

**“There’s More to Come”  
by Rev. Frances Savill  
Sunday June 18, 2023**

**Romans 5:1-8**

**Prayer for illumination:** God of wisdom, open our minds to your truth, our hearts to your love, and our hands to do your will as we listen to the Scriptures. With your Holy Spirit, equip us to follow Jesus, who is your Living Word. Amen.

This morning we are in Romans 5:

Paul is rejoicing, we are rejoicing in this new life and new standing that we have been given before God that we have through faith in Christ.

The chapter begins: *“<sup>2</sup> By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with Him, make us fit for Him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that’s not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that He has already thrown open His door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open spaces of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.*

We find ourselves set free, forgiven, adopted as children, in a wide open space surrounded by God’s grace and glory. And into the midst of this joy and good news Paul continues:

*There’s more to come:*

Now I don’t know what you expect to hear, but Paul has just told us we are in this wonderful place of God’s favour and love, and so I expect when he says, “there’s more to come” that it will be about peace, or prosperity, or the kingdom, or something wonderful.

*There’s more to come...*

*We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles.* That is not what I was expecting. Paul knew all about troubles.

He knew about hardship and persecutions, he knew about sickness, and financial troubles. He knew about loved ones getting sick, he knew about pain,

he knew about times when everything goes wrong. He lived in an occupied country, he was persecuted for his faith, by Jews and Greeks both.

But he proclaims that *we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!*

Most of us who have lived a few years recognize that our troubles can make us better people. My prayer life is better when I am facing trials and problems. I cling to God in crisis.

The people I trust most, the people who have depth of character, and are usually the most generous and caring, are those who have suffered, or those who have walked closely alongside of those who have suffered. They let their own suffering, or the suffering of others change them – drive them deep into the mystery of pain and live those days fully and well before God.

All of us also know the other kind of people who are angry, resentful and bitter because of suffering, either their own suffering or the suffering of others.

A Grace Disguised written by Jerry Sittser tells the story of great loss. Jerry and his family were in a car accident. A car came across the median and hit him and his family as they were driving home from a worship evening. His daughter, wife and mother were killed. He was left to raise his other three children alone.

Throughout the book Jerry speaks of the great pain, the trauma, and the problems he faced, and the great questions that plagued him. But also, he speaks of the deep love of God.

He found the incarnation of Jesus of great comfort. He writes:  
*"The Sovereign God came in Jesus Christ to suffer with us and to suffer for us. He descended deeper into the pit than we will ever know. His sovereignty did not protect Him from loss. The God I know has experienced pain and therefore*

*understands my pain. In Jesus I have felt God's tears, trembled before His death on the cross, and witnessed the redemptive power of his suffering. I have grieved long and hard and intensely. But I have found comfort knowing that the sovereign God, who is in control of everything, is the same God who has experienced the pain I live with every day. No matter how deep the pit into which I descend, I keep finding God there. He is not aloof from my suffering but draws near to me when I suffer."*

Throughout Jerry's story he tells how he and those who entered his suffering with him were changed. Jerry writes:

*"As long as I remain alive, I want to live as joyfully, serenely, and productively as I can. The supreme challenge to anyone facing catastrophic loss involves facing the darkness of the loss on the one hand and learning to live with renewed vitality and gratitude on the other. The challenge is met when we learn to take the loss into ourselves and to be enlarged by it, so that our capacity to live life well and to God intimately increases. Loss can diminish us, but it can also expand us. It depends, once again, on the choices we make and the grace we receive. Loss can function as a catalyst to transform us. It can lead us to God, the only One who has the desire and power to give us life."*

I know some of you have suffered loss, some of you are suffering different losses right now. Suffering comes to all of us. We all will experience loss. But the Bible tells us that in our losses, our sorrows, our sufferings we are never alone. God is with us. God walks with us and knows our pain.

And God can bless us, and enlarge us, and teach us to live life well as we walk the path. Our suffering given to God, walking through the challenges of today, prayerfully, bringing all of life to God, and Paul says, "being in alert expectancy of what God is going to do next", we will never be disappointed.

Paul is convinced that God is working in the most difficult circumstances. But sometimes we are blind to God's blessings and God's provision. Pain can give us tunnel vision- and if we are focused on the pain or the problem, we can miss what God is doing.

There's the old story of the person in their home and flood waters were rising. Emergency personnel came to him and said, you have to evacuate. We will get you to safety. But he refused to get in saying, "God will save me".

The waters continued to rise, a boat came, the rescuers urged him to get in the boat, he would not, again saying "God will save, me."

The waters continued to rise, and he was trapped on his roof. A helicopter came to rescue him, but he would not get off the roof saying; "God will save me." The waters continued to rise and he died.

When he came before God, he asked God why God didn't save him. God said, I sent you emergency services, a boat and a helicopter. What more did you want?

A person said to me; "my house is cursed- the day we moved in a pipe burst." Another member of the family said, "thankfully we were home and managed to shut off the water so there wasn't any damage done."

Sometimes, our tunnel vision on the problem makes it hard to see the grace and gifts, and provision of God. But when we are alert, watching, certain that God is with us, then Paul says what we find is; *"we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!"*

It's a challenge to live before God in "alert expectancy, especially in our sorrows and pains. It's easier to feel sorry for ourselves and focus on the pain. It's hard to lift our eyes up to God.

But if we see only our sorrows, we will miss all the amazing things God is doing every day and given to God our sorrows enlarge and make us the people we long to become, experiencing more and more life in Christ our Lord.

**Let us pray:** *God, we find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open spaces of your grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise. But there is more, we rejoice because you are with us in trials and troubles, in our pains and our sorrows. Give us eyes to see and watch for your love and your gifts poured out for us, and for those we love. In Jesus' name, Amen.*