

Romans 5:1–11 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

³Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, ⁴and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. ⁵And hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

⁶For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath through him.

¹⁰For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. ¹¹And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. *Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage, this I tell you brother, you can’t have one without the other.* Most of us are probably familiar with Frank Sinatra’s rendition of this song, and, along with the rest of the world, we’d probably agree with the sentiment. Whether it’s love and marriage, baseball and summer, peanut butter and jelly, some things just go together.

This past week my brother-in-law posted on Facebook that he tried a combination he had seen online — adding a little Coca-Cola to his coffee. He said it was awful. Oil and water, freezing rains and the roads, Coffee and coke, somethings don’t go together at all.

When I was a kid my grandma would visit and put a spoonful of strawberry jam on a piece of cheddar cheese. When I suggested it to our

kids, they reacted the same way I had: “Eww, gross!” But then, when they tried it, they decided it’s actually not bad.

Some things are like that. They sound as if they would not go together at all, but, at least for some people, they do. This morning the words of our text give us just such a combination. They show us that whether it’s with Jesus, or with ourselves, **Salvation and Suffering go Hand in Hand.**

You wouldn’t think so would you? The disciples sure didn’t. We heard it in our gospel reading this morning. Jesus once again made it clear that he was going to suffer and die, and they wanted nothing of it. “**Never Lord, Peter said, “This will never happen to you.”**

But how could they not have known? From the first promise in Genesis 3:15 it was clear — the Savior would suffer. “**You will strike his heel,**” God had announced to Satan. And everything about worship in the Old Testament — sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice — revolved around the truth that “**without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness.**”

The disciples were blinded by their sinful natures that concluded as every sinful nature concludes unequivocally: no good can come from suffering. It’s painful, it hurts. It drags on. It makes it hard for me. Makes it difficult for me to focus on what I want to focus on or do the things that I want to do. It should be avoided at all costs.

And besides that, salvation through suffering doesn’t make sense to our sinful nature. That God would make his only Son suffer *and die* for sinful people? We would never do such a thing, as Paul says here: **It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person.** Why would God? Ridiculous!

Here we see the difference between us and Jesus. As sinners, we are selfish. We think first and foremost about three people: me, myself, and I. And within this relationship with ourselves, there’s no room for suffering that doesn’t benefit me. That oddity found in salvation and suffering going hand in hand is further evidence of just how sinful we are and how much we deserve the fate reserved for Satan and his ilk.

While Jesus was a human being just like us, there was one notable difference. He was perfect. Where we walk with God’s will until it differs from ours, Jesus’ will and God’s will was one and the same, and he fulfilled it, even when it led him to suffer and die for sinners like us. **Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been**

good to him. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

With God, with Jesus, salvation and suffering go hand in hand because he wasn't just thinking about himself, but us. God's greatest demonstration of his love is the focus of the Lenten season. Jesus understood that without the shedding of his blood there could be no forgiveness. Jesus came to do what every Old Testament Sacrifices failed to do — pay the price of every single sin.

And so he left heaven's paradise behind and came to our sinful world. God himself become man. God himself lived under his laws. God himself was subject to man's authority: betrayed, arrested, captured, beaten, taunted, tortured, and killed. And so we sing hymns like *Go to Dark Gethsemane, Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted, Deep were his wounds and red, There is a fountain filled with blood and Glory be to Jesus, who in bitter pains, Thou, ah, thou hast taken on thee Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;* And rightly so.

But with every suffering he endured, he brought us closer to God. Closer to peace with him until on the cross it was achieved, creating the most ironic combination in the history of the world: Good Friday. We call good the day God's Son died. We call good the day God's people turned against him and God turned against his Son. We call it good because salvation and suffering go hand in hand. By his suffering and death our sins have been paid for. We have God's forgiveness, fully and free. Salvation is ours, and nothing can take it away.

The word Paul uses to begin our text is a very special and important word in the life of a Christian. No, it's not faith. It's not forgiveness. It's not love. It's "Therefore." It's a word that puts all that God has done for us together and shows us just how much our lives have changed by it.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God. In Christ, we have peace with God. The battle's done and won. There's no longer any dividing wall of sin between us and God. We have access by faith in to his grace now, and we rejoice in the glory that is waiting for us in heaven.

But what about now? Paul continues: ***Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings.*** Salvation and suffering not only go hand in hand with Jesus, but with us too.

In Christ, God has accomplished everything for our salvation. Nothing more needs to be done. Our sins are forgiven, we're at peace with him, heaven will be our final, eternal destination. If he did all that by not sparing his own Son, but allowed him to suffer for us, couldn't he have gone a little farther and taken *all* our suffering away? Couldn't he have made life for his people easy, smooth, and care free? Like a cushy waiting room with all the amenities we could ever need, as we wait for him to call us home?

And what if life was like a cushy waiting room, where everything we wanted was here, everyone we asked for was given, and we never had any problems or struggles, never were allowed to suffer? Sounds good, doesn't it?

But remember who we are by nature? Selfish, sinful people. The sinner in us only thinks about me, myself and I. If I never have any cause to think about anyone or anything else, what will happen to me? What will happen to my faith, hope and trust in God. If I never have to use it, I'll lose it. I'll leave it behind. I'll think, "What do I need this for? I've got all I want, all I need, and that's never going to change." I don't need to depend on God to get me through the next crisis, the next tragedy, the next accident, the next day.

Where Jesus' suffering brought us close to God, our sufferings keep us there. Our sufferings, trials, temptations, everything in this life that shows us how weak and lost we are on our own reminds us how much we need God. Our sufferings produce patient endurance. They spur us on to endure because this life is not all there is. They turn our eyes toward heaven where we have something much greater to look forward to.

That endurance builds and strengthens our character. It makes us stronger in our trust in God so that even in the most difficult times, under the most pressing circumstances, instead of running away from him in unbelief and despair, we run to him in repentance, confident of his forgiveness, for comfort, confident of his promises,

And, finally, that tested character produces and fills us with hope — hope that doesn't disappoint — not a fleeting hope as in the weather or a stroke

of luck, but a sure and certain hope. **Hope that doesn't put us to shame.** No one can say to us, "I can't believe that's what you're hoping for! Because what we hope for is real. The Gospel is true. We have been forgiven. We are right with God, we have been saved from the fires of hell — our future future in heaven is secure.

So secure that we can look forward to the future without fear. Even as we look all the way to the end, to Judgment Day. For most people of this world, that's a scary thought, and they hope it's not true, they hope it's not coming. But it is, and we don't fear it. It doesn't fill us with anxious dread. Where as Jesus' sufferings brought about our salvation so that the Friday he died, we call good, so too do our sufferings remind us and point us to the greater blessings of God, and keep us trusting in his Words and promises so that the last day, judgment day, is a day we look forward to with great and eager anticipation. For then all suffering will be over and salvation, our salvation will be the only thing left.

Some things in this life go together like love and marriage. Some things are better left apart. Suffering and our salvation, at first glance you wouldn't think it, but they go with the former things, they go hand in hand. May God first lead us to appreciate ever more the suffering our Savior endured to win our salvation, and then, to see how God uses our own sufferings to strengthen our faith, hope and trust, now and forever. Amen!