grace? Do we really have hope of sharing in God's glory? Look at the end of v. 1 and beginning of v.2.

A We have all this **through our Lord Jesus Christ**. If Jesus is your Lord, then peace, grace and hope are all yours.

Q. What if I don't feel very hopeful? What if my circumstances do not look very hopeful?

A. Then don't trust your feelings or your circumstances. This is very important because of where Paul takes us next. Remember what we said earlier.

We can have hope, regardless of circumstances, by comprehending the cross of Jesus.

B. The connection between tribulation and hope. (5:3-5)

i. 5:3 *tribulation* = a pressing or pressure, literally or figuratively; affliction, trouble, anguish

A pressing or pressure? We might use the word *stress*. Anyone out there under any pressure or stress these days? Of course we do. Let's glory in them.

ii. *perseverance* = cheerful endurance (Strong)

steadfastness, constancy, endurance; in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings (Thayer)

- iii. 5:4 *Character* is the composure, durability or toughness built only by experience. Think of an old battle-hardened soldier compared to the guy just going off to boot camp.
- iv. *Hope* We see now that hope – though certainly belonging to all Christians – is the special personal possession of those who allow God to mold their character through the patient endurance of trials.

Romans 9:21 (NKJV) Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

- Let's assume God wants to mold us into vessels for honor, prepared to share His glory for all eternity. How is He going to accomplish that? Through time and pressure. That's how vessels of honor are made.
- v. 5:5 *Hope does not disappoint.* Remember what we said earlier: Hope = desire mixed with expectation. That expectation includes a confidence based on the inward experience of God's love, poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
- vi. God's love is not only poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it is demonstrated to us by the cross of Jesus Christ.

II. God's love is demonstrated in the cross of Jesus Christ. 5:6-11

A. Who did Christ die for? Those who were without strength, ungodly and sinners (5:6-8)

- i. 5:6 *Without strength* = weak, infirm, feeble This word is also translated “sick”:

Acts 5:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. ¹⁶Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

- ii. *Ungodly* = irreverent, impious. It takes a word that can mean “worship” and makes it a negative. We were “not worshipful” or “non-worshippers”. In other words, Christ didn't die for those who worship Him, but for those who didn't – for those who intentionally treated Him with disrespect.
- iii. 5:7 *righteous, good* Maybe someone would die for them, but that would have to be a truly exceptional case – and that's not us anyway.
- iv. 5:8 *Sinners* That's the third term and sums the others. The awesome thing is that it's not for the righteous, not for the good, that Christ died. He died for sinners – for those who had offended Him. This is love.

1 John 3:16 (NKJV) By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us...

B. The “much more” of reconciliation (5:9-11)

- i. **reconciliation = at-one-ment in KJV** The Greek word means “change” or “exchange.” Between people, the term implies a change in attitude on the part of both individuals, a change from enmity to friendship. Between God and a person, the term implies a change of attitude on the part of both the person and God.

We can easily see why people need to change their attitude toward God, but we might not see that God's attitude changes as well. Reconciliation implies that God declares a person who was formerly His enemy to be righteous before Him. (See Nelson Study Bible)

- ii. 5:10 Add another word to our previous three: “enemies” So that's **without strength, ungodly, sinners and enemies of God.**
- iii. 5:9-10 The point Paul makes through this “much more” idea is this: While we were sinners and enemies, God justified us through Christ's blood. While we were at odds with God He still demonstrated His love. Now Christ is risen and we have been reconciled. We're no longer at odds. We can expect even better treatment than before.
- iv. 5:11 *We rejoice in God* We are no longer afraid of God, hiding from Him, questioning His judgment. A huge change has taken place. I can trust a God who loves me this much. I can rejoice in the fact that I know Him and I expect only the best from His loving, caring hand. I already have this example:

While I was without strength, ungodly, a sinner, and His enemy, God thought it best to go ahead and take the initiative and reconcile me to Himself.

Conclusion:

- Do you see why the the cross of Christ is *crucial* to the Christian faith?
- Christ's power and God's love are paradoxically revealed to us through this cross, this blood, this sacrificial death on our behalf.
- Remember what we said earlier:
We can have hope, regardless of circumstances, by comprehending the cross of Jesus.
- A solid understanding of the cross is especially helpful in our most difficult moments.
 - When we're grieving
 - When we're stressed
 - When we're pushed to our very limits and we can't take it any more.
- It's precisely then that the cross reveals its meaning, because the cross reminds us of His love.

Romans 9:21 (NKJV) Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

- Becoming a vessel for honor takes time and pressure (tribulation), but that pressure is being applied by hands that still bear the scars of where they were once nailed to a cross.