

3/22/20 Lord's Day morning worship, Covenant OPC
 Call to worship: Psalm 47:1-4. Hymns: 498, 665, 609
 Profession of faith. Psalm 32 (pp. 795-796 hymnal)
 Word read, preached: **Romans 5:1-11**

TOPICAL

God's Answer for Anxious Times

(Themes: The gospel, the benefits of Christ, the immutable blessedness of belonging to Christ, justification, hope, faith, peace, love, saved)

The hope. The book of Romans has been called the book of 'hope'. In fact the word 'hope' occurs more in Romans than any other NT book; I think something like twelve or thirteen times. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls God, *the God of hope*. (Rom.15:13) The prophet Jeremiah calls God, *O Hope of Israel*. (Jer.14:8)

In a number of places the apostle Paul uses 'hope' as a synonym for 'faith' or belief. He says, *in hope we have been saved...In Him shall the Gentiles hope*. (Rom.8:24, 4:18, 15:12) The chapter we are looking at this morning, chapter five speaks about hope three times; we exult in hope, proven character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint. (Rom.5:2,4,5)

Hope is the expectation of something good; something good in the future – for us.

Oh beloved, is this not what we need for the strange times in which we are now living. We have (the fear of) this dread virus that stalks in the darkness as well as in the light that produces in us an expectation of something bad. (Ps.91:6) We desperately want and need good news to alleviate us from all the bad news that we are being inundated with. Well, that is why I chose our passage from this book of hope. (Rom.8:15, 2 Tim.1:7)

The gospel. In one way, in Romans 5:1-11, we have a summary of the privileges or the benefits procured for us by Christ and proclaimed to us in His Good News. To put it another way, the Good News or the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the well-spring of all of our hope. We expect good because of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

And the virus cannot take Christ and His benefits from us. Nothing can. And you may say, *well, what if the virus causes our death?* We answer, then our hope will be exchanged for sight. Glory to God in the highest! (Rom.8:24-39, 2 Cor.5:6-9; Exodus/departure – Exod.16:1, Lk.9:31, 2 Tim.4:6, 2 Pt.1:15, WSC 37)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the immovable reason why we have hope in anxious times. Think of that. The announcement from God to sinners that He reconciles us to Himself in Christ Jesus, by Christ Jesus, is our unshakeable incorruptible hope that God plans good for us. (Eph.6:24, I Thess.5:23, Heb.7:26, I Pt.1:3-5, Jn.3:16)

Listen to this well known truth from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 29:11. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.¹² 'Then you will call upon Me and come

and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.¹³ 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.¹⁴ 'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD,

May the fear of this virus, and any other created thing, be useful in God's government over our lives as Believers in Jesus Christ to compel us to commune more intimately and honestly and purely and actively and holily with Jesus; unto His glory, our spiritual good, and the soul-good of our neighbor. (WCF 5.5, 16.2, Eph.4:1, Rom.16.2, Phil.1:27)

May our fears drive us to our Christ and in Him may we learn our true strength and hope and wisdom and life. (2 Cor.12:5-10, Phil.1:21, Ps.16:11)

The doctrine. I want to point out something as we look at hope in fretful times. God's hope is expressly doctrinal. Doctrine simply means 'teaching', words, propositions. The true gospel of Jesus Christ is true doctrine. Look at verses one through eleven. Proposition after proposition.

Religion apart from propositional truth is mere mysticism. So-called 'experiencing God' apart from the truth of God's word is not the faith of the Bible,

nor does it come from the Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible. (doctrine/sound words, I Tim.6:3, 2 Tim.1:13. See contrast – Col.2:18-23)

You see Beloved, this is why much of the words of comfort that are being expressed man-to-man right now are baseless. They are not founded on gospel truth. Fearful men say to fearful men in fearful times, *everything is going to be ok, this too shall pass*, graffiti bridge sign – *Stay Positive*.

But apart from hope founded on God's word, on God's gospel this is just *whistling past the graveyard* as the saying goes. (on the news) Singing from your window in Italy while you are on mandated lockdown may boost your feelings for a bit, but it cannot give you immovable eternal hope for certain good. Only Christ gives such true hope. And only the true Christ and the true gospel at that.

Remember, in Christ you are a child of God. God tells us not to fear what the unbeliever fears. God alone is our fear. God alone is our hope. (Isa.8:11-14) Say that to yourself once every hour.



The union. The truth of Jesus Christ as expressed in God's word, by the person and the power of the Holy Spirit – by Spirit-wrought faith, brings us into true vital spiritual union and communion with Christ, with the Father, and the Spirit. (Jn.17:1-17, I Pt.1:22-25, Jn.3:16)

James 1:18. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. (Jam 1:18 NAU)

Romans 10:15. How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Our hope is in the LORD. Not in man. (Ps.38:15, 39:7, 42:5, 130:5-7, Jer.14:8-22, Acts 2:26)
 Think often of your union with the Triune God. Meditate on it. Speak to God about it. Speak to one another about it. Take a break from speaking about the virus. (Mal.3:16) *And the things of this world will become strangely dim.* (WCF 26.2, WLC 65-66, see hymn: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. Trinity hymnal #481)

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that belongs to you united to the triune God of heaven and earth, soon to be revealed to you in its zenith!
 (Rom 8:18)

The justification. V.1. In a way, verse one, is the gospel in shorthand. In other words, we as Reformed Protestants believe that justification by faith (alone) is the essence of the gospel of salvation. This is why Martin Luther says that the church stands or falls based on its adherence to the truth of justification by faith alone. (See Rom.3 ,4, 5)

I want us to consider two things about justification. 1. What justification is. 2) And then the ‘fruits’ of justification or things that flow out of our justification. All of these things are reasons why we as Believers in Jesus have persevering joyful hope.

The instrument of our justification. V.1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

The grounds of our justification. V.9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Let me read how Paul lays this out in chapter three.

Romans 3:19. Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Rom.4:1-13, 5:1-9, Gal.2:16-21, 3:5-14, 5:4-7)

Let me read for you how our Larger catechism summarizes the Bible’s teaching on this. And as I read, pay attention for things which provide you with hope. There will be a quiz at the end. ☺

WLC 70 What is justification? A. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners,(1) in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight;(2) not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them,(3) but only for the perfect obedience and full

satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them,(4) and received by faith alone.(5)

(1) Rom. 3:22,24,25; Rom. 4:5 (2) 2 Cor. 5:19,21; Rom. 3:22,24,25,27,28 (3) Tit. 3:5,7; Eph. 1:7

(4) Rom. 5:17-19; Rom. 4:6-8 (5) Acts 10:43; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9

WLC 71 How is justification an act of God's free grace? A. Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified,(1) yet in as much as God accepts the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them and did provide this surety, his own only Son,(2) imputing his righteousness to them,(3) and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith,(4) which also is his gift,(5) their justification is to them of free grace.(6)

(1) Rom. 5:8-10,19 (2) 1 Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 10:10; Matt. 20:28; Dan. 9:24,26; Isa.

3:4,5,6,10,11,12; Heb. 7:22; Rom. 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:18,19 (3) 2 Cor. 5:21 (4) Rom. 3:24,25

(5) Eph. 2:8 (6) Eph. 1:7

Let's walk through why being justified we should be overwhelmingly joyfully perseveringly hopeful. Even during trying times such as these.

As believers in Christ, this means you are an object of God's love, you are a recipient of God's saving grace, you are an object of God's irrevocable favor. God gave you the indescribable gift of faith in Jesus and graced you with evangelical repentance unto life. (Jn.1:10-12, Eph.2:1-9, Acts 11:18, Phil.1:29)

Think of it, the Father sent Christ to live and to die to save you, to purchase you, so that you would be reconciled and belong to Him in an eternal love-relationship! Christ went the cross to pay for all of your sins to make you His spotless holy Bride. (Rev.19:1-10, 21:1-1)

Justification teaches you that Christ is YOUR high priest and He is YOUR atoning sacrifice.

Again, you are joined to Jesus. Right now. And forever. And now God no longer condemns you for any of your sin. God, right now, accounts you as righteous in His sight! Amazing. You are reconciled to God. Reconciled to the Law. Christ gets your record. You receive His record. God says, for you that believe in Jesus – you are holy, righteous, and acceptable to Him. (Rom.8:1, Ps. 32, Ps.51)

What good news! You have been justified. It is finished. (Jn.19:30)

Planned from eternity. Procured upon the cross. Applied when you first believed. (WCF 11.4) Utterly complete. Never to be repeated. Done. Finished. Your standing before God as righteous is permanent – eternal. No matter what happens in your life. Virus. Or no virus. You ARE righteous in the sight of God in Christ. Pure gift. (Rom.11:6)

Hebrews 10: 12. but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, ¹³ waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. ¹⁴ For by one offering He **has** perfected for all time those who are sanctified.(this is definitive sanctification, like consecration)

The fruits (of justification). V.1. And because of this, we may say that our justification produces certain fruits, such as peace with God. Of course these are elements or aspects of our sanctification. But I do want us to see they are a product of being justified before God, the law is satisfied for us.

Justification provides you with peace with God.

V.1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,(no more warfare)

Our sin provokes or incurs God's anger. Christ pays for the sin and thus divine wrath is removed. Divine favor has come. This is what it means to be reconciled – V.11. And this objective peace is what produces in us our subjective (feeling) of peace. We have heart and mind contentment that God is at peace with us, the enmity of the broken law is gone. (Phil.4:7)

God is our friend. We are God's friends. More, He is our Father and we are His children.

Justification provides you free access to God. Because our justification in Christ we have full access to God. We were strangers. We have no promises. No covenants. We were in the world, without God and without hope. Christ has brought us near to God. (Eph.2:12-21)

As God's beloved forgiven children we cry anywhere and everywhere, Abba Father and He hears us and receives us. (Eph.2:8, 3:12, Heb.7:25, Heb.4:14-16, PRAYER)

Justification produces exaltation in every circumstance. (5:2,3,11)
(*Kauchaomai*, to boast, to take pride in, to glory in, akin to rejoicing greatly in – Hab.3:18, Zeph.3:14-17)

V.2. 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.

We will see the glory of God when we see Christ return in His glorified estate. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess. Our hope and our joy is HIS glory. And seeing and hearing Him glorified by all things. This WILL occur on the Last Day. And it will last into all eternity. (2 Cor.4:17, Col.3:1-4, 2 Tim.2:10)

V.3. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

And we exalt in every situation, even in our sufferings, even in this virus time, know even this will work to God's glory, and the extension of Christ's church, even to the further sanctification of His people. (Acts 5:41)

Romans 8:24. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.²⁶ In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words,²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.²⁸ And we know that God causes all things

to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:16. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Justification assures us that the Holy Spirit abides within us. V.5.

V.5. 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.** (2 Cor.5:14)

Justification assures us that God loves us. V.8.

V.6. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

V.7. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

V.8. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (1 Cor.6:9-11)

Justification assures us we will arrive in heaven, saved from the wrath to come.

V.9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved** from the wrath of God through Him. (Eph.2:1-9, I Thess.1:8, I Thess.5:9-10)

V.10. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved** by His life.

V.11. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The conclusion. Beloved, how easy it is to count our fears one by one. Turn on the news. What will you hear? Well stay at home for two weeks. No, maybe eight weeks. No, maybe eighteen months! Oh sure the virus might go away in the summer. But it can come back in the fall! Money is gone. Work is gone. Toilet paper is gone. Fear. Fear. Fear.

Beloved. Fear not. You are justified in Christ. Do not let your heart be troubled. God is at peace with you and He loves you beyond what you can imagine. I want you to go outside in your yard today. Take your Bible. Pray over every one of these blessings that belong to YOU from our passage. And thank God for each one. Say it out loud. If there are other Believers in your house – do this together. Then, if you have a Trinity hymnal (#691), I want you to read (and pray over) Horatio Spafford's hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*. Beloved, In Christ you have hope! God plans good for you. Only believe.

Sermon Questions ~ Romans 5:1-11

1. **Define hope. Why has the book of Romans been called the book of hope? Why is God a God of hope?** (Rom.15:12-13, Jer.14:8, Ps.38:15, 39:7, 42:5, 130:5-7, Jer.14:8-22, Acts 2:26)
In what ways are hope and faith similar? Hints: What is the source of hope and faith? What is the object of hope and faith?(Acts 24:15, Rom.8:24, 4:18, Rom.5:1-5, Eph.2:1-9, I Cor.4:7, 2 Tim.3:15-17)
2. **What is the gospel?** (Jn.3:16, 2 Cor.5:17-21, I Cor.1:17-24, Mt.1:21, Eph.2:12-22, Rom.10:9-17, I Cor.15:1-4)
3. **Can any bad news separate you as a believer in the Gospel good news?** (Rom.8:24-39, 2 Cor.5:6-9; Exodus/departure – Exod.16:1, Lk.9:31, 2 Tim.4:6, 2 Pt.1:15, WSC 37)
4. **Describe your union with God. What is it? How did it come to be? Is it a living union? Is it a breakable or unbreakable union? What are other things in comparison with your union with God?** (Jn.17:1-26, Rom.6:5, Phil.2:1-2, WCF 26.2, WLC 65-66, Rom 8:18, 7:4, Eph.5:31-32, Jn.14:23, Mt.10:20, Jn.14:26, Jn.15:26, Gal.4:6, Eph.2:18, Jn.15:1-10)
5. **What is justification? What is the grounds of our justification?**(Rom.5:9) **What is the instrument of our justification?**(Rom.5:1, Jn.1:10-12, Eph.2:1-9, Phil.1:29)
What is Luther's famous quote on justification? Do you believe this? Why?(Rom.3:19-28, Rom.4:1-13, 5:1-9, Gal.2:16-21, 3:5-14, 5:4-7, WLC 70-71)
6. **Is justification finished or is it a process? How should this affect our hope?** (Rom.5:1, Heb.10:12-14, Rom.8:1)
7. **What is objective and subjective peace with God.** (Rom.5:1, 11, Phil.4:7, Lk.19:38-42, Jn.14:27, Rom.1:7, Rom.14:17-19, Rom.15:13, Gal.5:22) **Describe your subjective peace with God because of your objective peace with God. Give examples or instances of your subjective peace.**
8. **What does it mean to have access to God?** (Eph.2:8-22, 3:12, Heb.7:25, Heb.4:14-16, WSC 25, WSC 98, WCF 20.1, 21.2)
9. **What does it mean to exult? In what do you as a Believer exult? In what estates or circumstances do you and will you exult? Why? Give examples.** (Rom.5:2,3,11, 2 Cor.4:16-18, Col.3:1-4, 2 Tim.2:10, Acts 5:41, Rom.8:24-28, 2 Cor.12:5-10)
10. **Who is the Holy Spirit?** (Acts 5:3-4, WSC 4-6) **Where is the Holy Spirit?** (Gen.1:2, Mt.4:1, Mk.1:10, I Cor.6:19) **What does the Holy Spirit do for you?** (Jn.3:1-8, Rom.5:5, 2 Cor.5:14, Jn.16:13, Acts 6:3, Rom.2:29, Rom.8:5-16, I Cor.12:8, Gal.5:18-25, WCF 10.2, 11.4, 16.3)
11. **Why do you have certain hope that you will be saved from the wrath of God to come? Why do you have certain hope that you will be saved to enjoy God forever?** (Rom.5:1-11, Eph.2:1-9, I Thess.1:8, I Thess.5:9-10)**How does this make you feel?** ☺