

Romans 5:1-11

1. In order to find common ground between Jews and Gentiles Paul has moved the Torah from requirement to gift (2:17-3:2), so Torah observance is focused on the heart rather than on outward obedience to rules. This places the Jewish Christian in a remarkably unsettling position. Read Walter Wangerin's *Paul*, pp. 85-88 (1st full par.). How would 5:1-11 reassure a Jewish Christian?
2. "Suffering" in v. 3 is the Greek *thlipsis*, literally means "pressures." We have learned in our study of 2 Corinthians and Hebrews that this suffering is not just Christians being thrown in jail or tortured. It also includes the sort of pressures we all encounter when we try to follow Jesus, from watching colleagues get promoted for spending time at work that we spend working for the church to the heartaches and frustrations of lay ministry. What solace does this passage provide in the face of these pressures?
3. Paul presents Abraham as the model for salvation by faith. Paul also makes suffering normative for believers. Briefly, what trials did Abraham face? How did his situation differ from ours in this respect?
4. Having previously warned against boasting (2:17; 3:27), Paul now tells his readers what they *can* boast about. But Paul's meaning goes beyond bragging. "Boast" (2, 3, 11) translates *kauchaomai*, which spans the range from boasting to being proud to glorying or exulting or even rejoicing.¹ This suggests Paul is not merely rebuking the Jews and Gentiles for their boasting (though he is surely doing that). By focusing vv. 1-5 on *rejoicing*, he is also pointing to the *result* of the pouring out in their hearts of God's love by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22).

Listen to the last nine minutes of Tim Keller's sermon on this passage, "Joy". Have you most found joy as a child of God by reflection on your sinfulness?

5. Jesus' death removes the enmity between us and God, and his life saves us (v. 10). What does Jesus' life save us from, as distinct from his death?
6. Paul refers to God's love being "poured into our hearts." Some of the Puritan theologians saw this "pouring" as evidenced in occasional or rare times when we are overwhelmed by God's love, what they called a "sealing" of the Spirit. In the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, but you can be a Christian without having the love of God shed abroad in your heart... All Christians should have it" (quoted in Stott, 143). This is not some sort of "second blessing" but of a deeper awareness of God's love. Scottish Presbyterian Puritan William Guthrie, described it as follows:

It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart; it is a thing better felt than spoken of: it is no audible voice, but it is a ray of glory filling the soul with God...It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when He but mentioned her name— 'Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him..., Master.'...there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or not that was Christ, and if she had any interest in Him. ...it is a present, and, as it were, sensible discovery of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto His likeness; so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the Spirit!
[From "The Christian's Great Interest"]

¹ So while NRSV has boast in vv. 2, 3 and 11, other translations of 5:3 include "glory" (NIV, v. 3), "we can be full of joy" (Phillips, v. 2) and "continue to shout out our praises" (Message; v. 3). Stott (138) goes so far as to translate these three verses as "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (2); "we also rejoice in our sufferings" (3); and "we also rejoice in God" (11).

When do you most experience the love of God: in worship, study, reflection, community, etc.? What of your experiences best fits Paul's "[pouring of] the love of God into your heart?"

7. "Hope" in vv. 2 and 5 is the Greek *elpis*. This word differs from our concept of "hope" in that it's more certain. We "hope it doesn't rain"; *elpis* is "the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment; hope, expectation" (BDAG). Read p. 283 par. 3—284 par. 1 and p. 285 par. 2—end, from Jim Van Tholen's excellent sermon, "Where All Hope Lies." What in Romans 5:1-11 gives us the sure hope, that, despite our personal failing, we can and will "stand" (2) in God's presence, confident in the peace (1) and reconciliation (11) we have through Jesus?

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Fun fact: Calvin also spoke of a believer's being "sealed" by the Holy Spirit, both in an inner conviction of the truth of the Spirit (*Institutes* I.vii.4) but also in "the well-founded belief that God regards us with a Father's love" (commentary on Gal 4:6). [J. K. Parratt, *The Witness of the Holy Spirit: Calvin, the Puritans and St. Paul.*]

<As Abraham's trust was reckoned to him as righteousness, our trust in Jesus' atonement is for us.>

^{5:1}Therefore,

we have peace

since

we are justified

by faith,

with **God**

through our Lord **Jesus Christ,**

we have obtained access

²through [Jesus]

to this grace

we stand;

in [this grace]; and

we rejoice [boast]

in our hope

of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but

we also rejoice

in our sufferings,

knowing that

suffering **produces** endurance, ⁴and

endurance **produces** character, and

character **produces** hope, ⁵and

hope **does not disappoint** us,

because God's love has been poured

into our hearts

through the **Holy Spirit**

that has been given to us.

Leader's Notes

This brief passage provides the introduction to Paul's powerful arguments of chapters 5-8. Here Paul's language changes to "we" as he describes the immense benefits for all of salvation by grace. While a Jewish believer has already been reassured of the value of the law, Paul here presents the riches of the gospel. Again, he addresses boasting, suggesting one or both parties had been engaging in this. The word for "boasting", however, has a wide lexical range and can mean rejoicing as well, giving this passage a very positive flavor, despite the centrality here of suffering.

The truths in this passage are basic, but also foundational. Because they are basic, they may be hard to really apprehend. The goal of these questions is to turn over in our minds these basic truths to try to see past the patina or familiarity.

Paul made full use of parallelism, as indicated by the sentence diagram of vv. 1-5. It's also worth noting that all three members of the Trinity make an appearance. While it is sometimes suggested that the Trinity cannot be found in the Bible, it is implicit in many passages, such as this one.

Note: there is a large amount of overlap between questions 4 and 6. The leader may want to choose one or the other.