

This Grace In Which We Stand

Every building needs foundations. As the Lord Jesus longs to see his Church built in these days, he longs to see foundations laid in the lives of his people. In **Romans 5:1-11**, Paul writes about some of the foundations in the lives of believers. He reminds the Christians in Rome that they are counted righteous through faith and have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and then says that they (and we) have been brought, by faith, to *“this grace in which we now stand.”*

Then, he says, we rejoice – for three particular reasons. The word translated ‘rejoice’ means ‘exult, boast, glory in’ – a sort of proud rejoicing – Paul is really excited about this!

The first reason to rejoice (v.2). A lovely simple one, probably something we have all experienced, often right at the beginning of our new life in Jesus – the hope of the glory of God. A ‘sure and certain hope’ that one day we will be with him for ever, whether we die or Jesus comes back first. We cannot see it yet, so it remains a hope, but he has promised it so we can be certain about it.

The second reason to rejoice (v.3) is not quite so obvious. Paul says he proudly rejoices in his sufferings, his tribulations! Why? Because they have the effect of proving that something really is happening in his life. As we see the effects of suffering in producing perseverance in our own lives, and then that perseverance resulting in proven character changes, we have hope that God really is at work in our lives – it is not just our imagination, as the enemy would like us to think. The love of God poured out in our hearts is a real fact, so the hope is not empty and disappointing, as it would be if it was just our own invention. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is our guarantee of both this hope and the first one – see **Ephesians**

1:13-14.

Paul just can't resist the opportunity to underline the greatness of what God has done for us. The gift of the Holy Spirit is part of a great purpose which he has put into action in our lives:-

1) While we were still helpless, habitually failing to meet God's standards, God's own Anointed One, the chosen ruler of his people, died in our place (**vv.6-8**).

2) His blood shed for us means that we are clean and righteous in God's eyes – that's what 'justified' means (**v.9**).

3) Being justified automatically means that we are rescued from God's holy anger against all that is evil – we would have deserved it (**v.9**).

4) When we were still his enemies, he did everything that was necessary to make us his friends, to heal the wrong relationship between us, by the death of his Son (**v.10**).

5) But on top of all this, having been made friends with God, we shall be saved through the **life** of Jesus (**v.10**).

That, says Paul, gives us **the third reason to rejoice** – rejoicing in God himself, through the Lord Jesus Christ (**v.11**). He has moved on, not just looking at **what we will get** (the sure and certain hope of being with him for ever), nor even at **what we experience** (the very encouraging evidence of God at work in our lives). His life is **joined to the life of Jesus** and he knows that it is not just the historic death and resurrection of Jesus which saves him, it is his present life **now!**

This is a common theme of Paul's and seems to be the foundation of his life. Read **Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:3** and **Colossians 2:6-19**. Paul is in no doubt that his old life is really over and his new life has its source in the Lord Jesus Christ. See what he says in **1 Corinthians 1:30** about the fact that God himself has placed us **in Christ**. Jesus himself told us to make our home in him and he would make his home in us (**John 15**). This is not a strange teaching, just for some special kind of Christian; this is for us all!

Paul is concerned about foundations; he makes it clear in **1**

Corinthians 3:11 that Jesus is the only foundation which can be laid. His own foundations are secure in Christ; Jesus has given him an introduction to the grace in which he stands (**Romans 5:2**).

Where do we stand? Where are our foundations? Are we content just to hang on to the promise of eternal life and no more? Are we even prepared to settle for a life of experiences (pleasant and unpleasant!) which we can remember and relate to others as proof that God is at work in us?

Sadly we are often led to believe that there is nothing more than this, that experiences remembered or looked forward to are all that we can hope to build our 'Christian lives' upon. Paul warns against this in **Colossians 2:18-19**. There are people, he says, who take their stand on their own visions and man-made ideas. He puts this sort of approach on the same level as legalistic 'Christianity' with loads of rules and regulations and warns that people who live like this have lost connection with 'the Head', Christ himself. He also makes it clear that if we live this way, we effectively deny ourselves the possibility of growth in the Body of Christ.

Do we want to grow? In our relationship with God, do we long to have a reality which goes deeper than just adding up our experiences to date? Real experience of God should bring with it an increased knowledge of him, not just a nice feeling. One of the reasons why the Holy Spirit has been given to us is so that we might **know** the things which God has given us (**1 Corinthians 2:12**).

'This grace in which we stand' is more than a collection of doctrines or experiences. It is the solid foundation of a life joined to the life of Jesus, a life into which God the Holy Spirit reveals more and more of Jesus, not just to increase the information we have but to increase our appreciation of him and enable us to experience his reality in our real lives.

Paul prayed for no less for the church in Ephesus:

*"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the glorious Father, may give you
a spirit of wisdom and revelation,
so that you may know him better.
I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened
in order that you may know
the hope to which he has called you,
the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
and his incomparably great power for us who believe."*

(Ephesians 1:17-19).

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