

Grounds of Our Hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 February 2015

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] I want you to open up your copy of the Scriptures to Romans chapter 5.

We began chapter 5 last week. We spent about six months in the first four chapters last year. And now we finally have circled back around to Romans after spending a couple of months outside of Romans looking at other passages of Scripture.

And so I was excited last week to get back in Romans. And this week we're again in chapter 5. And again going to start in verse 1 of chapter 5. But this week going to read all the way down to verse 5. So if you're using one of the Bibles that are in the chairs, it's on page 942.

Otherwise Romans is right after the Gospels and Acts in your New Testament. You guys stand now if you would as we read God's Word. The Apostle Paul writes, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[1 : 16] More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance. And endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We give you thanks for this Word and pray that it would change us this morning, Father. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. You guys take a seat. Amen.

Amen. I want to make a confession to you guys this morning before we start. And that is that I have gained a new addiction lately. It is to an app on my phone.

A quiz app called Quiz Up. I told Aaron about it when he was in the hospital. I'm glad you're back, Aaron. It's good to see you. Y'all don't mess with him. He's taking it easy in the back there.

Good to see Aaron. I told Aaron about it, but I haven't seen Aaron on there yet. I told Tom about it, and I saw Tom pop up on there. I told Mike about it, and now Mike keeps challenging me to quiz games.

[2 : 21] It's addictive. They have every kind of topic you could possibly think of in this quiz app. I mean, you can just pick any topic, and they get very specific. You can do a quiz and challenge somebody on the other side of the world or a friend down the street on anything ranging from, oh, I mean, I don't know, any of your favorite television show.

You can probably find it on there and do a quiz over your television show and see if you're more obsessed with that show than someone else. You can do, I particularly spend most of my time in the New Testament.

Builds my confidence, you know. All right? I mean, not that I have two degrees in that, and I'm playing random people, but that's fun to do. But there's one particular one that drives me crazy. It really does.

And Mike is responsible for this because he challenged me to this. It's a quiz on phobias, on fears. Here's what drives me crazy. All it does is it'll name a phobia, and then you have to answer.

It gives you A, B, C, D, and you have to say what that fear is of. And some of them are, about half of the questions are ridiculously easy. I feel like, why are they asking this question? So one of them the other day was, what is the fear of myths called?

[3 : 26] And one of the choices was mythophobia. I wonder if that's the right answer. It was the right answer, all right? They're just so obvious. But then there are other questions where they ask you about something, something that you...

It's never occurred to me that anybody would be afraid of that. And none of these choices down here even looks like an English word, much less any word that I would connect with the fear that they've just mentioned.

I mean, weird fears. Fear of toenails or whatever. I mean, just strange, weird stuff, all right? But it strikes me that we are a people who are encountering fears on a daily basis.

I mean, we have all of these names for specific fears because somebody somewhere in the world has that specific fear. And it's amazing the breadth of fears that we experience in the world.

I don't know if any of you have ever met anyone who was agoraphobic. Agoraphobia is the fear of going outside of your home, going out into the world. And it seems, it's always struck me as an irrational type of fear.

[4 : 30] But people who have this fear, they will not go outside of their homes, not for any reason whatsoever, because they're afraid that something might happen to them outside the home. They may also be germophobes, and so they're afraid that they might catch some sort of disease if they go outside their home.

Or they may be afraid that they're going to get hit by a car. Whatever it is, they're afraid that something's going to happen to them if they venture outside their front door. But the reality is, strange things can happen to you inside your home as well.

You're not necessarily safe there. There can be a house fire. You know, you can get electrocuted when you go to plug something in. You know, somebody could break in. I mean, you're not, we don't have absolute security anywhere that we go in the world.

And yet, we like to kind of put up walls around ourselves, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively, to try to protect us from all the various dangers, because we want to feel secure.

We want to feel as if we are safe, and our future is made more certain. That's why, November 25, 2011, just two and a half months after 9-11, it was formed an entirely new cabinet position, an entirely new department within the government, the Department of Homeland Security.

[5 : 40] It didn't exist before that. Now, it's just a daily part of our lives. We hear updates and reports from the Department of Homeland Security. It was formed with the purpose of protecting us, protecting the citizens of the United States from terrorist attacks.

But then if you go onto their website today, they do all sorts of stuff. They're dealing with immigration. They're dealing with border control. They're dealing with, I mean, just all sorts of things. And sometimes you sit and you look at the list of things.

I was reading this week the list of things that the Department of Homeland Security does. And for almost everything that they do, we already had an existing governmental agency or department that was doing that.

So we have border patrol. We already have that, okay? We have FEMA. And yet it's listed in their charter that a part of the Homeland Security's charter is to respond to natural disasters here in our own homeland.

We have FEMA that does that. For almost everything, we already had a government agency taking care of that. So why create it? Because in the months following 9-11, we were afraid.

[6 : 43] We wanted safety. We wanted security. And if that meant creating a new governmental bureaucracy that would at least give us some sense of peace, then that's what we would do.

No doubt they've done a lot of good over the last several years. No doubt. But I think the reason that we created it in the first place was fear. Was a desire to be safe, secure, and sound.

And I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. We all want that. We want that not only for our physical lives here in this world, but we want to know that we are safe and secure for eternity.

We want to have a sense that goes beyond just maybe what I believe is true, maybe Christianity will turn out to be right and things will work out for me in the end.

We want more than that. We want to be able to know. We want to be able to feel. We want to be able to sense that we have assurance of the things that we believe.

[7 : 40] We want to be assured that these things are right and true. And over and over, the New Testament gives us reasons or grounds for assurance.

And here I think in these verses, I think one of the things that the Apostle Paul is doing, particularly in verses 4 and 5, but throughout these first five verses of Romans 5, is he's giving us grounds upon which to build a sense of eternal spiritual security.

What we call assurance of salvation. He's helping us to have assurance. Now, I don't want you to confuse assurance of salvation with salvation itself.

That's a mistake that many people make. And many people will tell you, well, if you're not sure, if you don't feel it every day, every waking moment, if you don't have a sense of assurance, then you don't have salvation itself.

But we'll see that that's not exactly the case. Our level of confidence, our degrees of assurance, they ebb and flow, and they waver and they rise throughout our Christian walk.

[8 : 50] And we need good, sound, biblical teaching and pointers so that we will know how to establish a firm foundation for assurance.

And that's what Paul does for us in this passage. In fact, really, if you were to do a survey of the New Testament just on this particular topic, you could boil down almost everything that's said in the New Testament about assurance of salvation to three things.

And I prefer to liken these three things to three legs on a stool. If the stool itself is your assurance, your sense of knowing that what you believe is right and true and that your belief about those things is real and genuine so that you feel, really believe that you're going to be safe and secure for eternity, if that's the stool, then these three grounds of assurance are like the three legs on the stool.

Remove any one of them and your stool will fall over. You will lack assurance if you remove any one of these three things. That's not to say that you'll lose your salvation.

No, they're two distinct things. Being saved and being assured of your salvation are two distinct things. But lacking one of these legs to help ground you, you will falter, you will waver, you will doubt, and you will grow fearful and afraid.

[10 : 13] And in this passage, Paul highlights all three of those things. It's not often that we get in one passage all three grounds of assurance that the New Testament gives to us. But here, we see all three.

We saw one of them actually last week. We can describe these things. This may be helpful for you to remember what they are. I'm going to describe them as having to do with our head. That is, our theology, what we believe.

Our hands, that is, assurance flows out of our lives and what we do in our lives. And then lastly, our heart, actually a sense and a feeling of safety and security. So you have head, hands, and heart.

And I want to show you those three things here in this text this morning. So first of all, we have the head. That is, we have our theology. We have actually the content of what we believe, assuring us, telling us that our eternal security, that our safety, that our salvation rests not in our own hands, but in Christ's.

That Christ has accomplished all that is necessary. And if we believe in Him, and if we trust in His work on our behalf, on the cross, we are then set in a right relationship with God.

[11 : 20] Paul uses the term justification over and over throughout Romans to describe this status that we have before God. That we are now, through faith in Jesus, God counts us to be righteous in His sight.

We are not righteous in and of ourselves. We're not right. We don't possess enough goodness within ourselves to pass through God's judgment. But we get to receive, through faith, Christ's righteousness as a gift.

And that's the first ground of our assurance. Notice what Paul says in verse 1. We talked about this last week. Therefore, since we have been justified, that is, since we have trusted in Jesus, and He has borne the penalty for our sins, and we have now received the reward for His righteous life, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have peace. Peace. It's not, it's not, this is not a subjective peace that we saw last week. This is not, this is not a feeling of peacefulness. This is an ending of the hostility that existed between us and God.

God says that while we were enemies, God reconciled us through His Son. This is the cessation of hostilities, the end of the war that existed between us and God before we trusted in Christ.

[12 : 43] We now have a real objective peace that exists between us and God. We can know that. Paul says we have it, and because we have it, it leads on.

It says that we've obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. There's the future sense of security.

The glory of God held out for us. participation in His glory, being swept up into the joy of His presence for all of eternity. That's the thing we long for.

That's the safety. That's the security. Because the only other alternative is the experience of His everlasting wrath in hell. We want reasons to rejoice in the hope of glory.

And I said last week that the hope that's mentioned here is not a wishful kind of hope. It's not the kind of hope when we say, well, I hope things turn out well for them.

[13 : 45] It's not that kind of hope. The hope that the Apostle Paul is talking about here is a sure, steady, firm hope. It's grounded. It's certain. It is, in many ways, it's parallel to faith.

It's being certain of what we know and believe. Paul says we have the hope of glory. We know we have it. Why do we know?

Because we have peace with God through Jesus who has taken the weight of our sins upon Himself and He gives to us His righteousness. That's the theological leg.

You have to understand that. That's the basic gospel message. That Christ died for your sins and by faith in Him, your sins can be dealt with and you can have His righteousness.

That's the gospel message. There's nothing complicated about that. Just believe. Don't work. Don't earn. Just believe in Christ and all that He has done for you and you'll be counted righteous in God's sight.

[14 : 42] The simple gospel message. And that's not a message that's simply intended for non-Christians. That's not something that we just need to proclaim to people who don't know Jesus yet. The reason why I keep coming back to that is not only because Paul keeps coming back to that, but because I know that you and I need to hear that every day.

We need to be reminded continually of the basis of our salvation. The gospel is not just for lost people. The gospel is for God's people who need to be reminded on a regular basis what is the primary grounds upon which they can have any hope at all.

And so we've established that. Not only last week, but as we spent those six months looking at Paul's description of the gospel, first of our need for the gospel, and then of how the gospel was actually accomplished, how the good news is made available through Christ.

We've spent months trying to understand that and understand what Paul tells us about that. And so we have that leg of assurance in place. In fact, if you were to make a comparison, I would say that if we were talking about a table, say one of those tables that doesn't have four legs, but just has like a single pedestal underneath it, so that there's one large sort of leg holding the table up, all right, then I would say that the gospel is that leg, when it comes to our salvation.

That the good news of Jesus Christ, faith in Jesus and all that He's done for us, is the only grounds for our salvation. But when we switch the metaphor to assurance of that salvation, now the gospel becomes one of three legs on the stool.

[16 : 34] Because you can believe these things are true. You can affirm all the truths of Romans 1-4, you can affirm all the truths of the Bible, and yet you can still have in your mind nagging doubts.

Maybe it's not a doubt about the truthfulness of the gospel. Maybe it's a nagging doubt about the efficacy of your own faith. Is your faith real? Is your faith genuine?

And you may doubt on a daily basis whether or not your faith really connects you to the righteousness that's made available through Christ. Maybe you're just not sure. Maybe you just feel the weight of doubt, not of God's gospel, but of your faith.

That may be, in fact, the case for you. Or it may be that you affirm all the truths that we've seen in Romans and throughout the Bible.

You believe those things. You have a strong, firm faith. But there are times when you just can't feel it.

[17 : 41] You know it intellectually. It's true. You know that. You believe it. You're certain of it. You've been convinced of it. You don't have any doubts about it. But there are days when you just don't feel safe and secure.

You just, you don't feel that your eternity is intact. And Paul is going to address both of those causes of a lack of assurance.

Doubting your own faith and then the lack of a sense or a feeling of being safe and secure, of having the hope of glory. I want you to take a look. Both of them are found in verses 4 and 5.

3 and 4. I want you to take a look at verse 3. Paul has said in verse 2 that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. But now he says, more than that, more than just rejoicing in the future hope of glory, but we are rejoicing in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope.

This is a strange thing for Paul to say. More than just rejoicing in the future hope that we have, we are right now rejoicing in our sufferings.

[19 : 00] He does not say we are rejoicing in spite of our sufferings. He does not say that we are rejoicing in the midst of our sufferings. He says more than that.

That is often true. There are many times where we go through stages of life where we are suffering and despite those sufferings, we just cling to hope and we rejoice in that hope.

But Paul says more than that right here. He says that our rejoicing or our boasting is actually in our sufferings. So that our sufferings themselves are a cause of our rejoicing.

What sense does that make? I understand when someone says you can rejoice in the midst of your suffering because there's maybe future hope or maybe there are good things scattered around all the bad things.

So in the midst of your suffering you can rejoice. But what a strange thing to be told that precisely because of your suffering you rejoice. Whether it's cancer or whether it's marital problems or whether it's problems with your kids.

[20 : 11] Whatever the case may be, the whole breadth of sufferings is included here. This is not merely just persecution. This is sufferings in general. Whatever bad things befall you in life, Paul says, we ought to rejoice in those bad things.

Not despite them, but in them. And he gives us a reason because suffering produces something. Suffering does something within us and inside of us.

Notice the chain of events. We rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character. And character produces hope.

So we're back to hope. We're back to that sure, steady, firm, steadfast hope. Because that's what we want. We want assurance. We want to feel safe and secure. We want to get back to hope.

We want to strengthen it. And how do we get there? Well, one of the ways that we get there, one of the means by which we strengthen our assurance of our salvation is to rejoice in our sufferings because of what sufferings are doing.

[21 : 15] Sufferings result in endurance. That's what they create. They enable you. They give you a kind of strength of character that you did not have before.

They help you to endure. I have never in my life been a long distance runner. Can't do it. I mean, I can't do it.

I know some of you are saying, but if you would just really try and really commit yourself and you would just get out there every day and run every day, a little bit further every day, then you could become a long distance runner.

Can't do it. All right? Not because I'm lazy, but because I've tried it. I'm telling you, I have tried and tried. Try starting off with half a mile, bump it up to a mile, bump it up to a mile and a half, bump it up to two miles, two and a half, three miles.

Not one time did it become easier. Not one time did it become more pleasurable. And never once did my speed increase. What's going on? I've never been able to figure that out.

[22 : 14] I have never been able through my running to produce great endurance for myself. I don't know why. I just never have been able to do that. But Paul says here that our suffering always results in that.

Suffering helps us, enables us, if we are trusting in Christ in the midst of it, it enables us to endure. But that's not the end goal, right?

If I were to tell you, and if I were to stop here, if Paul were to stop here, and I were to say to you, listen, the reason that you suffer in life is so that you can get better at enduring suffering.

Hmm. You would think, really? That's it? Well, then let's just do away with the suffering altogether, because I'd rather not get better at it if that's what requires me to suffer in the first place.

There must be more than that, and there is more. Notice, it produces endurance, and then endurance produces character. Now, this is an interesting word. You're going to get all sorts of different translations of this in your various English versions.

[23 : 18] Because it really means testedness or provenness. In fact, sometimes it's translated as a test or a trial. Sometimes it's translated as proven.

It's the idea that you now have a more solid ground to stand upon. That you have endured the test, and now the result of that is that you are proven to be what you claim to be.

That's the point of it. So that if you suffer, and then you endure through that suffering, at the end of it, you do not have merely increased ability to endure, but you've passed the test.

You now have a proven character. You have a tested character. And that's what our sufferings aim for. Why? Because so often we doubt not the gospel message.

We doubt our ability to believe in the gospel message. So often we are beset by fears that our faith is not the right kind of faith.

[24 : 24] Or that our faith is just not strong enough. That our faith is not the kind of faith that will get me saved by the message of the gospel.

And sometimes that's true. Paul tells us that we ought to test ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Sometimes it is true that your faith that you claim is nothing more than head knowledge.

And that will not do you any good on judgment day. But how can you know? How can you know whether or not your faith is real and genuine?

Paul says, suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces proven or tested character. You know because you are still standing in the faith after the suffering has passed.

You know then in that moment my faith is real. My faith is genuine. And because of that, Paul says, we ought to rejoice in our sufferings.

[25 : 29] Because they accomplish something. They do something for us in this fallen world. They help us to become more grounded. They help us to have a more sure and steady and firm belief.

That the hope of glory is actually our hope of glory. But then he moves on beyond that. He says that suffering produces endurance.

Endurance produces character. Character produces hope. And then he says that this hope that we have. This hope does not put us to shame.

That's the last enemy of assurance. To be ashamed. Or some translations say that the hope will not disappoint us.

In other words, it will not prove to have been in vain. It will not prove to have been pointless. Worthless even. Because there will be times.

[26 : 33] There will be days. When you are certain. You understand. And you agree with the gospel message. Yes, I get it. I know why Jesus died. I understand that he paid the price for my sins.

I understand what it means to trust in him. And have his righteousness. I understand that. You will know the doctrine. You will know the theology. You've got it down. No problem. And you have endured through various trials.

And you have not abandoned the faith. And so you'll know. I'm actually committed to this. This is real for me. I'm actually committed to this. My faith is not a fly by the night kind of thing. It's not a temporary thing.

It's not a phase that I was going through. I really believe this stuff. And yet. You will still have that nagging doubt. In your heart.

But what if at the end. Despite all these things that I have learned. And that I know from my Bible. What if at the end.

[27 : 31] Despite all my endurance through various trials. What if at the end. I am put to shame. Because. It doesn't turn out.

It doesn't work out. It's not true. Paul says. In regards to one of the truths of the gospel. The resurrection of Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians. That if Christ has not been raised.

Then we are of all men the most to be pitied. He says that if the gospel message is not true. If Christ has not really been raised from the dead. Then your faith is in vain. It's all for nothing.

And there can always creep in. Even when you have a good firm grasp on your theology. Even when you endure through trials. Even in those moments. There can always creep in this. This feeling. Of doubt.

What if it doesn't pan out? What if it's not. True. We need more than knowledge. We need more than the evidence. Of proven character.

[28 : 35] In our own lives. We need more than that. Sometimes to be really honest. We need to feel it. I know that we are a church that really. That really.

Centers upon. The word. We talk a lot about theology. We talk a lot about scripture. We talk a lot about discipling people. And teaching people the truth.

We do that. And I know my preaching style. We go verse by verse. And there are some times when you're thinking. Oh man. That was a little bit too much information for me. I get that. I know. We're kind of information oriented.

Because I'm information oriented. Alright. Maybe someday when I kill over. You'll get somebody who's better at balancing things. But that's me. I'm information oriented. And I throw a lot of information from the Bible at you every week.

I know that. I'm not unaware of that. Okay. And because of that though. Sometimes. We can neglect the heart. We can be so focused on the head.

[29 : 30] Or even upon the hands. And seeing that our faith in what we have in our head is genuine. We can be so focused upon those things. That we miss the heart.

And God is greatly concerned about the heart. He told the Israelites that he wouldn't accept their sacrifices. Because they didn't come from their hearts.

I'm sure that many of their sacrifices were performed according to the code in Leviticus. I'm sure that the Israelites were well aware of their own past as a nation.

And they had endured many trials coming out of slavery. And then being in the land. And having to fight various battles. And capture cities. And having to fight off all sorts of threats. I'm sure that they could look back at their history as a nation and as individuals.

And know that they had endured a lot. I'm certain of that. And yet those sacrifices God says I reject. Why? Because their hearts were not right. God is greatly concerned about our hearts.

[30 : 28] And He knows that our emotions are a core component of who we are. And if they're not addressed in some way. We won't have an enduring lasting assurance of our salvation.

It will waver. It will wane. It will at times dissipate altogether. Because we don't have a sense and a feeling that we're safe and secure in Jesus.

And so He says here that God has not left it to our own devices to whip up our emotions. To try to create an emotional atmosphere so that we can feel better all the time.

No. He says that God Himself addresses the heart. Notice what He says. That hope does not put us to shame. It will not prove to be disappointing in the end.

Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Notice what He says. He's not simply saying because we have the Holy Spirit.

[31 : 31] That's not merely what He's saying. You have to pay close attention to the wording here. He does not say because the Holy Spirit has been poured out into our hearts. He says that in other places. But that's not the language that He uses here.

That's not at all what He's talking about. Here He has in mind a specific work that the Holy Spirit does within all those who belong to Christ. And it is the work of pouring God's love into our hearts.

This is emotional. This is addressing that aspect of who you are so that there can be an experience, an emotional, heartfelt experience of the presence of God in your life.

This is not listening for voices. This is not looking for some revelation from God outside of Scripture. This is simply feeling, sensing, knowing that He's real, that His truth is real.

He pours His love into our hearts. We feel it. We know it. This is genuine. God cares about the heart. And so He makes known not only to our minds.

[32 : 38] He confirms not only through the work of our hands. But He makes known and He confirms the reality of His love in our hearts. So that we will not worry that the hope that we have will put us to shame someday.

The hope that we have is the greatest hope in all the world. Romans chapter 8 says that the entire creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God.

The entire creation is waiting with bated breath for what we will experience in eternity. It's great. It's beyond description.

But it's in the future. And we live now. We live here. And there will be times when your hope for the future feels distant and vague and feels as if it's fading.

And Paul says when that feeling comes, He pours out His love through the Spirit who has been given to us. You need to know the theology.

[33 : 57] You need to know the truth. You need to be grounded in the truth. If you don't know the truth, you can't have assurance of salvation because you can't have salvation. If you don't know the gospel message and believe the gospel message, you can't be sure of anything for eternity because it's the only means.

It's the only way by which you can be saved. Romans chapter 10, Paul talks about his Jewish kinsmen. He says his heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they might be saved.

He assumes that they're not saved. And then he says because they have a zeal for God, so they have the emotion down, but not in accordance with the truth.

There's no assurance apart from the truth. There's no grounds for salvation or assurance of salvation apart from the truth. And so you need the truth, and you need suffering to come into your life.

You need God, by His grace, to put trials into your life so that you can have a proven character that comes out of those trials. And you need to sense it.

[35 : 04] You need to feel it. You need to know it. You need to experience the love of God poured out into your heart. You see, my prayer for us as a church is that we would not merely be a church that proclaims the truth, but we would be a church that lives the truth and feels the truth.

Let's pray.