

## *“The Return to Romans”*

### **Romans - The Gospel of God**

Romans 5:1-5

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**Jeff:** Our gracious God in heaven, we are thankful for the many blessings of life. Chief among them is being in a relationship with You the triune God, through the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of His Spirit working in us. Father, we thank You for the gift of the Spirit who leads our thoughts to Christ, who reminds us daily that we belong to You and that we are children of the living God, and that we have a place at Your table. Father, thank You for His enabling way of helping us to understand that our conscience is cleansed, that we stand before You guiltless through Christ, that we also possess the righteousness of Christ. And Lord, as we grow up into that righteousness through our sanctification we pray that You will continually give us the resources as they are in Christ, and so freely given.

Father, we come before You today, asking that You will strengthen us for yet another day. And for some the days have been difficult and there is uncertainty. And we think about Matt and his work, and ask that You would continually strengthen him day by day. We pray that You'd give him encouragement. And Lord, we ask that You would give him a sense of direction. Lord, whether or not his company lets him go, we pray that he would have assurance, steadfast hope, and an understanding that You care for him more than the sparrows, more than the grass in the field, so much more than those aspects of creation which You use to beautify creation and to serve Your people. Father, we ask that You will indeed bless him. Father, we also ask that You'll be with his cousin. And we pray, Father, that Your hand would be upon her for good. And Lord, we pray that You'll encourage her heart. We pray that You'll give her health.

Lord, we pray for Gregg as well. And Lord, we ask that You will, as You have taken him obviously into the valley of tears, that You will teach him while he's there, and that You'll instruct him in these providences that are difficult. Lord, we oftentimes find ourselves in difficult ways. And yet we need to be reminded that some of the graces that You give to us often grow best in winter, as some of the old Puritans used to say. And we know that by experience, by looking at the world around us. For instance, when we think about the corn in the summer and how we can actually hear it growing in the evening hours, we recognize that sometimes we too grow in the same way. Although it's imperceptible and often painful, we know that Your hand is upon us and we are growing. Lord, we ask that You'll be with Gregg, and that You'll strengthen him and encourage his heart through all this.

Also Kevin. Lord, we ask not only for him, but also for his wife who cares for him, who opted not to have a knee replacement so that she could care for him. Father, we pray that You'll bless them both, especially in light of needing his teeth removed.

Father, we pray for our brother Bruce. And we ask that Your hand would be upon him and his wife. And Lord, we ask that You will indeed encourage their hearts and strengthen them by Your grace. And Father, we pray that You would do all of these things for not only the good of the people involved, but most of all for Your glory and for the purposes of Your kingdom. And we ask it in Jesus' precious and blessed name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

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**Don Maurer:** Excuse me, Jeff.

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Don:** What is chiasm?

**Jeff:** It’s a view of the thousand-year reign in the early church.

**Don:** Okay, because it bothered John Calvin. I’ll be talking a little about that tonight. You have your Paideia group; I have my Calvin group. I don’t know, I just can’t help but be chilly when it’s so cold out with this kind of weather, and when I put together kidney beans and ground meat.

**Jeff:** You know, I was worried when he told us he got that whistle. *(Laughter)* The germs have obviously affected him. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** I put it on my desk. It keeps away the ghosties, the beasties, and things that go bump in the night.

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ted Wood:** Robert Burns.

**Don:** Yeah, right.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let’s take up chapter 5 in Romans. And let me read just a few verses. I’ll just read the first five today, and then we’ll start there: Romans chapter 5 and the first five verses.

*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*“Not only that, but we rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance. And endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

Well, let’s think about this today. But in order to think about this text and some of the things that I’m going to bring to you, I want us to think about how we ended chapter 4, because that’s an important thing when you consider where we’re going. One of the things that we realize is that in chapter 4 Paul was impressing upon us that Abraham was not saved by virtue of anything that he did. He was not saved by his works. He was not saved by the sign of circumcision. He was saved by faith alone. And that faith was credited to him, or reckoned to him, or imputed to him by God.

Now one of the things that we have a tendency to wonder about—and I’m not going to spend a lot of time with it now because we spent some time with it before,—because we noticed in chapter 4, that the thing that was seemingly imputed was faith. And yet if it was his faith that was imputed as righteousness, then seemingly it is something that Abraham did, and that’s his righteousness.

Well, remember that I said to you at the time we looked at that that this is a synecdoche. In other words Paul is using a part for the whole, because he doesn’t say in other places like Philippians 3, that Paul was saved by the imputation of his own faith as righteousness to himself. He says that faith was an instrument by which Abraham receives and by which we receive the righteousness of God. So why is it that he seemingly is using faith for the whole? That is to say, not only the instrument by which he receives the righteousness, but also the righteousness which he receives by faith?

And that’s called a synecdoche. He’s doing just that; he’s using a part for the whole. So if I say something like this, if I said, “Are you going to talk to the suits today?”, well

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those of you who are in business would know that I’m not asking if you are going to the tailor and standing there and talking in front of the suit rack, right? What you would understand is, I’m going to work. And I’m going to talk to the executives, and so on. Suits becomes a synecdoche, a way of standing in for the whole, though it’s just a part.

And that’s what we have here. We have Paul basically using faith to sort of sum up not only the instrument, but also the thing received by the instrument. And so why is he doing that? Well, he’s doing that because he’s not going to spend time now talking to us about the inner workings of how one receives the righteousness of Christ. But what he’s doing now is, he’s helping us to understand that this righteousness that we gain is not by anything that we do. It’s by God working in us and not by us working before God. And that’s the idea.

And that is summed up for us in the last part. He says, *“The words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised Him from the dead—Jesus our Lord—who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification.”*

So here we have this idea. Don’t forget that it wasn’t just that he was reckoned righteous or accounted righteous. Those words weren’t just for himself; those words were for us as well. And then he’s going to move on into chapter 5. And he’s going to develop for us this whole idea of imputation.

What was imputed? What was it that was reckoned to our account? He gave us a shorthand way of thinking about it in chapter 4 so that we remember that it’s not by circumcision; it’s not by works; it’s not by anything that we do. But it’s by Christ working in us and for us and on our behalf that we are imputed or reckoned righteous. Now he’s going to work that out in chapter 5. And that’s how the chapter is going to begin.

But I want you to think about the chapter as a whole for just a minute, and not just as a whole of itself. But I want you to think about chapter 5 in terms of a broader swath of Romans. And what I mean by that is that it is a broader swath. When you think about what starts in chapter 5, you can trace its themes all the way back through chapter 8. And I’m going to show you that.

But one of the things that I want you to see is this. And I think this quote really does sum it up.

John Murray was a systematic theologian from Westminster Seminary during its heyday. And he says, *“We cannot escape the notes of assurance and exaltation.”* And he’s talking about not only what we find in chapter 5, but he’s talking about what we find in the rest of these chapters: 5-8.

And so for instance, one of the things that we recognize is that there’s something of an inclusion when we look at chapters 5-8. And Douglas Moo who’s a New Testament scholar points this out. And he shows us that in 5:1-11 and 8:18-39, which are really the beginning sections of chapter 5 and the ending sections of chapter 8, one of the things that we find is a high volume of repetition of words.

I hope you can see this. For instance you can see how *love, justify, glory, peace, hope, tribulation, saved, endurance*—all of those words appear in the beginning section of chapter 5 and the ending section of chapter 8. In other words, this is the idea of the inclusion.

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In other words, let me put it like this. We oftentimes think of an inclusio or an inclusion as a book ending, using a word, a phrase or an idea. But in this sense what we find is a grouping of words that come at the very head of the section, and that close the section out. So what we have is that we have a couple of bookends.

Now when you look at those words, one of the things that you realize is that all of those words speak to us about assurance and exaltation. I mean, we think about justification and love and glory and peace, and all of those words going towards or helping us to think about the assurance that we have in Jesus Christ. And so it's a beautiful picture, and it's something that I want us to unpack as we go.

Let me talk to you about Murray's summary. It's kind of an interesting thing. We think about the blessings of justification. There are several points here, points that may or may not interest us immediately. But I think they ought to at least inform us how we ought to think about Scripture from a broader standpoint.

What do I mean by that? Well there's a textual point here that again may or may not interest you. There are two words in the Greek that look very similar. And you're not going to be able to see this because (it) doesn't work on the screen. But you'll notice that's *ekamin*. And then there's an *omega*: *ekomini*. Now when you look at those words you find that *ekamin* is in the indicative, and *ekomini* is a subjunctive.

Now what does all this mean? Well, if you were to translate these words with those tenses in mind this is what it would look like. *“We have peace”* would be the indicative. *“Let us have peace”* would be the subjunctive.

Now let's read chapter 5 with that in mind. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace.”* That's the indicative. Since we've been justified we have peace with God. Now that's typically the way we think about it, because we think that justification brings peace.

Now there is evidence in the manuscripts that it could be a subjunctive; in other words, that it could be an *omega*. So it would look like this. In other words, the idea of “have” would be a subjunctive. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, let us have peace with God.”*

Now that's the difference. Do you feel the difference?

**Ted:** Oh sure.

**Jeff:** Yes, of course you do. Now I'm going to say just a couple of things about this. I'll answer some questions if you like, but my point would be this. This is a real textual variant, okay? When you open up the Greek New Testament you look at the notes at the bottom, and you're going to find that there is evidence that there is a subjunctive present. And therefore it could be translated *“let us have peace with God.”* However, most translations go with the indicative: *“we have peace with God.”*

John Murray in his commentary on Romans actually favors the subjunctive. The interesting thing about it though is that he says that it doesn't matter.

**Ted:** No.

**Jeff:** And it doesn't matter, does it? Because what he is saying is this. We are always being invited to attain to what we already possess. And so for instance, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places. Therefore look to Christ in the heavenly places, right? You are light; therefore walk in the light. We're always being invited into the benefits we already possess.

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And Murray says this is no different. If we say we’ve been justified by faith, therefore we have peace with God, or that we’ve been justified by faith; let us have peace with God, the sense has not changed. We’ve been justified by faith. And either we’re being reminded of the peace we have, or we’re being invited into the peace we already have. And therefore in one sense it doesn’t really change anything. So whether it’s an *omicron* or an *omega*, whether it’s an indicative or a subjunctive, whether it’s “we have peace with God” or “let us have peace with God,” it really doesn’t change our theology. So here’s an example of a textual variant that’s not only viable, but it’s an important variant. But it really doesn’t change any theology that we have. And I think in some ways that should be quite an assurance to us. And I knew Don was going to be the guy. Go ahead, Don.

**Don Maurer:** I think your point is well taken. I have heard debates between Roman Catholics and Reformed people on that very verse. And the Roman Catholics would be quick to point out “*let us have peace.*” In other words, strive to do everything you can to maintain it. And then the Reformed person would say no; we have peace which is already ours. But I think that the way you brought it together is really good. We have peace; therefore, let’s take advantage of it.

**Jeff:** Well I think that the whole point of what I’m saying really depends on chapter 4. And that is Paul asking the question: Was Abraham justified by anything that he did? And his answer is very clear: no. He was justified before he was circumcised, before he’d done anything. And therefore Paul establishes the indicative of God; that is, God does it on our behalf that we might be saved. And so when you get to chapter 5 verse 1 and you run into this textual variant, you realize that whether or not it’s an indicative or a subjunctive, it doesn’t matter if you keep the context of chapter 4 in mind.

If you divorce it from that context and you say that apparently we’ve been put in a state of grace that we have to work to maintain, then obviously that’s an issue. But I think that divorces 5:1 from the previous chapter.

Well as I said to you, Murray does favor the subjunctive, but he adopts the indicative. And so most translations adopt the indicative as well. And I think personally that with textual evidence there’s always sort of an external and an internal weighing of the evidence. And in this case I think it’s good for us to adopt the indicative.

But clearly he goes on to say that it doesn’t disrupt the sense. And I’m going to give you a quote from Murray. He says, “*Since we have peace with God*”—and this is what Murray would say—“*let us take full advantage of this status. Let us take what is already ours.*”

And Murray says this: “*It is not the composure and tranquility of our minds and hearts. It is the status of peace flowing from reconciliation—verses 10 and 11—and reflects primarily upon God’s alienation from us and our instatement in His favor. Peace of heart and mind proceeds from peace with God.*”

And I think that’s important. What he’s saying is very true. In other words, if we adopt the subjunctive—that is, “*let us have peace with God*”—, we need to remember that that’s a truism, isn’t it? Just because God has made it so that I have peace, think about it; think about your own life.

Every day you get up, and your faith is either weak or strong. Or you have long periods of strong faith, or maybe you go through a valley and your faith is weak. But has God moved in all of that? Of course He hasn’t. Has God’s word changed on your behalf in all of that? No, of course it hasn’t.

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But what’s different is your faith; how you approach Him and your response to Him, right? And maybe you’re going through a really cold and dry spell. And you’re not laying claim to the things that you possess already in Christ that He has claimed for you.

And I think James summarizes this in the fourth chapter of his epistle when he basically says, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”* I think the idea is, draw near to God because He hasn’t gone anywhere, right? And once you draw near to Him in faith, then you’re going to discover that He’s in the same place He was before. That’s the idea. Okay, any questions or thoughts beyond that? Okay.

**Ted:** I was going to say that this is really important. It might strike folks as kind of academic or theoretical. But this is so important because so many—and Don, you pointed out Roman Catholics—but I would say this goes for a lot of Protestants as well—in that they judge where they are in Christ by how their experience is. So we were on a trip to Israel a couple weeks ago. And our pastor got into a discussion with the bus driver who was a Muslim. Our pastor asked him about his Muslim faith.

And he said, “Well, I’m not a very good Muslim. I don’t pray five times a day.” So he went all through these. “I believe, but I’m not that good of a Muslim.”

And I thought, that’s so true for a lot of Christians. They say, “Well, you know, I’ve been saved. But I’m not that good of a Christian.”

**Jeff:** But they have a doctrine of “once saved, always saved” that’s kind of a messed-up thing like evangelicals.

**Ted:** I’m not going to talk about Islam so much; I’m talking about how it affects us.

**Jeff:** No, that’s really true.

**Ted:** The essential reality is that my life is Christ. *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* *“My life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Ted:** I have been made to sit with Him in the heavenlies. I’ve been crucified with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him; Romans 6. All of these things kind of establish who we are and give us joy in our living, because our experience is not especially joyful many times.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Let me give you one more example of what we’re saying here. You know, take for instance the marriage status, right? You’re married to your wife. That is a contract where you’ve already done it, right? It’s a done deal, right? You may not feel especially close to your wife at a certain point in your marriage. Maybe at other times you feel close to her. But the marriage contract has not changed, right? But maybe there’s something in your relationship that has either helped to cool things off or has strengthened things. But that’s your response to her, not the changing of the contract.

And so what Ted is saying is that we are in Christ. But the reason why we feel either cold or warm in our relationship toward God is because of how we respond. The beautiful thing about it is—and this is the wonderful thing, the thing that sometimes you just cling to—even when you feel distant from your spouse, you at least remember that the thing that’s holding you together is the marriage contract, right? And on that basis I can move closer. At least we have something in common, even if it’s just that. And I don’t want to minimize that.

And it’s the same way with God in Christ, right? It’s by virtue of the covenant of redemption, the covenant between the Father and the Son, the covenant of grace that’s the

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outworking of that. I may feel very distant from Him. But I know what He did for me. And I move closer to Him on that basis.

**Jordan Obaker:** This reminds me. I’ve been spending some time reading through the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** They talk about the perseverance of the saints. I think something I didn’t appreciate growing up was that there are things we should be doing on an ongoing basis as we persevere.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** It’s not for me to say that because Christ did something I don’t find the time and it’s not for us.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** And we can neglect those means of grace.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** Those means of grace being the Word, prayer, the sacraments.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** And I know when we recently had Communion at our church, and before, Jeff, you were mentioning what the Westminster Confession of Faith says about it, and preparing for it. And when you go back and you look through it, it says that when you’ve taken Communion, you should reflect on how you are feeling afterwards. And if you’re not feeling encouraged because of that sacrament, did you neglect the preparation going into it, thinking about what Christ has done for you? It’s a really humbling thing to say, “Am I neglecting the means of grace that Christ has given me to persevere?” And I think that all of us can say that we probably are. It’s given to us for our health and for our assurance.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** If we’re feeling like this, maybe it’s because we’re neglecting what He has given us.

**Jeff:** Yes. Jordan is referencing chapter 16, section 3 of the Westminster Confession. I’ll just read a part of it. This is the chapter on perseverance. It says, “*Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins.*” And so that’s one of the things that you were referencing there in the beginning.

**Ted:** Some churches substitute grape juice for wine. That’s great negligence.

**Jeff:** Nice! Whoa! *(Laughter)*

**Don Maurer:** It says “the fruit of the vine,” Ted; it doesn’t say “wine.”

**Jeff:** You know, when I was younger you would be part of an awkward situation. And then you would kind of jump in and kind of straighten things out. And now I’m just kind of like—

**Ted:** Whatever.

**Jeff:** Now it’s kind of like I wonder how this is going to work out. *(Laughter)* I need that silent space just for the rumble to take place.

All right. So let’s think now for a minute about the mediation of Christ. I want you to notice the prepositions that are here. Notice now: “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith.*” Now notice that. “*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” So (we are) justified by faith through Christ.

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Now remember what I said before. In chapter 4 he was using faith as a synecdoche. He was using it to represent the whole; that is to say, the means and what the means bring.

Now he’s parsing those things out. Now all of a sudden we see that faith is the means by which one receives the righteousness of Christ, or that which is in Christ. And as he goes on into the chapter he’s going to explain what it was that Christ did for us, and what it was that was imputed to us, and that by faith. So now he’s beginning to sort these things out; he’s beginning to parse them out for us.

And you realize that all of these spiritual blessings are then in Christ. And one of the things that I think is really important for us to notice, if we could just go back to the Westminster Confession for just a minute, one of the things that it talks about is this. And I can’t remember which question this is; it’s in the Larger Catechism. If you’ve been reading through it, Jordan, maybe you can help me with it. But it talks about our salvation and lists the benefits. It says, “*justification, sanctification, and all the other benefits that flow from our union with Jesus Christ.*” Does that ring a bell or not?

**Jordan:** The back end; is that right?

**Jeff:** What’s that again?

**Jordan:** I haven’t gotten that far yet.

**Jeff:** I don’t know; I can’t remember where that is now. Anyway, the idea then is, what’s the lynch pin—or the center; that may be a better way to say it—of Paul’s theology? Well, the center of Paul’s theology is union with Christ. And I’ve talked to you about this before: the *duplex gratia Dei*—the twofold grace of God experienced in union with Christ. That is to say—and I’ve summarized it like this—that we possess all forensic benefits and all transformative benefits in union with Christ, right? But when we think about what those things are, we think justification; we think adoption; we think sanctification. We think of all those benefits are possessed by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ. And that union with Jesus Christ is brought about by a faith union. But that faith doesn’t come until after regeneration.

In other words, here we are; we’re down on the ground. And we are resurrected by the regenerating work of God’s Spirit. He brings the new birth. And when the new birth comes about in our lives, what happens? Well, we’re converted. And what are things that we lump under conversion? Faith and repentance. In other words the blood begins to flow through our veins. And the proverbial blood that flows through our veins is faith and repentance. In other words, what life looks like in us is faith and repentance. That’s why Luther said that a Christian life ought to be a life of believing and repenting. That’s always taking place in the life of a believer. And those are marks of regeneration—what’s happened to us—all those things in Christ.

And so spiritual blessings are enjoyed through Christ’s mediatorial activity. I want you to see this. Notice: “*through our Lord*”; verse 1. “*Through Him*”; verse 2. That is, we get the clear sense that justification and all other graces that we’re going to see in this section of Scripture are through our Lord.

Okay. Maybe I need to get back another way just to put a stress on it. When we think about salvation we typically think about something that we even possess both outside of Christ and outside of the church. In other words, salvation is something that someone claims through saying a prayer or standing up, raising a hand, going down an aisle. And so someone can say, “I’m saved.”



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And the whole point of Scripture is not that. The whole point of Scripture is that one is saved because one has been united to Christ. And we see it when we see it in this way. My justification before God is Jesus’ justification. It says in 1 Timothy 3:16 that Jesus was justified, vindicated in the Spirit; that is, He was justified. It talks about how He sanctified Himself during His entire life. His sanctification is our sanctification. Remember, at His baptism He was adopted. His adoption is our adoption. In other words, all of the benefits that we possess were first His. That is to say, when I am brought into union with Christ, the things that were Christ’s are now made mine, okay? And so salvation is never possessed apart from Christ.

But it’s never possessed apart from the church. In other words, when we think about Christ’s church we think about His body. Remember what He says to Paul when Paul was Saul on the Damascus road. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute My church?” No; He says, “*Why do you persecute Me?*” That is to say that those who belong to Him and are united with Him are His body.

And that’s where we get the visible and the invisible church. Those who are united to Him, those people in this time and in all times, are part of the invisible church. But those who are part of the visible church are here and now professing faith in Jesus Christ, making a profession of faith in this world at this moment. That’s the visible church. And so we’re talking about the body of Christ, both invisible and visible.

We recognize that in the visible church there will be tares along with the wheat. But in the invisible church, that is, the church that is in Jesus Christ both now and in the past, and will be by election, those are never anything but wheat, right? That’s the idea. Does that make sense? All right, so it’s through the Lord.

Now here he talks about access to the Lord. We have access to God. “*Through Him we also have obtained access by faith.*” Access in this religious sense.

Now what is that sense? That sense is this unhindered presence. Now let me help you think about this for just a minute. I know I’ve talked to you about this before. But I think it’s important for you to hear this again. I think it’s been a while since I’ve said anything about this.

One of the things that we talk about is that we talk about a progressive revelation. That is to say that the gospel that was given in Genesis 3:15 is just a seed. When we look at the Gospels and the Epistles that explain this gospel, that’s a full presentation versus the seed. And so there’s a progressive aspect to revelation.

And yet one of the things that we talk about is that we talk about experience. In fact we often say this. We say, “Boy, I wish my experience was like Asaph the seer who writes one of the Psalms. I wish it were like David’s experience.” As if to say, “I’d like to go back and have their experience.” When in fact their experience was at a lower level, at a lower grade than our experiences.

Why? Why do I say that? Because the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament never gives an experience that normally exceeds the revelation that’s been given, right? In other words, the experience He gives is consistent with the revelation that He gives, with one exception. And that one exception is the prophet.

Amos chapter 3 says that God does nothing without first revealing it to His prophets. And remember Elisha? Elisha was just a strange dude. I mean, this is a guy that if we were living in his time I’m not sure he would really like any of us, right? (*Laughter*) You know what I’m saying?

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Do you remember when he’s in the new room that the Shunemite woman made for him? And you can tell she’s right there, right? She’s standing right there. And he says to Gehazi, *“What shall we do for the woman who has treated us so?”*

“I don’t know; why don’t you ask her?” Gehazi says, “I don’t know. Maybe she wants a baby.” And then, you know, on that basis “She shall have a baby,” right? And she does.

And then this is the story where he’s out in the field with his father. *“My head, my head!”* He goes home and then he dies, right?

And the Shunemite woman says, “I’m not having this.” And she goes off to Mount Carmel. She goes to Elisha. And Elisha sends Gehazi and Gehazi tries to stop her.

And what does Elisha say? This is really fascinating. He says, *“Let her come, because the LORD has kept this from me.”* In other words, this is an anomaly. “I don’t know why she’s coming to me. The LORD has kept this from me,” because the Lord regularly reveals things to His prophets, and in this case He did not.

Now that just gives you a taste of the prophetic: that there was intimacy with God. That intimacy was enjoyed between God and the prophet.

Now when you get to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 2 says that the last days have started. And in the last days he says that “your children are going to be prophets. Your old men are going to see visions,” all of these things. All of this is prophetic language. Everybody who is a Christian is going to be a prophet, in some ways even more.

And we say, “What in the world is that? Why am I not uttering prophecy?” And we miss the point. The point is that in the coming climactic moment of Christ everybody enjoys the intimacy with God that was enjoyed by the prophets. In other words, every believer now has access. Every believer has access to God in the same way through Jesus Christ and enjoys intimacy with God that was enjoyed by the prophet.

And that’s the point of it. The point of it is intimacy. The point of it is proximity. The point of it is presence, unhindered presence.

You know, we’re no longer Hannah, having to approach the ark through the High Priest who thinks we’re drunk because we’re so upset over our circumstances. And then he realizes she’s not drunk and he has to speak a word of encouragement. That’s not the case anymore, right? We are in the Holy of Holies through the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that the Old Testament saints were not because their experience was not our experience, unless you were a prophet. Does that make sense?

So the idea that we have here in Romans chapter 5 is this idea of unhindered intimacy. We enter into the presence of God and enjoy that access to Him.

And notice this: *“in which we stand,”* that is, we’ve taken our position. Let me put it this way: We boast in this because of the hope we have of the glory of God in us.

I’ll say this and then we’ll end. Of course this hope is not the hope of the ancients, right? The hope of the ancients was something that was foreign to us and I think is foreign to us in some ways. When we think about the ancients, we think about Pandora’s box.

Remember Pandora’s box? Pandora’s box was this idea that Pandora opens her box and lets all the evils into the world. That is the Greek and Roman explanation for the way the world is—the disruption and the chaos and the corruption in the world.

What was the last evil to crawl out of the box? Hope was the last evil to crawl out of the box.

## ***“The Return to Romans”***

Now Frederic Nietzsche was really a pre-Socratic philosopher; he was a specialist in the pre-Socratic philosophy. What did he say? He said this; this is a fascinating thing. He said that hope was the last evil because it was used by the gods to string human beings along so they wouldn't kill themselves. If you could always give them hope you could always string them along.

Now that's not Christian hope. Christian hope is a certain expectation of the promise of God being fulfilled. In other words, let me put it like this.

If I buy my daughter a bike because she's been wanting this particular bike, and I tell her; I say, "I have the bike, honey; don't worry. There are none at the store. When we go to the store it's not going to look like there are any at the store. But I want you to know that I bought the bike."

"Can I have the bike, Dad?"

"No, you can't have the bike now; you can have it in five months, on your birthday." The hope is that she's going to get what I've secured for her and that what I've promised is hers. She's going to get that in five months, right? That's her hope.

Now you say, "I don't know about that." Think about this. Think about the way we are. My intern just gave a sermon this past Sunday evening. And I think this is a fantastic illustration of how we ought to think. He told us that he can't watch a college football game of his favorite team unless he records it. And he said that he has to know the end before he can watch the game. He has to know that they win in order to watch the game, because he gets too anxious and he gets all worked up. So he has to know the end.

So he said, "I can know the end; I can know that we win. But at the end of the first quarter, if it's 21-0, I still get anxious. And I still think to myself, did we win?"

*(Laughter)* You know, it's sort of like watching the Titanic and hoping it doesn't sink this time. *(Laughter)* You know what I'm saying?

The idea is, this is us. Even if it's certain and we know we win, we will still battle. That's part of the old man, right? And so the certain expectation is that God has promised that it will come to pass. And we need to believe Him for the promise.

Murray says it like this: "*We project ourselves into the future in hope.*" I love that statement; it's from his commentary in Romans. We'll pick up the next time after that. But let's pray now.

Father, thank You for this day, for the blessing of life in Christ and our time together. Father, thank You for the promises that You give and the future hope we have. Lord, help us today to project ourselves forward by that hope, knowing that these promises that You've made are ours in Jesus Christ. And so, Lord, let us indeed, as we have been seated in the heavenlies, let us strive to be in the heavenlies, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*