

Jesus' Death and the Love of God

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us 13*, Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015

Romans 5:1-11 (ESV adapted)

5:¹ Therefore, since we have been **declared right from** (his/our) **faith(fullness)**, we have **peace with God** through our **Lord Jesus Messiah**, ² through whom we have also obtained **access by faith** into this **grace** in which we **stand**, and we **boast** in **hope of the glory of God**.

³ Not only that, but we even **boast** in our **suffering/tribulation**, knowing that tribulation produces **endurance**, ⁴ and endurance produces **tested character**, and testing produces **hope**, ⁵ and this **hope does not put us to shame**, because **the love of God** has been poured out in our hearts through the **Holy Spirit** who has been **given to us**.

⁶ For while we were still **weak**, at the right time **the Messiah died for the ungodly**.

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for the good person someone would even dare to die – ⁸ but **God** demonstrates **his own love for us** in that while we were still **sinners**, **the Messiah died for us**.

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been **declared right in his blood**, much more shall we be **saved** through him from the **wrath**. ¹⁰ For if while we were **enemies** we were **reconciled to God** through **the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are **reconciled**, shall we be **saved in his life**.

¹¹ Not only that, but we also **boast in God** through our **Lord Jesus Messiah**, through whom **now we** have **received that reconciliation**.

Romans 4:4-5

⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work but believes/trusts in him who declares the ungodly to be in the right, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Colossians 1:19-20

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace through the blood of his cross.

Zechariah 9:9-10

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Psalms 118:22-26

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
²³ This is the LORD'S (*Yahweh's*) doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes. [Mt 21:42]
²⁴ This is the day that the LORD (*Yahweh*) has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
²⁵ Save us, we pray (*Hosanna*), O LORD (*Yahweh*)!
O LORD (*Yahweh*), we pray, give us success!
²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD
(*Yahweh*)!
We bless you from the house of the LORD
(*Yahweh*).

A Week of Death and Life – All comes Together

This is Palm Sunday. In a.d. 30 (1,985 years ago), it was just a work day, crowds were pouring into Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus approached the city. Every action of ‘the prophet’ meant something. He begins the week that changed the world. Events happened – ordinary, wonderful, horrific, impossible – irony, paradox, multiple layers of meaning.

The Gospels lead us through the remembered events as they unfolded – signs, expectation, confrontation, teaching, wonder, love, betrayal, conspiracy, cowardice, denial, injustice, oppression, torture, abandonment, execution, grief, death, disappointment, lost hope. The promising life of a young prophet comes to an understandable end. All play roles.

Everyone has reasons for what they do. But flowing through it all is God’s higher/deeper purpose: the intention of God, anticipated in prophecy, filled with new meaning by Jesus. We’re here today because all the intentions and meanings crash together in these events. God’s purpose is active in all of it, but becomes powerfully visible in Jesus’ resurrection.

In Romans 5, Paul looks at these events through the lens of God’s purpose and sees the changed world. What was the center of it all? Betrayal? Suffering? God’s own love for us! We create the pain and alienation all the time. But here God’s love takes it into himself.

The “We” Factor. The Boasting Factor.

Paul sees “we” in relation to God. No outsiders. No blaming others. We: Jews/Gentiles; of every class/gender/ethnic identity/moral standing/power/culture. We are the ones who mess up our lives, alienate ourselves from each other and God, create power structures of violence, war, oppression. We are caught, trapped in our own sin and brokenness.

But even we can’t stop God’s love. God comes for us, but in a way we couldn’t imagine, not appearing like us but really being one of us – Jesus, Messiah, suffering servant, man, God. Jesus gives himself when we were *weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies*, with no claim on him. This is fundamental. Most religion has always been us humans trying to be good enough (pure, disciplined, ascetic, moral, ritually rigorous, etc.) to win the favor of the gods/god or break free of the human predicament. The Gospel/Faith is the reverse of religion.

God creates the peace/reconciliation between God and us. By faithfully fulfilling his promises in Jesus, who embodies God’s love and “in his blood” on the cross faithfully takes into God’s self our suffering, sin, and death. In spite of our weakness, God honors our freedom. His faithfulness calls us but does not force us to respond in faith/trust to his love in Jesus. We see that we live in a world touched by the amazing grace of God. We freely respond.

Paul spoke of religious boasting being excluded. But now God gives us a new boast: a deep confidence in the hope he creates, that carries us even through suffering, a confidence that God is true as we see his face in Jesus, Messiah, Lord, creator of reconciliation.

The Present Moment – From Past to Future

We always live in a present moment we sense moving from future to past. But Paul wants us to see how that present is wonderfully opened up by what happened in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Past events of Jesus shape our experience of the present, open the future.

What God has done creates a life of reconciliation, a space of Grace where we stand secure.

We are given present resources for dealing with our troubles this moment, for suffering to bring not despair but hope because we are also given the future in God’s Holy Spirit.

As we trust in him, we share his life and are safe/saved in Jesus’ own resurrection life.

What happened this week? Everything? God’s love acts for us, calling us into his life.