

**Not Ashamed
(Week 12)
Romans 5:1-5
“Sustained By Grace”**

Introduction

One of the most controversial doctrines within the body of Christ is that of “Eternal Security”, otherwise known as “Once saved...always saved”. In **Romans Chapter Four**, Paul makes it abundantly clear for us that we are saved by grace alone, and that no man’s “good work” can obtain a right standing before a Holy and just God. But what happens after a person is saved? Can he lose his salvation by not living up to God’s perfect standards? And if so, just how far does a person have to fall before he crosses that invisible line and loses favor with God? These are but a few of the questions that have caused many a church split, as well as, anxious Christians to walk the floor at night, wondering if they have somehow fallen from grace.

In fact, several years ago, there was a church just up the street from where I was pastoring, and they boasted of having fifty to sixty baptisms every month. I was genuinely excited when I heard of these numbers until I learned that the church only had about two hundred members! How can you baptize fifty people every month and not have a significant growth in your church membership? It turns out that the church in question was baptizing the same people over and over again, because every time they committed a sin, they were afraid that they had lost their standing with God and had to be saved and baptized all over again!

The fact is, this teaching is quite dangerous for one simple reason. It teaches that although we are “saved by grace”, we must “stay saved” by our own power. In other words, while God alone has the power to save you, you alone must keep from losing that salvation by your own power! Here is the simple truth of it all. No one can save themselves, and no one can keep themselves saved. It is ALL a work of grace from start to finish. Just listen to the words Jesus prayed before going to the cross.

“I Am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I Am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by Your Name that You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one. While I was with them, I was protecting them by Your Name that You have given Me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.”

John 17:11-12

So what was He saying? He said that all of His followers, with the exception of Judas, who was never a true believer to begin with, were kept safe by Christ. In other words, Jesus not only saves us, He keeps us saved! Period. End of story. Just as it is true that you can’t possibly be good enough to save yourself, you also can’t be good enough to keep yourself in God’s grace! It is ALL a work of God, so let’s remember to always give Him the glory and not brag about ourselves!

So, if the doctrine of eternal security is true, then the question always arises: “What about those people who joined the church, prayed a sinners prayer, and then fell back into the same life of sin as before?” Answer: Just as Judas was never truly saved, neither were they! Judas followed Jesus around for three years, just like the rest of those guys, but in his heart, he was still the same old Judas that he had always been. If your heart hasn’t been changed by Christ, then you do not possess Christ, for He, my friends, is in the “heart changing” business!

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

In **Romans 5**, Paul begins to lay out the guarantees that every believer has in Christ. Those, who have by faith accepted God’s grace, can also by faith know that God will continue to hold them fast. There are many things that every believer has the assurance of having in Christ. Three of those things are listed here in **Romans 5:1-5**. Every believer will have PEACE with God, the assurance of PRAYER (access to God’s presence), and the PRESSURE necessary to grow in Christ. Please allow me to explain.

Peace (with God)

“Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ.” **Romans 5:1**

Did you know that when you were lost in your sins, that you were actually at war with God? Paul goes to great lengths to describe this in **Romans 7-8**. When we were enslaved by our own fleshly desires, we were actually at war with a Holy God.

“Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. The mind-set fo the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God’s law. Indeed, it is unable to do so.” **Romans 8:6-7**

So you see, before you accepted God’s grace by believing His Word, you were an enemy of God, and God’s wrath was upon you. Jesus clearly tells us that this is so:

“The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.” **John 3:36**

Now many would say, “I’m not at war with God. I am simply neutral.” But there is no such thing. We are sinful by our very nature, and to reject The Son is to deny the truth of God’s Word. It is as if we are defiantly shaking our fist in God’s face. He is our Creator, and as such, He has every right to tell us what we should do and how we should live. When He tells us that we have fallen short of His standard, rather than being angry and defiant, claiming that He has no right to tell us what to do, we should fall to our knees in repentance and accept the gift of grace that He has offered. This is the ONLY way in which we can have peace with God.

The one who places his trust in Jesus can rest assured of God’s promises. He will in fact have PEACE with God. It is a guarantee of salvation. God is no longer angry with us, if we will simply trust in His Word. I am reminded of the story of Noah in *Genesis*. After the great flood, God made a covenant with Noah that He would never again destroy the world by water. God himself gave Noah the sign of the rainbow in the sky as proof of that covenant promise.

The rainbow was a symbol of God’s “laying down His bow”, and He was no longer at war with mankind. It is also important to note that the bow was not only laid down, but that it was curved upward. This symbolized that God had turned His bow upon Himself. He was willing to take the punishment that we deserved. Jesus Christ took the penalty for our sins upon the cross on the day that God was “pierced with the arrow” that we deserved. Christ’s death has made a way for us to have peace with God.

The word for peace in the Greek is *Eirene* (pronounced i-ray’-nay), and it is where we derive our word “serenity”. To those who will but place their trust in God’s promise of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, they are guaranteed to receive peace with God. All is forgiven, and they are not only saved by grace, they are also kept by that same grace. The child of God has been given serenity, knowing that all is forgiven and that God is no longer against us, but rather, He is FOR us (**Romans 8:31**). Do you have this serenity this morning? Be assured of this: It is there for the asking.

Prayer (access to God’s Presence)

“We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” **Romans 5:2**

One of the most glorious assurances of our salvation is that we have been given permanent and continual access to the very throne of God. John Phillips shares a story in one of his many commentaries about a poor and raggedy child in England, who was standing outside the gates of Buckingham Palace. One of the guards asked him what he wanted. To which he replied, “I’d like to speak to the king”. The guard informed him that his request was quite impossible and ordered the little one to “move along”. The boy sat down on the on the road side and began to cry.

It was just in that moment, when to the child all seemed hopeless, that a well dressed man came up to him and asked what was the matter. The little boy wiped his tears and told the kind man that he had simply wanted to talk with the King, but had been refused. The man replied, "Come with me, I can get you in!" He took the young boy by the hand and walked toward the palace gates. When the guards saw the man they snapped to attention as he looked down at the boy and said, "Don't worry about the guards, I assure you they will let us in". The guards opened the gate, and the man and boy strode into the palace hand in hand on their way to have an audience with the king. For it turns out, that the well dressed man was actually The Prince of Wales, the King's very own son. His standing gave a poor little child access to a place that was otherwise reserved for royalty. This is exactly what Christ has done for those who will believe in Him. By faith, take Jesus by the hand and let Him take you to the throne of God! You have been given access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand.

So, how can we know that this access to God has been permanently granted and is not dependent upon our own merit? The word that Paul uses for "stand" (*histemi*, pronounced his'-tay-mee) is a word that carries with it the idea of being rooted or permanently affixed. In short, what Paul is saying is that through Christ, we have been permanently affixed in the presence of God, so we have access to Him at all times. This means that we can "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) for we, through Christ, can be at the throne and be heard at any time we wish. There will never be a time when the King of Kings is too busy to hear your petitions. This is a glorious truth, or as the hymn-writer so elegantly penned it.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear
And what a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer."

Joseph M. Scriven (1855)

It is because of this privilege of God's presence, that Paul tells us we can rejoice "in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2b). Meaning that because we have been given not only in the present time, peace with God and access to God's presence through prayer, but because of these realities the believer is assured of everything God has promised to do in the future as well. *The Bible* calls this "our hope".

There is a big difference in the way that we use the word "hope" as opposed to its *Biblical* definition. The Greek word for hope is "*elpice*", meaning "a confident expectation of what is to come", rather than some blind wish for something. *Elpice* is waiting upon God to do what you unwaveringly believe that He will. Just as Abraham knew that God would keep His promises, we too, know it as well. We are confident in our faith that Christ has forgiven us and has granted us peace with God, along with permanent access to God in prayer; just as certain as we know these things, we know that one day we will be physically in God's presence forevermore!

I love the story of Fannie Crosby. She was a blind girl, who placed her faith in Jesus Christ, and as a result, not only did she do mission work, but also composed several hymns of faith. Arguably the most famous of which was a song called "*Blessed Assurance*". In the words of this great hymn she writes:

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His Blood."

These are the great truths of salvation. But it is in her last verse, that she speaks of the "*elpice*" hope that she has for the future:

"Perfect submission, Perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight
Angels descending, bring from above, echoes of mercy whispers of love."

My friends, when a blind girl can write a song about the "visions of rapture" that she is longing for when Christ returns, you can rest assured that she has the "*Blessed Assurance*" that God will do all that He has promised. Paul uses this word "*elpice*" three times in this short passage (vs. 1-5). Why? Because when you know you are at peace with God, when you know that you have been granted permanent access to His throne, you will also know that He will finish what He has begun... in you (*Philippians 1:6*).

Pressure (from God)

“And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through The Holy Spirit Who was given to us.”

Romans 5:3-5

Now to someone who is unfamiliar with the ways of our God, this particular set of verses would seem out of place. Through Christ, we have peace with God, as well as, the presence of God (which are both really good things). But we will find joy in tribulations! Who on earth would equate peace and prayer, with persecution? How is this possible? But the Scriptures are filled with passages telling us that God uses trials to make us more like Christ. The word that Paul uses that is translated “afflictions” is “*thlipsis*” in the Greek, and it literally means “*pressure*”. Every believer in Christ must come to realize that God uses pressure situations to conform us into the image of His Son. And here, according to Paul, they are actually a sign of God’s love.

Consider that for a moment. Because God loves you, He will also afflict you with trials. Why? Because any one can have a child, but it takes a loving parent to raise one, that’s why. God has not only saved us from our sins, but He fully intends to make us sinless. This process is painful, but also necessary. After all, we need to be remade. You cannot stay where you are and go with God! God uses trials to refine us. And the Christian who fully understands this will also be grateful for it.

Paul tells us that the pressure that God puts on us produces endurance. In other words, we humbly endure our trials just as Christ endured His. The reason for this is for a greater good. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed **“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”**. This attitude of enduring hardship for the sake of others salvation is as Christlike as it gets! When other people are cruel to us and we respond with love, we reveal the very nature of Christ in us. It is this type of endurance, Paul says produces “proven character”. The word that he uses there simply means “proof”. When we are like Christ in our trials, it “PROVES” that we do indeed have Christ within us, and we are a witness to the world of that fact. If you live to retaliate, then you are worldly, but if you live to show grace, then you are Godly. How you react to pressure is proof of your spiritual condition! In short, when you get “squeezed”, what’s truly inside you will come out.

And when we get squeezed and Christ comes out, it is not only proof of salvation, but it produces even more “*elpice*” hope that God is actually doing what He promised to do in you. You are being remade in the image of Christ, and not only does the world see it, but you do as well, and that gives you hope all the more, that God has been and will finish what He began in you!

So, in conclusion, we have not only been saved by grace, we are kept saved by grace as well. We have been granted through Christ; Peace with the Father, access to His Presence through Prayer, as well as, the Pressure that is necessary for us to mature into the image of Christ. Why does God do all this for us? Because of His great love! Remember, anyone can have a child, but it takes a loving parent to raise one.

Our God is the greatest Father of all! God doesn’t stop working on us after we are born again. He finishes what He has begun in us, by raising us up to be like His Son. And THAT is the very essence of our Eternal Security in Christ.

And let ALL of God’s children say... **TRUTH!!!**