

“This Changes Everything” //

Romans 5:1–11 // *Romans*

#10

FYI: Pre-Sermon: Parent Commissioning is happening right before sermon

3 things real quick before we get started

- Monday marks the beginning of **21 Days of Prayer** for us as a church leading up to Easter. We're kicking off day one by fasting and praying as a church.
 - You can find all of the prayer prompts and the fasting guide on our website and social media channels.
- **Easter inviter cards** - pick up a stack and invite your One (and everyone else's One, too. As you know, people are uniquely open to invitations on Easter, so go ahead and invite them.) **Thursday service**
- **Unplanned movie**... story of Abby Johnson. Abortion thrives by keeping us desensitized to the inhumanity of it all.

Introduction

Romans 5...

I love seeing our families commissioned here--family ministry is one of the ministries we take most seriously because we know that partnering with you to raise a generation of disciple-making-disciples is **unquestionably *the*** most strategic thing we can do to advance the kingdom of God.

And speaking of that, one of the things I've learned as a parent of teenagers now is that middle and high school students have a **special**

jargon they use, particularly over texts, and **if you want to know what's going on** in their lives you have to at least be familiar with it. (You **shouldn't use** most of these things--my kids get offended when I do. They are like, Dad...)

So, here's your crash course list of essential insider teen text terminology. We'll start basic

- **GIF** (How to pronounce?) (graphic interface format): This is where you put some image that adds color to your words. For example, this is what Veronica sent me on Tuesday when I told her about the place I was taking her for our next date night: **[Shaq Shimmy GIF]**
- **LOL** (Get this one right... Anyone remember the story of the mom who thought this meant, "Lots of love" and so sent a text to her college-aged daughter, "Your grandmother died, LOL." (True story.)
- **TTYL**
- **IDFK** [I don't even know],
- **BAE** [before anyone else],
- **Dime** [a 10 on a scale of 1-10],
- **TOPE** [blend of 'totally' and 'dope'—and dope means 'seriously great'] This sermon is Tope.
- **SMH**
- **ICYMI**
- **IMHO**
- **IMHBAO**
- This is one I use a lot at work: **PEBKAC**
- And a personal favorite, one I see this one my teenage daughter sends to me on an almost daily basis: **JDITBFACCAF, P, FS**. (J.D. is the best father a child could ask for, period, full stop.)¹

So, there, you have it, ladies and gentlemen: insider teen text terminology.

¹ Thanks to Tony Merida for idea here. See "Resurrection. Justification. Celebration.," preached at Imago Dei Church on April 16, 2017.

What Paul has been doing for 4 chapters in Romans is teaching you “gospel insider” terminology, and now, in chapter 5, he’s going to start showing you what a difference these things make in how you see life--particularly how you see suffering.

- For 4 chapters he’s given you the **essentials of justification by faith**--
- if we were giving out certificates, you could get a Gospel 101 one.
- And now, he’s going to show you **how these things transform** the way you interpret affliction.
- How well you **actually understand** the gospel--how much you actually understand and believe it--is demonstrated by the attitude you carry through suffering.

Martin Luther said that justification by faith is the doctrine on which the church rises or falls. Well, it is also the doctrine on which your spiritual life rises or falls.

- Every significant advancement in your spiritual life goes back to growing in your understanding of the implications of what God has done for you in the gospel.
 - **It’s like we say:** The gospel is not just the way we begin...
 - The gospel is **like a well**... not by widening the circumference of your knowledge, but deeper into
- In this chapter Paul goes **from argumentation for the gospel to celebration of the gospel**. Luther calls these verses the **happiest text** in Romans. They are a **miniature version of Romans 8**.
- You’ll see the word “rejoice” used repeatedly.²
- Their main focus is how the gospel transforms how you see suffering.

5 “Therefore STOP* (since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.)

*I’ve heard it said that Romans is built on **four “therefores.”**

- We saw the **first one at the end of chapter 3**, after Paul finishes laying out his case against the law, he says, ‘Therefore we

conclude that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law--it’s going to take something else to save us.”

- We’ll see **another huge one in 8:1 when he says**, “*There is therefore no condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus, which means we have access to all the privileges of the Christian life that **sons and daughters of God** should have.”*
- There’s another key one **In 12:1**, “*I beseech you therefore brothers by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice--IOW, now that you understand what God has given you in your salvation, you should give yourself without restriction to him.*”
- Here, at the **beginning of chapter 5**, he says, “**THEREFORE:** because we’ve been declared righteous by faith, we look at life and suffering differently.”

Master the ‘therefores’ and you’ll master the message in Romans.

since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **The peace with God he refers to** here is not a subjective feeling that floods our hearts with serene feelings of calm; it’s an objective reality Christ’s death has created for us.
- Feelings are important, of course, but feelings come and go; it’s the reality of our standing with God is what is important.
- I point this out because **a lot of people think that the primary purpose of religion** is to give you therapeutic feelings of peace, and **so they’ll say things like**, “*Well, I’m glad Christianity gives you that, but I get those feelings from yoga or meditation or taking long walks or eating Kale or drinking bourbon or rubbing essential oils on my lymph nodes” (or whatever).*³
- But more important than **feelings of peace is whether you actually have actual peace with God**.
 - **Right?** Which would you **rather have happen?** To go to the doctor with a headache, have him do some tests, and him say,

² Vv. 2, 3, 11.

³ Tony Merida, “Resurrection. Justification. Celebration.” preached at Imago Dei Church on April 16, 2017.

“You’re fine, this headache is nothing serious,” then go feeling fine and have him say, “You have a brain tumor.”

- **You should base your feelings on what you know to be true** in reality:
 - I feel **peace in my heart** because I know I have peace with God, not visa versa.
 - It is amazing to me **how often people come up to me with these reversed:** “Pastor, I just don’t feel like God loves me or I don’t feel like he is close.” And they think that means something is wrong.
 - I ask, “**Why are you looking at your feelings for assurance** instead of God’s word?”
 - Fact/faith/feeling
 - Believe your way into your feelings...
 - Who cares about our feelings? Isn’t the Word of God more reliable?
- There’s a ‘**Gospel Prayer**’ I have encouraged you to pray every day to remind you of peace with God: (4 phrases, I’ve given it to you on a bookmark, up on summitchurch.com.) The first phrase is designed to remind you of the absolute peace you now have with God. It says, “**In Christ, there is nothing I could do that would make you love me more, and nothing I have done that makes you love me less.**”

This is what Paul is saying. So, he continues: ² **We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace** in which we stand,

- Think of the word “grace” here as ‘**favor,**’ because Paul’s focus at this point is less on getting “mercy for our sins” and more about the favored status we have with God.
 - We exist in a favored status... It’s like a child feels with a parent they know loves them.
- **J.I. Packer** says you can tell how much someone really understands Christianity by finding out how much they think about, and cherish, the thought of being God’s child: “**If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers**

and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all.”⁴

- Ask yourself: How do you feel when you go to God?
 - Do you feel like he generally disapproves of you--like you need to negotiate with him?
 - Or maybe that he’s not really listening, or not that concerned with what is going on?
 - Or do you come with the awareness that he is a tender Father who couldn’t love you any more than he does

You say, “Well, **my dad was never like this** and it’s hard for me to see God that way.” Yes, **I get that, but it’s like I always say,** “Evaluate your earthly father through the lens of your heavenly one, not your heavenly one...” God is the Father for whom you were **always yearning...**

- A Father who is more in touch with you than a mother is with the newborn nursing at her breast.
- A Father who says (Ps 139) that he literally journals all your days in a book and who, even if you made your bed in hell, he’d come for you. (Teenage daughters)
- You have a Father who this very weekend (Zeph 3:17) rejoices over you with singing: Which I’ve always thought was a little hokey? I love my kids but...)
- You have a God who, after you had spurned him and run the other way, despising him, stood at heaven’s gate waiting every day for you to come back home, and when he saw you coming back he ran to you.

We should pray with that knowledge... **and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**

- As we saw in chapter 4 through the life of Abraham, **hope is the assurance that God will keep all his promises.**
- It is a **hope rooted, Paul will explain in a minute, in the resurrection.**

⁴ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 224. See also Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 75–76.

- **The resurrection shows me, Paul explains, that one day God is going to restore all that is broken down here--**
 - And at the end of the day, if nothing else works out down here, I've got that assurance
 - I love how **D.A. Carson** says it: **"I'm not suffering from anything that a good resurrection can't fix."**
 - **And that's good news, Amen? Eventually we all just get disappointed.** People die.
 - Our bodies are just getting older... I participated in the CrossFit open. I didn't do that awesome. It's not getting better. When I was young I used to measure my health based on how much I could lift or how many pull-ups I could do or how fast I could run. Now it's by...
 - **I know I'm being a little silly, but the point is, it all fades...** but ultimately our hope is resurrection. On a serious note...
 - Sometimes God doesn't take the cancer away; sometimes he doesn't stop the effects of aging; sometimes the marriage doesn't get reconciled; sometimes the one who sins against you isn't brought to justice
 - **But that doesn't mean we're without hope.** Because you're not suffering from anything a resurrection can't fix.
 - **And this makes me rejoice:**
 - Rejoicing, of course, is different than happiness, though many Christians get these confused.
 - Happiness, I've told you, is **contingent on what you want to happen happening.** It's in the word.
 - **Joy is different.** It has nothing to do with your happenings.
 - **Many Christians think the Christian life** is supposed to always happy, happy and if you're not something's wrong.
 - A song we used to sing: **"Now I am happy all the day"**
 - I remember the **first time reading the book of Job** and thinking, The **Psalms** aren't like that, they're not all catchy, peppy, positive-encouraging tunes/"I don't think **Job went through life all happy--like a room without a roof/ Jesus** didn't seem to bounce through life in a go-lucky, don't worry by happy way-- "He was a man, Scripture tells you, familiar with sorrows and acquainted with grief!"
 - But Jesus was **still someone who said**, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." This is a **joy that comes from knowing that what you have with God is better** than what you are missing in life and what he's promised you in his word is more secure than what you can guarantee on your own.
- ³ And not only that, but we (even) also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance,
- **Rejoice in afflictions?** What does this mean?
 - Is Paul some **kind of masochist**, where you rejoice in pain for pain's sake because it shows people how righteous or tough he is?
 - No, this is **rejoicing in affliction because you know that the affliction**, no matter how great, is **producing something in you of greater value** than a pain-free life.
 - **Listen: Christians aren't stoics--A stoic is someone who is just unmoved by pain.** Detached.
 - **That's Buddhism, not Christianity.** Buddhism teaches you to not feel pain by detaching yourself from the world and not really loving anything. But **Christianity pushes you into the world** to experience it, love it, and feel its pain more deeply.
 - **Think about Job**, who, after he lost his health, his family and his livelihood, **ripped his clothes off, shaved his head, fell to the ground and screamed at God.** **"...yet in all these things, Job sinned not." (Job 1:22).**
 - **Many Christians, if they saw Job doing this, would say**, "Well, Job needs a faith recharge. You need to pray more. You obviously love this world too much. You need to let go and let God." But Job *sinned not!*
 - **Don't go through life like a Buddhist.** Feel the pain, even rage at God sometimes...
 - **But trust God because you know even in that**, God is up to something ultimately good, and some of that is **in you.** **...we know that affliction produces endurance,**
 - **Endurance is the ability to keep going when you are experiencing no other earthly benefit from your faith!**

- **It's a test: Will you keep going** when nothing is working out? **Is God enough?**
- **Campus pastor Peter Park:** "Back in 2010, I had just come on the pastoral team at the Summit and I prayed something absolutely foolish. I prayed that God would teach me to walk closer to him by showing me what it meant to suffer well.

In many ways, I wish I had never prayed that prayer. And I would never tell someone else to do that. Because the next year was the hardest year of my life. A close friend died of leukemia. My wife and I lost our daughter. For months, we were in the hospital more often than we were in our own home.

I hated that season. And it took me years to even talk about it. But God walked with me in that time. And I learned what Paul says here, that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. It's the most beautiful though most painful lesson I've ever learned."

I think here of the words of,

- **Corrie Ten Boom** (Nazi concentration camp survivor): "I never really knew that God was all I needed until he was literally all I had."
- **Robert Smith, Jr.** "When faith is stripped to the bone – no marrow, no tendons, no muscles, no fat, no gristle – and all our props and crutches are gone, our faith in God that He is good and is still on the throne is the only thing that will keep you going."

Affliction produces that. It produces things in you that you can learn no other way. Luther said that three things were necessary for understanding Scripture: Prayer, Meditation, and Suffering.

- "I credit the devil, the pope and all my other persecutors with my deep knowledge of the word. Through the devil's raging they have turned me into a fairly good preacher, driving me into the gospel to depths I never would have reached without their afflictions." **Martin Luther**

Suffering in the believer's life is **like the cold that triggers your heater to come on**. You have a set point--**first marriage fight**. When the temperature in your house drops, your heater cuts on and all this wonderful warm air starts pouring out of the vents. The **cold temperature didn't make the warm air**, of course, your heater does that, but the cold temperature caused the heater to kick in.

That's how your faith works. Suffering makes your faith kick on and pours new experiences of trust and confidence and even joy in God in the cold of suffering. And the colder the temperature gets, the hotter the furnace gets.

4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

- "proven character" means character that has gone through the furnace of affliction and had the impurities burned away.
 - Peter said: **1 Peter 1:7: "When you suffer, your faith-- more precious than gold-- is being refined so that it will result in praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus Christ.**
 - (In those days they'd purify gold by heating it up and everything that was not gold would burn away) That's what happens.
 - **God has given me so much--great marriage, family, health, kids...** But how much is my joy and satisfaction depends on those things? The **furnace of affliction** tests and purifies that.
- **In suffering God may be trying to prune out some bad habit**
 - Shepherd who breaks the legs of the lamb
 - *Before I was afflicted I went astray...*
- He may just be **trying to free you from dependence on an idol**. He strips out some good thing even though there is nothing wrong with it to show you that he is sufficient. (Can't know he's all you need...)
- It may be that he is **simply allowing you to experience** how sufficient he is. I've told you before about the ancient Japanese practice of **kintsugi** (actually, I've never told you the name), but *kintsugi* is Japanese for "golden repair." *The flaw adds value, because the flaw has become a unique aspect of the object's*

history, which adds to its beauty. **Suffering allows God to infuse the gold of his presence into the broken seams of your life.**

That process produces **hope**. And ⁵This hope (hope: the confidence that God will keep all his promises is working all things together for good and that one day he will restore all things in the resurrection, and that in the meantime he will never leave you nor forsake you) **will not disappoint us,**

- Listen: **Every other hope will disappoint!**
 - Some of you are **hopeful because you are just optimists:** Optimism is the assumption that tomorrow will be better just because it's tomorrow. "The sun will come out, tomorrow!" But we have no guarantee.
 - Some of you are **hopeful because you think that whatever doesn't kill you just makes you stronger.** (Just finished a book called *Can't Hurt Me...*) But **some things really damage you and you never fully recover.** Emotional wounds. And one day, your body will just stop and you die. At some point you're not going to overcome.
 - **Some of you seek hope by medicating** through drugs&alcohol/materialism/sexual pleasure. That always ends badly. When it's unhappiness that is driving you to those things they turn into **toxic, destructive poisons** in your soul, because your soul was not designed to feed on them.

Paul says, **"I have a better hope than any of these things!"** One that does not disappoint!" **because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

- This is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Romans, and he is the installment of God's love in our hearts.

His main role is to remind you of God's presence with you.

- **I've described it to you like the father walking along with his son...**
- Sometimes overwhelming; sometimes subtle
- **Mostly, he directs you back to the logic of the cross:** ⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the

ungodly. ⁷For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die.

Here's Paul's logic: **Sometimes, it's rare, but sometimes, a heroic person** sacrifices himself for someone they love. A heroic soldier saving his buddy. A mother giving her life for her child.

⁸ But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- God laying his life down for us is not like me laying down my life for my kids. I was his enemy! (He uses **that very word** in vs. 10.)
 - That means his laying down his life for me would be **like me laying down my life for a terrorist** that murdered one of my kids.
 - **Imagine if a terrorist murdered one of my children** and was being sentenced to life in prison and I showed up at the trial and offered to take his place and give him all my fortune so that he could go home to his children and start over on life.
- **You say, "Who would do that?"** God did. He did that to make us his sons and daughters.

⁹ How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

- "Saved by his life". **If his blood secured my forgiveness,** then his life guarantees that what God started he'll complete
 - His life proves that I have someone always pleading my case before the Father who will never let me go
 - Someone using his sovereign power to make all things work together for good
 - And someone who one day will resurrect me like he has been resurrected, wipe away every tear, make every sad thing come untrue, and heal me complete.
- *Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea; a great High Priest whose name is love, who ever lives and pleads*

for me. My name is written on his hand; my name is written on his heart! I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart...

The cross of Jesus proves his love for me, that he will never leave me;
The **resurrection proves his power**, that he will finish the job.

It means, I don't know what God is doing in suffering. People ask me, "What does it mean?" **I know what it can't mean.**

- It can't mean that God has forgotten you. The **cross shows you** he hasn't forgotten you.
- It **can't mean that God is no longer involved**--resurrection shows you that God will complete what he started.

You won't always know what God is doing in your suffering. I've heard it said that at any given point God is doing about 10K things in your suffering and you are aware of about 3 of them. But **the cross and resurrection assure you** he is indeed doing something.

And that means the mark of those who believe the gospel is JOY:

Tim Keller: Your belief in the gospel is measured by your ability to have joy in suffering.

MUSIC

But let me tell you, this joy is not something that comes naturally. That's why Paul talks about it as a learning process. **You have to choose along the way to rejoice.**

- See vs. 3 Paul says, "*We rejoice... because we know...*" (vs. 3) Rejoicing comes from **reminding** yourself of something.

It's amazing **how many times in Scripture we are commanded** to worship. Not just if we feel like it.

- At least 40x in the Psalms we are commanded to raise our hands in worship
- **Scripture is replete with commands to sing and shout**

We're **commanded to do these things whether we feel** it or not because **worship is a choice to rejoice, by faith**, in a reality that God declares to be true, in defiance of your feelings.

Many of you, **when you come in here, are thinking about how you feel. Do I feel like worshipping?**

Worshipping is not a reflection of how you feel; it's a reflection of what you know to be true. It's a declaration of what God is worthy of.

Many people feel like they shouldn't worship if they don't feel it... so when we come in here you look into your heart and say, "How do I feel?" And if you feel good then you worship.

- Worship **doesn't begin by looking in here** (heart) at how you feel but up there at what God has promised.

Worship is not a reflection of how you feel; it's a declaration of how worthy God is.

I don't care how you feel. I care what God is worthy of. And he's worthy of praise whether you feel like it or not.

And here's what happens: **as you declare it, you begin to feel it.** And sometimes even the **posture of your body will actually guide your heart**, which is **why I think we have all these commands** to raise our hands and shout in worship.

- Sometimes when I kneel in prayer, I feel submissive.
- When I raise my hands in surrender, I feel surrendered.
- When I open them, I feel needy.

It's **not that I feel these things and then reflect that with my posture.** It's that I do these things with my hands as a statement of what I know to be true and then my heart begins to feel it.

Worship is a declaration of faith not a depiction of your feelings. It's a defiant declaration that 'I am not how I feel. My life is not what circumstances may make it look it is.'

- When you are walking through a deep season of suffering, it is very easy to allow that suffering to define you, to become your identity.
 - "I'm a kid without a dad."
 - "I'm terminally ill."
 - Divorcee
 - "I'm just a victim."
- In those moments, **worship is a declaration** that while suffering may be a part of your story, it's not your whole story or the end of your story.
- **Worship re-centers your identity** on who you are in Christ and declares, defiantly the victory you have in him.

So, **let's stand and let's worship / rejoice** as a declaration of what we know to be true in defiance of how we may feel... let's declare not what we feel but what we believe God is worthy of.

Transition to Worship