

Spirit of Hope
Romans 5:1-5

Isaiah 42:1-13
Hebrews 4
Psalm 111

This morning we are going to be continuing our journey through the book of Romans looking at the first part of chapter 5. As we continue on into chapter 5 we can see that Paul has laid down the ground work in the first few chapters and here he is starting to build upon it, bringing in some application to the teaching of the previous chapters. In chapter 5 here, there are themes of chapter 4 being picked up and applied to the believing church- which he had argued that all those who are of faith, are indeed the true children of Abraham. And like Abraham, each and everyone who believes in like faith is justified and experiences God's glory. And this faith and deliverance comes to the believer in their deepest time of weakness as did the fulfillment of the promised offspring come to Abraham and Sarah, when their bodies were old, beyond child bearing age, is when God granted them a child, the very thing that is impossible with mankind, was made possible by God. And it is this faith of Abraham, which caused him to believe that God was both willing and able to do as he had said, against the weakness and hopelessness of the flesh that it was accounted to him for righteousness. So to it is with us in the new birth and salvation, that God grants life where there is death, and brings about a new birth, and faith, hoping in the promises of God unto salvation.

And this new birth comes, to us in our weakness and inability, so that there is nothing within us that would cause us to boast, except in the grace and mercy of our father who has brought us from inability and death, to a new life through his Son, now being able to do that which is pleasing to the Lord, through faith having been reconciled to him, now by faith we follow him. As we go through chapter 5, we will see that Paul also picks up on the theme of a journey, or pilgrimage. We use the term pilgrim, or pilgrimage knowing that it means someone or a group on a journey, but the meaning is a bit deeper than that, for it is a journey with purpose. The definition of Pilgrimage is that "it is a journey, often into unknown or foreign places with the purpose and intent of the individual or peoples to find a new expanded meaning or purpose about themselves, others, nature, or a higher good through experience. A pilgrimage can lead to a personal transformation after which a pilgrim returns to their normal life." Basically, again it is a journey with purpose, it is not a basic wandering, or even a heading from one point to another, but a journey in which one experiences growth in knowledge, and in the christian, faith and reliance upon God.

The theme of pilgrimage runs throughout the old testament, and into the new, In this chapter Paul recounts the story of Adam and because of his disobedience being cast into exile, a journey into the unknown and foreign land, separated from the presence of God. God's purpose in redemption is to bring about reconciliation of man back to himself, and we are on this journey, or pilgrimage back into God's presence through the new birth and salvation. Just as the Jews journeyed back from exile in Egypt, or from Babylon, likewise we too as believers have a journey to endure before we arrive at the goal of salvation, for our inheritance is not of this world, but is stored up for us in heaven.

Paul understands the deliverance of believers to be the first step in this pilgrim journey, a journey which will inevitably involve suffering and discouragement, yet these things will not deter God's people because the spirit that is within us which works in us to will and to do that which is pleasing to God, because of the spirit which convicts and ministers in us the hope and the glory of God that lies before us. But the giving of the spirit, and the promise of sharing in God's glory are the expectation of the Christian pilgrimage in this sort of new exodus that we are living. Just as seen in the book of Exodus the deliverance from the captivity and slavery of Egypt centered on the death of the first born sons, with sacrificial lambs being a substitute for the Hebrew first born. The Christian's deliverance centers upon Jesus, God's only Son, being delivered up to death to bring about the salvation of his people.

Paul uses the law and the prophets to point to this one, Jesus show how through him God has rescued them from a hopeless situation fulfilling his covenant promises, much like how he fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah through the impossible act of giving them a son, likewise as well when he rescued Israel from exile, and King David from guilt. These are all elements of the new birth that we who are Christ's enjoy. The impossible new birth, being gathered back into the fold like lost sheep, rescued from the exile and separation from God, and lastly the removal of guilt, for in Christ we are secure and found righteous before God. Our justification is the outcome of Jesus' death and Resurrection, as Paul wrote in chapter 4, "he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised for our justification." God has been faithful in his promise to Abraham in delivering his spiritual descendants from the realm of darkness and bondage. This kingdom of darkness is the new covenant equivalent to Egypt, or Babylon, where the people of God were held in captivity. It is a condition in where Satan rules and man is cut off from the fellowship of God.

In Israel we get a picture of the Christian, God's chosen, who is living a life captive and a slave to sin, lost and in exile away from God. But Just as God delivered Israel from captivity, so to he delivers his people from the captivity of sin, by his son, whom he sent, the sacrificial lamb that was slain in our place, so that we may be reconciled and brought to be in his very presence. Our justification is all about, and through, the work of God delivering his people from their captivity. In the previous chapters Paul has shown that our justification only comes from what Jesus has done for us. Chapter 3, verse 21: "but now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Chapter 4, verse 24 "it shall be imputed to us who believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."

Paul describes Jesus death, as the Christian's Passover sacrifice that delivered God's people from the captivity of sin, much like Israel's deliverance from the captivity in Egypt. Both an act of God, and both having the requirement of a sacrifice. But one being the picture, and the other the fulfillment, establishing as God promised Abraham, a people from all nations.

So let us look this morning at chapter 5, as Paul continues to build his case for justification through faith, and the works of Christ. (Read Romans 5:1-6) The outcome of God's work and justification for his people, is an established peace with God, brought about by the death of his Son, the necessary sacrifice to pay for the sins of God's people. The Roman believers whom Paul is addressing, as well as to us, have been brought into this peace before God having been reconciled by the blood of Jesus Christ. Just as Israel could stand before mount Sinai to worship God because of the Passover, so to we can stand in the grace into which we have been brought as a result of our Passover lamb, Jesus Christ. Verse 5, "Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Throughout all of scripture the glory of God is being revealed. In the old testament his glory was shown through creation, through his covenant with Abraham, through the deliverance of Israel from captivity, to the birth and death of Christ, shining brightly through the resurrection bringing about the promised reconciliation of mankind to God. And it is in this glory, through faith that our salvation stands, that God has worked on our behalf forgiveness of the sins that separated us from him. Each of these moments, along with many others is a progressive revelation of God and his glory, his mercy, and his grace with the pinnacle, the highest point of God's glory being revealed through Christ lifted up on the cross. The promise to the ages, and the hope of us who have come after.

The final revelation of God's glory to mankind will be on that day when he comes to call his people home, to dwell in the very presence of God. Paul called this, the hope of the glory of God, the end of the Christian pilgrimage on earth, and the culmination of God's covenant and promises with his people. Though the people of God have suffered throughout all of time, and will continue to do so as long as we are in exile on this earth, we have the promise that we will one day see our Lord- the one whose death made our deliverance possible, that is why Paul says rejoice, exult and praise the one we have gained access to by faith, for he is our glorious hope. We have been delivered by grace, through Christ from the eternal condemnation and bondage to the sin that rules and reigns in this life, the guilt and punishment of our sin has been paid for by Christ and we have been bought by his blood, just as Israel was freed from Egypt and Babylonian captivity, so to we have been freed from the captivity and bondage of sin and Satan, and just how Israel was in exile for 40 years in the desert awaiting the promised land, so to we are wandering through this life awaiting the coming of our Lord to usher us into the promised land. What greater grace is there, then to be freed from Satan, and to become the adopted children of God? We are the new covenant community who have been called out of the kingdom of darkness to be the bride of the one true living God.

And as his bride, we have access by faith, into this grace. This is an important aspect of Paul's writing, in which he will expound upon further in the up coming chapters. But for now he is focused upon the promises of God toward his people and look at what he says in verse 3 and 4, that we do not only have hope in the glory of God, but because of God we can have hope and rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character hope.

The Christian pilgrimage experience is still bound in this world of sin and suffering, but these problems are not to be viewed negatively as if they have no purpose in the grand scheme of God, but rather it is through the deliverance, and perseverance through these sufferings that we experience God's grace and mercy. Our sufferings is not as some see it as an act of purification, or punishment because of our sins, but rather it is merely the outcome of living in a sin sick world but through it we can rejoice for our hope is not of this world, but rather our hope is upon an inheritance of the promises of God, that we shall be in the end, in his very presence. This hope is not like the hope of this world, which blindly wishes for a better tomorrow, the hope that we have in Christ surpasses any worldly sense of hope, for God has given his children a larger picture, one that expands beyond the scope of this world to know of the coming days of deliverance from the wrath of God. Our hope is not merely bound up in this idea that God will deliver us from our earthy trial, though he also is pleased to do so, our hope is bound in the fact that in the end we are his children who is loved. This extends beyond our earthly time, but into that which comes after as well. It is an eternal, persistent, unending love in which we have our hope for an ultimate deliverance into the presence of God.

Paul goes on to say, in verse 5, that this hope, “does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. The Spirit's presence in the lives of the believer continually point to, and reveal the love of God to us. But not only that, those of us who are his children have his love flowing not just through us, but out of us as well. The nature of the new birth is just that, a new birth born of love, and mercy, bound in the hope found only in God. God's giving of the Spirit upon his children is the fulfillment of the prophesy in Joel, that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh, that we may become his Spirit indwelt community bound in the covenant made with Abraham, through faith. This presence of the Spirit in the lives of the believer is the guarantee of his promises, working in us, and through us to will and to do that which is pleasing to the Lord. Through the Spirit God has equipped his saints with the tools necessary to thwart the attacks of Satan. Isaiah 59:19 says, “When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will put him to flight.” We are not left on our own to fight this battle against sin and temptation, but God has equipped us with his Spirit, not so we may merely overcome, but so we may be conquerors against the wiles of the devil.

The Spirit's convicting work in the life of God's children stands as one of the evidences of adoption. That is, if you are one who struggles with the notion of whether or not you are one of God's children, one way you can test if your faith is true is by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. God's children may fall into sin, fall being the operative word, but when we do, the Spirit convicts, points it out, causes us to repent for it reveals in us this darkness and failure and though we stumble, and though we fail, God's people desire to please him, so conviction and repentance brought on by the Spirit is a sure sign of one's belief. If you are God's, you have his Spirit, and if his Spirit is in you, then it is actively and constantly working in you, both to love, and in conviction and repentance. And is this work, which builds in us hope knowing that we are God's, and all who are his will never be lost nor cast out, but shall one day be gathered together with him.

The hope of the Christian is not some vague wish for something better. It is the certainty that God will fulfill his purpose, and promise. He is the God in whom we trust, the God who keeps his promises, and the one who gave up his only Son to death in order that we may be saved from his wrath poured out upon sinful humanity. He is the God who brings the dead to life, and hope to the hopeless. As Christ said, "come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We are all weighed down by a burden of sin, guilt and shame, but through Christ we have been given deliverance and therefore rest for it is he who has accomplished redemption for us. Trust in him, believe in him, repent and seek after him, and you will find rest, peace, hope, and joy beyond this world for he has overcome this world, so that we through him are more than conquerors, having this hope working through us that we are indeed his children and inheritors of his promises.