

**FIVE SMOOTH STONES:
ENTERING AND HOLDING THE HIGH GROUND OF GOD’S LOVE**
(Romans 5:1-5)

I. WELCOME / INTRO

- A. Welcome
- B. Opening Pastoral Prayer
- C. Today’s Text:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and *so* exult in *the* hope of the glory of God. ³And not only *this*, but we also glory in *our* tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, ⁴perseverance proven character, and proven character hope. ⁵Moreover, *such* hope does not disappoint *us*, for the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. – Rom. 5:1-5

D. Introduction

- The story of Chris
- MP: Many non-Christians have a hunger for “higher ground” and quest for it
- MP: God has graciously granted this higher ground to his kids by giving them Five Smooth Stones (Cf. The story of David and Goliath)

Five stones by which to ENTER the higher ground
Five stones by which to HOLD that ground against all enemies
Five stones found in Romans 5:1-5!!!!

E. Today’s Big Idea: God our Father is calling ALL his children to Higher Ground: to a deeper and more consistent experience of His love, truth, and power for life and service. In the Gospel He has made it possible for us to *enter* this higher ground; and by the Gospel He has made it possible for us to *hold it* against all enemies. *But we have a part to play in this, and He wants us to play it well!*

II. STONE #1: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

A. Text: Therefore, having been justified by faith . . .

B. Justification

- Defined (A Divine Declaration of Righteousness)
- How accomplished: Double Imputation (Seen in two key texts: HSL)

3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 4 The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” 5 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. 6 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” 7 Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by. – Zech. 3:1-5

My little children, I write these things to you that you might not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate¹ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is an atoning sacrifice² for our sins, and not for ours alone, but also for *those of* the whole world. – 1 John 2:1-2

C. By faith (not works, so that our salvation may be sure, and our assurance firm)

D. MP: *To enter and live on higher ground, we must SEE the truth of our justification by Christ, through faith; when we do, we'll be VERY GLAD . . . and an eternity of worship will begin!*

III. STONE # 2: RECONCILIATION WITH GOD THE FATHER, THROUGH CHRIST THE SON

A. Text: . . . *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .*

B. Defined: Two former enemies become friends (“The restoration of friendly relations”)

C. How accomplished: By Christ putting away . . .

- God’s wrath (John 3:36: He who believes in the Son . . .)
- Our hostility (Rom. 8:6-8: For the mind set on the flesh is death . . .)

D. Impediments to seeing and enjoying

- A faulty understanding of the Gospel, of the Good News of Christ’s work. This is really the ONLY impediment, and why we must preach it daily to ourselves!
- Others that flow from it: Wrong God-concepts, wrong self-concepts
- The (negative) story of Milton Vincent (Reading #1)

E. Antidote(s) to:

- Fresh light on propitiation
- Fresh light on reconciliation
- Fresh light on adoption and the Fatherhood of God

- A Fountain of Such Light: Luke 15! (HSL)

²⁰“Then he got up and headed *back* to his own father. But while he was still a good distance *from the house*, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; and running towards *his son*, he fell on his neck and kissed him over and over again. ²¹The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his servants, ‘Hurry, bring out the best robe and put *it* on him; and place a ring around his finger² and sandals on *his* feet. ²³Bring also the fattened calf, and kill *it*; and when we have eaten, let us rejoice and celebrate! ²⁴For this son of mine was dead, but has come to life³ again; *and* he was lost, but *now* is found.’ So they began to celebrate. – Luke 15:20-24

- The Further Story of Milton Vincent (Reading #2)
- Healthy God-and-Self Concepts: “I am the beloved son of the Father, the beloved Bride (and Body) of the Son, and the Beloved temple of Holy Spirit, unchangeably, both now and forevermore!”

IV. STEP # 3: INTRODUCTION (BY FAITH) INTO THE GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND

A. Text: . . . through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand . . .

B. Key Points:

- This text speaks of an ETERNAL change of residence: The justified, reconciled believer is TRANSFERRED out of the Domain of Darkness, into the Kingdom of God’s Beloved Son (1 Cor. 1:13)
- He goes THROUGH Christ: the Door, the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- He steps INTO *a grace in which he stands*:
 1. Into a World above
 2. Into the Family above
 3. Into a face-to-relationship with the Father above (one face, not two)
 4. In which he FOREVER stands!

Note: NET Bible, Jude 1: Wrapped in the love of God the Father

- Caveat: Though our sin no longer angers him, it does grieve him, and can elicit Fatherly chastening, always administered in love (Heb. 12, Rev. 3)
- Example: Gandalf to Theoden: “Breathe the free air!”
- Example: Josh McDowell in the family of his friend. An *atmosphere* of home, family, and love . . . *brings aspiration, transformation.*

C. Crucial Application: It is the awareness of this immutable grace that powers our quest for Higher Ground. Always, we understand there is more of Him to be seen, known, and enjoyed. And now, *free from* the fear of wrath and judgment, we are *free to* seek for it with all our hearts. (Chris) *This is simply second nature to the true child of God.* (Milton, Reading #3)

¹²Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I press on in order that I might lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. ¹³Brothers, I do not count myself as having laid hold. But this one thing *I do*: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. – Phil. 3:12-14

V. STONE # 4: EXULTATION IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

A. *Text*: . . . and so exult in the hope of the glory of God.

B. Key Points:

- When introduced to the gracious world above, we are also introduced to a world up ahead: God has given us “eternal good hope through the Gospel.” (Note: The importance of eschatology)
- In this hope has *no mixture of doubt*: It is confident assurance.
- But *what* is it? Answer: Attaining “the glory of God” is to be made like Christ: “. . . those whom He foreknew, he predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. – Rom. 8
- *When* is it? Answer:

1. In a measure, *now*, as we look upon Christ through Scriptures:

¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding⁶ as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.⁷

Grace is God looking upon you; faith is you looking upon God; glory is when your eyes meet! – Doug Wilson

2. In a measure *at our death*, when our spirits are perfected in heaven (First Resurrection)

3. In fullest measure, *at the Parousia* (HSL)

As for what we shall be, that has not yet been revealed; but we do know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed upon Him purifies himself, even as He is pure. – 1 John 3 (cf. 1 Cor. 15)

- *What does it do for us?* Answer: It opens a FOUNTAIN OF INEXTIGUISHABLE JOY AND EXULTATION!

VI. STONE #5: EVER-INCREASING LOVE FOR GOD ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TRIALS FAITHFULLY ENDURED

A. Text: ³ *And not only this, but we also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance,* ⁴ *perseverance proven character, and proven character hope.* ⁵ *Moreover, this hope does not disappoint us, for the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

B. The Big Idea of this Verse: As we hold fast, through every test and every trial, to all we have seen about our justification, reconciliation, our new home above in the world of Grace, and the eternal good hope God has given us in the Gospel . . . God pours into our hearts, by his Spirit, a greater and greater sense of His love for us, eliciting in us greater and greater love for Him, leading to greater and greater assurance of salvation.

C. The Spiral Staircase / Further Up, and Further In!

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right forehoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! (So, as Aslan said) Come further up, come further in!” —C. S. Lewis, *Chronicles of Narnia*

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Question: How shall we attain Higher Ground this year? How shall we hold onto it in the face of every enemy? How shall we go further up and further in?

B. Answer:

- By faithfully using the normal means of grace (HSL) *and keeping your eyes on these Five Smooth Stones!*
- *See them, believe them, speak of them, rejoice in them!*
- Do so through every trial, in all faithfulness and obedience
- Do so over and over and over again
- And the good Word of God says you will indeed ascend the Spiral Staircase, and reach Higher, Higher, and Higher Ground!