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But in Romans chapter 5, after we've reviewed what we covered in chapter 4 and so forth, we're looking at the initial part of this chapter where Paul says, therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We just discussed the fact that having been justified by faith is an *eris* participle, and that precedes the action of the main verb. In other words, we have to have achieved this declaration of righteousness by faith as a precondition to having peace with God through Jesus Christ.

And this could have been put in an if-then form, to answer your question, and that is the gist of what he's saying. And we get this from the context of chapter 4, especially where Abraham's salvation is not in view but his living faith, the persistence of his faith, its unswerving nature, its endurance in the face of very big obstacles and things that would make the normal person think, well, that just can't happen. Look at my circumstances.

The promise of God can't be fulfilled in my life because look at my circumstances. I'm old. Sarah's old.

It just can't happen. But he had faith in that situation, and that's not a salvation context. That's a daily life of a believer context.

So Paul says, when we have been justified by faith in that way, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And as we were just discussing, not every believer rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Not all of us understand the hope of glory or meditate on it or think about it.

From our previous studies in faith and hope and love, we remember that faith is the means of living the Christian life and hope is the motivation. If we don't understand the hope, if we don't understand the purpose that we discussed at the outset of this lesson, we're not going to have any motivation to live the life. And this is the sad thing about many believers today.

I've been making it a point because I've had a regular schedule here the past several days, for the past few weeks, actually. And so I get to actually stop and eat lunch for a change. And so I try to stop in time for 12 noon because they have the Minnert Clinic on the radio and they pick a topic and they discuss it and they have believers call in and ask questions about these issues.

And it's much easier to see in other people than it is to see in your own self. You hear these people calling you and you say, well, I know what your problem is. And that's really a bad thing.

I'm going to fall under the judgment of Chapter 2, judging others and not judging myself. But one of the things that comes through many times when you hear folks call in is they have a particular objective that they want to accomplish in their life. There's something wrong.

There are crossways with their spouse. There are crossways with their children. There was a lady that called in today and had had apparently a history of abuse as a child and had grown up and she felt like she had problems interacting with people and she lost her job because some things happened and she wasn't able to cope with the authority factor and cope with the criticism of people and one thing and another.

She was very insecure and all of these things. But she was focused in on these circumstances and on the terrible nature of these circumstances and she had a goal. She wanted to be approved.

She wanted to be employed. She wanted a lot of these things that all of us want and seek for. It's a natural human tendency.

But anybody can set those goals. Any unbeliever can set those goals and a lot of unbelievers and believers can achieve them by pursuing them. The challenge that we are called to as believers is to get our eyes off of those things, to recognize that what God says about them is true.

They're earthly. They're temporary. Even when we have them, they don't bring happiness.

And all you have to do is watch the entertainment world and people who achieve their dream and they have a hit movie or they launch a great career and so forth and they're constantly seeking and searching. And a lot of them write books later and they say, you know, after I had achieved all of these things, I was miserable. There was a fellow on the radio the other day who was a great football player and was told as a child he had a lot of problems with his respiration and so forth and they said, you know, this kid will be lucky.

He's going to be a sickling. He's going to be a weakling. He won't ever amount to anything.

He overcame that. He worked very hard in high school and college. Became a great football player.

Played for eight or ten years in the NFL. Was MVP for his team for years and years. I think he played for Chicago.

But he was saying, you know, after I achieved these goals, this was my life's goal to prove that I could do it. And he rose to the top of his profession. He said, I was never happy.

There was an emptiness. And no matter what I achieved and what I set for myself when I achieved it, it didn't bring the satisfaction I thought it would bring. And this was the point at which he actually turned to Christ and became saved as an adult.

And he now speaks on this to a lot of the rest of us. And so this is a common thing, that there is no satisfaction. All the circumstances that we dream about and hope for, if we achieve them, we still wouldn't have the happiness, which is really what we want.

What makes the difference is what he's talking about in verse 2. We have access by that faith, that living faith, of deciding that what God wants is more important than what we want. We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And like Joseph was pointing out, this whole thing is sort of in the character of an if-then.

If we decide to live by faith, to follow Abraham's example, we will have peace with God. We will have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. God's grace is infinitely available to all of us as believers, but if we don't go in and claim it, it doesn't do us any good.

It has to be claimed. And we claim God's grace by faith. We claim it that way at salvation.

We claim it that way in daily life. And when we do that, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is what gives us motivation, because we realize that in our nondescript, anonymous life, we can achieve something grander than the greatest accomplishments of human history.

By trusting God, God accounts us righteous, and it's the biggest thing God has ever done in history. The angels stand there, essentially with their mouths open, looking at the fact that God can take puny, weak, sinful, fallen creatures and declare them to be as righteous as He is, with no effort on their part. We don't earn it.

We don't deserve it. We don't work for it. We don't accomplish any task to gain it.

We just decide that what God says is reality, and what we see with our eyes and experience in our lives isn't as real as what God says. And it's hard for us to do. But when we do that, we rejoice, because we're starting to understand the expectation of the glory of God.

When we do this now in this life, we will eternally reflect God's glory. And another consequence of this is given in verse 3. Not only that, but we also glory in tribulations. Now, there's nothing more tiresome when you're fighting through bad circumstances, and you're under pressure, and you're miserable, and things are tough, and the world looks bleak and dark, for somebody to come up and stick one of these verses in your face and say, count it all joy, brother, when you fall.

It's tiresome. It's wearing. It doesn't encourage.

It doesn't lift us up. We just say, well, that's fine, but you don't know what I'm looking at. If you can see the seamy underside of the world as I am currently viewing it, you wouldn't be spouting all of this stuff to me.

I don't know about that. It... Yeah, but you know what I mean. It's easy for somebody to glibly come by and say, count it all joy, or glory in your tribulations.

You know, your pressure is an opportunity to be happy and so forth. And so how does this really happen? It doesn't happen because somebody comes up and speaks it in our ear or crochets it and puts it on the wall or something. Simply being reminded of this or knowing it, that God has

said it, that doesn't make it so.

This is another thing that results from that aorist participle in verse 1. Having been accounted righteous by faith, meaning that we do what Abraham did in that whole previous chapter, we can glory in tribulations. And it isn't a matter of simply wanting to. It's like someone coming up to you and saying, love me.

And you don't even know them. Or you may know them and you don't like them. And they say, love me.

And you can't just turn a switch in your mind and say, okay, I love you. And you have a warm glow and you can't stand to be apart from them and so forth. It just doesn't happen by making a decision or by deciding that it ought to be so.

Many times we know that we ought to have a different attitude than we have, but knowing that just makes us more miserable because now on top of the failure and misery that is all around us, we know we're failing in the middle of it. So how does this take place? This is where we get down to the brass tacks of life. This is where the rubber hits the road.

We know that this is the goal. We know that this is the purpose. How does it take place? This is what Paul is giving us the key to.

It starts with small decisions to accept what God has said to be so. I don't think it happens all at once. I don't think any of us often have the experience that we suddenly, you know, I remember Romans chapter 5. Well, I am just blissfully happy now.

Boy, what a wonderful sense of enthusiasm I now have having remembered that verse. It comes as we exercise faith. To exercise faith, we have to think about things that God has said, think about things that God has promised, and do like the captain of the Enterprise when he says, Make it so.

We have to say, All right, God has said this. I'm going to act as if that is the case. That's going to be my reality.

And we have to take it a little bite-sized chunk at a time. You think about any pressure situation that you may now be in or that you've been in in the recent past. I don't think any of us think of one promise from God and suddenly the clouds part from the sun, a new ray of hope and enthusiasm comes into our life.

This is an incremental process type of thing. Remember what it said about Abraham in the last chapter? It took three verses for him to talk about this process. He, contrary to hope, in hope, believed, not being weak in faith when he considered his own body already dead and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but he was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. This was a process because the angel, the messenger, came and said, About this time next year Sarah will have a son. So Abraham had a 12-month faith test.

Of course, it probably got easier when Sarah started walking funny and having to take breaks and morning sickness and so forth. But for a good period of time there, Abraham just had to take this completely on faith, and so he had to do it in small chunks. We don't have to trust God for the whole rest of our lives.

We just have to trust him for the next few minutes, for the next couple of hours, just for the rest of the day. We can break this up into smaller chunks and say, What are the promises of God that apply right now? This is a very helpful thing to do. It's just like cleaning the garage.

If you try to go out and clean the garage and do it all at once, or you think about, Well, I'm going to reserve Saturday. I'm going to clean the entire garage on Saturday. Well, you think about what all is in there, and it's such an overwhelming task you hesitate to even begin.

It's like, What's the point? I know I'm not going to get the whole thing done. But in big tasks like that, in human life, we break them down into smaller things. We say, Well, today I'm just going to do this corner, or if I can just get this part of my bench cleared up, or if I can just get these three boxes unpacked and put away.

And we do it in increments. And as we whittle away, pretty soon the whole thing is done. That's what we have to do with faith.

When we face a big challenge or a big test, and we feel like we're under a lot of pressure, we break it down into smaller things. This is what Abraham did. He said, Okay, what are all the obstacles here to this son coming about, being the father of many nations and all that? Well, first of all, the baby has to come.

Well, what are the obstacles to that? I'm 100 years old. Sarah's nearly 100 years old. We're both nearly dead.

And so he thought about him one at a time. He thought about his own body. He said, Well, God made my body.

I guess God can make it function. God built the functions initially. If he says he can make the mechanism work one more time, I reckon it can.

And then he thought about the deadness of Sarah's womb. And he broke it down, and he exercised faith in each of those areas. And his faith was accounted to him for righteousness.

So that's what it's telling us over here in chapter 5. To do this, to follow in Abraham's footsteps, that's what we do. And we know that God is our Father. We know that we have a standing with

him because of what Christ has done in his death.

And we know that because Christ is alive, we have the potential for life as well. And through Christ we have access by faith into this grace. It doesn't say we have the grace.

It says we have access to this grace. How do we access the grace? It's by faith. So every little situation where we need God's grace, we can break it down and take them one at a time and think about the promises of God, think about the truth of God as it applies in that situation.

So we didn't get the big promotion. So the opportunity that we thought was going to really make things turn out for the better passed us by. It was like a great ocean liner, and we tried to jump on board.

We splashed in the water, and it sailed away. And we missed it. And we think, oh, that opportunity will never come again.

That was such a perfect opportunity. I botched it. I missed it.

I was robbed of it, whatever. And then we stop and think, well, now wait a minute. If God wanted that for me, there's nothing in the universe that could stop it.

God's provision is great. If God wants me to have that, that ship will turn around and make another pass. And we have to trust God.

And so we just take one thing at a time and trust God for it. We say, okay, in this one little area, what is the grace I need? I need God's grace of provision. I need God's grace of forgiveness.

I need God's grace of something productive to think about instead of this negative thing that keeps coming into my mind. And so we claim this in increments. And when we do that, the things that are talked about in verse 3 through 5 become more than platitudes.

It's more than a verse to throw at somebody else that's in hard times. We can glory in tribulations. Because every time we look at these problems and we claim the grace of God in that particular situation, that's the glory of God.

That's God showing what he can do. He's God. How else could we know who he was and how powerful he is if we didn't see him in action? And you can be the greatest problem solver in the world.

Joseph and I are computer technicians. But as I have reminded Joseph many times, if people didn't have problems, we'd be out of a job. The only reason we get paid is because people have problems.

And we get the chance to demonstrate what we can do and the knowledge that we have and the training that we have and the experience we have when someone has a problem. And we go in

and we know the solution that fixes that. And people, I suppose, appreciate the fact that here's a guy that knows all about computers.

You take your car to a mechanic and he fixes it. Here's a guy that knows all about cars. You appreciate that person's skill, their knowledge, whatever it is, because they're able to solve the problem.

That's how God is glorified. What is God's glory? It's his creature's appreciation of him. How can we appreciate him unless we see him in action? So each of these tribulations that we face, when we claim God's promises, we can glory in those tribulations.

And we know that not only are we seeing God in action, but God is doing something with us in that. It's like lifting weights. It's like teaching children to clean up their room or finish their food or control their emotions.

When they want to do one thing, we make them do another. And it's hard on them. It's stressful.

It's stressful for a child to be forced to control themselves. The natural tendency is no control. The natural tendency is what I feel I will express.

And we force them to discipline themselves, to control themselves. And it's hard. It's a strain.

It's a struggle. But through that struggle, children learn self-control. And it's the greatest gift, outside of spiritual things, it's the greatest gift that a child can receive, is the ability to control themselves, because it orients them to life, it orients them to authority, it gives them the ability to be happy in bad circumstances, because you can master your emotions, you can master your impulses, you can master your urges, and you're not a slave to every impulse that comes by.

I have a book that I found in my grandmother's library. It's a very, very old book. It was printed in the late 1800s.

And the title of it drew my attention, because the title of this little book is Self-Control, Its Kingship and Majesty. And back in the 1890s or sometime, someone sat down and thought, you know, self-control is one of the great keys to life. And every page of this book talks about the virtues and the advantages of self-control, its kingship and its majesty.

And that's a great thing. We put our children through stress so that they will learn self-control. If your children faced no stress, they wouldn't learn self-control, and they would miss that great gift and the great capacity for life that comes from it.

God puts us under stress, allows us to go through stress, because it's good for us. We learn self-control. And so we can glory in tribulations, because we know that tribulation produces perseverance.

It's one thing to trust God in an immediate moment. When the Israelites went out of Egypt, God said, the Egyptians are going to let you go. Here's the Passover, the angel of death.

The next morning everybody woke up. The Egyptians were scared to death. They said, get thee hence.

So the Israelites walked out, and they trusted God in that moment. But very soon after, once the realities of the journey and the distance and the provisions and the Red Sea and the pursuing army faced them, that momentary spurt of faith evaporated in the face of realities. Paul is saying, look at Abraham.

In the face of those realities, he persevered in that faith. He didn't let it go. He didn't say, well, I didn't realize all these things were going to happen.

Now I don't trust God anymore. Tribulation produces perseverance. Perseverance produces character.

Character produces hope. Why is hope produced when we persevere under stress? What is hope? Hope is an expectation sometime in the future. That's our motivation for the Christian life.

And we recognize, as we trust God in these abysmal circumstances and these hopeless situations, we realize that just by trusting God and watching Him work and resolve these difficulties, that His glory is going to be reflected in the eternal future, and we are going to share in that. And it's exciting to recognize that you have found the narrow road that Jesus talked about. There are few that find it.

This is the narrow road. It's the road of faith. It's the road of trust in God.

And we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. I want to show you something before we take our break in Paul's writing. We don't think this way, and the people that Paul was writing to in those days didn't think this way.

People thought the glory is in what you accomplish. The glory is in when you do a righteous deed, and people see it, and they say, oh, well done. What a good selfless act of devotion that was that you just did.

And we see this today when people want to talk about their ministry on their radio or their TV or books and going over to foreign countries and so forth. And let me list the accomplishments. Let me show you the great things that we've done and the way that God has worked in us and through us and among us and so on.

Well, let me give you the equivalent in Paul's life. These are some passages that are brought to mind by what he's saying here and talking about rejoicing in sufferings. Paul probably, I think nobody would argue, had one of the greatest ministries that anybody's ever had.

What did Paul say about his ministry when he talked about it in his life as an apostle? Think of the things that he can claim. Well, you know, I've written umpteen inspired books of Scripture. I visited these cities.

This many people came to Christ. We took a head count at the last big... When I went to Mars Hill there and talked about the unknown God, I think there were probably about 2,500 Athenians that came to Christ as a result of my ministry. And I sure hope you all will remember that as you dig deep in your wallets and contribute to my next trip to Jerusalem and so forth.

What did Paul say about his ministry? It's hard to find him claiming his successes. What he talks about are the tribulations. He says in 1 Corinthians 4, I think God has exhibited us apostles as least of all, as last of all, like men sentenced to death because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men.

We are fools for Christ's sake. But you, talking to these Corinthians, you are wise in Christ. And he's being a little sarcastic here.

He says we are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we are in disrepute. And it's like a contrast.

I think if Paul could see the ministries that tout themselves today, he could probably just include this in his note to them. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we are in disrepute.

To the present hour, we hunger and thirst. We are ill-clad. We are buffeted and homeless.

We labor, working with our own hands. We are reviled, but we bless. We are persecuted, but we endure.

We are slandered, but we try to conciliate. We have become and are now as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things. And this word for refuse is the word used for the contents of the chamber pots that got dumped into the streets in the days before sewers.

He says we're the chamber pot contents of the world. We are the off-scouring of all things. This is not a great, grand, glorious picture that he paints.

And we think, well, maybe he just had a point to make on that particular day. Maybe he was feeling a little down. But in 2 Corinthians, he says the same thing.

He says, we share abundantly. This is 2 Corinthians 1, verse 5. We share abundantly in Christ's sufferings. So through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort also.

There's no need for comfort if you're not suffering. And God is the God of all comfort. If we're not suffering, we don't need comfort.

And so he says, in the same way that we abound in suffering, we abound in comfort. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and your deliverance. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. We do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. We were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.

Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. Once again, that idea of living grace.

He delivered us from so deadly a peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again. Later on in that same letter, in 2 Corinthians 4, verses 7 through 12, he says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are persecuted, but not forsaken.

We are struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying about in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. And once again, that's the arena for faith.

We recognize what God has done for us in sending Christ to die and relieve us of the sin burden and the sin problem. And we also think about His life and that the life that we live now, we can live to God just as He does. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

In just a couple of chapters later, in 2 Corinthians 6, Paul says, we put no obstacle in anyone's way when it concerns the gospel, so that no fault may be found with our ministry. As servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way. And you think, well, now he's going to talk about the testimonies and the number of people that come and so forth.

He says, we commend ourselves in every way, through great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in calamities, in beatings, in imprisonments, tumults, labors, in watching, in hunger, by purity, by knowledge, by forbearance, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, genuine love and truthful speech and the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left, in honor and in dishonor, in ill repute and in good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet we are true. We are treated as unknown and yet we are well known.

We are dying and behold we live. We are punished and yet not killed. We are sorrowful yet always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, having nothing and yet possessing everything.

And that's the great deliverance that Jesus died and was raised again to give us, is that whatever our circumstances are, we can be dying, we can be of ill repute, we can be suffering, afflictions, hardships and calamities and yet at the same time we can be true, we can be well known to God, we can live, we can rejoice, we can make others rich and yet we can possess everything ourselves by focusing on why we're here. This is the opportunity. And taking these things one at a time and exercising faith, we can possess all of these things that God promises.

I'll just read you one more of these. It's amazing how many times Paul does this in his letters when he talks about his ministry. In 2 Corinthians 11 he says, these people who brag on themselves and talk about their great qualifications, are they servants of Christ? I am a better one.

I am talking like a madman with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods.

Once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked. A night and a day I have been adrift at sea on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant? And so when we think about our lives and the declaration of righteousness that we want to receive from God, it's not based on our works, it's not based on our circumstances or what we think we have achieved, it's based on our faith. And Paul's life is a great illustration of this.

Abraham's life is a great illustration of it. And it's a picture of our opportunity to let God do what he does so well, to turn cursing to blessing, to turn adversity to his own glory. But it requires of us one thing and that's the willingness to trust, the willingness to exercise faith and be the recipient of hope and the sharing of the glory of God that he's talking about here in chapter 5. We're going to pause and take our break and when we come back, we'll finish this short section up through the end of verse 5 in chapter 5.