

I'd like for you to think about verse 6 for a moment.

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

The phrase “the right time” is often used in the OT to refer to the appointed time – the time that God ordained for a particular sacrifice.

A different phrase is used in Hosea 13 – but with a similar idea.

We read in Hosea 13 that in the days of the prophets the time had come for Israel.

“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store.  
The pangs of childbirth come for him,  
but he is an unwise son,  
for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.”

Several of you are approaching “the right time” – the pangs of childbirth.

What would happen if you went into labor and your child decided not to come?!  
That would be a *most* unwise son!

As you have reached that most uncomfortable stage of pregnancy,  
where you cannot find a good position to sleep in –  
the one thing that keeps you going is that *this will end!*

*The right time* is approaching.

And when *the right time* comes,  
your child *will* present himself at the opening.

As bad as an unwise child might be,  
our problem is worse.

2 Kings 19 tells us of the invasion of the Assyrians,  
and how Sennacherib the great king of Assyria destroyed Israel  
(fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea).

Sennacherib also invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem.  
And Hezekiah the king of Judah sent word to Isaiah the prophet, saying:  
“Thus says Hezekiah, this day is a day of distress, of rebuke and of disgrace;  
children have come to the point of birth,  
and there is no strength to bring them forth.” (2 Kings 19:3)

Our problem is that the child is ready to be born – but we have no strength!

The right time has come – and the baby is ready –  
but we are too weak to do anything about it.

You lay there, exhausted – labor pains wracking your body –

but you have no strength left.  
You cannot push.  
You cannot breathe.

All you can do is lay there and die.

*That* is the picture of 2 Kings 19 –  
and *that* is the picture that Paul takes over in Romans 5:6

*For yet Christ, while we were still weak, at the right time, for the ungodly – he died.*  
We could do nothing to save ourselves.  
We could not give birth to salvation.

*For yet Christ, while we were still weak, at the right time, for the ungodly – he died.*

Romans 5:6 captures the basic point that Paul has been driving at  
through these first chapters of his epistle.

The literary structure of Romans 5:1-11 centers on verse 6.

Notice verse 1 “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have also obtained access...”

Compare with verse 11, “we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

The next parallel is verses 3 and 11

“More than that, we rejoice” (v3)

“More than that, we also rejoice” (v11)

You can also see the connection between the love of God in verse 5,  
and the love of God in verse 8

At the very center of verses 1-11 is verse 6 –  
which is one of the shortest sentences in the whole book of Romans!

While we were still weak – he died.  
At the right time – he died.  
For the ungodly – he died.

Christ came to us in our weakness, in our sin, in our utter helplessness,  
and he did what we could not do;  
he reconciled us to God through his death.

Chapter 5 of Romans is rooted in verses 24-25 of chapter 4.

Righteousness “will be counted to us

who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,  
who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

We are justified before God – we are declared righteous in his sight –  
not by works of the law, but by the grace of God  
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.  
And this justification is received by faith.

And Paul's point in chapter 5 is to show us that this one justification  
has two aspects:

- 1) the "already" of our justification,  
which is rooted in the death of Christ –  
the "propitiation by his blood"  
the atoning sacrifice that has removed our sins.
- 2) there is also the "not yet" of our justification -- the eschatological aspect –  
which is rooted in the resurrection of Christ.

Paul has already told us

that *Christ* "was declared to be the Son of God with power  
by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom 1:3-4)

The resurrection of Jesus was his justification,  
as Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:16

"he was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit."

Jesus was openly and publicly vindicated by God  
by the resurrection.

But what does the resurrection of Jesus our Lord have to do with our justification?

We can easily see how the blood of Christ was shed for our sins.

We can easily see how the death of Christ is the atoning sacrifice –  
the propitiation for our sin and guilt.

But how was Christ "raised for our justification"?

The whole dynamic of Romans 5:1-11 depends on this.

The resurrection of Christ *is* our justification,  
because in the resurrection *he* was justified,  
and we are now in Christ.

Start with the condemnation of Jesus.

Jesus was condemned – God put him forward as a propitiation by his blood.

He was condemned to bear the wages of sin, the curse of the grave.

God judged Jesus guilty in our place.

Jim Dennison puts it very well when he says:

"But sin, and guilt and the grave could not hold him.

The curse could not bind him.

The final judgment of Jesus could not sustain the charge  
"guilty of condemnation."...

The resurrection of Jesus is the declaration that he is not guilty.  
The resurrection of Jesus is the declaration that he is righteous.  
The resurrection of Jesus is his justification.  
No more condemnation for Jesus of Nazareth—  
no more death for Jesus of Nazareth—  
no more curse for Jesus of Nazareth.  
Jesus has been justified by resurrection.” (James Dennison on Romans 4:25)

In other words, the wrath of God’s final judgment  
has fallen on Jesus,  
and Jesus, alone among all flesh,  
has endured the final judgment and been vindicated.

And so Paul says in Romans 4:25, “he was raised for our justification.”  
Do you see what this means?  
Christ’s justification is our justification.

Okay, what does this mean?

Why has Paul spent the last four chapters  
laying out this detailed historical and theological argument?  
Plainly, Paul believes that you need to understand your history!  
You need to know your theology!

But the doctrine of justification is not an abstract theological principle.  
Paul believes that justification  
will produce a certain sort of life.  
Notice how I said that:  
it is not that the *doctrine* of justification produces a certain sort of life.  
It is justification itself!

(which is why it is useful to understand the doctrine!)

First:

**1. Justification Results in Peace with God (5:1-2)**

*1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith  
into this grace in which we stand,  
and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Paul’s point here is that this is a present reality.  
We *have* (present tense) peace with God  
because we have been justified (past tense).  
And through our Lord Jesus Christ  
we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand.

Paul makes it perfectly clear that our access to God –  
our approach to his grace –  
is only through Christ.

And so therefore we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The word that is translated “rejoice” is the same word used in chapter 4  
to say that Abraham could not boast before God.

So it would be better to translate it, “we boast in hope of the glory of God.”  
I realize that sounds a little strange –  
but Paul is drawing on the language of Jeremiah 9:  
“let him who boasts, boast in this: that he understands and knows me!”  
Our boasting is not in ourselves, but in hope of the glory of God.

Notice that our boasting is not in something that is presently obvious to everyone.  
You are boasting in hope.  
You are rejoicing in something that you cannot yet see.  
You do not hope for something you already have.  
I do not hope that I will become the father of six children.  
*I am* the father of six children.

What is your hope?  
What is the future that gives you purpose and direction for your life?

Do you boast in the hope of the glory of God?  
Do you rejoice? Do you celebrate that hope?  
Is that hope what keeps you walking forward day by day?

Or is it your career?  
Your family?  
Your happiness?

Or are you uncertain?  
I think I hope in the glory of God...  
But how can I tell?

That’s where we go in point 2:

**2. We Boast in Our Suffering Because of God’s Love (5:3-5)**  
*3 More than that, we rejoice [literally, we boast] in our sufferings,*

One of the best ways that you can tell what your hope is,  
is to ask, “what are you willing to suffer for?”

Whatever glory you hope in – whatever future you celebrate –  
is the thing that you will suffer for.

Think of the Olympic athletes  
enduring great hardship and pain –  
pushing their minds and bodies beyond the limits of ordinary human ability.

Why?  
What for?

So that they can boast in their Olympic gold medal –  
or perhaps simply that they performed in the Olympics  
for the glory of their nation.

Maybe you have been pursuing the wrong hope.  
Maybe you have been rejoicing in the wrong future.

How can you pursue the right hope?  
How can you develop that hope in the glory of God?

Paul says that we rejoice in our sufferings,

*knowing that suffering produces endurance,  
4 and endurance produces character,  
and character produces hope,*

If you haven't been through much in life,  
then you generally don't have too much endurance.

But God will bring suffering into your life.  
He will bring tribulation and difficulty in order to test you –  
in order to prove your character.

And the more suffering you endure patiently,  
the stronger and more proven your character.

And when you have been through fire and water  
and still your eyes are fixed on Christ,  
that is when you have a hope that is unshakeable –  
not because you are so strong but because

*5 hope does not put us to shame,  
because God's love has been poured into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Boasting in the hope of the glory of God  
and boasting in your sufferings  
are not really two different things!  
Because your hope is that you will be brought through suffering to glory.

Just like Jesus.

### **3. For While We Were Weak, at the Right Time, Christ Died for Us (5:6)**

*6 For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

As we have seen, verse 6 is at the heart of this passage.

Paul has been saying that we boast in the hope of the glory of God –  
we boast in our sufferings –

and here is the reason why.

The structure of this verse is quite unusual.

Literally translated it reads,

*“For Christ,  
while we were still weak,  
at the right time,  
for the ungodly,  
died.”*

The effect is to make all three modifiers focus on Christ.

Because while we were still weak –  
while we were laying there helpless and about to die –

*Christ died.*

At just the right time –  
at the *appointed* time –  
at precisely the right moment –

*Christ died.*

And – here is the most remarkable part –  
on behalf of the ungodly –  
for those who were hostile – sinners – enemies of God –

*Christ died.*

And this raises the question:

Why?

Why would the Son of God die for me?

Why would the Father send his only begotten Son to die for rebels?

### **4. For God Loved Us – While We Were Yet Sinners (5:7-8)**

*7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—  
though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—  
8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Why did God send his Son?  
Not because you were righteous.  
Not because you were good.  
But simply because he loved you.

God loves you.  
And he has demonstrated his love for you  
by sending Christ to die for you.  
If you ever start thinking that God is an angry Father  
and that Jesus is the one who loves us and appeases the angry Father –  
come and read Romans 5:8 again.  
God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners,  
Christ died for us.

And so, Paul concludes:

**5. Since We Have Been Justified by His Blood, We Boast in God (5:9-11)**

*9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood,  
much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

I want you to see what Paul is doing here:  
We have *now* been justified by his blood.  
And so we *shall be* saved by him from [literally, simply] “the wrath.”

Notice the “now”!  
Paul often uses this little word “now”  
to show us that what we have already received in Jesus Christ  
is nothing less than deliverance  
from the eschatological wrath of God.

What we have *now* is justification by his blood.  
And if we have justification by his blood *now*,  
then Paul considers it certain that we *shall be* saved by him  
from “the wrath.”

This word “wrath” is the word Paul used in 1:18 to refer to the “wrath of God”  
that is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.  
It is the word that Paul used in 2:5, 8 to speak of the “day of wrath”  
and in 3:5 to speak of the wrath that God brought on Israel  
as a prelude to the final judgment.

Paul explains this further in verse 10:

*10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,  
much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

In other words, if God loved you while you were a sinner,

if God the Father sent his Son to die for his enemies,

what do you suppose God will do for his friends?

What do you think God will do for his children?!

Justification, here, is portrayed in terms of reconciliation.

*We* are reconciled to God.

It is not at though God needed to be reconciled to us.

It is not that we loved God,

but that he loved us!

The problem was that *we* were enemies of God.

And *now* God has reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son.

We are now friends of God.

If we are reconciled by the death of his Son,

then how much more will be saved by the life of his Son.

Paul is here using the word “saved” to refer to the future aspect of salvation.

We have already been justified by faith,

we have already been reconciled to God.

And Paul’s point is that because of this justification,

because of this reconciliation,

we may have full confidence that he will save us from the wrath to come.

Because Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification,

therefore both the death *and* resurrection of Jesus have become ours.

*11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Here’s that word “boast” again.

In verse 2 “we boast in the hope of the glory of God”

In verse 3 “more than that, we boast in our sufferings...”

And here in verse 11, “more than that, we boast in God.”

Certainly we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

And the only route to that glory is the path of suffering,

so therefore we boast in our sufferings.

But more than all this,

we boast in God.

How?

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received reconciliation.

## **Conclusion**

How are you doing at this?

Rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in suffering, rejoicing in God?

My guess is, is that if you find it hard to rejoice in suffering,  
then your hope is probably not in the glory of God.

Paul says that you need to remember what justification is all about.

While we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.  
We have *now* been justified by his blood.

At the right time.

For Jesus, the final judgment is past.  
He endured the wrath of God,  
and so now he has been raised up to glory.  
And so for you who are in Christ,  
you need not fear the final judgment.  
Since you have been justified now,  
you will be saved from that wrath.

Yes, it hurts now.

Yes, the pain is real.

But this is as bad as it gets!

The sufferings of this life are all that you must endure.

You will never have to endure the wrath of God –

because while we were enemies, while we were sinners, while we were weak –  
at the right time, Christ died for us.

Therefore,

rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,  
yes, rejoice in your sufferings,  
and more than that, rejoice in God!

Let us rejoice together, marveling at God's great love by singing #155

Sing TH 155 "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High"