

**God's Great News for Humanity's Great Problem**  
*Paul's Letter to the Romans*

**Our Confidence: Christ in Us, the Hope of Glory**  
*Romans 5:1 – 11*

<sup>1</sup> Therefore having been justified by faith,  
    we have peace with God  
        through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
        <sup>2</sup> through whom  
    we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;  
and we exult in hope of the glory of God

<sup>3</sup> And not only this, but we exult in our tribulations,  
    knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;  
        <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, proven character;  
            and proven character, hope;  
                <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint,  
                    because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts  
                    through the Holy Spirit who was given to us

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

<sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man,  
    though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood,  
    we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him.

<sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son,  
    much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

<sup>11</sup> And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
    through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

## **Introduction: Confidence**

What does it mean to have confidence in Jesus? During this time of your life, as college students, that's an important question, because you are looking for things that you can be confident about. What the world suggests is that you can find your confidence in your performance. I remember when I was ten, I was among a dozen other kids being picked for teams for swimming relays. It was a butterfly relay, and I hated butterfly. I was not good at it. But I was confident that I would get the honor of being picked early because my friend Jack was one of the captains. But I wasn't picked first. I wasn't picked second. I was picked next to last. In the relay I was to go last, because they wanted to build up a good lead for me. I dove in the water with a pretty good lead over the team next to me and I was chugging away. Except that when I touched the wall and I got done coughing, I looked up and saw that the other team had one. They were cheering their anchor man. And although my teammates didn't say anything, I could tell they were disappointed in me. As I held on to the side of the pool I reflected on this. The first thing I learned was that friendship didn't mean a whole lot in this race. I thought I was safe because, after all, Jack was my...friend. But friendship didn't mean a thing. The second thing I learned is that the other guy's success was based...on my failure. And I determined that I wanted to be secure so I hoped that other people would fail more often than me. Strange concept of security from our world. I know for myself that I'm sometimes afraid to think of life as something other than a series of goals, performances, and accomplishments because it's actually the competitive arena that I can't give up. Sometimes the thought of being a husband and a father scares me, because I can take no refuge in the so-called security of my performance-orientedness.

But if any group is offered a strange confidence in our society, it's got to be women. Appearance, for example, is often touted as the way to gain security. But the standardization of beauty in our culture has led to no security and no confidence. The pain and the frustration of a generation is captured in a song from the 70's called, 'At Seventeen' by Janice Ian.

*I learned the truth at seventeen  
That love was made for beauty queens  
And high school girls with clear skinned smiles  
Who married young and then retired*

*The Valentines I never knew  
The Friday night charades of youth  
Were spent on one more beautiful  
At seventeen, I learned the truth*

*And those of us with ravaged faces  
Lacking in the social graces  
Desperately remained at home  
Inventing lovers on the phone  
Who called to say, 'Come dance with me'  
And whispered vague obscenities  
It isn't all it seems  
At seventeen*

*It was long ago and far away  
The world was younger than today  
And chains were all they gave for free  
To ugly duckling girls like me  
At seventeen.*

This song was the number one hit for 2 years straight. It tells the sad truth of the pain and frustration of a generation trying to find security in the wrong things. The question looms larger before us. Where will we find confidence? Can we have confidence in Jesus? What does that mean? When we believe in Jesus, what does he do? Does he just sit there and say, 'Hey, thanks!' Or what? What can we be confident that Jesus will DO for us? With us?

## **Background**

This is what the apostle Paul is answering for us here in Romans 5:1 – 11. Now in Rome at about this time, the heavy persecutions of the Christians by the Roman Empire were unpredictable. They were going on and off, on and

off. What's more, the state and the society were becoming increasingly anti-Semitic, making it hard for many of the early Christians in Rome who were Jewish. Here were believers who needed to hear about confidence in Jesus. And this passage serves as a great reminder to us today because we are in great need of dealing with our insecurities and allowing Jesus to meet us with his love at every turn.

### **Boasting that Christ is in me: v.1 – 2**

Paul opens this section with, 'Therefore.' He's just gotten done talking about how God is the one who brings life out of death, and how true faith is not just believing that God exists. That is not enough. Faith in a biblical sense is believing that God will bring life out of death – our death, human death, death in all its forms: spiritual, emotional, physical, relational. After all, if human beings bring sin and evil and death into the world, then God is the one who heals it and brings life out of our death. He's done that supremely with Jesus, bringing him alive out of death. Now we're starting to see how God brings life out of death in us, by placing Jesus here in us.

'Therefore,' since God is the one who does this, 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.' I'm going to skip over much of that sentence, except for the last phrase: 'We exult in hope of the glory of God.' One of the reasons I believe this little verse is so central is because the word 'exult' occurs three times: here in v.2, v.3 (we exult in our tribulations), and v.11 (we exult in God). Now that word is an unfortunate translation. In the NIV it reads 'rejoice' but I still don't think that captures the essence of it. Prior to this, the word is used four times in Romans. Every time it is translated into the word 'boast' or 'brag' (NIV). Thirty out of thirty six times in the New Testament it is translated 'boast.' I guess the translators here wanted to sound extra-pious so they used 'exult.' But really 'boast' captures an attitude of security so rich it's overflowing with confidence.

What's also important is that the word 'boast' is in the present on-going tense. Whereas we have been justified, and we have obtained our introduction at specific points in our life, this boasting is going on now. And we can expect it to keep on going! Whatever this is, this is real confidence!!

In what sense can we be confident in God? Webster's Dictionary defines confidence as: '1b: faith or belief that one will act in a right, proper, or effective way' <have confidence in a leader> 2: the quality or state of being certain : certitude <they had every confidence of success>. In this case, since we're asking, 'How can we be confident in God?' the question is in what sense can we be certain of Him doing something? In what sense will God act in a right, proper, or effective way?

The next word just reinforces this. It's the word 'hope.' People in Biblical times almost always used the word 'hope' to express a certainty. Today, we use 'hope' to express our uncertainty. It's like saying, 'I hope that the dining hall has something new today.' That is anything but certain! It's really uncertain. But in the Bible, hope is about having a secure, certain expectation that something will happen. But what?

Christians boast in the hope of the glory of God. Now what does this mean, the glory of God? At first I thought that the glory of God equaled the second coming of Jesus Christ, but that is not what Paul is talking about here. The word 'glory' always means 'a revealing.' In Israel, the glory of God was God revealing himself in the blinding column of light that lived in the tabernacle and later, the temple. In their respective time periods, both the tabernacle and the temple were the center of life for the people of Israel. It was the place where God placed His Spirit, so that His presence would protect and impact the community. Everyone revered the tabernacle and later the temple, because that was where the glory of God, the revealed presence of God, was. But in 586 BC, Israel was taken over by the Babylonians, who destroyed their Temple. When the Jews returned from Babylon and rebuilt their Temple, they thought God would return in a pillar of cloud and fire, but He never did. So for centuries they went along, expecting it but not knowing how exactly would that look? Would it be another pillar of cloud and fire, like in Exodus? Would it be the chariots of fire around the cherubim around God's throne, like in Isaiah's and Ezekiel's visions? We don't know. Well, in John 2, Jesus stepped into the Temple and said, 'Destroy this Temple,' referring to his own body, 'and I will raise it again in three days.' Now because Jesus has perfected his own body as the place where God dwells, and places his Spirit in us when we come to him. So in Ephesians 2 and 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, Paul says that we have replaced the tabernacle and the temple. Now we are given the Holy Spirit so that the glory of God, His presence will shine out and be revealed through us.

The development of this thought is clear in Colossians. Paul writes something that will help us narrow this down fast. He writes, 'God willed to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is

*Christ in you, the hope of glory*' (Col.1:27). Here we have a very neat definition of what the hope of the glory of God is. It is Christ in you. Glory always carries the sense of a revealing. In this case, it is God revealing Himself through believers in Jesus Christ because they are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ living in them. This is what we can be sure about. Jesus' commitment to us is to reveal his life and his love through us. Jesus Christ comes into us, so that can live out his life through us.

Illus: Now what does this mean? I grew up in a home in which communication was hard, especially the communication of affection. One summer, after I had learned about Jesus during the school year, I went home for vacation, and I prayed, 'Lord, please use me today. And please love my parents through me, because I don't know how.' And the life of Christ in me would get me really excited. I wanted to see what Jesus would do through me. So I'd stepped off the plane and gave my parents big hugs. I still remember my dad's face (shock). And each vacation, Jesus would begin and end that time at home with hugs for everyone. And there were neat things that Jesus who lived in me did to make my relationships with them so much better. To this day, my mom and I are more affectionate than we've ever been because of the Spirit of Christ in me. Well, a few months after this new change, my sister was thinking about this, and since she had become a Christian by this time, she said, to me, 'God has brought affection to this house through you.'

This is the great security we can all have, that Christ will live out his life through us. This is the hope of glory, that heaven and earth have been longing to see: the Spirit of God being given to people by faith in Jesus, so that the life and love of God can pour out in blessings. This certain truth is what we can boast confidently about.

### **Boasting Even in Suffering: v.3 – 5**

Now one question we might have is whether we can have this confidence in hard times? Like when we go home and things aren't right. Or when we head into finals and feel pressure. Or when the housing lottery is coming up and we feel stressed about it. In what sense can we be confident in Jesus? What will he do for us? Paul now announces to us something even more profound. He says, 'And not only this.' And what he announces is incredible. He says that we also boast in our tribulations.

This has got to grab our attention, because life is a pressure cooker and we have a tendency to boil over. This is a totally different mentality than any we have ever had. But Paul is looking at the world as it truly is: a place of deep suffering. Each person has something that has caused them deep pain. You can take whatever that is and read it into this verse. The Christian view of life is realistic; it admits that life is fundamentally painful. Paul is being real about what he sees. Suffering is the norm, not the exception. But what will make the suffering of this temporary world light is the deep weight of God's faithfulness. This is why if we are in Christ, we can be confident that God will shine His life out through us even more brilliantly. And this is the perspective that Paul wants us to have.

We also boast in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance. This is the perseverance of always looking to Christ and letting him deal with our pressures and pains while we rest. It is by letting the Spirit of God do this through us that we then find proven character. Literally, this is approved character, the character of Jesus shining out through us because his life is poured out in us.

Illus: Towards the end of the third century and until about 307 AD, Rome was nabbing the Christians for not bowing down to idols. The Romans were tired of executing the Christians so they sentenced them to hard labor in the marble mines of Palestine and Cyprus. Being sentenced into these mines was like martyrdom stretched over years. 'The mines were always in desolate country and the prisoners got nothing more than the bare necessities of life. Christians sentenced to the mines were mutilated in various ways. The tendon of their left foot was usually cauterized so any escape would be painfully slow. Their right eyes was cut out with a knife and burned with a hot iron. Young boys were castrated.' In the midst of this furnace of trials stood a man named John, in whom Jesus Christ lived. He was totally blind and lamed in the left leg. But he had memorized whole books of the Old and New Testaments. Eusebius records that he saw John standing and teaching about the love of God, because Jesus was pouring out his love through him. And crowds would gather around this man as the Lord would use him to bring many, many people to faith in Christ.

Illus: I have a friend from Stanford who learned this about Jesus. During the third quarter of her sophomore year, she was taking a class in her major; she was a premed and this class counted for a lot. She was facing the final, and her grade for the quarter totally depended on this test. So she went through the usual routine. She studied a lot, as much as she possibly could. She still felt inadequate, but she gave the test over to God. She prayed as she walked

into the test. And she wound up receiving the best grade she ever got. It was a D. Now why was that the best grade that she got? It wasn't because it helped her get into med school, but it was because a catalyst for a new relationship with her mom. Her mom had always said, 'You're the oldest, you're the smart one, you're the responsible one. You're the one who needs to go make the bucks.' All they ever talked about was how she was doing in school, her function in school, and her function in the family. What this grade did was question the assumptions about her future. Everything was laid out on the table: her life, her faith, her dreams, her fears, her parents' love and hopes... And despite the tension, Jesus poured his life out through her. She endured questioning and accusations from her parents. Because of the character of Jesus shown through her, she opened up a whole new relationship with her parents. Jesus took that D and its consequences and transformed the suffering for her. The following year, when her mom called, they talked much more personally. Before, she had never felt real love from them, and never felt good enough, but now, she feels like they support her and more unconditionally and truly know her.

Illus: Jesus does not guarantee you good Christian friends all the time. He guarantees Himself to you. Right now, you might feel like you're lacking friends, maybe even Christian friends. In Asian Christian circles, we tend to think that having Christian friends is the answer to everything. But there are times when that doesn't happen. But if and when that happens to you, know that you're in good company. There are people in the Bible that God took through a time of loneliness: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Jesus, Paul, and John. These are people God used in a MAJOR way, and part of their development was God taking them into a time of deep intimacy with him. That was a formative time for them because they learned to place their identity and confidence in God alone. Then God was able to use them as leaders to bless others in HUGE ways. So if you feel alone, even though you're in the midst of people, you need to receive it as a gift. It is not a test or trial per se. It is a time that God wants to develop your sense of intimacy with Him and confidence in Jesus. So receive it that way!!

Now as we experience the living Christ live his life through us, we become even more secure in our certain hope for the glory of God to be shown through us. We can even boast in our trials because it's under these times where it's expected that we'd crack, that Christ's life shines even more brightly.

And this hope, in v.5, does not disappoint. That is to say, it does not leave us ashamed. We won't be embarrassed for trusting in Him. This is because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. When God gives us His love, He doesn't say, 'Here, take a few sips to slack your thirst.' He says, 'Open up your heart, because Niagara Falls is coming in!!' And He doesn't give us a token of His love to say, 'Thanks for coming.' He gives us Himself, in the person of His Spirit, to say, 'I will live in you, to understand you, to live through you, FOREVER STARTING RIGHT NOW!!'

Let me encourage you guys to know the love of God at this level. I feel like I'm just starting to understand this deepest of all truths: how the Lord wants to minister to others through me at the level of the heart. When the Spirit comes into our heart, He gives us the intimacy we desire from God. He reassures us of the forgiveness we need from God. And He gives us the unmatched security of God Himself being present in our lives every day. You see, Christians in this country don't need to be famous. We don't have to change government policy. We don't have to have great jobs so that people will respect us that way. We need to know how deeply God extends His love securely into our hearts because that is how we all need to be touched.

### **The Logic of Our Confidence in Christ: v.6 – 10**

At this point, if you're like me, you're wondering how this could possibly be true. Where is there any objective proof that our subjective experience should be like this? The objective proof Paul points to is the cross.

In v.6, we have a summary of the cross: For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. While we were powerless to fight sin on our own, insecure and fearful about life, it was the perfect time for Jesus to come and be crucified. There was Judas, who pretended to serve Jesus but served only himself. We have that same self-centeredness. There was Pilate, who tried to please as many people as possible for his own skin. We have that same manipulateness. And there was the angry crowd who just got swept up in its own frenzy. There are elements of that mentality in us, too. This was humanity helpless to sin. It's an ugly picture, isn't it? Yet this was the perfect time for Jesus to be crucified by their hands, their nails, on their cross. He was paying for their sins.

To help us understand this, we have in v.7 and 8 we have a contrast between the capacity man has to love and the capacity God has to love. In v.7 we see that there is the occasional glimmer of heroism where someone dies for a

righteous or good man. Maybe what is going through Paul's mind is a soldier that sees a spear coming for his friend. But at the last moment, the soldier takes the spear in his own body. That is the height of man's love.

But God's love shines infinitely more brilliantly than that. Because in v.8, we read that God demonstrates His love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we had no friendship or love for God at all, Christ died for us to pay for our sins. Jesus intercepted the spear aimed at his enemies.

If this is the contrast between God's love and man's love, what can we say? It is hard to argue against this logic. If God went so far as to die for us while we were His enemies, what will God do for us now that we are His own children? Paul's thoughts turn logically to this. He says, 'Much more then,' which is another way of saying, 'You ain't seen nothing yet!' Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

What this means is that now that Jesus has died for us to save us from God's wrath, we can expect God to do even more to keep us from His wrath. What His wrath means is first of all being separated from Him and living with no forgiveness. The consequences of this follow as we sin. But if we have faith in Christ, we can be sure that God will never be separate from us again, because Paul assures us in v.10, 'For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.'

Notice the progression in words used to describe us? We go from being helpless, to being ungodly, to being sinners. Now we are enemies. And at the point at which we are enemies, Christ dies on the cross for us and if we have faith in him, he accompanies us to the banqueting table where we are crowned into God's royal family. You see, as human beings get more and more exposed as ugly, God's objective demonstration of love on the cross becomes more and more beautiful. Because it is at the cross where we receive this reconciliation, the complete and everlasting restoration of a relationship with Him.

But if this unshakable reconciliation was given to us while we were enemies to save us, think about how much more the life of Christ planted in our hearts will save us from sin every day. The cross is the objective proof in our lives that God's life lived through us and God's love poured from Him, through you, to others, is a commitment from Him that He intends to keep. Our life-experience can be rooted in this.

### **Boasting in God Himself: v.11**

Finally, as we experience the certain hope that Christ will live out his life through us, especially in difficult times, we have confidence in God Himself. 'And not only this, but we boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.' This is so important because the biggest question that we ask when we go through lots of changes in life is, 'Who will be with me through those changes?' When you guys go off to college, who will be with you faithfully? God Himself will be with you.

Illus: Many times my senior year, my roommate and best friend from college, Andrew, would stay up and talk. We'd lie there in our bunkbeds and have those great late night conversations. Now in our senior year of college, both of us were afraid of changes. Often, we'd talk about our deep fears and insecurities about life. And I remember us saying to each other that no matter what happens, we would always be friends. Now as important as our friendship was and still is, both of us were learning that it is God Himself who promises us that no matter what happens, He will always be our friend. Within the next year, both of us went through the most incredible changes we've ever experienced. Andrew proposed to his girlfriend Jeanny, making him the first of our circle of friends to take the big plunge. And I decided to move into East Palo Alto alone, being one Asian person among Mexican immigrants. Scary changes? You bet! But both of us had it in the front of our minds that God would be with us every step of the way. He'll be the one being faithful.

To me, that's just a great picture of the great security that God gives to us who have faith in His Son. He gives us unshakable security, so that we can confidently boast in His presence in us, ready to live through us. That is the security of His love.

This, more than anything in the book of Romans, is what I've wanted to teach. It is so important that Paul spends the rest of chapter 5 up to the end of chapter 8 developing the doctrine of eternal security simply to prove that this is true. And it has been so foundational in my life. If you want to know why I moved into East Palo Alto alone, this undergirded my decision. This is important. Base your life on this truth, and this text!!!