

Lesson 49 at StudyRomans.org

Romans 5:4, Continued

Romans 5:4 — and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

When we ended last week, we were looking at how suffering produces endurance, how endurance produces character, and how character produces hope. And we noted that all of those benefits of suffering are available only in Christ.

That is particularly true of the hope that comes from that character and from that endurance. When we patiently endure suffering and develop a tried and tested character, that reminds us of the hope that we have in Christ. Our hope reminds us that our suffering is not forever! Our hope reminds us that our suffering is not meaningless! Our hope in Christ is how we endure that suffering. And we know that our hope in Christ is a sure and steadfast anchor of our soul.

Hebrews 6:19 — We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.

But the sad truth is that there are many people in this world who **think** they have that hope, but who in fact do not have that hope. Jesus describes such people when he tells us that one of the most common emotions on the day of judgment will be surprise.

Matthew 7:21-23 — Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day

many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

"On that day **many** will say to me." Yes, Jesus says "many." There will be many on that last day who thought they had hope, but who in fact did not have hope. Why? What was lacking?

Didn't Jesus just answer that question? What those people lacked was obedience. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**" They were not doing the will of God. That was why they found themselves outside the kingdom of heaven.

Is Jesus talking there about perfect obedience to a system of law? No, we know that he is not. We know that perfect obedience to a system of law is not the obedience that Jesus requires because Paul has already told us that. But Paul has also told us about "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5). And the obedience of faith is required. Paul tells us that, Peter tells us that, and James tells us that. We must do what God tells us to do to be saved, and yes, there are things we must do to be saved (Acts 2:37-38).

And so what is the difference between those whose hope is a true hope and those whose hope is a false hope? The difference is whether they have done the will of God. That is what Jesus told us in Matthew 7. And we know the will of God only from the word of God. Let's keep that fact in mind as we look next at verse 5, which is a somewhat difficult verse to understand.

Romans 5:5

Romans 5:5 — 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.

If we were to choose the letter from Paul that tells us the most about the Holy Spirit, I suspect many of us would choose Romans — and that answer may be correct. But, correct or not, it took us 49 lessons to find the phrase “Holy Spirit” in this letter, even though, as we discussed, we have likely already seen the Holy Spirit both with the Spirit of Holiness in 1:4 and the Spirit in 2:29. There was some question about the meaning of “Spirit” in those verses, but there is no question here. Verse 5 is definitely about the Holy Spirit. (As a reminder, the Handout for Lesson 14 of our classes on Joel shows the complete text of all 252 passages in the Bible that mention the Holy Spirit, including every such passage in Romans.)

Verse 5 raises a lot of questions. What does it mean that God’s love has been poured into our hearts? What does it mean that this pouring was through the Holy Spirit? What does it mean that the Holy Spirit has been given to us?

And we will look at those questions, but let’s first look at the bigger picture — what is the purpose of verse 5? Perhaps if we know the purpose of verse 5, then that will help us understand the meaning of verse 5. Why do we have verse 5?

We have a very clear answer to that question. The purpose of verse 5 is to assure us that our hope will not put us to shame. That is what the verse says — “and hope does not put us to shame, **because...**”

How can we know that our hope is a true hope instead of a false hope that will put us to shame? How can we know that we are in the group of people who will hear Jesus say, “well done,” instead of the group who will hear Jesus say, “I never knew you?” Whatever the second half of verse 5 means, we can be certain that it is an answer to those questions because of that word “because” in verse 5.

But don't we already know the answer to those questions? Don't we already know how we can be sure that our hope is true? Don't we already know how we can be sure about what Jesus will say to us on that final day? Didn't Jesus tell us how to answer those questions in Matthew 7? Doesn't the answer depend on whether we are doing the will of God? Didn't Paul already tell us the answer is the obedience of faith? Didn't Peter tell us in Acts 2 that the answer is obeying the gospel? Doesn't the example of Abraham tell us the answer is our life-long walk of faith? Isn't that how we know our hope will not put us to shame?

We haven't looked at Paul's answer here in verse 5 yet, but do we think Paul's answer here will be different from all of those other answers to the same question that we find elsewhere in the Bible? Romans 5:5 is not the only place in the Bible where we are told how we can know that our hope in Christ is a true hope and not a false hope that will put us to shame. Do we think Paul's answer here will be different from those other answers? I don't think so.

So, with that background, let's look at Paul's answer here in verse 5. Paul, how can we know that our hope in Christ is a true hope and not a false hope that will put us to shame? Paul says that we know that “because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the

Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” That’s how. But what does that mean, and how does it show that our hope is not put to shame?

Let me make that question very personal — how do **you** know that **your** hope does not put **you** to shame? How do **you** know that **your** hope is a true hope? How would you answer those questions? How do you know those things?

I can tell you how I know those things. I know them because the Holy Spirit told me. That’s how I know. That’s how I know my hope is a true hope. The Holy Spirit told me.

And how did the Holy Spirit tell me that? The Holy Spirit told me that through the Bible, the written word of God. That is how the Holy Spirit talks to me. The Holy Spirit speaks to me in the words of the Bible. Whenever I read those words, the Holy Spirit is speaking to me. That is how the Holy Spirit talks to anyone. Not through some whisper in my ear or some nudge in my heart, but through the written word of God, which, all by itself, is enough to make me complete and fully equipped (2 Timothy 3:17).

Oh, but some might say, the Holy Spirit guides me and talks to me apart from the Bible. Really? So does that mean you are now somehow more than complete and more than fully equipped? How is that even possible? And what would the Spirit need to say to you that he has not already said to you in the Bible? If I am not complete and fully equipped, what should I do? Wait for a nudge from the Spirit? Wait for a spiritual tingle in my heart? No. I just need to open my Bible a little more often. It is the written word of God that makes me complete and fully equipped for every good work.

And if the Spirit is telling you things that the Spirit is not telling me, wouldn't that make God a respecter of persons? What if your teacher had, during an exam, walked through the classroom whispering answers and hints in the ears of certain students while ignoring the rest of the classroom, including you? Wouldn't you see that teacher as a respecter of persons?

And, yes, there was direct communication from the Holy Spirit in the first century while the word of God was being written and while the church was first beginning to grow, but that time has long passed. The complete word of God has come, and the partial has passed away (1 Corinthians 13:10). The time of childhood has ended (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Hebrews 5:12-14 — For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness**, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Solid food is for the mature — and that solid food is the word of God.

So, back to my question — how do any of us know that our hope is not in vain? The answer is that we know that because of what we read in the word of God. We know that because of the Bible, each word of which is from the Holy Spirit of God. Absent the Bible, we would know nothing about God or Christ beyond what we could discern about the power and the nature of God from his created universe.

Everything that we know about the gospel of Christ comes from a book — from the Bible. Everything.

So, once again, Paul, what is your answer to that question? How do we know that our hope is not in vain? Paul's answer is that we know that because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We know that God loves us, but how do we know that? We just answered that question. We know that fact about God's love the same way we know everything else about the gospel — we know that because the Holy Spirit told us that in the Bible. We know that because the Holy Spirit gave us John 3:16 along with all of the other verses that describe the love of God.

Is the love of God in your heart? And, if it is, how did it get there?

I can certainly answer that question for myself. In my case, the love of God first entered my heart through my ears! Before I could even read, my parents were telling me about the love of God. And then later, the love of God entered my heart through my eyes as I read about his love in the Bible.

Is your answer different? Did you learn about the love of God in some other way? I don't think there is any other way. Either you read about God's love in the Bible, or someone else did that and then told you about what they had read in the Bible.

After all, what does it really mean for something to enter my heart? How does that happen? Let's let the Bible answer that question.

Luke 8:12 — The ones along the path are those who have **heard**; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Acts 16:14 — The Lord opened her heart to **pay attention to what was said** by Paul.

Psalms 119:11 — I have **stored up your word** in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Deuteronomy 6:6 — And **these words that I command you today** shall be on your heart.

Luke 6:45 -The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart **his mouth speaks**.

Proverbs 4:20-23 — My son, **be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings**. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Satan takes away the word that they heard from their hearts. Her heart was opened to pay attention to what Paul said. The words I command you shall be on your heart. The mouth speaks out of the heart. Be attentive to my words and incline your ear to my sayings, and keep your heart with all vigilance.

The message is clear. If the love of God is in my heart, then it got there through words. It got there through words that I heard and words that I read. How else?

That conclusion leads us to another of Paul's favorite ways to describe our faith. The first way that we saw earlier came from Paul's phrase "obedience of faith." Paul opened this letter with that phrase in Romans 1:5, and Paul will close this letter with the same phrase in Romans 16:26.

But we see another description of faith from Paul in Romans 10 and in Galatians 3.

Romans 10:17 — So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Galatians 3:2 — Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Faith comes from hearing the word of God. Didn't Jesus say the same thing?

John 5:24 — Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

John 17:20 — I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

Luke 8:11 — Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

The seed is the word of God. The seed that grows in my heart is the Bible. Who first planted that seed? My parents did when they first told me about the love of God before I could even read. And where did

they get that seed? From the words of the Holy Spirit that are written down in the Bible. “The seed is the word of God.” That is what Jesus tells us in Luke 8:11.

And John also told us that:

John 20:30-31 — Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are **written** so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And don’t we see that again on the day the church was established and the first gospel sermon was proclaimed?

Acts 2:37 — Now when they **heard** this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

The Handout for Lesson 49 shows many other verses from the Bible that teach us this same thing. Faith comes through words — not through something we feel, but through something we hear or something we read. The Spirit does not nudge me; the Spirit speaks to me. In fact, the Spirit speaketh expressly (1 Timothy 4:1). And the Spirit speaks to me only through the written word of God.

So what then does Paul mean when he says that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit”? He means that we have heard the word of God and we have understood and believed all that the word of God tells us about the love of God. That word has been poured into our hearts through our ears and through our eyes!

Don’t we see that same thing later in this same chapter? Look at verse 8: “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ

died for us.” How do we know that Christ died for us? We know that only through the written word of God. Absent the Bible, none of us would know that.

That is how I know that my hope is not in vain! That is how you know your hope is not in vain! We know that because God has told us that in his word. We know that because that word has been poured into our hearts through hearing and reading the word of God, which we have through the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:13 — And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Ephesians 6:17 — And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And this fact about how the love of God enters our hearts should not have come as a surprise to any of the Jews who received Paul’s letter. Why not? Because this fact was a foundational prophecy about the new covenant.

Jeremiah 31:33 — For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

I will write it on their hearts! That prophecy is just another way of saying that faith comes from hearing. And Jeremiah’s prophecy is that such would be true about everyone who would be part of the new covenant. “They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” as Jeremiah writes in the very next verse.

But, some might say, what about Lydia?

Acts 16:14 — One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. **The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.**

Doesn't that verse prove that God operates on our hearts directly through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit? Many people think so. One commentary that I looked at this past week said that Lydia's heart was "enlightened, impressed by his Spirit, and so prepared to receive the truth."

Is that what happened in Acts 16? No, it is not. There is nothing in that account to support such a notion.

For starters, I think the ESV missed the boat a bit in the translation we just read that "the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." That makes it sound like Paul was having some trouble keeping her attention, but does that sound like Paul? It does not sound like him to me. I think Paul had her attention.

The problem was not that Lydia did not hear Paul — she did. And the problem is not that Lydia did not pay attention to Paul — I think she did that as well. The problem was what Lydia would do after hearing Paul. Would she stick with her old way of viewing things, or would she instead see things through the lens of what she was now hearing — through the gospel of Christ?

I think the Greek text supports that view. The Greek word translated "pay attention to" in the ESV is translated "give heed unto" in the ASV and "attended unto" in the KJV. I think those translations are much

better than the ESV. If you tell me the bridge is out, I might pay attention to what you said, but if I keep driving toward that bridge, I have not heeded what you said; I have not attended to your warning.

Whatever Acts 16:14 means when it says God opened her heart, the purpose for the opening was so that Lydia would both hear and act upon what she heard. She believed what Paul said, and so she acted upon what Paul said.

And what caused her to do that? I think that when we look at what happened in Acts 16:14, what we will see is that it supports what we have been saying about Romans 5:5 — God operates on our hearts through our ears! The reason why Lydia heard, believed what she heard, and acted upon what she heard was because of what she heard. In short, she was convinced by what she heard from Paul. She was convinced, and so she acted — she attended to what she heard. She heeded Paul's message.

And notice the order in Acts 16. First, we are told that Lydia was “a worshiper of God” before she ever met Paul. Second, we are told that Lydia heard Paul. Third, we are told that God opened her heart to attend to what was said by Paul. Before we are told that her heart was opened, we are told that she heard Paul.

And so, whatever this opening involved, it happened after she heard that to which she needed to attend. There was no preparation of her heart to receive the truth as that earlier commentator suggested. She was already receiving the truth from Paul. What she needed to do was obey the truth.

But does that mean then that there was instead a compulsion to obey the truth? That Lydia didn't really want to attend to what Paul had said, but that God compelled her to do so? Is any Calvinist really willing to argue that God compels people to be saved? If so, then why isn't everyone saved? Isn't it God's will that all be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4)? If that is God's will, and if God saves people by compelling them to obey, then why wouldn't God compel everyone to obey?

So if God did not prepare Lydia's heart to receive the truth, and if God did not compel Lydia to obey the gospel, then what is left? How did God open Lydia's heart to attend to what Paul had said?

What's left is exactly what happened! Lydia's heart was opened by the preaching of Paul. Paul's preaching is what opened Lydia's heart. Paul's preaching awakened Lydia to a new way of thinking about God and about the plan of God. Paul's preaching enlarged Lydia's heart beyond her former understanding to now understand the truth about Christ.

But wait! How can we say that Paul opened her heart when the verse says that God opened her heart?

First, why was Paul preaching to anyone? Answer: Because of God! Because Jesus appeared to Paul on that road to Damascus. Jesus told Ananias all about it.

Acts 9:15 — But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

Second, why was Paul preaching in Philippi, where Lydia heard him?

Answer: Because of God! Just back up a few verses — Paul was there because of the Macedonian call!

Acts 16:9 — And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

Third, why was Paul telling Lydia the things that he was telling her?

Answer: Because of God!

1 Corinthians 2:13 — And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

I think that verse confirms that what Jesus said about the 72 in Luke 10 was also true about Paul — “The one who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16). The words that Paul was proclaiming to Lydia were the words of God.

And so, yes, Lydia’s heart was opened through the preaching of Paul. But Paul was preaching because God called him to preach, Paul was preaching to Lydia in Philippi because God called him to preach there, and Paul was preaching words taught by the Spirit of God.

And so what can we say about Lydia? We can say that for her, as for us all, faith came by hearing. And we can say that what she heard was spoken by Paul. God opened her heart through the preaching of Paul.

Then, as today, God opens our hearts through our ears. And rather than showing the opposite, Lydia provides a perfect example of how God operates on our hearts through the proclamation of his word.

And, yes, there are some differences between how God did that in the first century and how God does that today when we have the complete word of God that we can pick up and read whenever we want to do so. But are things really that different?

- Jesus is not appearing to us in person to tell us to proclaim his word as he did with Paul, but Jesus is still telling us to proclaim his word (Matthew 28:19-20).
- Jesus is not appearing to us in a dream to tell us to go preach in some specific part of the world as he did with Paul, but Jesus is still telling us to go out into the world to preach (Matthew 28:19-20).
- And Jesus is not putting the words in our mouths as he sometimes did with Paul and the other Apostles, but Jesus is still telling us what to say (Matthew 28:19-20).

Now, let's look at the end of verse 5 — and what we see at the end of verse 5 is a second gift. The love of God poured into our hearts is the first gift, and that first gift came through the Holy Spirit, which is then described as a second gift. The Holy Spirit is not what was poured, but rather what was poured came through the Holy Spirit. And so we have two gifts in verse 5 — that which was poured through the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit himself.

And we should note that verse 5 very clearly states that the Holy Spirit has been given to us. What that means is that we know for sure that the Holy Spirit was given to at least some Christians at some time. But who and when? And more to the point, does the word “us” in verse 5 include us today?

Who is “us” in verse 5? Is it all Christians everywhere for all time? Is it all Christians everywhere for a specific time (such as all Christians in the first century)? Is it specific Christians for a specific time (such as some Christians in Rome in the first century)?

However we answer that question, we need to understand that our answer will have a ripple effect in this chapter. Paul has been addressing this same group since at least Romans 4:24, and Paul will keep addressing this same group at least through Romans 5:11. If we limit the Christians addressed in Romans 5:5 in some way, then I don’t see how we can avoid imposing that same limit throughout the entirety of Paul’s discussion here.

How else is this same group described in this same discussion?

- (4:23-24) But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for **ours** also.
- (5:1) Therefore, since **we** have been justified by faith, **we** have peace with God through **our** Lord Jesus Christ.
- (5:2) Through 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.
- (5:6) For while **we** were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
- (5:8) But God shows his love for **us** in that while **we** were still sinners, Christ died for **us**.

- (5:9) Since, therefore, **we** have now been justified by his blood, much more shall **we** be saved by him from the wrath of God.
- (5:10) 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.
- (5:11) More than that, **we** also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom **we** have now received reconciliation.

If we were to conclude that verse 5 is directed to a subset of all Christians, then I think consistency would require us to say the same thing about all of these other verses in the same discussion that use the same pronouns.

I think a better approach is to let those other verses guide us in our understanding of verse 5 — and when I do that, I conclude that, whatever verse 5 is saying, it is addressing all Christians for all time. Every other verse in Paul's discussion here has that scope. And I think that broad scope makes sense given what Paul is doing here — he is explaining the basis of our hope in Christ, which is not something we would expect to change over time.

And I think that answer makes sense when we look at other verses that also describe the Holy Spirit as a gift or as having been given. They likewise seem broad in their scope.

Acts 2:38-39 — And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your

children and for all who are far off, **everyone** whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Acts 5:32 — And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given **to those who obey him**.

2 Corinthians 1:22 — And who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts **as a guarantee**.

2 Corinthians 5:5 — He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit **as a guarantee**.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 — Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

I know there is some disagreement on this point within the church, but my opinion is that these verses apply as much to me as they did to those who first heard them. My opinion is that the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 was in fact to “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Does that mean I can work miracles? No, it does not.

For starters, the gift of the Holy Spirit is not the same as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself while the gifts of the Holy Spirit are spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 suggests that all of the Roman Christians had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but Romans 1:11 suggests that at least some of the Romans had not received any gifts of the Holy Spirit (any spiritual gifts) and would not receive them until after Paul arrived in person.

So if receiving the Holy Spirit as a gift does not mean that I can perform modern-day miracles, what does it mean? I think it means that God has written his name on me with the seal of the Holy Spirit, that God has given me the Spirit as a guarantee, and that the Holy Spirit talks to God the Father on my behalf when I pray. I think we will see at least two of those things when we get to Romans 8. None of that involves me working any miracles, but I believe that all of that describes blessings that I presently enjoy in Christ because of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul will have much more to say on this topic when we get to Romans 8. And, for those who studied the book of Joel with us, you will recall that we spent a great deal of time discussing the Holy Spirit when we looked at the great prophecy in Joel 2 that is quoted by Peter in Acts 2. You may also want to review the numerous Handouts from those lessons.