

“The Return to Romans” Pt 3

Romans the Gospel of God

Romans 5:1-5

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Jeff: Sometimes we have a tendency to think about identity issues as just pertaining to the whole trans-gender community, and so on. But apparently, as you are well informed, there are those who would like to identify as all different sorts of things. And so apparently Don would like to be identified as an able man—able to see. And so he went to the Department of Transportation. And this picture was snapped of him while he was there. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: A picture of a man with a cane driving a car.

Jeff: But that’s a scary thing to me, to see him behind the wheel of a car. *(Laughter)* I don’t know about you, but that’s a scary thing to me, to see him behind the wheel of a car. And I don’t know the outcome either; I don’t know what happened. So we’ll have to ask him when he comes back what they ended up doing, if they ended up giving him a license or not; I just don’t know. One thing I can say to the people out there is that I hope there are no new people here to see this. *(Laughter)* The last time I did something like this to Don there was somebody new here, and we never saw him again. *(Laughter)* That’s true; I could see him. I debated on whether to do it because he was shaking his head the whole time I was making fun of Don. So I’m just glad. Yeah, okay. Well why don’t we pray and we’ll get started.

Our gracious Father in heaven, we give You thanks and praise for who You are, for how You loved us in Christ Jesus when we were yet sinners. You sent Him to be our Savior and we’re thankful for that. We’re thankful for Your Holy Spirit who indwells us, who has brought the work of Christ to bear upon us, clothed us in His righteousness and made us alive so that we can see the things that You did on our behalf. So Father, thank You for all these things. We gather before You because You have called us to Yourself—called us out of the world, called us to the wonderful light of Your Son’s kingdom. And Lord, we’re like the pilgrim in *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Perhaps we don’t always see that light clearly; yet we always run toward it, and that’s sanctification. And we’re thankful for that process of holiness that You’ve established in us by Your working in us. And so Father, we pray that You would continue to work in us that which is pleasing in Your sight.

We pray, Father, that we would continually be conformed to Your Son’s image. We ask that Your hand would be upon us for good in all of our endeavors. Father, whether it would be in the workplace, whether it would be raising our families, we pray certainly that You will lay Your hand upon us and put Your blessing upon us and our work, as long as we conform to Your will. And Lord, we ask that where we don’t that You’ll correct us gently, bringing us back into alignment with Your word.

And so, Father, we ask that You will not only bless us, but we certainly pray that You will bless our families, those with whom we have to do in our workplace and everywhere else that we find ourselves.

Father, we certainly pray for our brother Kevin. We ask that Your hand would be upon him. We certainly pray for his wife as she cares for him. We pray for Don while he’s absent from us and ask that Your hand would be upon him as well.

Lord, we ask that You’ll open our eyes to the truth of Your word more and more, and that You’ll deepen our love for it and our understanding of it. Father, we pray that You will do good

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things in us, that You will work what is pleasing in Your sight and make these things last for all eternity. And we pray in Christ’s precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well I want us to turn back to Romans chapter 5 today. And I want us to continue looking at the first five verses of Romans chapter 5. Just for you guys that are coming in, so you know, Don went to the Department of Transportation to try to get his driver’s license. This was snapped of him while he was there. *(Laughter)* I don’t know the outcome. We’ll have to wait for Don to get back and report to us what happened. *(Laughter)* So I’m as concerned as you are. But let me read Romans chapter 5, verses 1-5.

You know, actually this is kind of great, not having him here to kind of spout back, you know? You know how that would go. He would just talk over me and so forth, and it would be hard.

Ted: You wouldn’t win.

Jeff: So Romans chapter 5, 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 our 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.”

Now let’s think about this. What I want us to think about today is really Christian experience. There are certainly some things in this text that I want us to revisit, especially as we think about what is ahead. And certainly what is ahead is talk of imputation—the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us.

But what I want us to talk about today is Christian experience. I want us to talk about that aspect of what Christ does in us since or because we have been justified. Hey, Ted.

Ted: I surrender all.

Jeff: I just caught you with the corner of my eye. So I want you to think about this in this kind of way, if I can just set it up like this. One of the things that we’ve all experienced if we’ve had a father who has taken some care to invest in our lives and to help to mold and shape us, is that we have distinctive character qualities. And someone may notice those character qualities that we have and comment on them. And one of the things that would be true of someone who has a healthy admiration and respect of a father is that they would immediately reflect and say, “Well, my dad when I was growing up did this, and he instilled this and that and the other thing. And so the idea would be that we were shaped, we were molded. We went through the process of childhood and so on, and we emerged after the image of our father in the way that he shaped us. And in some sense that’s what we find in this text, and I want us to think about that today.

For instance, one of the things that Paul says is that we boast in our sufferings. We not only boast in our God; in fact we only boast in our God. But derivatively we boast in those things that our Father did so that we can become what it is that we are. And certainly one of the things that happens to us in our lives is that we experience suffering. And so Paul says that we boast in our sufferings. And we boast in our sufferings, not because we’re masochists, not because we enjoy suffering. But we boast in our suffering because we know that it’s God’s hammer, His chisel. It’s

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His tool that He uses to shape and craft us after His own image. And so Paul says that God uses trials in order to build us up.

Think about this progression that we find in the text. He says, “*We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings.*” And then he says this: “*Knowing that suffering produces endurance,*” and so on.

Now I want you to think about that for a minute. He is thinking about progression, one thing building upon another. And so the idea is that suffering produces perseverance; it produces endurance.

Now just think about that for a minute. When we experience suffering, I can’t think of too many people who have a right perspective in the midst of suffering. Usually people are seeking to get out from under the suffering as soon as they can. They’re not praying something like this: Hey, would you pray for me so that while I endure this suffering,--and by the way I couldn’t replicate this in my life even if I wanted to;--so while I endure this suffering that I know God is providentially overseeing in my life, while I endure that, help me to glean and learn and derive everything that I can from these moments, because I know that I couldn’t replicate it again if I wanted to. But I know that in the midst of this situation I’d rather not be in I know that God is going to shape me and use it to my good, to my benefit, to my spiritual good. I know that I’m going to suffer loss as I come out of this, and I don’t know what I’ll lose in the end. But pray for me in the midst of it.

You know, that’s the kind of thing that we rarely hear. Usually you hear this sort of thing: Help me to get through this as fast as I can because I don’t want to be in it, right? And yet the idea is that this suffering actually produces something in us. And that something that suffering produces is certainly endurance; it produces perseverance.

The question that we have to ask is how? How in the world does suffering produce something in us except sorrow? And we all know that it produces sorrow within us. So how does it produce something else?

Well in verse 3 we’re told that suffering brings about endurance. Now think about that word *endurance*. It means the ability to remain under, that is, the ability to remain under the suffering that we’re experiencing.

Now I want you to know something. It doesn’t magically do that. We have to be instructed in how to do that and to do that. And if we’re not instructed to do that we typically won’t. We typically will react in a way that is typical of anyone who faces a situation that’s uncomfortable and painful. We just simply want to get out from under it.

But the idea is that we need to live under it. I was counseling a couple of people years ago whose marriage was on the rocks. The wife had had an affair; it was truly a desperate situation. There was a member of my congregation who was a relative of this person. And my congregant came up and said, “My relative is in a hotel. She’s threatening to take her life; their affair has been exposed. Would you talk to this person?”

I said, “Sure I would.” And so I went and talked to her. I was able to talk some sense into her, and brought her husband into the picture. The three of us met, and they agreed right there on the spot that if possible they would try to fix their marriage. And so we started meeting.

And it was really interesting because I could tell that the husband just wanted to get on the other side of this, and really quickly. And the wife did too, but I think less so.

I’ll never forget. I was talking to them one day in their house. And I said to them, “You know, if you could short circuit this process, you could just short circuit this process and just move

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yourself in a time machine to the end without having the experience of going through this, you will be poorer for it, and your marriage will be poorer for it. But if you really and truly suffer through each day of getting better in your marriage with your spouse, you’ll come out of this richer.”

And you know, you could see the light come on in his eyes. That’s not the way that we’re typically wired. We’re wired to want to be done with the pain. And so we need to learn to remain under it—not to keep ourselves in suffering unnecessarily, right? But while we’re in this providential situation we need to learn from it, and we need to grow from it, because we will. Any thoughts or maybe some comments that you have as a result? Yes?

Ted: I think the fact of the matter is that even in the church where many of us are suffering, no one prays for this.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: It is absolutely without exception. We never pray to rejoice in our sufferings.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: We’ve talked about this in our church. We acknowledge this as a fact, and we don’t pray for it.

Jeff: Do you know what we do pray for?

Ted: What, in your church?

Jeff: No. Do you know what people do pray for? They pray for patience. And then when they get opportunities to be patient, they lose the patience.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: It’s kind of the example of this, right? Why in the world?—that kind of thing. And really God has given them an opportunity through His providence to be patient. That’s kind of what we’re talking about, right? And even when they do pray for something like that,--

Ted: Just one other thing; we know this from sports: no pain, no gain.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: I mean, we apply that all the time. I remember many workouts were very painful.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: But I knew that if I wanted to win on Saturday I would have to go through that pain Monday through Friday.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: I mean, it’s a hard struggle. And we just simply do not pray this way.

Jeff: Yeah. And let me just add to your illustration. For those of you who do work out or have worked out, you know that soreness was a good thing. If you were sore after working out you felt good, like I’ve done my body good. I’ve broken down muscle tissue and it’s repairing. And I’m going to be stronger or I’m going to be more fit, or whatever at the end. And so it’s good for you. And so you actually go into a workout hoping for soreness. No one goes into life hoping for soreness, right?, even though it does you good. Matt, you were going to say something.

Matt Reichart: Yes. My version says, *“And we also exalt in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.”*

Jeff: Yes; we boast in it.

Matt: The idea of exalting meaning death, can we pray that God does what He pleases? Praise God in our case.

Jeff: Yeah.

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Matt: Can we praise God even when life is hard? Can we still trust Him? Life has lots of hardships. I was with a buddy yesterday who has ALS into his third year. He has great, strong faith, and he was sharing with me. He said that he takes medicine. He said, “I wanted to stop taking the medicine. But my wife said, ‘I’d rather have you around. I know that sounds kind of selfish.’” And he is just trusting the Lord. He wrote a paper, a great thing on the sovereignty of God that he passed around to all who were there.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: He’s just trusting and believing. And so, you know, when you go through hardships can you praise Him? And perseverance, going through endurance, means that we go under to stay. Nobody wants to stay because that makes it hard. But there is a blessing in staying.

Jeff: Yes. And there is a place for trying to find your way out of your situation. For instance, if they developed a medicine for ALS, then surely he would take it. But there’s a difference between being content where God has you and sort of always living for the day when they’ll make the cure, right?

Jordan Obaker: Can you clarify? When Paul is talking about sufferings does he have certain kinds of sufferings in mind: persecution as opposed to just—

Jeff: Yeah. That’s a great question. I think oftentimes we have a tendency to think that persecution is kind of what’s on Paul’s mind. But my own view of suffering in general is that when Paul talks about suffering, he’s talking about experiencing life as a Christian and united to Christ.

So when I’m suffering for my faith and I’m being persecuted for my faith; I’m being persecuted as a Christian. But if I have ALS as a believer, my suffering is in union with Jesus Christ. And so I’m suffering as a Christian in the face of the sin that has been brought into the world by my first father Adam. So there’s a sense in which any suffering faced in union with Christ can be viewed as falling under this kind of pattern. Yes?

Ted: I was just looking at the Greek for that suffering. It’s interesting because it has a sense of pressure or being hemmed in, or no way of escape and being in a situation.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: That could apply to physical suffering. It could apply to the emotional or the spiritual.

Jeff: Yeah. It’s this general idea, like Ted said, of having been squeezed or hemmed in. Anything can produce that, right? If you have a work scenario where you don’t know what’s happening that certainly has a way of putting pressure on all of life. If you’ve lost someone dear to you it’s the same thing. Maybe you’re facing physical difficulties where you’re actually losing your ability to move, all of these have different sorts of pressures where God is squeezing us in; it’s amazing.

Matt: And in this context there was a gentleman, a business guy, who lost his wife to cancer and chose not to do chemo so that it would not kill the baby; she was pregnant. And that was 23 years ago. She died when she had the baby. But after the loss of his wife (*Unclear; he is now involved in missions.*) This is a guy who has his priorities right, serving the Lord.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: So it’s like you said, right? And then he’s connected to some good friends. (*Unclear*) So he’s working with that organization.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: But what is God’s plan and purpose? I don’t know. But when we do work for the Lord, sometimes we get into suffering. It can be persecution or attacks from the enemy.

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Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: So the more we’re committed to making an impact for this world, just expect that it’s going to come. If we just stay quiet, the enemy will let us go.

Jeff: You know, years ago when I was first saved I was reading. And the guy who owned the gospel bookstore in town introduced me to Joni Eareckson Tada’s books, and so I read her life story. And then she put out a book sometime after that called *A Step Further*. Joni Eareckson Tada was the gal who dove into the Chesapeake Bay, broke her neck and was paralyzed from the neck down, and so was a quadriplegic—quite a gal. She has “Joni and Friends,” and has camps all over the place for disabled families and their children.

So I was reading *A Step Further*. And she was talking about how this man came to one of her conferences and listened to her speak and then approached her afterward, and basically said to her, “I don’t know how you can do it. If God put me in a situation like this I don’t think I’d be able to handle it the way you’re handling it”—on and on and on.”

And she received a letter from him a year later. He had been in a motorcycle accident and broke his neck and found himself in a wheelchair, and contacted her to reach out to her. And you know, God has His way of preparing you for things, right? Here this guy from the gospel bookstore introduced me to these books by Joni Eareckson Tada. My wife and I really enjoyed reading these books. And then five years later we have a son who’s in a wheelchair—you know, that sort of thing, right? God has a way of sort of just preparing you for the weather that’s coming.

And so in some ways it’s not like these things just come on us. And in some ways they do; in some ways we need them. Maybe we need them to kind of shake off the pride in us, and so on. But the idea is that sufferings provide for us an opportunity to basically endure.

And then notice verse 4. The ability to remain under these sufferings, these pressures, actually produces character. Now when we think about character, the interesting thing is that I’m not sure it’s always exactly what we’re thinking of in terms of correspondence. So it says, “*Endurance produces character.*” The idea is this whole idea of being proven or tested. The actual word for *character* comes from a word that’s related to it that means *marble*. In other words, if I can put it this way, in the best sense a hardening that takes place.

I mean, there’s a sense in which to become a hardened individual is a bad thing. But there’s also a sense in which to become a hardened individual in the best sense is a good thing. That is, when our character is proven, when we’re resolute, when we’re convicted, when we know who our God is no matter the struggle, that’s the good thing.

If I can put an earthly illustration on this, maybe this gives you an insight into my psyche more than it does a good illustration. But I’ll never forget that I was driving through. You know how you can drive out to Philadelphia on the Turnpike. And you know the mountains on each side of you. (I use that term loosely for those of you who are from Colorado.) But the mountains are on each side of you, and—

Mike Davis: They’re better here.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah, yeah; that’s right. And so you’re just driving through. And you can see the storm coming from miles away if there is one, right? And one day I was driving out to Philly, and the heat was getting intense. You could see the clouds in their circular pattern as they were rolling back up from the south into the valley. The rain was starting to come down in big gobs.

I’m in the fast lane. And just as I’m driving into this storm—you can just see it coming!—this old Harley-Davidson rider, this grizzled old guy with this big old beard, with big glasses on his

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face, is erect as all get out. *(Laughter)* And he’s just a-riding in this storm. *(Laughter)* And I’m like I love it; this is great! Just marble; granite, you know; he’s kind of like just riding with the storm, not even worried about it. Luke 9:51, right?

Transcriber’s Note: Luke 9:51, NKJV. *“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”*

Jeff: Anyway, that’s the idea, right? So sufferings give us the opportunity to endure. And enduring produces this grand, marble-like character. It’s proven; it’s tested. And that’s the kind of process that we’re in as we face these sufferings.

And then character produces hope. And you know, this is the thing that I was talking about last time when we were together. I said, you know, when you think about hope, in the Greco-Roman world you think about something different from what the Christian was being taught from Paul. In the Greco-Roman world hope was more like you would find in the Greek myths. So Pandora opens her box and all of the evils are released into the world. The last evil to crawl out of the box is hope.

And a pre-Socratic philosopher of the pre-post-modern era said, and I think rightly, that hope was the last evil to crawl out of the box because it was Zeus’s way of basically keeping humanity from committing suicide so that he could string them along through the evils, and they were basically their playthings. And the idea, when you think about it, is that hope is evil. If hope just strings us along from one day to the next so that we’ll keep living so that we can be playthings to the gods, that’s not much hope.

And the Christian hope is something far different than that. The Christian hope is that there is a day coming when all things will be set right.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And the idea is that that day is fixed. I think I mentioned this to you kind of hastily the last time we were together. But I said that you can think of that hope in the sense of my child saying, “Dad, I want a bike. And I don’t want just any bike; I want a special kind of bike for my birthday. And that special bike is a limited edition, and it’s at the bike store now. And there’s only one left. Dad, are you going to get it?”

“Well, your birthday isn’t for six months.”

“Dad, it’s going to be sold before then.” So I go to the store. I buy the bike. I bring it home. I put it in the bag. And my kid says, “Dad, the bike’s gone; they just stepped in today; the bike’s gone!”

And I say, “I got the bike.”

“You got the bike?”

“I got the bike.”

“Show it to me.”

“No.” *(Laughter)*

“Can I have it now?”

“No. You can have it on your birthday. Six months from now you can have the bike.”

“Really?”

“Really. Trust me.” And the hope that child has that he’ll receive the bike six months from now is a certain hope. The trouble is that we don’t always trust in what we know to be absolutely true.

I don’t remember if I shared this with you last time or not, but this is absolutely hilarious. The intern at Grace preached a couple of weeks ago. And he let us in a little into his psyche. He told

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us that he loves football. Texas A&M, right? He loves Texas A&M. But he said that he can't watch a football game unless it records it because he gets so excited, so nervous, that he needs to know the end. He needs to know that they won before he can actually watch the game.

So he said, “There will be times where I know the outcome.” But he said that at the end of the first quarter they'll be down 27-0. “And then I start to wonder: did we really win?” (*Laughter*) And he said, “I know the outcome.”

And I thought to myself that this is so illustrative of us and the Christian hope. We know Christ won! And we know the victory is secure and it is ours. And yet in the present moment we sometimes have this inkling, this worry that maybe we didn't win.

So Paul Says, “*Hope does not disappoint.*” He says to us that all of this process builds hope. And he reminds us that hope does not disappoint us. It is not a plaything of the gods; it is not a plaything of the God of heaven and earth. He doesn't string us along with Him. Hope doesn't disappoint; it gives what it promises in the end. That's the idea.

Ted: Jeff, if you look back in verse 2 it says, “*In Him we have obtained access by faith into this grace.*”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: “*In which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Well, to me that's even more substantial than that Jesus wins in the end.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: To the glory of God. Because what does that mean: the glory of God?

Jeff: Well it certainly will be talked about earlier, right? What Martyn Lloyd-Jones says about the text is this. You know, we talked about this the last time. “*Therefore, since we have been justified.*” That is, since you've been justified, because you've been justified, “*Christ the Mediator takes us by the hand and leads us into the presence of the Father.*” We have access to the Father on the basis of Christ's work on our behalf. And it is Christ who by faith takes us to the Father, and we stand in His grace. And so that's our hope.

So the interesting thing is that it's an already but not yet. That is to say, we already stand in the presence of God and have this access to the Father, and that's our hope. And yet the process of living life and the suffering we experience basically hones and chisels away, and shapes that hope and binds it. And I think that's the idea. So we have this already, right? But we don't have it yet. There's an already but not yet that's true. Do you want to follow that up?

Ted: Well, what does that glory mean? For myself I'm taken to understand that more and more in the Hebrew sense, which has to do with weight or substance. So our hope is in the substance of God.

Jeff: Oh yeah.

Ted: We're made part of that.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Now out of that comes things like God wins in the end and other things. But there's something more basic to our hope, and that is the glory of God.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And to begin to see that our federal Head is not the breath at dawn, but the weight and the substance of lie that is the glory of God; it's the work of God.

Jeff: Yeah. I think what you're saying is that the main thing is not my salvation; the main thing is God, right?

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Ted: That’s exactly right. All these other things are basically secondary to the glory of God.

Jeff: Yeah. And there is a God-centeredness to our final salvation.

Matt: But we have that hope within. Our focus is about God, but we get to be a part of that. We get to live forever in His presence. And we will reign on the new heaven and the new earth; there won’t be diseases and tears. We’ll have new bodies that will be perfect.

Ted: For me that is great; it’s all true what you just said. But there’s something of greater substance than that, which is the glory of God itself, because *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man imagined”* all these things. And we often talk about eternity as kind of an aggrandized human existence. And this is something weightier than that that we can’t imagine. But it’s found in the substance of God.

Jeff: Yeah. I think what you’re saying, at least when I listen to you, I sometimes think that I don’t even know what my relationship with my own family will necessarily be like because we’re like the angels, not given in marriage. And so there’s an ambiguity to relationships that are well worn for me here. But what’s not ambiguous is that I’ll see the face of God.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: And so I think that’s the idea; that’s kind of what I think of when I hear what you’re saying.

Brave Man: That’s kind of where the word of God is.

Ted: I know that. I’m trying to take it one step deeper than that. Our hope is in the sanguinity of God Himself.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And I get to be part of that; I’m incorporated into that, right?

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Anybody else before we move on? Yes?

Jordan: You’ve told a story in the past about kind of the point that our hope is not of faith.

Jeff: Oh, yeah.

Jordan: It goes beyond our faith. There was a man who was on his deathbed and he was struggling with his assurance. And some pastor had written a letter about inspecting a bridge.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jordan: Do you think that relates to this?

Jeff: Yes; isn’t that a great story? (*Laughter*) It is a true story. Robert Dabney, a Southern theologian, was on his deathbed writing to a friend of his by the name of Vaughan who was a theologian. And he basically confessed that he was struggling as he was facing death.

Jordan: Sure.

Jeff: And Vaughan writes back and says, “Now Bob, if you were walking in the woods and came to a bridge, would you spend time asking yourself if you trusted in bridges enough to cross this bridge? Or would you go and inspect that bridge and find it worthy to be crossed?”

And so his point was “Bob, you need to stop asking yourself, ‘Do I have enough faith in Jesus?’, and look at Jesus and find Him worthy of faith.” And that’s a great, great story. So we’re kind of putting our eyes off of ourselves and onto Christ, onto God, and seeing Him as sufficient for us. We’re kind of derivative in that sense.

You know, the Puritans were oftentimes sort of brought in and kind of used as guys who wanted to get into morbid introspection. I’m a sinner; woe is me! I’m terrible, I’m bad; I can never trust my own heart, and so on and so forth. And I think the worst part of Puritan application is sometimes that kind of Puritanism gone awry, always focusing on the negative and never actually coming to apprehend the mercy that is actually in Christ.

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And yet (there was) the best of the Puritans. I can remember that it was Thomas Watson saying in a book that for every time you look inward to yourself at your own sin, look ten more times at Christ Jesus. And that’s kind of what you were saying, because your only hope is in Christ Jesus. If you have to remind yourself why you need Christ Jesus, just don’t look to yourself because you’ll be reminded pretty quickly. You can look to Him. Matt?

Matt: On this topic of suffering persecution for righteousness’ sake, it makes me think of Job chapter 42 verse 5.

Transcriber’s Note: Job 42:5:

*“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.”*

Matt: He said that he used to know God by the hearing of the ear, but now I have seen.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: That’s at the end. But when you think about Job, he was a righteous man. If God blessed anybody, look at Job. He had been living a righteous life. Paul said, “You men are supposed to be in toe Word, to love our wives and our kids. We’re going to bring up our kids to be involved in our church and our community and to be witnesses.” He was doing that all his life. And he knew the Lord, but he didn’t really know Him until he went through all those tribulations and trials. And now what tribulation and persecution does as God takes you through that, it gives an intimacy there.

I remember a friend of ours that was going through cancer. And she said, “I just feel like God is good.” He’s in her thoughts even with her bad experiences. But that doesn’t stop here in her suffering from being in the Word. I’m probably off the topic, but—

Jeff: No, this is really an important thing to keep in mind. I appreciate what you’re saying, because some people have a tendency to engage in backtalk and ask themselves: Why don’t I have that kind of experience? Why don’t I have the nearness of God in my own experience? And I think that one of the things that we have to remember is that, if we can put it this way, God is static; He doesn’t move. But I who have been brought into a relationship with Him by faith can draw near to Him. And when I draw near to Him I have a sense of proximity to Him. But by faith and justification I’m united to Him in Christ. So if I’m in Christ I never leave union with Him; I never go outside of union and inside union. So let’s just draw this big circle and say that I’m in union with Christ, okay?

Now why is it that sometimes I feel distant from Him and sometimes I feel close? And the answer is faith.

Now think about what faith is. If Don were here we would draw Don. Oh, let’s draw him anyway. *(Laughter)* Yeah, that’s Don.

Ted: It does look like him.

Jeff: Yeah, it does. *(Laughter)* Yeah, that’s right; that’s Don. Okay. Now when we think about Don’s state, we think about the classic definition: *notitia*, we think about *assensus*, and we think about *fiducia*. You know, *fiducia* is more correct because it’s a hard c sound, but I hate saying it. You know, you always want to say *fiducia* (with a soft c sound.) This sounds better. But anyway, these things are the basic definition of what faith is when you think about Reformed theology: *notitia*, *assensus* and *fiducia*.

When you think about notitia you think about the mind. When you think about assensus you think about the will. And when you think about fiducia you think about the affections. Okay, so when we think about those things they correspond, right? Obviously the mind, the will, the heart.

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Transcriber’s Note: *Jeff says something about his drawing which produces uproarious laughter.)*

Jeff: And of course Christ has enlarged his heart, so he has an enlarged heart. Anyway, so the mind, the will and the heart, or the mind, the will and the affections. When we think about faith, we think about the correspondence between what we think, what we assent to and what we love.

Now the thing is, when we’re unbelievers we don’t love God, but we may say something like this. Well, if there is a God then I can conceive of Him being like this. And if there is a sin problem I can understand this or that or the other, right? So we can understand the gospel, and even an unbeliever can articulate that gospel back to us. There are bunches of 19th-century liberals who can give the gospel in a clear way. And so the mind is there.

They may even say, well, if certain conditions hold then this may be true. So they give some assent to it. But this is no different than what? The demons. The demons know, and if you can get them to tell the truth long enough they’ll assent to what they know. But they don’t have any love for God in Christ Jesus.

Now that’s pretty clear. Now think about us for just a minute. Our problem is not with the love. But it goes in reverse once we’re saved. We say, “Well I love God; I’m just struggling with some doubts right now.” Or “I’m struggling to an extent with some things that I know are true, but I’m having a conflict,” right? So when we feel distant from God it’s either a doubt problem, or it’s that we have ourselves caught up in idolatry and we’re conflicted in our affections. We love God and know we should love God. But we love that other thing that we know we shouldn’t love. And so our will is in a mess because sometimes our mind knows the better thing, but our heart wants the other thing, and so do our wills. This is the thing that keeps us distant from God.

So we can be distant from God because our faith is either weak or strong. And when we feel distant from God it’s because of our weak faith. And when our faith is weak and we feel distant from God we need to ask ourselves, what sins am I loving? What am I thinking these days? Am I doubting something? Am I thinking too much? Am I disobeying Philippians 4—not thinking of things that are good, godly, beautiful, and so on and so forth? Is my mind somewhere else?

You know, I want to tell you something; let me give you an example. I love watching “The Forensic Files.” Remember that old show? That guy’s voice was absolutely terrifying. (Jeff imitates the man’s voice.) He was absolutely terrifying. And several years back they would play them in a loop, like five of them at a time, you know? And I’d enjoy watching; I’d binge watch “The Forensic Files.” And I loved watching the show because the bad guy always gets caught. This is great! And then, you know, you go like this. *(Laughter)*

And you’re paranoid, right? There’s a killer, literally waiting outside the door! You know, this is stupid! My mind is preoccupied with evil! Even if I’m not thinking about doing evil, my mind is preoccupied with evil—the evil of others. And it affects the way you think. Did you ever meet the man who says, “Words don’t affect me?” They’re only affected in their outward appearance. do you know what I’m saying? Things affect us. And we can either be far from God or near to Him.

Don Bishop: The example you were just giving was just like Don stuffing your head.

Jeff: Yeah. *(Laughter)*

Ted: He isn’t here, Jeff! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, there’s a building manager down at the seminary and he’s always messing with me. And so even if he’s not doing anything I’ll just look at him. And he’ll just look at me and he’ll say, “I love when I’m not here.” *(Laughter)*

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Roger Myers: Jerry Bridges, who I’m reading now, is very convicting. He talks generally about godliness. It’s convicting to think about how many times a day do we even think about God? So as far as feeling far away, we don’t even think about Him for long stretches of time. That hits me pretty hard.

Jeff: Yes. I mean, how is faith strengthened? We know it’s strengthened by the means of grace. We know it’s strengthened in worship; we know it’s strengthened in the Word. We know it’s strengthened in the sacraments; we know it’s strengthened in Christian fellowship. We know where faith is strengthened,

Well let me wrap us up here just for a minute. There’s more to say. We’re going to go on to the next set of verses in chapter 5 here. But I want to take us to something that he says in verse 5. *“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.”*

Now think about this. Why are we not put to shame? Well Psalm 22 gives us a good indication. I’ll read Psalm 22 verse 6. Psalm 22 is the Psalm that Christ quoted on the cross, and it starts out very familiar: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* We all know that text. And if we read down through the Psalm we see that this is the experience, if we can put it this way, of kind of the psychological experience of the Mediator while He suffers and dies. And certainly this Psalm actually has a turn; it changes. It moves from wrath to grace in the sense that He moves from suffering to praise.

But in the midst of the suffering section in verse 6 it says this:

*“But I am a worm and not a man,
Scorned by mankind and despised by the people.”*

And the idea is, when he says that *“hope does not put us to shame,”* that is, hope in the gospel does not put us to shame. Why? Because the One who is the gospel has been put to shame on our behalf; that’s the idea. He has suffered shame, that we may not have to. And then in 25:20:

*“Regard my soul and deliver me.
Let me not be put to shame,
For I take refuge in You.”*

That’s the Psalmist saying, “Guard me; keep me from shame. I take refuge in You; I’m hidden in You.” That’s an Old Testament pre-figuring of union with Christ. That’s what we would say: we’re hidden in Christ. Let us not be put to shame. Hide us, guard us. Keep us from the things that Christ has already experienced for us. That’s the idea.

And then let me finish. He says, *“God has shed His love abroad in our hearts.”* And notice now that it’s an interesting thing when you think about it. And I’ll finish with this and then we’ll close out. But the interesting thing about the way he puts this is that when we have this idea of the Holy Spirit being poured into our hearts, when you think about that you think about this. I think about how the Westminster Confession puts it when it talks about sanctification. It talks about the infusion of the benefits of the Holy Spirit, or the infusion of grace into the heart of the believer.

It talks about imputation when it comes to salvation. We are imputed with the righteousness of Christ. But when it talks about sanctification it talks about infusion. It talks about the Holy Spirit being poured into our hearts in ways that change us and shape us.

And so you may be thinking, what’s the difference? Well when you think about imputation, imputation is judicial language. We’ve been declared innocent or righteous on the basis of having the righteousness of Christ reckoned or imputed to us, reckoned to our account. But then we

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grow in grace. And how is it that we grow in grace? We grow in grace through putting on habits that the Holy Spirit nurtures in us.

And one of the ways I would say to you to think about this in a really basic way is to think about the way you teach your own children. You know, you tell the kids, “Make sure you turn off the light when you leave the room.” And they don’t, right? And so we have this little talk with them. “Daddy wants you to turn off the light.” And then they turn it off once in a while.

And then they get a little older and you say, “Hey, let me sit down with you, and let me explain to you why it is that I want you to turn off the lights. It’s because we’re living in Joe Biden’s America.” *(Laughter)* No, I’m just kidding. *(Laughter)* “We need to turn out the lights because it costs money to have these lights on when there’s nobody in the room. And so we need to turn off the lights.” So they turn them off a few more times.

But all of them are building a habit, right? They’re seeing change and movement. And we’re basically not only pouring into them instruction about why, but we’re reinforcing behaviors.

And then we say this when they’re 16 and still not turning off the lights: “Now you owe me. You pay me x amount every time I find the light on.” And then pretty soon, when they get into their own houses, they say, “Turn off the light!” And they’re sanctified, right?

So that’s kind of the Christian life, where we are slowly in the process of change. And we’re becoming more godly in our habits. And we are looking like Christ more and more as we go. I think that’s the idea. And that’s this whole process, right?

Now that you’ve been justified, here’s the process by which the Holy Spirit is shed abroad in our hearts. It’s the process of boasting in suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, knowing that endurance produces character, knowing that character produces hope. And hope doesn’t disappoint. And by the way, this whole process is the Holy Spirit working in your hearts. This is the work of God shed abroad in your hearts. This is you being conformed to the likeness and the image of His Son. That’s the idea. So we’ll pick up there with the next verse next time. Let me pray and we’ll adjourn.

Father in heaven, we thank You for this time that You’ve given us. Thank You for the justification that we have in Christ Jesus—that by faith not of ourselves, but it is indeed Your gift. Thank You, Father, for this wonderful study that we learned about by which You change and shape us and form us after the likeness of Your own Son.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity to live another day and glorify You. We ask that You would bless us and our families as well, our friends and those with whom we have to do. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.