

Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Theme: Reviewing Reasons to Rejoice.

With the Europa League final on Wednesday and the Champions League final last night all containing English teams, many people in UK will be broken-hearted as their team lost and others be ecstatic as their team had won. Usually in such situations the winning teams will have a victory parade and thousands will line the streets to celebrate and hail their conquering heroes!

Nowadays people talk of a real party spirit as people want to rejoice and celebrate - birthdays, births, anniversaries, weddings, especially royal weddings are great celebration events in our nation, as well as the teams we support. How do we rejoice? We may say we are British, with British reserve, perhaps we are not the emotional types and wouldn't want excesses in our celebrating. For some certainly not so in their church. We know some in churches are from different cultures and their way of worshipping would be totally different to ours - different does not necessarily mean wrong! Yet, our own Britishness may put down and crush any expressions of joy and rejoicing that we or others may want to show. The apostle Paul in his writing, as he concludes his wonderful arguments on the certainty of our salvation says v11.

He wanted and expected the believers at Rome, even all believers to rejoice. He has drawn our attention to the great, wonderful things God has done for us, especially His love demonstrated in the death of Christ. Paul has shown us his deductions - if that is the case, how much more shall we be saved from wrath because we are in connection, in union with Christ's life. We have a secure future - the future is amazing, is glorious for us as believers. Yet Paul doesn't leave it there - painting some pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die picture. Not at all, for the things he has written of are to affect and make an impact on our day by day lives in situations. I want us to see 3 things:

1. Present Rejoicing.

Paul starts v11 *“Not only is this so...”* Yes, the truths he had written to them of are glorious, real and he held out to them and us the hope of the glory of God; of not facing wrath, but we have been saved, fully saved for all eternity. We are to realise the Christian life is not just an escape to heaven one day - as glorious as heaven is, but it is to be known and enjoyed **now**, in our present lives and there is a right rejoicing - *“we also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

It is amazing that again we see the Christian is one who has joy, has rejoicing. It is the same word we encountered back in v2 & 3 *“rejoice”* (NIV); *“rejoice or glory”* in AV; where we noted that the word means *“to exalt, to boast, to glory, to rejoice, to joy”*. It is a dynamic word, an expressive word. Some Christians speak of having deep joy and you may wonder if it is so deep that it cannot be seen! Other Christians are silly, glib and seen on some sort of spiritual speed! This joy is *“solid joy and lasting treasures”* and it is a true joy that is not necessarily expressed in a superficial way, or even in an external way, but is present even in the trials, the troubles and the sufferings - which v3 tells us, for this joy enables us to rejoice even in sufferings.

Paul did not write this in isolation, but wrote it at the conclusion of this little section in which he speaks of all God **has done and will do** for us as believers. Paul presents truth after truth before us and as we see these, it should be we view them in amazement and they are to affect us now – our minds, hearts and lives. The Westminster Assembly Shorter Catechism asks *“Q1: What is the chief end of man?”* The answer is *“A1: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.”*

This v11 underlines, dives home to us that the truths expressed previously, as they are outworked, are to cause us to rejoice, joy,

glory in God and all He has done and will do. As we rest secure in His salvation, we are to enjoy Him, all He has done and will do. The great men of God of the Westminster Assembly wrote in their notes and explanations and said *“Those most in His house on earth, do most glorify and enjoy Him... And when God shall be most fully enjoyed by the saints in heaven, He will be most highly glorified.”*

Do we enjoy and therefore glorify God and all He has done for us? Yes, I know, as do you, that the Christian life has difficulties, tribulations and we can have such because, and only because we are believers and sadly, I can give an unbalanced picture at times as I show the difficulties of the Christian life. Please forgive me that, but I also know the Christian life is also full of joy and we should be rejoicing and so glorify God for all He has done, as well as for all He is doing, will do and especially for all He is and is to us. This joy, this rejoicing is for us now - it is a present rejoicing, joy and glory. We, as told in 1 Peter 1:8, are to be *“filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy”* and Peter wrote that in the context of those going through trials (v6).

So often we too readily focus on our problems, our feelings, our circumstances and it seems all God has done is eclipsed and we live under a dark cloud. I do not minimise our problems and pressures, but are they really so big as to warrant no rejoicing in God? So, our rejoicing is a present and continuing rejoicing, but now we see:

2. The Centre and Focus of Our Rejoicing.

“We are to rejoice!” It is so easy to say, but so often we hurt, are down, pressurised, have this or that going on in our lives. I feel that is why Paul is specific as he says *“we rejoice, joy in God...”* We do not say *“Well, things are ok today, I feel fine, so I will rejoice.”* We always begin with God, who is, all He has done for us, is doing for us and will most certainly do for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We look out, away from ourselves, our circumstances and feelings onto the

great things God has done for us and who He is to us. In fact, Paul directs our attention to the reconciliation we have received in and through the Lord Jesus. The AV translates the word “*reconciliation*” (NIV) as “atonement”, but it is better translated as reconciliation. Reconciliation involves Jesus’ work - both in His life and atoning death.

Paul is saying in effect “*Look you have every reason to rejoice - not only heaven, having no fear of God’s wrath, but expecting to be in glory and even now you are reconciled, at peace with God, justified by faith. Remember believers that is the present condition you and I are in!*” If we are a believer, even if we do not feel “justified” or “reconciled” or even if we fail to enjoy the peace **of** God that comes from peace **with** God - our standing and status with God is not affected one little bit. We are not more saved, more justified, more reconciled, more at peace with God if we do or do not feel or recognise it consciously in our lives – but we delight more in such. Our standing, irrespective of our feelings, remains justified, reconciled, at peace with God.

Obviously, it is far better for us to be aware of these glorious truths applied to our lives in a felt and recognised way, but we are still to be able to rejoice even when we do not feel deeply, keenly the wonders of it, because it is still sure for us - for it depends not on us and our working at all, but on God and what He has worked in us. Our rejoicing is to focus, centre on God and on the Lord Jesus and all He has done for us.

Is it me, or does Paul seem to be obsessed by the Lord Jesus? Here in the first eleven verses of Roman 5 he seems to be determined to focus on, centre our attention on the Lord Jesus. There in v1 he is not content to say that we are justified by faith and have peace with God, he has to mention our Lord Jesus Christ. In v2-5 he says all the blessings there are **through Him**. In v6 Christ is again mentioned

and also in v8. In v9 it is His blood and through Him; then in v10 Paul focuses on the death of His Son and through His life. Here in v11 it is not rejoicing in God, but “*in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” and even then, he adds “*through whom have now received reconciliation.*” Jesus is mentioned, alluded to 10 times in 11 verses!

Ok mister great apostle Paul, why are you so obsessed, so taken up with Jesus? The answer is that without Him, we are without strength, are ungodly, sinners and enemies. Without Him we deserve God’s wrath and would be utterly lost. That is why our praise, adoration, worship, our rejoicing in God stems and flows through and from the Lord Jesus. Personally, I want to be more and more obsessed with that Pauline type of obsession and appreciation of the Lord Jesus, that I would be captivated and enamoured and be always falling in love with Him. What I want for myself I want for us all here.

The fountainhead of all our blessings is Christ - as Paul writes in Ephesians 1:3 “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*” I can’t even begin to explain what it means for us to have every spiritual blessing in Christ. We know some of the joys of those blessings in our lives now, others will continue to be experienced and known as we go on with Christ, but one day we are going to come into our full inheritance. What that is has not even entered into our hearts and minds yet!

Some of these blessings are such things as: God is now not a terror to us, nor do we fear His wrath. So, we can say and sing with Augustus Toplady “*the terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do; my Saviour’s obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view*”.

As I’ve chatted with people, they said that this series in Romans 5 must have been great to prepare. Yes, it has been a privilege to

prepare and preach, even if hard work at times, trying to deal with these glorious and great truths. I feel I've only stirred the surface of the text. Yet, I'm aware that I can say glorious things from these verses and yet people may feel *"Huh, it's okay for you to say that, but me, I'm hurting, struggling, losing the will to go on in the Christian life and even today's sermon is nothing to me!"* So, finally:

3. Pointers to Help Us Truly Rejoice.

The matters we have looked at so far in this chapter are wonderful, are great reasons for rejoicing and thankfully many of you have been encouraging in your feedback. Believe me, I do not want flattering, as pride is so easy to stirred up in the best of men, let alone in my heart; but it is a real encouragement to know that the word of God has helped people. I pray these brief points would be of help if we should be struggling to rejoice in our God.

A. Applying Jesus' work aright: this may sound a daft point, but so many professing Christians miss out on true joy because they contaminate and pollute Jesus' work with their own work and best efforts. They are ready to rejoice in God, so long as they can bring their achievements with them. Yet justification by faith excludes our achievements totally. If we want to go with anything of self to God, it pollutes our worship, our approach to God. How can you glory in God alone, if self and self-worth is there? The Pharisee in the temple couldn't, neither can we! Sadly, we can let this creep into our lives - what we do, feel or achieve, yet when we do not reach our standards, or feel good enough, we find we cannot rejoice! Our attention and focus are off what God in Christ has done and on what we do and feel like. We are to refocus on the Lord Jesus and all He has achieved and done for us.

B. Looking to our own hearts in a wrong way: we can look inwardly too much in a morbid and introspective way. We can be forever focusing on our failures, sin, weakness, feelings, emotions

and efforts. I am certainly not advocating a low and shallow view of our sin, but one of the devil's ploys is to get us to focus on our hearts, lives, situations and not on the Lord and all He has done for us. It is right as believers to search our hearts before God, to have Him search us, to examine our lives, but we are not to stay in despair and a sense of hopelessness. Self-examination should drive us to God, to Christ, to all He has done for us and we say *"Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling"*. God showed His love to us while we were yet sinners, but **now** we are reconciled, justified sinners, we are not to let our sin and failures rob us of the joy of our salvation. We are to take them to Him, confess and forsake such. We are not to focus on our failures, but are to focus on Jesus and His work for us. Paul does this in 8:31-39 and does so by a series of questions - good for us to look at to think over on our own or together!

C. Focus often on what Jesus has done for us: as I pointed out earlier, Paul directs us 10 times in 11 verses to the Lord Jesus and all He has done for us. Do we ever take time out to count our blessings? Yes, our physical blessings, but don't forget what God has done for us spiritually. We are to remind ourselves of His love, grace and mercy. We are to stand in all that the many waves of His lovingkindness have brought upon us; to ponder Jesus' death for us and His saving work in our lives. Always view God's blessing to us through Jesus Christ. Yes, it will involve us using our brain - which is hard work for some of us - but is well worth doing for the rich reward we will have. As we think of the things the Lord has done, apply it personally to our own life, that these things are true of you and me.

Ask yourself questions, ask the word of God questions - *"So, is this true? Does God mean it? Does He really mean it for me?"* The answer will be positive for salvation blessings as a believer, or for someone seeking Him. God means His blessings and His cursing is and they are all found to be true. God's promises will never fail. We

are not to imagine we are the exception! All He has said and done is true for us. You may feel you have nothing to rejoice in, but I don't think any of us would openly call God a liar even in our situations! If we cannot call God a liar, then recognise even we have a reason to rejoice and glory in as a believer as He keeps His word gives us grace.

D. Apply God's word and its truth to our life: Paul will go on to give us a list of "*how much mores*". In understanding the truth of what Paul has said, should lead us to glory and rejoice in God. If we cannot, then maybe we have not really understood the truth, or may even still be in darkness. Yes, I'm aware spiritual and physical depressions, lows can cause us to block out such comforts, but it is well worth doing such an exercise as the Lord can so often fan up the dying embers of our love, praise and joy as we do so.

Not to rejoice, means we need to repent of our sin of unbelief even as a believer, as we doubt God. True self-examination should drive us to Christ and all He has done for us, to cast our helpless souls on Him and see all He did for us and cause us to rejoice in such a Saviour and so great salvation.

Paul in v1-11 shows us our security, our certainty, our assurance of salvation. We are to recognise and to apply such and to go on in our lives to rejoice and glory in God through the Lord Jesus. My prayer is that we will all glorify God and enjoy Him more and more in our everyday lives.