



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Ian Hamilton

Romans 5: 1-11

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"Joy, Joy, Joy"

TRANSCRIPT

What an introduction. *[Laughter]*, 'The King of Scotland'! Well, better than the 'King of England'. *[Laughter]*,

I think maybe I mentioned, last time I was here, that I was preaching near Seattle some years ago, and a little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mommy, is that man from China?" *[Laughter]*, which I thought was a little hard on my semi-mellifluous Scottish accent. Only Eric Alexander had a mellifluous Scottish accent; mine is 'semi'.

But then I thought, "Well, it could have been worse. He could have said, 'Is that man from England.' " *[Laughter]* And then I thought, "It could even have been worse; he could have said, 'Is that man from Edinburgh?' " *[Laughter]* My wife's from Edinburgh, but she's the only good thing that ever came out of Edinburgh.

Well, let me read with you from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 5. Again, very, very familiar words; Paul has been expounding the grace of God and the Gospel. He has shown us our need of the Gospel—the Good News of God's justifying righteousness in Jesus Christ; and now he's beginning to unpack the blessings that flow out of being justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through 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. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and 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.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 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. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5: 1-11 (ESV)

Well, before we turn to God's Word, let us pray together.

Our Father, we look to You, our eyes are upon You; we seek the present gracious help of the Holy Spirit as we together sit under the ministry of Your Word. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our God, and our Redeemer. And we ask it all in our Savior Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Well, please turn with me in your Bibles to the 5th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, to these verses that I read a short time ago. I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that the life of faith in Jesus Christ is left out in a fallen, hostile, God denying, Christ rejecting world. The apostle Peter wrote in his first letter, 'Think it not strange, my brothers, at the fiery trials that are coming upon you.' (1Pet 4:12). The life of faith, inevitably, because it unites us to Jesus Christ, exposes us to the hostility, the

antagonism of this fallen world. We can't escape it. The only way you can escape the hostility of the world is by aligning yourself with the world.

'The servant is not above his master', Jesus told His disciples, 'If the world hated Me, it will hate you also.' (Jn 15:18&20). That's the default of the Christian life; there's no escaping it. The Lord Jesus was always alerting and warning would be disciples, 'to count the cost' — 'to count the cost'. (Luk 14:28). And yet, at the same time, Jesus said to His disciples, (John 15, verse 11, I think), "I have said these things to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

The apostle Peter, in his first letter, speaks of the people of God 'enjoying', "...joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1Pet 1:8). It's a remarkable statement: He's just been writing about the hostility of the world against the children of God; and yet he says in the midst of that, we can know, "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." (ibid). And this morning I want to consider with you the three notes of *joy* that the apostle Paul highlights in these first 11 verses of Romans chapter 5.

Let me just briefly set the context for you. He introduces the letter, you'll remember, chapter 1, verses 1 through 17. Paul has never been to Rome; he's hoping to go to Rome, and from Rome be sent on his way as a missionary to Spain, (we read about it in chapter 15).

He's looking for Rome to be a second Antioch, a launching pad for Gospel mission to the unreached peoples. And he tells them that his Gospel, what he calls, "the gospel of God", (Rom 15:16), and then, 'the gospel concerning Jesus Christ', (Rom 16:25), and then in chapter 2, (vs16), "my gospel"; he tells them what this Gospel is—that God had raised them up to proclaim. He wants the church in Rome to have as full an understanding of the height, the breadth, the length, and the depth of the Gospel of God, that he proclaimed wherever he went.

And so he tells them in verse 16 of chapter 1, that that Gospel, "...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...". That's the great text that shines brightly throughout this letter to the Romans. The Gospel...is. You don't need to make it the

power of God, you don't need to dress it up—and dress it up in the language of the world, the imagery of the world. It is natively, "...the power of God for salvation..." to all who believe. (ibid.)

And then from 1:18 through to the end of chapter 2 into chapter 3, Paul shows us our need of the Gospel no matter who we are—whatever our background; Jew or Gentile; high or low; rich or poor. No matter who we are or what we are, we all need the salvation of God that He has provided in Jesus Christ.

And then from 3, verse 21, through to the end of chapter 4, he focuses on how God has come in grace and in love to provide for the world, in Jesus Christ, what we could never provide for ourselves—and what is our great lack before God. Our great lack is righteousness and atonement. We cannot live the righteous life that God requires; we cannot pay the debt that our sin has accumulated. But in Jesus Christ, God has provided us with 'a substitute', 'a representative', 'a covenant head', who has come and fulfilled all righteousness. He lives the life, (that we could never live), in our place. He dies the death, we could never die, in our place—and provides us with a holistic salvation.

And then from, (*Romans*), chapter 5, verse 1, Paul begins to unpack the riches of the Gospel. And I want, simply in the time we have, to notice with you the threefold, the triadic notes of *joy* that Paul highlights in these verses. He tells us in verse 2, "...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And then in verse 3, "...we rejoice in our sufferings...", (astonishingly). And then climatically in verse 11, "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So notice with me, first of all, the *source* of the believer's joy. (*Verse 1*), "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith...", (*that is, 'made right with God through self-abandoning trust in Jesus Christ'*), "...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the foundation on which the *joy* of the child of God rests: That we have been made right with God in Jesus Christ, and therefore have peace with God.

Now I think particularly, if not exclusively, Paul is thinking here, (if I can put it like this objectively), 'God no longer is against us, He is for us. His wrath no longer rests upon us. It has been removed from us. We're at peace with God. God has no longer any contention with us, because all His contentions were placed upon His Son and laid upon His Son—He laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'

And this is the great foundational truth of the Gospel: That we are *made right with God*, not through any merit of our own. We are saved by works—but not our own works, but by the work of Jesus Christ in our place and for our sake. This is the settled reality on which the whole of the Christian life rests. This is why, when we are troubled with assurance, and when Satan tempts us to despair and tells us of the guilt within, it is upward we look and see Him there, who made an end of all our sins.

We go back to basics and we say, 'Yes, I am a sinner! To my shame, I continue every day to my great shame. But through faith in Jesus Christ, God has justified me, declared me righteous in His sight because He beholds me in His Son, (the righteous One), clothed with His righteousness.'

Brothers and sisters, this is the source of our *joy*—the *unshakable* source of our *joy*! Our feelings come and go; they rise and fall; our love ebbs and flows...but God's declaration concerning us never changes. To be, 'right with God', to know that God is for you and not against you is the foundational source of every other Christian blessing.

So let me simply ask you as we begin to unpack these verses: 'Are you right with God? Have you, through faith in Jesus Christ, been made right with God? And have you seen your need to be made right with God, and have you seen that God has, in His Son Jesus Christ, gloriously, unfathomably, wonderfully provided for us a Savior, on whom we can rest the weight of all that we are?'

Horatius Bonar, one of the great Bonar brothers, in the latter half of the 19th century in Scotland, wrote a great hymn, (he wrote many great hymns), but one of the hymns had these lines upon it:

"Upon a life I did not live
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's life, another's death
I stake my whole eternity."

Are you resting the weight of all that you are, on Jesus Christ? He is the source of our *joy*.

And I want to notice *secondly*, the three *aspects* of Christian joy that Paul highlights in these verses. Notice *first* of all he says, verse 2, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Then, if you look back to chapter 3, verse 23, to words that you will know well, we read, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The word could perhaps even better be translated, "all have sinned and lack the glory of God."

Remember the rich, young ruler who came Jesus, and he's so full of promise; "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luk 18:17). What a question to be asked! I think our instinctive answer would be to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved."

And Jesus says to him, 'Keep the commandments.' (Jesus is going to dismantle this young man.) 'Why, I've kept all the commandments.' ('Have you?'), "One thing you lack." (Luk 18:22). (It's the same word, *hustereo*.) "One thing you lack." Jesus is putting His finger on the very sin that lay at the heart of this young man...God was not in all his thoughts.

And so Paul says here in Romans 3, "All have sinned and fall short, (or lack), the glory of God." But now he says, (*in Romans 5:2b*), "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We no longer lack it; we have the prospect of it; and he's thinking of the ultimate omega point, the ultimate destination that the child of God has: 'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!'

Now you will know that in the New Testament the word, *hope*, isn't an uncertain word. You know, 'I might *hope* that the Golden State Warriors win the NBA this year.' Well, they're not going to, but 'I hope' they might. (Actually, I'd love the Boston Celtics to do it; that's my team.)

You know, we use the word, '*hope*', but in the New Testament, *hope* is, 'something sure and certain that is yet to be'; that is yet to be; it's certain, it's sure. God has promised it; He has decreed it; He's declared it; though we've yet to enter into the fullness of it. And so Paul says, because, "we have peace with God", we have this sure and certain, "hope of the glory of God." (verses 1&2). The Christian believer is the only man, the only woman, the only boy, the only girl, who has, "a living hope". (1Pe 1:3). And our living hope is not some kind of eternal existence in some kind of spirit form. Our eternal hope is "the glory of God." (vs2). We are heading for glory; we are heading for Emanuel's land; we're heading for, 'the city with foundations whose builder and maker is God.' (Heb 11:10). We're heading to where God is in His glory.

And we rejoice in that. With all the trials and troubles that some of you, I know in recent days have gone through deep, deep trials and troubles—dark providences that have unsettled you, and perhaps in measure, dismantled you; but brothers and sisters, be of good cheer. —You can rejoice in the midst of your tears, "in the hope of the glory of God." (vs2).

You see, when the Scriptures speak of *joy*, it doesn't speak unrealistically, as if we're always to have some kind of grin. Sometimes our joy is through broken-heartedness and tears. And we say, 'LORD, to whom else can I go?' That's one of the great notes of joy in the Christian believer—we rejoice "in hope of the glory of God", he says.

But then *secondly*, in verse 3 he says, "...we rejoice in our sufferings....". Now if Paul had stopped there, we would have said to him, 'Get a life, man; get a life. Who in their right mind rejoices in sufferings!? You have to be twisted to rejoice in sufferings as such.' But he says, "We rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that He has given to us." (vs3-5).

How can we rejoice in our sufferings? How can we rejoice when dark providences overwhelm us? When people we love die; when children we have delighted in are taken from us...how can we rejoice in that!?

‘Well’, says Paul, (and I just want to touch on this briefly), ‘because God is sovereignly, is mysteriously, gloriously, if bewilderingly, is working all things together for your good.’ (Rom 8:28).

You maybe can't see it. We live, “by faith and not by sight.” (2Cor 5:7). We maybe can't see it, but in the midst of your suffering, God is producing *endurance*, and *perseverance*. And *perseverance* is shaping your character, your Christian confession; and your Christian life is not simply a matter of words, but in the midst of it all you're being conformed to the suffering Servant.

You know we say, ‘Father, make me more like Jesus.’ I think I sometimes think the Father's saying, ‘Seriously!? You want to be more like My Son?’ ‘Yes. I'd love to be more like...

“More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show;
More of the Savior's bright increase,
More His coming, Prince of Peace. “

(More About Jesus Would I Know, by Eliza Hewitt)

‘O, LORD, make me like Jesus’...

‘Okay. Suffering.’

How is Jesus made perfect? How well do you know your Bible? You say; “Made perfect???” Absolutely, Scriptures say that. Not from imperfection to perfection, but from one degree of Glory to another, as He matured, as He grew, “in favor with God and with man.” (Luk 2:52). How is Jesus made perfect? Through suffering; Hebrews 5,

verse 8, (*"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."*) God makes us more like His Son with the same spiritual pathology as the Holy Spirit made Jesus the man He had been destined to be in the counsels of eternity.

The Holy Spirit comes to lead us into suffering, not because suffering is good in itself, but because in that, God will make us mature—maybe through tears and cries, maybe even through wails.

And, 'God is working all things together for our good.' It's one of the most breathtaking verses in the whole Bible, isn't it, Romans 8:28, "All things work together for the good of those who love God." And you think, 'LORD, all things!?' Joanne and I have dear friends that we'll be visiting next week in Mississippi. When the daughter of our dear friends had a four month scan, (*ultrasound*), the child, a little girl, had no kidneys. And they prayed that the LORD would be pleased to keep her alive until birth—and He did. By four hours after birth she died...And you say, 'LORD, 'All things?' 'It's breathtaking; it's mind stretching; it's heart convicting...'All things?' 'LORD, do You mean most things?' 'No, I mean 'All things I will work together for your good.'

And that's why ... You know, some people occasionally will say to me, "Ian, what do you think is the first thing we'll say when we see the Lord?" Well, who knows? I'd like to think I'll say, "You did all things well. You did all things well." We'll no longer, 'see through a glass darkly, but face to face.' (1Cor 13:12).

That's why your doctrine of God is the most significant thing about you. The most significant thing about this young man, (I don't know your name, sorry), but about you, about you, and about you, and about me...the most significant thing about you is what you think about God. What you think about God will shape how you respond to the vicissitudes, the exigencies, the difficulties, the trials, the troubles, the joys, the sorrows of life. Your doctrine of God is the most significant thing about you. It will either encourage you or depress you.

One of my favorite hymns, and I'm sure you know it well, William Cowper:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm. (*quoting Psalm 77*)

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
For God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

(God Moves In a Mysterious Way, by Wm Cowper)

I remember as a young boy, (we lived in a little, you would call it 'social housing' apartment in Glasgow), and my mother had a washboard—and I still remember her taking shirts, especially, and putting soap on the collars and rubbing them up and down the washboard; it's the only way to get it clean. It's a crude illustration, but sometimes the only way to make us like Christ is for God to use, 'the washboard of trial and suffering'; because the Holy Spirit comes to replicate in us what He first produced in Christ.

But then *thirdly*, and climactically, in verse 11 Paul says, "More than that, we also rejoice in God..." Ah, there's the thing; we, "rejoice in God"—not just in "the hope of the glory of God." (vs2). 'We *rejoice* in God Himself'—He is the summit of our rejoicing. Let me ask you a question: What makes you happy? Well, many things make us happy, I know; and there isn't one right answer. —But there is one, overarching, answer: 'God makes us happy.'

Our oldest son is a lawyer in London; he's a financial litigator. Last year he was approached by a firm to become a partner. And at the interview, the first question he was asked was this: "What gets you up in the morning?" It's a very good question, isn't

it? Kind of, I think he was expecting, "What's your view of the Financial Regulatory Act, passed by the government?" ... 'What gets you up in the morning?'

I said, "Well, what did you say to him?" "Well," he said, "I was tempted to say, 'My three children get me up in the morning.'" [Laughter] And he said, "No, I decided not to say that." "So what did you say?" I said to them, "The glory of God gets me up in the morning...and my three children." Joanne and I were just so thrilled.

He got the job, (I think they probably admired his courage). He said, "Well, they need to know right at the outset who I am."

The Christian's deepest joy is in God. Probably, if I had to take a book with me, (other than the Bible), to a deserted island it would be John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In Book One of the *Institutes*, where he's dealing with the doctrine of God, Book 11 XIII 17, (Don't be impressed by that; I've read it hundreds of times. It's just there that Calvin is writing about the Trinity; and he says, "These words of Gregory vastly delight me." (He's speaking about Gregory Nazianzus, a late 4th century Greek church father.) "These words of Gregory vastly delight me." And then he quotes three lines from Gregory's *Baptismal Oration 40*, chapter 41. [Again, don't be impressed by that. I've read it so often.] And here's what Calvin was "vastly delighted with"—and does vastly delight you.

Gregory writes: He's preparing a young man for baptism....[You do that here, I'm sure. Your Dan does it, others. Someone comes to faith and should be baptized, (as soon as possible, I think that same day, according to the Bible). My elders at Cambridge used to shake when I'd say that. I'd say, "If you've been converted this morning, I'll baptize you tonight." 'But what about the classes.?' I'd say, "No, were just following the New Testament, and we'll deal with the mess afterwards. We don't deal with the mess before it, we'll deal with the mess after it.]

And Gregory writes and he says to this young man, "When I think of the one God, I think of the Three. But when I think of the Three I must think of the One. But then I think of the One, I must go back to the Three. But when I'm with the Three I think of the

One. My mind is overwhelmed, my heart is moved. I need to stop now because tears are coming, and I need to worship."

When I read that many, many years ago, I then went back to Gregory, (actually, believe it or not, I had his works), and it's stunning. He's overwhelmed by the wonder of God in His Tri-unity. And I thought, 'Ian, you preach about this, you lecture about this... when were you overwhelmed by the God-ness of God, that He is Three in One, that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Persons—but One God!?'

And Paul says, "...we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." (vs11). Now: 'What is it we rejoice in?' Well, we rejoice, as I said, first of all in who He is—in who He is. 'This is who I Am', God is saying. God is introducing us to Himself throughout the Bible. That's why in Genesis 1, I think we are confronted with Trinity, in a 'dimmed' way, perhaps: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Gen 1:1-2). "And God said", (God spoke His Word), "Let us make man in our image." (vs26)...And the whole Bible is really a developing, escalating, and unpacking, and unfolding of the "us"-ness of God. We rejoice in who He is; we rejoice in His love for us.

I was converted through someone preaching on John 3:16. I had never heard the verse before. We know it so well; "God so loved the world." Why? Why did God love the world? The world was fallen, sinful, hostile. Well: 'Because He did!' But why? Why? 'Because I have.' I've often wondered when you go to glory whether we will ever go over saying, 'Why, O LORD, such love to me? Why me? Why me?'... 'Because it pleased Me so to do!'

You see, the sovereignty of God is not presented to us as a puzzle to solve—but as a pillow to rest our weary heads and hearts upon. God doesn't expect us to understand His sovereignty. If you do, you would be God—and none of us are. That's why, when Paul comes to the end of his exposition of the Gospel and speaking of the

predestinating purposes of God in Romans 9 through 11, how does he end? He says, "O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments. His paths are beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the LORD?" (Rom11:33-34). You know what Paul is saying? He's saying, 'Brothers, I've done my best. I'm out of my 'depth', so let's bow down and worship.'

Doxology is the resting place of biblical theology. We *rejoice* in who He is, we *rejoice* in His love for us, we *rejoice* in His grace to us in Jesus Christ. We *rejoice* in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's love has become epitomized, concatenated, concentrated in the incarnation life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ. 'This is My love to you: The giving of My Son for you.' You know, we sing about the grace of God. I do far too easily. We sing about amazing grace. How amazing is grace? When were you last stopped in your tracks by the wonder, the inexplicable wonder of the grace of God? "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!" The Christian ultimately rejoices in God.

Though all of that is true, maybe you're here this morning and you're saying, 'Ian, I hear what you're saying. I hear and read what the Word of God is saying. But if you knew how hard my life was, how difficult my life is, how uncertain, how deeply perplexing, how I struggle' ... [And the Bible is very honest about that, isn't it? And you find in the 45th chapter of Isaiah, (verse 15), and Isaiah saying, "Truly you are a God who hides Himself."...] 'There are times it's as if God has just departed the scene. 'Deus absconditus'; 'God has absconded.' ...and you're telling me to rejoice in Him?! '

There's a remarkable verse I was speaking about, or preaching about, Friday night in Oklahoma. Isaiah 49, verse 4, 'My life has amounted to nothing. It's been a waste and a vanity.' Who said that? 'My life has amounted to nothing. It's a waste and a vanity.' Jesus Christ said that. (2nd Servant psalm in Isaiah.)

Sinless despondency, as He lived a perfect life in a Godless, unholy, fallen world, as His disciples eventually abandoned Him: One denied Him; one betrayed Him—all forsook Him. He could say, "O you of little faith", and it seemed to the Lord of glory that

His life had amounted to nothing. That was His true humanity, His true, sinless humanity. If He couldn't have said that, He would have disqualified Himself from being our Savior. It would mean He was *a superman* and could walk through life and cruise to glory without being troubled by sin around Him.

And yet He says this, "My life has amounted to nothing. It's become a waste and a vanity; yet...", (and here's the thing I'll close with)... 'yet, I trust in the LORD.' (ibid.) He's saying, 'Though all around My soul gives way, He then is all My hope and stay.'

Brothers and sisters, we can rejoice in God even in the darkest of times, through our tears, through our brokenness of heart, we can rejoice in God because God is for us in Christ; because He loves us with an everlasting love; because He never beholds us apart from His Son.

So we have cause for *joy*. And that *joy* rests on the justifying righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. So may our *joy* this morning rest alone in what God has done for us—but ultimately in who God is for us. May God bless to us His Word. Amen.

(Closing prayer) Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters in Christ, lift up your heads, open your eyes, and by faith receive the blessing of the Triune God.

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face to shine upon you, be gracious unto you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace. Amen.

(End of Audio)