

14th June 2020
Trading Places
Romans 5:1-8

It won't be long before we will be back together on a Sunday morning. The Council have been spending time looking at the implications of a restart. Please make sure you have received a letter from Council outlining a map of how we can restart. Please read it carefully, as we are taking all the necessary precautions to keep everyone safe. All going well we will be meeting at 10 a.m. On Sunday 28th June.

Our preaching plan will return to Romans x7, and Matthew x5 over the next 12 weeks. We will have Nick Wright from (IMA) and David Ratten from (CCVT) as guest speakers over the next two months.

I've chosen the theme, "Trading Places" for our message today from Romans 5:1-8. Trading Places was the name of a very successful film, a "blockbuster" film back in 1983, where a very successful Commodities Broker becomes poor, and a homeless man becomes rich. More of that later...

Peace and Hope v1-2

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God".

"Access" has become a key phrase in our technological age. At several external doors of our buildings at CrossCulture in the City we had key safes that we had to remember the "access" code.

At the computer we turn the noun into a verb: "I need to access that file." When I am at home trying to retrieve messages from another e-mail account and my finger or my memory slips as I try to type in my password, the screen goes blank except for the sad judgment: "Access denied."

Many of us have different passwords for our e-mail accounts, our banking, and the on-line vendors from whom we order books, CDs and food. I have a list in a diary, or diaries with most of my passwords that at times I need. I only hope that I don't lose those diaries!!

Paul wrote for a world in which people were desperately trying to find the passwords that would give them access to God. Some thought that careful obedience to the law of Moses was the key.

Others thought that civic virtue was the key. Still others tried to placate God by the breadth of their philosophical knowledge. Paul's astonishing claim is that there is only one password we need to remember: **Jesus Christ**, and that in Jesus Christ everyone has access to *grace*. And suddenly the entire picture is reversed. It is not that we are striving to reach God, it is that God is striving to reach us--grace. It is not that we use Jesus to attain God's mercy, it is that God sends Jesus to enact the mercy that God has intended from the beginning of time.

Grace, however, is not only the activity of God in Jesus Christ that reaches out to include everyone (in Paul's case, especially both Jews and Gentiles.) Grace is also our dwelling place *"This grace in which we stand."* God's goodness to us surrounds us and upholds us and defines who we are. Our lives are shaped by the gift we can never achieve, but can only receive.

And Paul tells us what the life looks like that is grounded in grace. It is not usually marked by earthly success and most certainly not blessed by earthly prosperity. Far more often it is marked by suffering. It is, after all, a Christ-shaped life that lives in grace.

But the suffering bears its own fruits, or better, grace bears fruit through the suffering. The gifts of grace is a kind of sketch of moral and spiritual development for the person grounded in the grace of God.

Start with suffering and move to endurance; from endurance comes character, and character produces hope. Ethics teachers are much committed to helping us think about "character ethics" these days. Paul would say that we can be pretty sure someone has character right if they live in hope.

We often talk of hope as wishful thinking: "I hope it won't rain"; "I hope my football team will win"; but Paul's concept of hope in Romans is different.

He introduces "hope" in the story of Abraham's faith (Romans 4:18), and develops the concept in chapter 5. For Paul, hope isn't wishful thinking, but absolute certainty about the future because it is grounded in God's faithfulness to keep his promises. That is, what God **will do** for the believer in Christ is grounded on what God **has done** for the believer in Christ.

v1 also opens with an inference, "*Therefore...*" suggesting, from the preceding discussion about God's gracious provision of righteousness by faith and not by works of the law (3:21-4:25). Throughout, Paul argues that God's gracious act in Christ silences any who boast in their own actions, status, or privileges (2:17, 23; 3:27).

Paul develops this in v2 by proposing that believers boast also in their suffering. In verses 3-5, he builds an argument in which the experience of believers is like a chemical chain reaction, one substance setting off a whole sequence of processes.

We know that suffering produces patience, and patience produces character, and character produces hope. Suffering is the catalyst in this process, and hope -- the hope of sharing in God's glory -- is the terminal point.

This suffering-fuelled-hope does not disappoint (or shame) us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit v5. The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence functions as a guarantee or down payment of believers' future hope (see also Romans 8:23, 26-27).

How can Paul join together suffering and God's love? Aren't these two themes contradictory? It sounds like an Oxymoron!

An oxymoron is 'a rhetorical saying that uses an apparent self-contradiction to illustrate or to reveal a paradox.'

Some examples:

- Pretty ugly.
- Clearly misunderstood.
- Diet ice cream!
- "I am a deeply superficial person." — Andy Warhol
- "We learn from history that man can never learn anything from history." — George Bernard Shaw
- "A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on."

So, v3 may appear oxymoronic. Paul, writing to the Jewish Christian church in Rome, in one breath speaks about both suffering and God's love. 'We [boast] in our *sufferings*, because we know that *suffering* produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because *God's love* has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 5:3-5). How can both suffering and a God of love coexist?

Trading Places:

I mentioned earlier a major film in 1983 called Trading Places. The film starred Eddie Murphy, Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ralph Bellamy, and Don Amache. The plot of the film centered around the lives of Louis Winthorpe, a commodities broker, and Billy Ray Valentine, a streetwise homeless man; who, unbeknown to them, become pawns in a \$1 dollar bet by the duke brothers, Mortimer and Randolph. what was the bet?

That the Duke brothers could turn Winthorpe poor and Valentine rich. In other words, they traded places. Winthorpe finds his bank accounts frozen and his life is turned upside down as he becomes homeless. Valentine, on the other hand, moves into Winthorpe's home, gets Winthorpe's job, and life seems great for Valentine.

But today in Romans 5 we see another major blockbuster story that was not distributed by a motion picture company, but by God. This major blockbuster story only had one star and that was Jesus, who traded places with us on the cross. the life of one for the lives of the many.

1. The text.

Paul, demonstrates the love of God for the world in giving his son to die in our place. This text shows clearly that salvation originates with God, for the purpose of God, to placate the wrath of God.

It also illustrates God's grace towards those who did not deserve it. The world, by right did not deserve God's love or his grace, but deserved the divine justice of God which was death. It is by Christ's selfless act of trading places with us that we are brought out of the darkness and into his marvellous light.

For those of us who have accepted Christ, we have traded places from sinners to saints. Thank God that Jesus traded places with us!

2. Crucifixion was a dehumanizing, and dreadful method of death.

Crucifixion was a slow, agonizing process. A person could linger on the cross for days before death came to ease their suffering. It has been reported that during Jesus' crucifixion, that he experienced great pain just to breathe. Imagine the pain of trying to lift himself up, causing the nails in his feet to produce excruciating anguish. Imagine the distress in his arms he must have felt as he slumped from exhaustion. What agony our Saviour endured for our redemption!

3. Jesus' trading places with us.

When Jesus traded places with us, he was subjected to the wrath of God on the cross.

- By taking our place on the cross, Jesus accomplished what no other person could accomplish, and what no other sacrificial offering could accomplish.
- By taking our place on the cross, we are now justified before God.
- By taking our place on the cross, reconciliation to God has been secured.

On the cross;

- It was the innocent dying for the guilty.
- It was the best, dying for the worst.
- It was the purest, dying for the polluted.
- It was the highest, dying for the lowest.
- It was the shameless, dying for the shameful.

By taking our place on the cross, we now have eternal life with him who died for us! Brothers and sisters, we should think about what Jesus accomplished on the cross daily and not just on a Sunday or during the Easter season!

4. Our response;

Since He traded places with us, we should:

- Live in service to him.
- Love what he loves.
- Hate what he hates.
- Be a witness for him to others.
- Strive to be a blessing to others.
- Seek the salvation of others.
- Worship him in Spirit and in Truth.
- Spend more time in His Word and in prayer.

5. Conclusion;

Since Jesus traded places with us, we must consider the three ways this truth has set us free:

- a) His trading places with us **has freed us from the power of sin**, which means that sin does not have dominion over us. Now that we are saved, we should live holy. Things that we used to do, we don't do anymore, and places that we use to go, we don't go anymore.
- b) His trading places with us **has freed us from the penalty of sin**. no longer are we God's enemies condemned to eternal separation from God at death. The death sentence of sin has been revoked because we have accepted Christ as Saviour.
- c) Finally, **one day we will be free from the very presence of sin**. we shall reign in eternity with Christ our King, where the presence of sin does not exist.

So now brothers and sisters, we can praise him...

- In the midst of bad news,
- When burdens seem unbearable,
- When life seems unfair,
- In the death of loved ones,
- When we have little and when we have plenty,
- In church and outside of the church,
- In the morning, noon, and night!

"You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus was: though he was so very rich, yet to help you he became so very poor, so that by being poor he could make you rich".

2 Corinthians 8:9 (The Living Bible)

Thank God, He traded places with us! Amen.

Prayer