

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Security of Salvation, Part 2

Scripture: Romans 5:2b-5a

Code: 45-41

Open your Bible, if you will now, to Romans chapter 8. What a joy it is in my heart to see a great congregation like this, a full church, for the study of the Word of God...so thrilling, so exciting. And we're looking at a great, great chapter. It's a chapter I confess to you that is beyond me in many ways. Its riches are so profound, but how thrilling has been our limited, cursory look at the first verse and a half, which we began last week.

Basically, the message of the first eleven verses of Romans 5 is very simple. And I'm not going to pull any punches or keep any secrets, the message is you can't lose your salvation. Your salvation is forever. It is eternal. It is everlasting. It is unchanging.

Peter says in I Peter 1:5, "We are kept by the power of God."

What a great statement. We are kept by the power of God. And without question the most comforting, the most assuring, the most confidence-building, the most joy-producing of all Christian truth is that our salvation is forever. That is a tremendously exciting reality. The believer's joy and the believer's comfort really depends upon the sense of security of salvation. And so Paul is affirming that in this great text of Romans 5. It is the heart of the passage that our salvation, our justification by faith is secure...in the power of God.

Now, as we noted last time, and I don't want to take a long time in introduction, because there's so much here, but last time we noted that this subject fits into the flow of Paul's thought in Romans.

You remember that he begins in the epistle of the Romans by dealing with the wrath of God against sinful men. And then he offers an escape from the wrath of God. The wrath of God is unfolded in chapter 1, chapter 2, and the first half of chapter 3, and then the escape is unfolded in chapter 3, the second half, and chapter 4. And he says if you believe in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, simply believing that is by true, genuine saving faith, you are justified or made right with God. There's no works involved, there's no self-effort involved, there's no human enterprise involved, it's a matter of believing what God has done in Christ. Justification by faith, being made right with God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Now, that seems so incredibly simple to the Jew that it would be very difficult for him to handle that. Because, you see, he was basically reared in a works system. It even would seem incredible to a

Gentile who was raised with a religion of human achievement, which all false religion is. And to hear that all you need to do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you can be made right with God forever is more than they could have hoped for. And so the natural question that follows that is that you're going to say to yourself -Well, boy, this seems too simple, too...too...too clear, too easy, there's got to be more than just believing. And so you ask yourself -Is this enough? If all I do is believe, can that really save me? Can that keep me? Will that be enough in the day of judgment when I stand before a holy God and it's time to find out the real issue of eternity, is my faith alone in Jesus Christ going to hold me there? Am I going to survive the judgment? And that is why in chapter 5 Paul speaks to this issue. Because anyone who is newly converted and comes to Christ through faith is going to naturally ask the question -How long is this good for? How do I keep it? Is there anything I do to lose it? Now that I've got it is it mine forever? And that is the reason he approaches the subject in the way that he does. And we're not surprised by that.

Look with me for a moment at Ephesians chapter 1, and I'll show you a parallel. In Ephesians the Apostle Paul begins to unfold the great realities of the gospel. And in verse 13 he talks about the gospel of your salvation. "In whom also after you believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." So, here he's talking about your salvation and the gospel that saved you, and when you were saved you were given the Holy Spirit.

And then he says: "When you have been saved through believing and you have received Jesus Christ, you were given the Holy Spirit who sealed you," stamped you authentic, stamped you permanently the possession of God. And verse 14 says: "The Holy Spirit became the arrabonor the earnest, or the engagement ring, or the down payment or the guarantee, that someday you would ultimately come to full glory.

In other words, the giving of the Holy Spirit is, in a sense, the guarantee...very important truth.

Now, watch this. He articulates the gospel of salvation in verse 13 and 14, in its fullness, you believe, you receive Jesus Christ, you're given the Holy Spirit, and so forth. And immediately he says - I..."After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus," I heard that you were converted, "And the demonstration of your love to the saints, I began continually to pray for you." And for what did he pray? "I prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you something?" What is it? What is it that a Christian needs most? What is it that you would want, first of all, to give to a new believer in Christ? What is it that would be your first prayer request? Here it is, "I pray that the Father of glory may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him so that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened and you would know what is the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

In other words, I want you to be able to comprehend what is yours in having Christ. I want you to have the hope of His calling. In other words, that what He has begun in your life ultimately He will

fulfill, that's what hope is. And the riches of the coming glory of the inheritance promised to the saints. So, Paul says - Now that I know you're saved, I'm praying for you and my first request is that you'll understand that your salvation is forever, and that you have a hope and you have an inheritance and you have a coming glory.

So, we are not surprised, then. going back to Romans 5, when Paul in Romans essentially does the same thing. He speaks to the matter of the gospel of salvation in chapters 3 and 4 and in chapter 5 he really affirms the fact that this salvation is forever.

Now, the Apostle gives us six great links in the security of the believer, six links in the chain that ties us to the Savior forever, six great realities. He says here we have peace with God, we have standing in grace. we have hope of glory, we have possession of love, we have certainty of deliverance and we have joy in God. And each of those acts, as I see it, as a link in the chain that eternally secures us to Christ. And so when the enemy hits you with doubt and you begin to wonder whether you're really saved, you begin to question that, you can retreat to the promised realities of this particular passage.

Now, remember the first two we looked at last time. The first one is in verse 1, "Therefore being justified by faith," that is through the act of believing in Jesus Christ, that's all there is involved in salvation from the human side, we simply believe, through that act we have, first of all, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we pointed out last time as psalm 7:11 says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." God is at war with men whether men are consciously at war with Him or not. Some people say - Well, I don't know how I can make peace with God, I've never been mad at Him...I've never been angry with Him...I've never been at war with Him.

Well, that's not the issue. The issue is He's at war with you, because you're a sinner and you're an object of His wrath. In fact, he calls such children of wrath, in Ephesians 2:3. Christ comes into this, Christ bears the wrath of God on the cross. Christ is the substitute who receives the punishment that we should receive. He receives the fury and the anger and the vengeance of God against sin on our behalf.

And so we have peace with God. And it says in Isaiah 32:17, "The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever." So, when Christ does His work of righteousness He brings peace with God. And that means we're at peace with God. And it's going to be that way forever because God has poured out all His wrath already on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we saw that we have standing in grace, verse 2: "By whom also," that is by Jesus Christ, "we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand." We talked about the word access.

Christ has given us access to God. And as we open the door that is the access and step into the Kingdom we find ourselves standing in...what?...in grace. And grace is a place where all sin is forgiven.

Grace is a place where all sin is forgotten, because of what Christ has done on the cross and because He ever lives to make intercession for us.

So, Jesus opens the door to God. And there we enter, we find no condemnation, no judgment, no vengeance, but only and incessantly do we find grace.

Now. at this point someone...and I need to interject this...someone might bring up a passage of Scripture and say - Well, you can be in grace but you can fall from grace. And this is often the argument of the people who want to deny that our salvation is secure. They say - Well, you can fall from grace. And they point out one Scripture and I'd like you to turn to it, Galatians 5:4...Galatians 5:4. And it says there, "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." And people say - You see, right there it proves that you can fall from grace.

That's right, it does say that. But would you notice to whom it says that? it says it to people who try to get saved by...what?...by law. You go back to verse 2: "Behold, I Paul say unto you that if you be circumcised," in other words, if you believe you can be saved by surgery, if you believe you can be right with God by some kind of physical operation, "then Christ means nothing to you." Christ is of no use to you. You don't need Him. He's profitless because you can be saved by your surgery.

And then in verse 4 he says: "Christ is also of no effect to you if you are justified by the law." In other words, if you think you can be made right with God by your law-keeping and your self-righteousness and your own religious works, then equally Christ is useless to you and these are the kinds of people who are fallen from grace. What does it mean? It means that you have fallen away from the grace principle of salvation. It really isn't defining Christians in terms of salvation.

It's defining non-Christians...people who come to God, as it were, or attempt to come to God some other way than through grace. You are fallen, as it were, away from the true principle, the true principle that saves is grace, it is not teaching us that a Christian standing in grace can fall out of grace. The context would be utterly foreign to that concept. We who are saved through the Spirit, verse 5, we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, not by law. So it is simply falling from the principle of grace as a way of salvation.

Now, Christ's death, then, provides for us these two things, peace with God and standing in grace. Now I want to show you the third link and I don't know if we'll get pass this, I intended to do two each time, but this is so rich. The third link, verse 2 again, "We have access by faith into the grace in which we stand, and we rejoice," or we exult, or actually we boast, we make our boast, "in hope of the glory

of God." The third link in our security is hope of glory.

We are secure because we have peace with God. We are secure because we stand in grace. And we are secure because we have been given the hope of glory. In other words, to put it another way, God has promised us future glory, right? He promised. Does God keep His promises?

He is the God who cannot lie. And we will enter into that glory in the future.

Look at Romans chapter 8 verse 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Now watch this: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." In other words, if He preestablished a love relationship with an individual and He predestinated them, He didn't just predestine them to enter in, He predestinated them ultimately to be in the image of whom? Christ. Now watch this, so He isn't predestining the initiation, He is predestining the completion. Do you understand that? We are predestined not to start, but we are predestined to...what?...to finish.

We are not predestined to be incomplete but predestined to be complete.

And so, in verse 30: "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified them He also...what?...glorified." There's no loss, because if you're predestined to begin, you're predestined to end. If you're predestined to start, you're predestined to finish. If you're predestined to be in Christ, you're predestined to be like Christ. Isn't that a marvelous truth? You see, that's the securing reality of the hope of the believer. And the doctrine of security is based on the hope of glory.

Now, at this point I would just stop and draw these first three together because they need to be drawn together. The security of the believer is first of all anchored in the past. Christ made peace with God. And then the security of the believer is anchored and maintained in the present, we stand in grace, and Christ ever lives to intercede on our behalf. And then the security of the believer is anchored in the future, for our future glory is guaranteed for we have been redeemed to exult in hope of ultimate glory. And so, past, present, future all comes together to secure the believer.

Now, look with me for a moment at the very phrase itself, rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The word rejoice is, as I said, kauchesthai is a word that basically is a confident boast or an exultant jubilation, it's a...it's a very strong word, it refers to rejoicing, I think, at the highest level. We really rejoice in a secure future, don't we? I mean, that is our great rejoicing. We are at peace with God because of Christ's finished work in the past, we stand in grace because of His intercessory work in the present, and we have no fear of the future because of His ultimate statement that He said "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I have lost none, but will raise him up at the last day." Isn't that great? John 6. So, the Christian has a secure future. We boast in a secure future. And that is

what our hope speaks about in this passage. In fact, it says in...I think it's I Timothy 1:1...where it says, "Our Savior who is...or, our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope." He is our hope because we are one with Him we have hope.

I think Peter is referring to it in I Peter 1, verse 18, says: "You were redeemed not with corruptible things like silver and gold, from your former vain, empty manner of life, received by tradition from your fathers but you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory that your faith and hope might be in God." The idea being that if God raised up Jesus from the grave then we can trust Him to raise us up by the same promise. Jesus prayed in John 17, verse 22, that marvelous prayer, He simply said this, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." And at that point it was a yet future fulfillment in its fullness. But we have the hope of glory, folks, the hope of ultimate glorification. So, our rejoicing in future glory is not based on our own worthiness, that is not based upon our ability to stay saved, it is based upon the promise and the power of God.

Now, look at the end of verse 2. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." If you know me very well and you've been around Grace very long you know that's one of my favorite subjects and I'm tempted to do about a three month series at this point on the glory of God. That was the most life-changing discovery I ever made in all my Christian pilgrimage, when I discovered the reality of the meaning of the glory of God.

And if you...if you haven't really studied that, get the series of tapes we did on "Glorifying God," and the one single tape on "The Greatest Theme: the Glory of God," and you'll understand the importance of that.

But, let me see if I can give you some sense of what it means in this text, and I can't cover the whole thing, it...it has marvelously unique facets of meaning, but for here and now what he is really talking about is the glory of God basically, now mark it, is the expression of God's person, the glory is God's intrinsic revelation of Himself. God has revealed His glory, that is the expression of His person. And what it's saying in this verse is that someday God in the fullest, truest, purest, unmitigated way is going to reflect His eternal character through us. That's really what it's saying.

In Romans 8, I think Paul is dealing with this, in verse 18, he says: "Anything that we suffer in this present time shouldn't even be worthy to be compared with the glory," now listen, "which shall be revealed...where?...in us." In other words, there is going to be a time when God without any hindrance, without any veiling, is going to be able to pour through us in eternal, infinite manifestation His glory. Now that can't happen now. we wait for that, verse 19, Romans 8, "The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God." We...we...we can't do that now. We have this treasure, says Paul to the Corinthians, in earthen vessels, right now.

There's limitation there. And so we're waiting and we're waiting, and we're groaning and we're moaning and the whole creation is waiting, verse 23 says, for the adoption and the redemption of the body for we ?e saved in hope. And what is our hope? That we're going to lose our humanness, we're going to lose the incapacitation of the flesh, we're going to lose the body, the earthiness and we're going to become clear, crystal, eternally...eternal persons through whom God can reveal His glory. And the point being if He called you and if He justified you.

He'll glorify you. That is our hope. The consummation of our redemption, the ultimate fulfillment of our salvation is connected with the manifestation of the glory of God in and through us.

You know, when you read about heaven you read about the fact that there's no lamp in heaven, you know, and there's no light there because the Lord is the lamp of it, the Lord is the light, and as you read about heaven you find out that everything is transparent in heaven.

The streets of gold are transparent. The layers and foundations and so forth are made out of jewels through which the very glory of God will radiate. I mean, heaven must be like some utterly incomprehensible flashing crown of jewels with the glistening of the glory of God from the inside radiating out of every refracted element of it and you and I are going to be little different from that, we're going to be caught up in that whole, incredible display of glory and become reflectors eternally of the full majesty and glory of the infinite God Himself. And you know, it's hard to do that in these deals, isn't it? It's impossible and that's why we groan waiting for the redemption of the body. Because our bodies get in the way of that reflection, don't they? Of the glory of God. And whenever you read in the Scripture about Jesus' coming, He's always coming in power and great...what?...glory, that blazing glory that will be radiated through us.

In Romans 8:29, it says that glory is defined this way: "We will be conformed to the image of His Son." Now, I'm not sure all of that means, but whatever it is we're going to be just exactly like Jesus and my own personal feeling, as you remember, when He went up on the mount of transfiguration. and pulled back His flesh and revealed the fullness of the glory of God and they were literally shaken to the very core with the profound wonder of what they saw and He showed them His glory, it says, I think that that is the essential reality of the glorified Christ and we're going to be like that. And this becomes a marvelous theme throughout Scripture, II Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18, a verse that I write underneath my name when I sign it, a book or something, "We all with an unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from one level of glory to the next." You see, as we gaze on the glory of the Lord even now we are being changed, and the illustration, of course, was Moses.

He went up into the mountain, God was there, He revealed Himself to Moses and when Moses saw the glory of God, you remember what happened?

He got glory all over his face, he got glory all over his face. He came down the mountain and he didn't know, it says, that his face shone, it was like a light bulb. And the people were ahhhhh, you know. And it says he veiled his face because the glory would fade, and he didn't want the people to see the glory fade. You see, in these bodies, in these human instruments, the glory fades very fast even when seeing the revelation of the afterglow of God on the mount, it didn't last in Moses' case. But there will come a time when we will be lifted from one level of glory to another level of glory, to another level and finally that ultimate level of glory when we become in the image of Jesus Christ, able to manifest the full blazing glory of God Himself.

In Philippians chapter 3, verse 20, "Our citizenship is in heaven from which also we look for the Savior." We're looking for the Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, listen, "Who shall change our lowly body." Now what's He going to do with it? "He's going to make it fashioned like His glorious body." We're going to be like Christ. We're going to radiate the divine glory of God. Just marvelous to think of.

How about Colossians 3:4? It says: "When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall ye also appear with Him...what are the next two words?...in glory." I mean, we're not going to be these crummy little creatures like we are now, running around this heaven of glory. I mean, we're just not going to be what we are. We're going to be reflectors of the glory, we're going to be like Jesus Christ transfigured. Oh, what a marvelous incomprehensible reality.

Hebrews 2:10 will sum up our little quick-trip through the glory road for the believer. Hebrews 2:9 says, Jesus came, He was crowned with glory and honor, and by the grace of God He tasted death for every man. He died for everyone. "For it was His purpose," it became Him, it says, "for whom are all things and by whom are all things," listen now, "in bringing many sons unto glory."

What was the purpose in saving you? What was it? To bring you to...what?...glory. It is ludicrous to assume that God saves people and then crosses His finger and hopes they'll get to glory. You, if you were initiated, were initiated to be completed. You were redeemed to be glorified. You understand that?

You say - I've read Romans 5 a lot, I never saw that there. I'm glad you see it now. You see, that's the joy of Bible study, you can just skip over the words and it doesn't mean much, but in the digger....the deeper you dig the more profound it becomes. The reason I am secure is because God has given me the hope that is built into my salvation that I was saved unto glory. And that He doesn't lose the people He redeems to glory. So, the hope of the glory of God is a confident assurance that in the future we will partake of the divine glory that He is in the business of being a salvation captain who through His suffering is bringing many sons to glory. Oh, what a great, great reality...how secured we are in that anticipation.

One other...I just keep thinking of verses on this subject cause I've studied it for so many years and my mind is filled with them - but Romans 9:23 always strikes me as a marvelous verse. You say - Well, you have to earn your way to get to glory, folks. You've got to keep yourself saved. No, no. no. No, verse 23 of Romans 9 says: "That He might make known the riches of His glory." Now, the Lord wants to show the riches of His glory, now who's He going to show it to? Watch this. "The vessels of...what?...mercy which He hath before...before when?...before anything, just before, before anything...prepared unto...what?...glory." Now remember this, those of us who get to glory here are called vessels of...what?...mercy. Now what does mercy assume about us? That we deserve it? That we don't deserve it? Right. The point is those who are ordained to glory are ordained to glory through mercy, not through deserving it. You see that? So, we're prepared to glory. Before the world began I was prepared to glory. And any other thought misconstrues the reality of our redemption.

Paul in I Corinthians 2 verse 7 says: "We're speaking in the wisdom of God in a mystery," that is the new covenant, and he says; "Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages unto our glory." You're saved to be glorified, folks, you understand that? You're saved to be glorified. That's why Paul says, as I read earlier, Our citizenship is not here...is it? It's up there. We're just waiting to get rid of this thing so we can get there and enter into glory. And even when we have struggles in this world, II Corinthians 4:17 says. "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Oh, I love that. The whole New Testament is just loaded with glory, I'm just sort of wandering around in here and I keep coming across them.

Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you," what does it mean to have Christ in you? "The hope of...what?...glory." When Christ entered into you it was to put there the hope of glory. Oh, what a marvelous security.

How about I Thessalonians 2:12? "That you would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto His Kingdom and glory." See, He didn't just get you in, He's going to bring you all the way.

Oh, we might as well look at I Peter 5...I just love this subject. First Peter 5:1, "The elders among you I exhort, whom am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ," and look how Peter identifies himself, here's another definition of a Christian, write this down in your definition-of-a-Christian book, here it is: "A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Isn't that great? We're partakers of the glory that shall be revealed. Marvelous...partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

So, that's our hope and that is a secure hope, never will it waver. Now, I want to add a footnote. Hebrews 5:8, we've seen it from God's side, I want you to see it from our side. You say Ah, well that's great, man, I'm just going to go do what I want...and I'll get glorified in the end. There's a word for you...it's in Hebrews 3:6. "But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are," listen now, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Now listen to me, the

hope is secured by God. You say - Do we have anything to do with it? We prove ourselves to belong to God genuinely if we hold fast our confidence and the rejoicing of that hope firm to the end. Somebody who just wanders off into sin and just wanders off and says - Well, I guess I'm going to be glorified in the end, I'll live any way I want....you just proved that you never were in to begin with. Yes, God secures us, but from our side we are truly the household of God if we hold fast the confidence and keep the rejoicing firm to the end.

So that, listen, not only does God secure His own sovereignly, but He implants within His own the power of the Spirit of God that keeps alive the hope and the rejoicing and the obedience. God will keep His promise for those who are genuine.

Verse 14 says the same thing. "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." Now listen, it isn't saying that you stay saved by hanging on, it is saying that you reveal that you really are if you do. You understand the difference? You prove yourself. From the divine viewpoint God holds onto His own, but from the human point He gives them the power to hold that confidence firm...to hold that hope firm, to rejoice in that hope. So we're secure. We're secure if we're the real Christians. We're secure if we're the ones who hang on to our hope and rejoice in our hope.

The hymn writer had it right: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is...what?...sinking sand. When darkness fails His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." Our hope is secure in the work of Christ in the power of God and it is proven to be secure when we walk in obedience to His holy will.

Now, with that in mind go back to Romans 5 and watch this next verse, most thrilling. Verse 3 and 4, "And not only so," what do you mean by that, Paul? Not only do we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but watch this, "We also," and the word should be rejoice there, not glory, if you have the King James, it's the word exult again, it's the word for exultant jubilation, for rejoicing and boasting, "But we rejoice in tribulation because we know that tribulation works patience and patience character and character hope." Now listen - you say - What is this saying? This is so terrific. I mean, I get it all...I can feel it all in me, I just want to say the words to get it out. The believer not only rejoices in the glory to come but he even rejoices in the tribulation now. Because the tribulation now produces the kind of character that has a greater capacity to rejoice about the future.

So, Paul says we rejoice even in our tribulation. Why? Because we know no matter what comes, no matter how severe it is, no matter how devastating it is, it can never take away our promised glory. It

can never steal our hope. Therefore it can never touch our joy, and so when the tribulation comes we don't curse God, like the rest of the world, we don't question God, like other people do, we rejoice in our tribulation because we see in the tribulation a product. By the way, the word tribulation is thlipsis, it means pressure, and it was used for squeezing olives to get the oil, squeezing grapes to get the wine. When we get in the real pressure, when we really have the stuff applied to us, what oozes out of us is the oil of rejoicing, the wine of rejoicing. Why? Because tribulation works patience... hupomoneit means patient endurance. You go through trouble, you learn to endure. You go through trouble, you learn more to endure. The more trouble, the more you learn to endure.

And what happens? Endurance produces...and the word is experience, you see that word in your Bible? Experience? Let me tell you what that means. Dokimenis the noun, it comes from dokimazo which is a word that means to be approved, to put to the test for the purpose of approving someone, like you test gold to get the impurities out, you test silver to make sure it's pure, you test somebody. And what it's saying, and this is so beautiful, is when you have trouble it produces endurance and when you go through trouble and you learn endurance it builds, here's the reason...here's the way to translate that word...proven character...proven character...proven character.

The term is used, by the way, of metal, it would be much like we use the term sterling, sterling silver, or when we say about someone's character, they're sterling character, we mean there's no flaws, there's no impurities. You see, the pressure takes all that out of us. Why? Because we learn to trust God in the trials, we learn to trust God in the stress, we learn to trust God in the pain. And tribulation is not a problem for us, for one thing it's an honor to suffer for Christ, isn't it? For another thing it is a joy to learn to experience His sustaining power in the middle of suffering. It increases our faith. It purges us. It sanctifies us. It washes us. It strengthens us. It's like spiritual weight lifting. it builds our muscles, it raises our level of holiness. And so, we look at tribulation and we rejoice in that also. We're not just saying - Hey, pie in the sky, by and by, folks, we're just hanging on for dear life till we can get to the gloryland, we're not moaning and groaning here with all of the struggle and hoping for that heaven, we're even rejoicing right here because the process of trouble is building proven character...purging out the flaws...purging out the dross.

James talks about this, doesn't he? "And blessed is a man that endures testing, for when he is tried he'll receive a crown." It's part of the purifying. Now listen, that's James 1:12...the reason we enjoy the suffering, the reason we're patiently enduring it is because it's building proven character and sterling character, and more flawless character. And the stronger we grow spiritually.

the richer our hope becomes...the greater our rejoicing, why? Because the greater the reward that awaits us there, the greater the joy to receive it and cast it at the feet of Jesus Christ....great truth.

Listen, salvation doesn't refine your character. You take a bitter, angry, cantankerous person and get him saved and you've got a bitter, angry, cantankerous Christian. That's a transaction that occurs on

a divine level. But salvation does do is plant in you the capacity to be perfected, see. And then the purging process begins and the Lord uses trials and tribulations and all of that and when they come into your life you rejoice. Why? Because they're making you sterling, they're improving your character and not only that no matter what those trials bring, no matter what those trials do, one thing they'll never do is take away your future hope, cause that's secure, right? So, come what may, folks, you can hit me with all the guns you want, you can fire all the darts you want, Satan, you can come at me with all the troubles you want, the Lord can bring those things into my life and even the worse attacks that come, the severe tribulations of life, do nothing but strengthen me because they develop my spiritual character and the greater my spiritual character the greater my hope...and the greater my rejoicing for what God has for me in the future. And that's why I Thessalonians 3:3 says: "So no man is disturbed by these afflictions, for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this." Destined for this.

So, we are secure. We're secured by peace. We're secured by grace. We're secured by hope, forever.

Verse 5, and we'll stop at this point. And here's the wrap-up on hope. "Hope makes not...what?...ashamed." What it really means is hope is never disappointed. You don't have to be ashamed of God. And you say - Ah, I put all my faith in that God, I put all my faith in that Jesus Christ and He deceived me, He never came through, and I lost everything and what a deceiver...I'm ashamed that I ever mentioned that name. No, you'll never come to that point. Hope is not going to be ashamed, not when it's put in Jesus Christ. Hope is never disappointed. It will never be ashamed. It will never be disappointed. Why? Because it will receive the promised anticipated glory. That's what it is saying. Because we are at peace with God through Christ's death on the cross, because we stand in grace we have a promised future glory. And I don't blush to say that's my hope. I'm not ashamed to say to anybody on the face of the earth, I'm going to be in glory with Jesus Christ someday, radiating the eternal glory of God throughout the eternal Jerusalem. That's my destiny. That's where I'm going, and I'm not going to be ashamed, because hope in God, hope in the Lord Jesus Christ is never disappointing.

Now what does that say? You put your hope in Him, you will never be disappointed. When you came to Jesus Christ and you embraced Him and you said - My hope is in You, Lord, that You're going to keep me till I'm glorified...you will never be disappointed. He will, you'll never be ashamed to name His name.

Now, do you get the feeling you're secure? I hope, I hope it's more than a feeling. Hope you understand it. Now that's the introduction to the main part of this section. Come back next week...let's pray.

Our Father, we are overwhelmed at what is ours in Jesus Christ, the security that is ours, so undeserved. We thank You. We thank You that You saved us when we didn't deserve it. You keep us when we don't deserve it. And You'll make us like Jesus Christ which we don't deserve. And so we thank You that Your grace extended to us, that Your peace is ours and that You've filled us with hope, and our hope will never be disappointed. And, Lord, we pray tonight that we might demonstrate our gratitude not by taking advantage of Your grace, not by saying - Oh, oh, if I'm so secure I'll do whatever I want - for that might truly betray that we're not even your children in reality at all. For if we were we wouldn't trade on such grace. But we would have strong confidence and continue steadfast in the hope and the rejoicing firm to the end. Thank You, God, for redeeming us to be like Christ, to that end we pray, for that moment we wait.

And for those in our midst who have never come to Jesus Christ, who have never been yet brought into that glorious security of justification by faith, may they embrace the Savior even now.

We pray in His blessed name. Amen.

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