

# **WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE FREE? ROMANS 5:1-11**

**By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn**

**JESUS INDEED DID SET US FREE AND GIVE US NEW LIFE. HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT TOOK FOR JESUS TO SET US FREE, IS MEANT TO GIVE US ATTITUDES OF CONFIDENCE AND JOY THAT HELP US TO LIVE FREE AND TO STAY FREE.**

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- B. REJOICE IN GOD'S PEACE (Vs. 9-10)
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## **WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE FREE? ROMANS 5:1-11**

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This morning, we are going to start the next section in Romans. It will cover chapters 5-8. This section basically deals with life from a believer's perspective. The theme of chapters 1-4 was how the sin problem is fixed because of our sin and our natural bent towards evil, we were alienated from God. Since we could not fix the problem on our own, God took the initiative by sending His One and Only Son Jesus to suffer and die for our sins. As we place our faith in Jesus, we are forgiven for our sin and we become reconciled with God. The theme of chapters 1-4 are we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Last week, I wanted to set the stage for these next 4 chapters. I preached on Matthew 25, particularly, Jesus' parable of the talents. At the end of the service, I passed out 32 \$100 bills the purpose of which was to demonstrate that being a Christian has nothing to do with being or acting religious. Being a believer in Jesus Christ means that we are to carry on the mission that Jesus started, using the resources that Jesus gave us. The \$100 was only symbolic of the truth that all we have, our money, possessions, property, talents, abilities, spiritual gifts, our families, and our lives, everything we have belongs to the Master, Jesus. We are merely the stewards of these gifts.

As I passed out the money, I reminded you that the \$100 bill belonged to God. Each of you who received the money were to pray, ask God for His leading, and then find ways to multiply the money with all of your resources and others around you, then spend it to further the Kingdom of God.

Second, for those of us who didn't take the \$100, we too must be reminded that all we have belongs to God and we should be constantly looking to invest all we have to further the

Kingdom. I know this worked well in my house, Maribeth and Luing didn't take a \$100 bill at church but I overheard them talking in the kitchen; Maribeth was looking through our World Vision catalogue and mentioned to Luing that she was going to buy a goat for a family in Africa when Luing said, "The goat can't be alone, so if you buy the family a female goat, I'll buy them a male goat that way they can ultimately have many goats."

That's the kind of thing that I hope happens as we all take time to think about who we are as believers. We are children of God with the mission of liberating the world from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the fear of death. Please, even if you were not one of those who received the money, make sure that you tell your story to Samella who is going to keep track of what we are doing as church, the Body of Christ.

That's where we pick up Romans again this morning. I'm sure when I placed the \$100 in your hands you were stunned and a little bit shocked then I'll guess excitement set in and finally, when you realized the money belonged to God, a little anxiety set in. The temptation is to simply get rid of it as soon as possible. But don't forget, everything else you have still belongs to God. The mission never ends until Jesus comes back for us and puts an end to evil and its effects once and for all.

You see, in chapters 1-4 we learned that Jesus set us free so in these next 4 chapters we have to gain some realistic perspective on what it means to live free and stay free. Our experience seems to be that it is relatively easy to get free, but much more difficult to live free and stay free.

It seems to me that one of the main characteristics that manifests in believers is joy. Joy is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit yet, I don't always experience it? How about you?

Let me give you an example. We have been here for 12 years and by now you know there are no secrets in my family. We do everything in public, good ... and bad. When the kids were little, chaos ruled our house and every Sunday morning was just crazy. Since I often had to preach and teach, I had to make sure I was at the church on time. Of course, none of my family was ever ready to go, so I'd be ranting and raving and yelling to get everybody ready. Well on one Sunday morning, I was preaching on Philippians 4, and the theme was "Rejoice, again I'll say it, Rejoice."

The car ride was no better, the kids were in the back seat fighting and Luig was in the front seat mad at me for rushing her. Finally I yelled out, "O.K.! Everyone settle down. In 15 minutes, I have to be up in front of the congregation preaching and modeling what it means to be a joyful, Spirit-filled, radiant Christian, and by golly, that's exactly what I intend to be." Do you have those days where joy just seems to be out of reach?

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**JESUS INDEED DID SET US FREE AND GIVE US NEW LIFE. HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT TOOK FOR JESUS TO SET US FREE IS MEANT TO GIVE US ATTITUDES OF CONFIDENCE AND JOY THAT HELP US TO LIVE FREE AND TO STAY FREE.** Most of us who take our walk with Jesus Christ seriously quickly come to realize that coming to Christ for salvation is much easier than living for Christ day by day. This passage is meant to give us the encouragement we need to enjoy a successful walk. If you look at your outlines, you will notice that each heading has the word celebrate in it. The passage centers round the word "kaukomai" in Greek. Now the word has a complicated meaning so we may miss it, what complicates it even more is that it is translated in different ways. Let me quickly show you. Look at verse 2. In the NIV, the word is translated rejoice. In

verse 3 it is translated as rejoice, and in verse 11 it is translated as rejoice. The NLT translates the word confidently and joyfully in verse 2, rejoice in verse 3, and rejoice in verse 11. The NASB translates the word as exult in all three instances. But if we were to turn quickly back to chapter 2, verse 17, the word is translated as boast. The Jews were mistakenly bragging about their relationship with God, simply because they were His chosen people to receive The Law. Further in chapter 4, verse 2, again the word is translated as boasting. Paul reminds us that even a great guy like Abraham had nothing to brag about when it came to salvation. He like the rest of us had to come to salvation by grace through faith his heroic behavior alone couldn't save him.

I have chosen to translate the word celebrate, combining both meanings of joy and boasting. How many of you have ever played sports or watched sports? I'm sure most of us. Did you ever see someone pump their fist after a great play, or see these football players celebrate in the end zone after a touchdown? That's the idea of celebration. Life in Christ is meant to be a celebration the key is knowing what to celebrate.

I. CELEBRATE THE GOOD TIMES (Vs. 1-2)  
**KNOWING THAT JESUS HAS SET US FREE FROM SIN AND DEATH IS AN EVENT TO CELEBRATE.**

In Verses 1-2 we are encouraged to celebrate the good times. You know people get all crazy at sporting events yelling, standing, cheering, and waving. But in reality what is that in comparison to what Jesus accomplished on our behalf at the cross? **KNOWING THAT JESUS HAS SET US FREE FROM SIN AND DEATH IS AN EVENT TO CELEBRATE.** This thought should overwhelm us with joy. Verse 1 describes experiencing the joy of peace.

A. EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF PEACE (V. 1)

There is a dramatic language shift starting in chapter 5, Paul is going to use “we and us” throughout this section this is going to focus on us as believers. Verse 1 summarizes what he has been saying in the first 4 chapters, but he is going to add the result to it. He says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Remember justified is a legal term and it means that when we place our faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross, God the Father declared us to be “Not guilty!”

The result is that we now have peace with God. For the church in Rome, and for us, this word peace is confusing. For the Greek and Roman world, peace meant the absence of conflict. If there was no war, trouble, sickness, or catastrophes, there was peace. However, to the Hebrew Christians, peace had the Old Testament meaning being in a right relationship with God. The word “shalom” in Hebrew has nothing to do with the absence of conflict or trouble. It means to be at peace in the midst of any situation, resting in the knowledge that God is near and that He is on my side. That’s why Paul writes about suffering next.

You see, we have come to place so much value on the things of this world, we redefined peace to mean what the Greeks and Romans meant. We have somehow come to think that if I am a Christian, pray, tithe, serve, and be good, that I shouldn’t experience any pain, conflict, suffering, illness, setbacks, or tragedies. When we focus on these things, we lose the wonder and reality of what it means to be reconciled with God. Before we received Christ, we were headed to spend an eternity in hell where there is eternal torment and our eternal destinies were headed towards death.

When Christ died and we received Him as Lord and Savior, He changed our eternal destinies from death to life. We are now headed for heaven, an eternity of joy together with our

God, where there will be no more sorrow or suffering, only joyful celebration. If that's all we ever receive in this life, don't you think that's enough reason to stand up and cheer?

B. EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF GRACE (V. 2a)

But wait! There's more. The first half of Verse 2 invites us to experience the joy of grace. Not only are we declared not guilty and made citizens of heaven, through Jesus, we are made children of God and co-heirs with Christ. We are granted access to God the Father anytime we want. We don't need to ask permission, we don't need to be announced we just say, "In Jesus' Name," and we are there ... in the throne room of God. Now look at the wording here. We stand in grace. It's not like God declared us to be not guilty by grace and then left us on our own. We stand in grace, we live in grace and everything we do is under grace. Why? Because not only legally did God declare us to be not guilty... relationally He adopted us to be His sons and daughters. We have been given the legal titles of princes and princesses of His Kingdom. Is that enough to make you get up off your chair and celebrate?

C. EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF HOPE (V. 2b)

Look at the second half of Verse 2. We are to experience the joy of hope. We'll talk more about this later, for now, let me say that hope in the Bible is not wishful thinking it is confidence that it will happen. We will rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We have talked about what the glory of God is as it applies to us. It means that God will continue to make us Christ-like. We will more and more reflect the image of God. We will continue to be restored to what He originally intended for us to be in Creation, before the fall. He will complete the good work He started in each one of us. Did you get that? No matter how badly you feel or think you are doing, it is God who will finish the work in us. We are not hoping in our own abilities. We are hoping in God, Who cannot fail.

Let's now review. We have been declared not guilty by God by grace. We have been adopted by God, have access to him, and stand in a state of constant grace because of His love. We will one day be transformed and conformed to the likeness and image of our Lord Jesus Christ by God's grace and we have peace with God, a wonderful, passionate, loving relationship with Him because of grace.

Isn't all of that more to celebrate than the Chicago Bears scoring a touchdown on Sunday afternoon? I don't know about you, but for me; **KNOWING THAT JESUS HAS SET US FREE FROM SIN AND DEATH IS AN EVENT TO CELEBRATE.**

II. CELEBRATE IN BAD TIMES (Vs. 3-5)  
**THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS SETTING US FREE SEEMS RELATIVELY EASY, COMPARED TO THE STRUGGLE OF LEARNING TO LIVE FREE AND TO STAY FREE.**

I love the next three verses because it is a real nice corrective for those of us who have a wrong idea of what it means to be a believer in Christ. Jesus promised us... did you get that? Jesus promised us that in this world we would have tribulation. This life is filled with sufferings. Paul uses a very broad word for suffering here. It could mean afflictions, persecutions, setbacks, disappointments, illness, death, and even everyday minor annoyances. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." In 3-5, Paul encourages us to celebrate in bad times as well.

We will quickly come to learn that **THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS SETTING US FREE SEEMS RELATIVELY EASY, COMPARED TO THE STRUGGLE OF LEARNING TO LIVE FREE AND STAY FREE.** If we come to expect that things should always go our way, and that there should be no struggles or disappointments in the Christian life,

then we are in for a big letdown. The fact is, for the most part, we should expect more problems after we become Christians.

- JOY
- SUFFERING

We have already studied through the book of Exodus. Setting the Hebrews free was relatively simple for God. Teaching them to live free proved much more difficult. Each time they faced a setback, they immediately wanted to turn back to slavery. That's the way it is for us. When we face difficult times, we start to wonder what good it is to be a Christian. Yet Paul takes a much different approach. He says, "Rejoice in suffering." Why? First of all, we should approach it with joy, because suffering sets off a chain reaction that ultimately makes us stronger and more confident in God's love and His power. Suffering can mean anything from your coworker getting on your nerves to facing incurable cancer. So suffering makes its appearance in our lives, now let's look at the chain reaction it is supposed to set off.

- SUFFERING
- PERSEVERANCE

First, suffering develops perseverance. This word is graphic in Greek it has to do with endurance, bearing a burden over a long period of time, and long-suffering. An example of perseverance is of what it takes to run a marathon. I remember a few years back, Diane and I were sitting in my yard and I think King proposed the idea of running in the Chicago marathon. I know I was thinking, 26.2 miles, is he crazy, that's a long way. Nevertheless, Diane and I worked out a training schedule and over the next 5 months we increased training mile by mile, stuck to it day by day, week by week, month by month, and then not only ran in, but finished the Chicago Marathon. Those 26.2 miles that seemed so impossible became a reality. That's the attitude that God wants us to have. Our attitudes must be, "We would rather die as free men and

women in the wilderness, than to ever go back to the slavery of sin, Satan, and death.” If God is to produce fruit in our lives, we need the attitude of stick-to-it-ness. It really doesn’t matter how we feel perseverance is the attitude, “I will go on God will carry me through.” That kind of perseverance builds character. The word here in Greek has to do with something that was tested and proven. I know that as we prepared for the Marathon and ran the Marathon, we developed the attitude that we CAN do this. Each week we became more and more confident and finally on race day, we were totally confident. In fact, we were so confident, that on about the 24-mile marker, I developed a cramp in my calf I told Diane to go on and not to worry about me. There was no way I would not finish the race and it was confidence that allowed me to finish with no problem. As we successfully face trials and tribulations, we start to develop a confidence in God. We come through a trial, and that calls for that touchdown celebration.

- CHARACTER
- HOPE

As God starts to build this character in us, we start become more and more confident in the hope that He indeed will make us into who He wants us to be. We will not be disappointed, we will not be let down and we will make it. But, we have to keep in mind that our hope is not in our own strength, circumstances, or other people for they will all let us down, our hope is to be placed in Christ alone.

- LOVE

And please don’t miss the motivation; God loves us. That motivated Him to send Jesus to die for us and He sent the Holy Spirit to live in us. Now again, please don’t miss the picture here at the end of Verse 5, God pours out His love into our hearts. The word pours out is the same word that is used in describing God’s pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. God is sloppy as He pours out His love on us. He spills it everywhere. It is so

extravagant, that it hits people standing around us. Remember as we studied through the life of Joseph in Genesis every time God poured out blessings on Joseph, it spilled out onto those standing around him. God continues to pour out His love on us, even in times of suffering. We need to learn to look for the blessings in times of suffering. Falling in love with the God who first loved us is the motivation for continuing on even in the midst of trials. We have reason to celebrate even in suffering because we build confidence in our ability to stand in Christ. We are to rejoice because we are learning to live free and stay free in Christ: **THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS SETTING US FREE SEEMS RELATIVELY EASY, COMPARED TO THE STRUGGLE OF LEARNING TO LIVE AND STAY FREE.**

### III. CELEBRATE GOD (Vs. 6-11)

**KNOWING THAT WE CAN ALWAYS DEPEND ON GOD TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTS GIVES US THE NECESSARY COURAGE TO LIVE FREE.**

Verses 6-11 give us the most powerful reason to celebrate. We are to celebrate God. You see, **KNOWING THAT WE CAN ALWAYS DEPEND ON GOD TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTS GIVES US THE NECESSARY COURAGE TO LIVE FREE.** Again, I think we place too much importance on ourselves. Yes, we have been given influential identities as children of God yes we have been given the monumental task of being Jesus to the world and yes, we are to be salt and light, all the while dealing with our own struggles yet, we must keep in mind that all this will be accomplished by grace as well. God Himself will empower us to live successfully by grace through faith. God started the good work in us by saving us by grace through faith He will enable us to live by grace and He will continue to shape us and perfect us by grace.

#### A. REJOICE IN GOD'S LOVE (Vs. 6-8)

Look at 6-8. Here we are invited to rejoice in God's love. You see, Satan gets us to fall by convincing us that God doesn't love us. So if we really want something and don't get it, Satan says to us, "See, God really doesn't love you." If we suffer or are disappointed, again Satan wants us to doubt God's love. But follow this argument Verse 6 starts out with the phrase, "Just at the right time." I don't think this has anything to do with clock time or calendar time. I think this is poetic and applies to each of us individually. While we were powerless, ungodly, and sinful, that's the time Jesus decided to die for us. We were sinful we were born in sin. Every part of our being has been touched by sin. We were ungodly. Our natural bent was towards evil, self-centered, and away from God. We were slaves to our lust and to sin. We were powerless and there was nothing we could do to break free. It was at this time Jesus took pity on us and decided to show His love for us.

You see, Paul's argument is this. It's understandable if Jesus would lay down his life for righteous and good people, but from human experience, even that's rare. Human love may be willing to sacrifice its own life for a husband, wife, children or close friends, but Jesus chose to die for us when we were dirty, rebellious, and helpless. That is when Jesus chose to demonstrate his love for us.

God did not offer us salvation because we were smart, hard working, good, appealing, or so worthy, God offered us salvation because we were so pathetic. You see, some of us fail to comprehend how much God loves us because we are too proud and arrogant. Getting a realistic view of who we were when Christ died for us and reached out to us with His love makes all the difference in the world. If we somehow, in any way think we are good, then we miss the magnificence of His love. We were as evil, dirty, rebellious, and pathetic as we could be, yet Jesus was attracted to us.

## B. REJOICE IN GOD'S PEACE (Vs. 9-10)

God's love is far more dependable, and far greater than anything we are able to think or imagine. That love is what sets the stage for Paul's argument in verses 9-10 we are to rejoice in God's peace. Here Paul is going to argue from the "*a fortiori*" position. In other words, he is going to say, "If God loved us so much when we were so evil, pathetic, and helpless, how much more will He love us now that we belong to Him as children?" Again, Paul will describe it from the legal view and the relational view. First, let's look at it from the legal view. In our natural state, we stood guilty before God. As we said, our eternal destiny was hell but because of the blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, as we placed our faith in Him, God justified us He declared us to be "Not Guilty." Now look at the second half of Verse 9; if that's the case, that He declared us to be "Not guilty" while we were alienated from Him, then how much more sure should we be that now as His children and the resurrection of Jesus we will not face the final wrath that unbelievers will face on the day of judgment? We have already been declared to be not guilty we have nothing to fear at the final judgment because He has already changed us from death to life, with our eternity set in heaven. We can be sure of that because we can be sure of His love as described earlier. So legally, we are at peace with God.

In Verse 10 he describes peace from the relational view. If God demonstrated His love for us, His enemies before we were saved, by sending His own Son to die for us, how much more assurance do we need that we are loved by Him now that we are no longer enemies but His children?

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus that guarantees it all. The death of Jesus guarantees that we are no longer enemies of God. The death of Jesus guarantees that we are no

longer alienated from God. The death of Jesus guarantees that God has forgiven us of all of our sins, and intended to finish the process of perfecting us.

The resurrection of Christ insures that we will make it all the way to heaven and that we will rule with Him in eternity, as we share in His inheritance.

### C. REJOICE IN GOD'S JOY (V. 11)

We also rejoice in God's joy, as summarized in Verse 11. Look over your outlines quickly to see what reconciliation brings with it, celebration, joy, peace, grace, character, hope, and love. God will empower us to do all He has for us to do, and He will make us the people He intends us to be. He saved us. He will successfully bring us home.

**KNOWING THAT WE CAN ALWAYS DEPEND ON GOD TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTS GIVES US THE NECESSARY COURAGE TO LIVE FREE.**

We stay free by learning to celebrate. We are to celebrate who God is He loves us and promised to accomplish all He has for us. We are to celebrate the good times in life and we are to celebrate the bad times as well.

**JESUS INDEED DID SET US FREE AND GIVE US NEW LIFE. HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT TOOK FOR JESUS TO SET US FREE IS MEANT TO GIVE US ATTITUDES OF CONFIDENCE AND JOY THAT HELP US TO LIVE FREE AND TO STAY FREE.**

I think this story by Harold Kushner, in his book When Bad Things Happen To Good People.

**“There is an old Chinese tale about the woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, ‘What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?’ Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, ‘Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life.’ The woman set off at once in search of that magical mustard seed. She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said, ‘I am looking for a home that has never known**

**sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me.’ They told her, ‘You’ve certainly come to the wrong place,’ and began to describe all the tragic things that had recently befallen them. The woman said to herself, ‘Who is better able to help these poor unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own?’ She stayed to wherever she turned, in hovels and in palaces, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. Ultimately, she became so involved in ministering to other people’s grief that she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had in fact driven the sorrow out of her life.**

This illustrates a proper view of how to remain free even while suffering.