

## The Benefits of Justification – Part 5

By David Harrell

Romans 5:1-11

And one of the ways we bring glory to our great God is by humbling ourselves before the preaching of his Word. So will you take your Bibles this morning and turn to Romans chapter five as we embark upon the fifth in a series on the benefits of our justification? Let me read the passages that we will be looking at here this morning.

Romans chapter five beginning in verse one.

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.<sup>1</sup>

Dear friends, the benefits of our salvation are absolutely staggering. If you were to ask the average Christian, “What is the greatest benefit of your faith in Christ?” you will quickly discover that most people will answer, “Well, my sins have been forgiven and I have the promise of eternal life.”

And, certainly that is true. That is a cause for great rejoicing. But then if you were to ask, “Well, what else? What else is exciting about your faith in Christ?” You will begin to see people in most cases shuffle their feet a little bit and kind of scratch their head and think, “Well, let me think about that. Can you give me a hint?”

And then if I were to ask, “Well, why don’t you just list a few benefits of your justification?” their answer would typically be, “What is justification?”

Isn’t that sad? I hope that will not be your reply especially after the many hours that we have spent trying to teach this glorious doctrine.

But then we would need to say to that individual, “Well, my friend, justification is that judicial act of God by which he declares the sinner righteous and treats him as such.” It is the reversal of God’s attitude towards the sinner because the sinner is now united to Christ, the sinner is now clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He now possesses this imputed righteousness. He is no longer condemned by the law. He has been forever acquitted, a substitute has borne his guilt.”

Now solely on the basis of a believer’s union with the Lord Jesus Christ, not at all on the basis of any merit of his own, God sees that person as perfected forever in his dear Son.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 5:1-5.

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So, having said that, tell me. What benefits do we possess because of our justification, because of this supernatural declaration?

Well, my friends, this is precisely what the Holy Spirit wants every believer to understand. And this is the main theme of this section in Scripture and Paul's great epistle to the Romans. Don't you know that this would have brought enormous joy to those early saints there in Rome?

Again, we think there were probably a couple of churches there in Rome and they would have been sitting around some kind of portico, some kind of in the shade of the trees and the covers around them and they would have heard this marvelous letter read to them.

And here in the first 11 verses of chapter five he reveals at least nine benefits of our justification, eight of which we experience and enjoy right now and one which we will experience and enjoy when we die.

But as we have learned—and this is important for you to remember—there is a direct relationship between what we know and do based upon this doctrine and what we will enjoy as a result of it. For example, a pauper can have a million dollars in the bank, but if he doesn't know it and he never uses it, he will never enjoy the benefits of it. Certainly it is my passion as well as my responsibility to do all that I can to help you understand your justification and help you learn to live consistently with these great truths so that you can enjoy it and, thus, give great glory to God who has made it all possible by his grace alone.

I hope that you will be able to answer my hypothetical situation by saying, “Oh, yes, thank you for asking about the blessings of my salvation. Yes, certainly my sins have been forgiven and I have the hope of eternal life, but then, oh, when I think of my justification... How much time do you have? Let me begin by saying, first of all, according to Romans chapter five and verse one, I have peace with God.”

The text says, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

You see, God's wrath upon me is forever over. It has been satisfied completely in Christ to whom I have now been united. Whereas once I was his enemy, now I am his adopted child. Once I was condemned, now I am acquitted.

But it is more. I also have access to God. In verse two we read, “...through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the guilt and shame of my sin has been permanently removed, past, present and future. No longer exposed to the penalty of the law, God sees me in his beloved Son and I am therefore righteous in his eyes.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:1.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:2.

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Ah, but there is more yet. I have a permanent standing before God. In verse two we also read that “...we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.”<sup>4</sup>

In other words, having been declared righteous by the only sovereign judge, I am forever anchored in the Gibraltar of free grace.

Oh, but I am so excited. There is more yet. As you can tell, I have this jubilant hope of glory, verse two.

It says that, “...we exult in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>5</sup>

In other words, as I ponder my immovable standing in this grace which is the basis of my confident hope, I am literally consumed with sheer joy knowing that one day I will experience unrestricted personal fellowship with the triune God. Moreover, I will be personally transformed into the glory of Christ.

Oh, in light of such confidence and jubilation, fifthly, I have joy even in the midst of tribulation.

In verse three we read, “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.”<sup>6</sup>

In other words, my friend, I exult not merely in spite of my trials, but because of them, on account of them, because God has ultimately ordained them for my good and for his glory.

You see, I seldom know what God is up to when trials come into my life. And he certainly owes me no explanation. And if you were to give it to me, I couldn't even begin to comprehend it. But I know that God is accomplishing some great work in my life, even in my suffering. He is up to my good. He is completing the work that he began in me. He is producing in me patient endurance through suffering and trials.

And, of course, this leads to a sixth benefit. This proves my salvation, verse four.

We read, “...that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, prove character.”<sup>7</sup>

This is what my God is up to in my heart, in my life. He is producing in me by the power of his Spirit a light that will remain steadfast even in the face of great anguish, even in the face of great tribulation.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:3.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 5:3-4.

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Why? So that I can manifest genuine saving faith to a lost and dying world and also so that I can experience the assurance of my faith.

Well, dear Christian, I pray that these will be your convictions. So if I ever ask you, tell me, what are some of the joys of your salvation, you will be able to say these very things.

Ah, but, dear friend, there is more. As we study this text we see there is a crescendo of glorious blessing. It is as though the apostle is taking us even higher onto this mount of exhilarating joy. And this next blessing is mysterious and yet it is marvelous. And I am referring to number seven, the hope that we have through a subjective awareness of the love of God.

Now, let's get a running start as we examine the text. Go back to the end of verse three. There we read tribulation brings about perseverance and then he goes on to say, "and perseverance proven character; and proven character hope."<sup>8</sup> There it is.

But notice how he goes on to elaborate on this hope. He says, "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."<sup>9</sup>

This is an astounding statement. And I wish to explain it to you this morning by looking at three things. First we are going to examine the purpose of hope. In other words, what is the great function of this divine blessing of our justification in our life? And we are going to, secondly, look at the power of hope. That is, what is the great engine of hope that drives this, that sustains it in our life? And then, finally, we are going to look at the poison to hope. What can rob us of the joys of hope and render us disheartened and discouraged and depressed and defeated, afraid, useless in service and so forth?

Now, as we examine this we must, once again, be reminded of the context in which Paul speaks of these things. You see, from the very beginning of chapter five he has been attempting to prove to us how our salvation is eternally secure because of the works of justification.

In fact, these benefits of justification thoroughly refute that destructive error that some will teach that a person can be justified and then, because of sin, be unjustified and lose their salvation. Frankly, that is a cruel attack upon the grace of God and his power to save. And I would also humbly add that anyone who argues that a man can lose his salvation simply does not understand the doctrine of justification.

Moreover, Paul here is underscoring the work of the triune godhead in our salvation. As we study this, we see that we have peace with God the Father. It is through our Lord Jesus Christ the Son. And we experience his love through the Holy Spirit who was given

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 5:5.

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to us. And here in verse five he emphasizes the Spirit's work to give us absolute assurance that God's work of grace cannot be forfeited.

Whenever I think about that, I think, "My, if I could lose my salvation I certainly would and I would have no hope, because in myself I am absolutely incapable of maintaining a sufficient amount of righteousness to preserve what God originally granted to me by his grace."

How righteous would I have to be? Does anybody have the list? How many rules would I have to obey? How could I even measure it, especially given the fact that most of my sin is completely obscured by my flesh. I can't even see it. I see just the tip of the iceberg.

Beloved, we can do no more to preserve our salvation than we did to gain it. It is all of grace. The same God that redeemed us by his grace, secures us forever by that same grace.

Now, hang on, because this is really exciting and I hope that somehow in my feeble words I can help you see this. You see, we know these things objectively as we read the Word of God. We understand them intellectually, but God wants something more for us. He not only wants us to know these truths and, by faith, believe them and accept them, but he wants us to feel them. He wants us to experience this eternally and internally and subjectively.

I know intellectually and by countless experiences that my dear Nancy loves me, but I can be on the other side of the world in the middle of Africa or in Siberia, she is nowhere around and I can feel that love as sure as if she were in my arms and I were looking into her eyes. How does that happen?

Beloved, even more so the love of God, he wants us to experience that love. And this is something that we can enjoy, a subjective awareness of the permanence, of the grace that has been granted to us where we can literally feel his love deep within ourself. And this occurs by an amazing inner working of the Holy Spirit that is described here in verse five.

And so the context here is the work of the Spirit to produce within us the assurance of salvation.

Now notice carefully what the Spirit says pertaining, first, to, number one, the purpose of hope. And here the apostle expresses this by revealing the opposite.

He says in verse five:

"Hope does not disappoint."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 5:5.

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You may recall the old King James says, “Hope maketh not ashamed.”<sup>11</sup>

Well, what is he saying here? Well, first it is important for you to know that in the original language he uses what we call the definite article, the word “the” in front of the word “hope.” So, in other words, he is talking about the hope, a specific hope, not just any hope. And this is very important because we all know that many things that we hope for don’t come true. They leave us disappointed.

Some of you have hoped for a wonderful marriage and you have been disappointed. Some have hoped for a successful career, a bountiful retirement and those hopes have been dashed. Some hope for good health. Some hope for children to grow up to walk with Christ. But you have been brought to great sorrow and shame because of the way they conduct themselves. So most hope disappoints. It can cause us to hang our head in shame and discouragement. And, hopefully, it would also cause us to run to the Word to understand how to deal with these things biblically so that we can enjoy all that God has for us to enjoy even in the midst of sorrow.

Multiple times every week I speak with people whose hopes have been dashed. They weep in great sorrow. But here the apostle speaks of another kind of hope. You see, this isn’t just any kind of hope. This is the hope. This is a special, a unique, one of kind hope. It was the one first mentioned in verse two.

“Hope of the glory of God.”<sup>12</sup>

When we will one day enjoy an unrestricted personal fellowship with the triune God and we will be personally transformed into the glory of Christ. My friends, this is the hope that is strengthened and refined through trials that will never put us to shame, that will never bring us to disappointment.

So, indeed, this is the purpose of hope.

Peter speaks of it in 1 Peter 1:3 as a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”<sup>13</sup> and the writer of Hebrews says in chapter six verse 19:

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which enters the presence behind the veil.”<sup>14</sup>

And in Titus two the apostle Paul speaks of the blessed hope in verse 13, the one that every saint looks for and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the hope that is the helmet of salvation in 1 Thessalonians five and verse eight, that helmet that protects us from the double edged broad sword of doubt and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 5:2.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 1:3.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 6:19.

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discouragement. This is the hope, according to 1 Peter 3:15 of which we are always to be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is within us.

I would ask you. Do people ask you about the hope that they see in you? If not, there is something wrong.

So what is the purpose of this hope? It is to protect us from disappointment and shame and doubt, to encourage us in the midst of sorrow and certainly, therefore, to give us assurance of the justification that we endure.

The apostle Paul endured enormous amounts of suffering at the hands of evil men both inside the Church as well as outside the Church. In fact, it is estimated that about 25 percent of his missionary life he spent in prison.

We know that in the last months of his life he languished in the miseries of a Roman dungeon. Let me tell you about them for a moment. They were notorious for being exceedingly cool places. They were overcrowded. They were cold. They were damp and they were dark. The stench is described by others as something that is unimaginable. There were no toilets. Basically it was like sitting in a slimy septic tank. The men and he women would be thrown in together. They would be put in chains. The chains would either be around the wrists or around the ankles or many times around the neck and many times you would be shackled to other prisoners. And like all prisoners, Paul would have been stripped naked before he went into the dungeon and then he would have been flogged. His wounds would have been severe. They would have not been treated. He would then put his garments back on him. They would be blood stained and then he would have to sit in this painful condition. Sleep was almost impossible. Food and water were scarce and often prisoners had to depend upon people outside the prison to somehow give them something to eat and to drink.

We learn as we read historical accounts that suicide and rape were rampant in these dungeons.

Now the apostle Paul was facing imminent death. Virtually all of his close friends had abandoned him for fear of persecution. And in 2 Timothy we read how Paul passes the mantle of ministry on to a young man named Timothy. And it is interesting that as we study Timothy we see that he was a man that was prone to fear. He was prone to discouragement and depression. And with that context, here is what the apostle Paul writes him from this place. We read about it in 2 Timothy one and verse six.

He says to him:

Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,

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or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.<sup>15</sup>

Then he goes on to say this in verse 12.

“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know...”<sup>16</sup>

The term there literally means I am able to perceive with my senses. I can see it. I can behold it. I can feel it. I can perceive it.

“I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”<sup>17</sup>

Dear friend, do you know whom you believe? Is that as real to you as the person standing next to you?

He is saying to Timothy, “Timothy, you must not forget. We have a hope. We have the blessed hope that will never disappoint. So don’t cower in fear. Don’t succumb to discouragement and doubt. Don’t be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Don’t be ashamed of me the Lord’s prisoner, because God is in all of this. He is working things in my life and in your life that we can’t even imagine. It is ultimately for our good and for his glory.”

As you read the history of the Church, especially the testimonies of martyrs you quickly realize that even in the face of the most hideous forms of torture and death they were never ashamed. They were never disappointed with the God they served. In fact, the very opposite is true.

If you read the accounts you will quickly discover that they literally gloried in their suffering. How could this happen? It is because of the marvelous benefits of their justification, that by the power of the living God they possess the hope, that blessed hope given to them that would never disappoint.

But Paul goes on to explain something in connection to this hope that is utterly amazing. You see, again, God wants us not only to just know these benefits of our justification intellectually, but, as I said earlier, he wants us to have an abiding, unshakable awareness that is deep within the core of our innermost soul. And, frankly, here I find myself at a loss of words to be able to somehow describe the indescribable. But those of you who have experienced it will know quickly what I am trying to say.

So having first expressed the purpose of hope, that is to protect us against disappointment, give us assurance of our faith, he reveals to us, secondly, this great engine of hope, the power of hope, this engine that drives this magnificent reality.

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6-8.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Timothy 1:12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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Before we look at it closely, let me ask you. What would empower a man to have such joy and such hope in a Roman dungeon? What would give Steven such great assurance of salvation that even while he was being stoned he would call upon the Lord and say, “Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit”?

To give you another example, how is it that a man could lose four precious children in a terrible tragedy at sea and then while traveling aboard ship to the place where his children had been drowned, suddenly be overwhelmed by the promises of God and write these words?

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,  
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

How could this happen?

My friends, the answer is right before us in verse five.

Again, it is because of our justification the hope that does not disappoint. Now catch this. “...because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”<sup>18</sup>

You see, herein is the power of hope. It is a hope that is fueled by the indwelling Spirit who produces in us a conscious awareness of the love of God, a love that we can actually feel pulsating through the veins of our spiritual heart, love that makes certain all the promises that God has given us including the promise that one day a man would be reunited with his children in glory.

What an amazing benefit of justification.

Well, let’s look more closely at verse five. He says, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”<sup>19</sup>

Now, first, understand that he is not referring here to our love for God, but for God’s love for us. This is what he is speaking of. And the fuel that powers this hope that does not disappoint, this Spirit empowered, internal, conscious, subjective awareness of the love of God is, indeed, the Holy Spirit of God.

And notice he says this has been poured out within our hearts. In the original the concept of poured out speaks of a gushing forth, not a trickling, not a trifling amount. It speaks of that which is abundant, that which is lavished upon us, something that is an extravagant torrent, a flood and in this case an outpouring of the love of God within our hearts. What

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 5:5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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a joy to know that God is not stingy. He wants us to experience deep within our souls this super abundant reality of his love for us that we might never be disappointed, that we might never lack assurance.

I might add that healing is really the companion to faith. We know that Christ is the object of our faith. Works is always the proof of our faith. But I fear many times in our circles that we tend to disregard the emotional, the subjective experience of things especially in this case, the love of God, the peace of God, the presence of God. And certainly we must be careful because there are many places that dwell primarily on emotion. But even though that error exists we might... we must be careful not to somehow think that emotion is not part of the reality of our faith.

So he wants to empower this hope so that we can experience, we can feel his presence in the expression of his love and therefore give us assurance of our salvation.

He says it has been poured out within our hearts. In other words, the awareness of this wonderful love of God is something that permeates our hearts. It has become the dominating essence of our innermost being. We are empowered by the Spirit of God to fully perceive the reality of it.

You see, again, God wants us to not only intellectually understand what is ours in Christ and to believe it by faith, but he wants us to feel it. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, some will say, “Well, what if I have not yet received the Holy Spirit?”

Well, the answer is quite simple. If you have not received the Holy Spirit, you do not belong to Christ. You have not been justified. Scripture is clear on this. I will give you but one watershed passage in Romans eight verse nine the apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear.

He says, “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”<sup>20</sup>

That is not hard to understand.

If I could digress for a moment, dear friends, guard yourself against the false teaching that is prevalent especially in the charismatic circles that would have us to believe that there is such a thing as a Spirit baptism, that there is some second work of grace that a believer must earnestly seek in order to achieve some higher level of spirituality or to receive some miraculous ability like the speaking of tongues or whatever.

I would humbly say that these are superstitions that have no basis in Scripture. Biblically, as we study these things we learn very quickly that every believer is baptized

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:9.

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by Christ with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Nowhere in Scripture is a believer instructed to somehow seek a so-called Spirit baptism.

So if you know Christ you have the Spirit within you. And this work is occurring within you. What an astonishing truth. Think about that. The Spirit of God dwells within us.

Paul speaks of this in many passages. For example in Colossians one and verse 27 he speaks of this glorious mystery. He says it is, “Christ in you the hope of glory.”<sup>21</sup>

In other words, the living Christ, the Messiah would not merely come to earth, but he would actually live inside of every believer.

So we come back to verse five and we see that Paul is saying that the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Jesus spoke of this in John 14 and verse 17.

He says, “The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.”<sup>22</sup>

Likewise in John 15 you will recall Jesus promised that he would send the helper, come from the Father which is, namely, the Spirit of truth who would testify of him.

Scripture speaks of so many works of the Holy Spirit. As we study the Word of God we see that it is the Spirit who creates life, gives life. He is the supernatural and sovereign agent of regeneration. He is the one that causes us to be born again. He appoints and commissions ministers. He directs them where and what to preach. Scripture teaches that it is the Holy Spirit that convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. We read that it is the Spirit of God that reproves and comforts and helps us in our weaknesses. It is he that teaches and guides and sanctifies and testifies of Christ and helps us glory in Christ. He is the one that empowers us to Christian service. He transforms us into the image of Christ in this glorious process of sanctification. Scripture even teaches that it is the Holy Spirit that seals believers for the day of redemption and it goes on and on from there.

But, dear friends, will you look and will you rejoice at yet this great work that we have before us? He is the supernatural agent that causes the love of God to be poured out within our hearts. Have we not experienced this in our life? Those times when we experience some profound sense of his presence, those times especially in the midst of some great difficulty when there suddenly comes rushing over us an undeniable sense of the love of God and the peace of God and the power of God and the presence of God, those times when there is a great profusion of grace that brings us to tears, that peace that surpasses all comprehension, those times when we experience his grace to be able to bear up under some great load of sorrow, that all sufficient grace, that strength that helps us in

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<sup>21</sup> Colossians 1:27.

<sup>22</sup> John 14:17.

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the midst of our weakness and suddenly even as we lay prostrate on the floor in tears, we experience a measure of strength that is indescribable.

Paul further describes this in chapter eight and verse 14. He says this:

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"<sup>23</sup>

And he goes on to say this.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.<sup>24</sup>

My, what a marvelous assurance we have. Again, think about it. Not only do we possess an objective peace with God because the war is over, but we also experience a subjective peace with him.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”<sup>25</sup>

Now you must be careful. This is not speaking of some mystical voice that keeps on saying, “God loves you” or something to that effect. But it is, rather, those profound experiences of his presence. Sometimes it may be a staggering awareness of the glory of God in creation. Sometimes it might be in a time in your life when suddenly for reasons God can only explain, you are overwhelmed by some great lyric that we have sung or some passage of Scripture that sweeps over your soul and absolutely drives you to tears, those times when you can suddenly look upon yourself and you can realize that there are actually some fruits of the Spirit growing on this vine and I have had nothing to do with it, really. This is such a work of grace. Those times when we, for whatever reason, remember the countless times that God has demonstrated his love to us and God suddenly pulls them up on the screen of our minds and we see it and we are forced to praise, fall on our knees. Those times when we are overwhelmed by a passion to know him more fully, to serve him more faithfully.

I remember times in my life as a pastor when the sorrow and the ridicule and the abuse was so severe that the only thing that would bring me joy would be those times when God in his mercy, by the power of his Spirit would cause me to suddenly, vividly remember that period of time in which he called me to be a pastor. And then I would be like the apostle Paul in terms of what he said to Timothy. It is as though the Lord was saying to me what Paul said to timothy.

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<sup>23</sup> Romans 8:14-15.

<sup>24</sup> Romans 8:16-17.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 8:14.

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“Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you...”<sup>26</sup>

“I have not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and love and discipline.”

Now where does this come from? Where does this come from? It comes from the indwelling Spirit of God. And, my friends, this is something that an unbeliever will never experience, because the Spirit does not dwell within them and they have no hope. They have not been justified. This is something that we sense in the core of our being, way beyond some intellectual apprehension. This is the glorious gift of the love of God that has been poured out in our hearts.

In 1 John four beginning in verse 12 we read this.

No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

And then verse 15 he goes on to say:

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment.<sup>28</sup>

What a marvelous reality. What a glorious promise.

I recently read of a virtually unknown young English minister. He was 36 years old when the scenario that I am about to disclose to you occurred. His name was Richard Roberts. He lived in the 1800s. And his final days on earth are a remarkable testimony of this reality. He was dying with what they called consumption which, I believe, is really the old word for tuberculosis. Here is what he wrote.

Quote, “Frequently, all around me [?] thought me about to expire. My cough was dreadful. So were the pains I felt in my chest and side. And, above all, the languor which oppressed me for a while seemed almost overwhelming. But while I was thus sinking, I felt more of the consolations and supports of religion than I have ever experienced before. Oh, with what strong and assured confidence I was enabled to look up to my Redeemer and how gladly would I have resigned my soul into his hands. What glorious manifestations of his love and mercy did he make to my soul. And how did I rejoice to believe that in a few days more I should be with him in glory eternal. But for the sake of my dear wife and friends, I was willing to live and saw it my duty to do all proper,

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6.

<sup>27</sup> 1 John 4:12-13.

<sup>28</sup> 1 John 4:15-17.

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through all proper means to promote my recovery, which, however, I and every one else, I believe, conceived to be impossible without a miracle. But for my own sake I had a desire to be with Christ. Thus I laid in sweet suspense, as it were, between earth and heaven. And, indeed, so I have remained in general ever since.”

And then as his condition continued to deteriorate he was only able to write on a slate, no longer able to speak and here is his last quotation.

Quote, “Since my last attack three weeks ago, the Lord has been near and has manifested his love to my soul in an uncommon degree. I have been deeply humbled under a sense of my unworthiness and past unfaithfulness. But I have felt myself firmly fixed upon the rock of ages and have been enabled to anticipate my departure from the body with unspeakable delight. One thing has much occupied my mind, namely, the great proneness I have ever felt to rest short of all the fullness of God. Often it seemed within my grasp. Often has my soul seemed to take possession of it, but never did I enjoy such a constant sense of it, all of the great salvation of God, however, I never gave up the hope of possessing it fully and I trust that I shall now obtain my heart’s desire.”

And, finally, a friend that was with him in those last hours wrote this.

Quote, “In the course of this day he experienced an ecstasy of heavenly joy. His eyes were bathed in tears and he uttered words of praise, consolation and triumph. It appeared as if he was transported into paradise. It was evident that he experienced a foretaste of heaven,” end quote.

And just before he died he whispered, quote, “Oh, I am happy in my God in his love,” end quote.

What an astonishing doctrine this is, dear friends, that the Holy Spirit dwells within us to accomplish such a work of grace. To think that God redeems that he might inhabit us. This is what caused Peter to rejoice even in the face of his own crucifixion and say in 1 Peter 1:8.

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.<sup>29</sup>

But what of that Christian who knows little of these things? Maybe this is you. You claim Christ but when trials come your way you cower in fear and you become discouraged and you know nothing of what I speak.

May I close these last few minutes by speaking to you about the poison to hope? In a word it is because of sin that grieves the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>29</sup> 1 Peter 1:8-9.

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In Ephesians chapter four and verse 30 Paul says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”<sup>30</sup>

And if you read that text in its context, you will discover that Paul describes a variety of sins that can do this, things like a failure to maintain a sweet communion with God, a fellowship with others, a failure to build others up with your speech, being consumed with selfish anger, not being diligent in resolving conflicts in your life, being unforgiving.

You see, the point is when we hold to sin what we end up doing is grieving the Holy Spirit, and, thus, we poison the well of hope.

In 1 Thessalonians five and verse 19 Paul says, “Do not quench the Spirit.”<sup>31</sup>

The context there is a failure to maintain things such as a habit of prayer, of being thankful, of receiving the Word of God with joy and being discerning about things that are not from God and so on. You see, failure to do those kinds of things quenches the spirit. In other words, it suppresses the power of the Spirit in your life.

Instead, in Ephesians 5:15 and in Galatians 5:16 and 25 we are told to be careful how we walk which is a metaphor for how we progress through our life. We are to walk in step with the Spirit, not participate in the deeds of the flesh.

Sadly, I see some of you that I love so dearly and I notice that you are cold towards spiritual things. Your life is what we might call stagnant. You are not growing. It seems as though you are not really manifesting nor enjoying the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control, as a result of walking by the Spirit. Some of you have little appetite for the Word of God. And when you hear it you often ignore or resent it.

It has come to my attention that some of you have responded to the exercise of church discipline with intense anger. That exposes not only your ignorance of Scripture, but your pride, your lack of submission to God ordained authority and certainly a superficial understanding of the holiness of God and his desire for the purity of his church.

Some of you live in your own little world. You are really not part of the body. You are closed and callous and frayed and angry and self protecting. It seems as though you don't want to deal with your life biblically.

And the list goes on.

Beloved, these kinds of things rob you of the joy that the Lord longs to give you. It quenches the Spirit of God in your life. Because, you see, your sin is a poison that will inhibit the joy of your hope in Christ and the very real awareness of his grace. Your

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<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 4:30.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

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fellowship with him will become strained. And the guilt of your sin will rob you of assurance of salvation.

You see, sin is to assurance what weed killer is to weeds. Just a little will greatly reduce it and all will kill it all together. So please examine your life. Humble yourself before the truth. Take hold of all that God has given you in your justification, especially this blessed hope that will not disappoint so that the Spirit of God can flood your soul with his love and make real all of the promises that are yours in Christ Jesus. And then when trials come you will be able to say with the apostle Paul, “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.”

Let’s pray together.

*Father, thank you for these truths. And my prayer for each of us today would echo that of the apostle Paul in Ephesians that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give to each of us a Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him. I pray that the eyes of our hear may be enlightened so that we may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might, of your might, God. Speak to our hearts. Make these things real that we might enjoy all that you have for us in Christ. For it is his name that I pray. Amen.*

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