

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent 2/25/24 - SJ, SM

Romans 5:1-11 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!<sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!<sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, DFR:

Con men and salesmen are constantly trying to get us to believe fantastic claims so that we will buy their products. We see ads like these:

- ⇒ *You too can get amazing results! Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!*
- ⇒ *Earn \$100,000 in your own home in some of your spare time*
- ⇒ *Or how about these: Use our miracle cream and look 10 years younger!*
- ⇒ *Our super-scientific blended vitamins can add YEARS to your life! Order a 90 days supply now!*
- ⇒ *You too can have whiter teeth in just 15 minutes every day!*
- ⇒ *lose weight without exercise! Eat anything you want on our special diet!*

But those results – even if they are true – are nothing compared to the blessings that we learn about during Lent. Let's look at those blessings today as we consider:

### The Amazing Blessings of Lent!

1. Abundant blessings
2. Undeserved blessings
3. Guaranteed blessings

#### 1. Abundant blessings (1-5)

God's blessings are abundant. Justification. Peace with God. Access to God. Grace. Hope. Joy. Perseverance and character. God's love. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Paul lists ten different blessings that are ours because of the Savior who became our substitute and took our punishment and our sins to Calvary.

**Justification and peace with God.** Our salvation is not the result of an act by us. It is based on God's declaration from his throne in heaven that we are **not guilty** of sin. And because God no longer considers us guilty of sin, we no longer have any fear of punishment. Any lie, any horrible act is forgiven **through our Lord Jesus Christ**. Again and again the Bible reminds us that Christ is our only hope. What peace we have in knowing already the verdict that by faith we will hear on the Last Day!

The same Savior gives us **access to God by faith**. We were separated from God by sin. No sinner can stand in presence of God and live. But we are no longer sinners. Has himself has declared us **not guilty**. Old Testament believers could not enter into the temple but remained outside it with only the priests and Levites allowed into the temple itself. Yet the instant Christ died, the curtain inside the temple was torn by God in two pieces, showing us that we no longer are separated from God by sin. We have access to God by faith.

Because of God's grace, we have hope. Paul describes a joyful boasting, but it isn't a boasting about ourselves. No, as forgiven sinners we boast before others of the love that Jesus had for us that he would save us while we were still sinners. We look at the blessings of Lent, and we look at their price. The crown of thorns, the purple robe, the nails in hands and feet. We boast Jesus' loved us *this much* – to suffer this torture, this pain, this much to save **us!**

#### 2. Undeserved blessings (6-8)

We stand in the presence of God as forgiven sinners, heirs of his kingdom, children adopted **by grace**. It's is God's great love, so great that it didn't hold back his only Son, so undeserved we cannot understand why God loved his enemies and saved those who despised him. And yet he did – by grace.

Centuries ago, in Great Britain it was possible to hire someone to take your place to serve in the military. But assuming you're young and healthy, how much money would it take for you to trade your freedom so a child molester could get

out of jail? What would it take to convince you to take a spot on death row for a murderer?

Consider Barabbas. A rebel against the government already tried and found worthy of death. Yet Jesus willing took his place. Jesus died so that Barabbas could go free! Yet it wasn't just Barabbas's place that Jesus took. He took *our place* on the cross. We were the ones on death row waiting to suffer the greatest penalty of all, eternal suffering in hell and total separation from God's love and blessings for all time. As Paul explains: **You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Every year during Lent, some of the people of Philippines the gather to watch people volunteer to be crucified. They use tiny little nails compared to the large spike-like nails we normally see pictured, and the victims are not scourged and bone-weary as Jesus was before the torment starts.

I once saw one of these men interviewed. He made the comment that he does this every year and the *longest* he has ever lasted is just 7 minutes before the pain was so great he had to be taken down. That makes us realize the great pain that our Savior endured for us, as we remember that the Filipinos have family and friends encouraging them and caring for them, not cursing them and reviling them. Nor do these men suffer the agony of separation from God's love and favor as he endured the pain of hell for long hours as our substitute.

Unlike the Filipinos who could come down from their cross anytime they wanted, the Savior needed to remain on the cross until the last of our sins was paid for and our entire debt erased before God. That Jesus would willing do this for us sinners is truly incomprehensible! What an amazing blessing that Christ would die for us sinners!

### **3. Guaranteed blessings (9-11)**

Paul's closing words show us that God's blessings are guaranteed to us. **Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

God the Judge of all people has declared us not guilty of our sins. Would he now decide to punish us and send us to hell anyhow? Certainly not! And that's why you and I know that heaven is guaranteed to us and we need have no fears on Judgment Day.

Guarantees can be so very important. When you spend money on a new car, you want to know if you have problems, you can bring it back to the dealer and they will fix it without additional cost and without wasting a lot of your time.

Think of all those offers I mentioned at the beginning. Lost weight, whiter teeth, losing your wrinkles, getting into better shape. Yet what good is a guarantee if the companies go out of business? What good is a warranty if the company won't answer phones or if they void the warranty on a technicality, such as we didn't return the warranty card or broke a seal.

Yet we look at God's blessings and we can't help but notice just how amazing they are. God doesn't give us 1 or 2 blessings, he gives us overflowing, abundant blessings. He gives us blessings even though ever single day we know God's blessings are totally undeserved, a gift of his limitless mercy and grace. And maybe best of all, those blessings are absolutely guaranteed to us not by some shyster trying to get us to spend our money, but guaranteed to us by God himself! God's blessings truly are amazing. Amen.