

## A Choice to Rejoice

Romans 5:1-11

Peace with God is more than a feeling:

Our peace with God is an objective reality, not just a feeling that comes and goes. Ignoring our sin or pretending it doesn't exist never leads to peace. But when we face our sinfulness and the truth of Christ's atoning death for us and surrender our lives to Him, we have faith. As we act on that faith, meditating on what we believe, then we feel peace and joy that aren't affected by our circumstances. The facts of our salvation lead to faith, which then leads to our feeling of peace.

Our attitude in suffering demonstrates how well we understand the gospel:

Jesus does not promise us happiness. Rather, rejection and persecution are the guarantees He made in His teaching. But that is with good reason: God is most at work in the painful parts of our life, producing *holiness*. When our focus is on becoming holy rather than just happy, we can rejoice in our sufferings. We don't do that as stoics who are unmoved by pain but because we feel pain deeply but trust God's purposes in it. Verses 3-5 tell us that such rejoicing allows us to endure trials, and that endurance then allows God to shape our character, burning away all that is not of Him. Seeing God transform our character brings hope, both that God will continue to work in this life and that He will be faithful to His promise of salvation.

Our worship is not a reflection of what we feel but of what we know to be true:

Our worship is the outflow of our rejoicing that God has reconciled us to Himself and has given us a new identity as His children. Just as our relationship with God is not affected by our circumstances or our feelings, neither should our worship change with those things. It is tempting, though, to focus on suffering rather than on God's purposes and to define our identity by our struggles rather than by who we are in Christ. True worship is a choice to rejoice in God regardless of our circumstances, and to turn that rejoicing into praise.

*Questions to consider:*

- Consider something difficult you are facing/going through this week. How can you choose to meditate more on the gospel this week as you face that issue?
- Where is God at work in your life to shape your character and make you more holy? How is He doing this? How can you yield yourself more fully to the potter's hands to allow Him to transform you into a vessel of honor for His glory?
- How have you viewed worship in the past? Have you thought of it as a way to feel close to God? As a command to obey? As a way to express love and gratitude to God? Or as a way to escape the challenges around you? Is God calling you to reconsider how you view worship? Have there been times it is hard for you to worship? Why?