

“Peace with God”

Romans 5:1–5

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I will be preaching from Romans 5 and pray this will be an encouragement to you. Please give attention to the reading of God's holy Word for the Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, completely sufficient, and completely authoritative. Romans 5:1-5 says [1] *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [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. [3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [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.*

Thus ends the reading of God's Word. Let's pray for His blessing upon it.

Prayer:

Lord, we ask that You would use Your Word mightily in our hearts, minds and that we would become more and more like our Savior and that we would tell others of His greatness. This we ask in Christ's precious Name, Amen.

As we come to our passage, I want to give a very brief note of context. This begins the second main portion of the book of Romans. In the first part of the Book of Romans, chapters one through four, Paul has explained justification by faith – that is how we are right with a holy God, and that is through the finished work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in Romans 5, Paul turns to the consequences or the fruit of justification. What does it bring to us? How are we affected by our justification now in this life? I'd like to point out two main areas in which God brings forth fruit in the life of the Christian. First, we will see what the Lord gives to us, benefits of salvation that God gives to every believer. Then second, we will see what the Lord brings about in us, because salvation does not just change our relationship to God, it changes us. We are changed and remade a new creation – what the Lord gives to us and what the Lord does in us.

Let's begin then, by looking at what the Lord gives to us. Paul begins with this phrase in Romans 1:5 which says “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul is saying from the very beginning that everything in this passage and that will come in the next few chapters depends on our justification. That is foundational. In order to obtain these blessings, these benefits, you must know the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. You must have given up on your own works. You must run to Christ and His cross and be born again.

The very first word that Paul uses is therefore and when we come to a therefore in the Bible, we have to look back to see what the therefore is therefore. It points us back to what Paul has said before ‘since we have been justified by faith,’ is a past tense. Paul is describing Christians who have been changed by Jesus. They have been made right with God. This is actually an interesting phrase. It's a participle where it's basically part verb, part adjective put together. That means it's an action that describes a person. So, we as Christians are described as those who have been justified by faith. That is our being. It is a summary of what Paul has said.

You may be wondering, what does that look like to be justified by faith or you may be asking, is there anything to faith in Christ now or am I just looking forward to what I will receive? I'm looking forward to heaven and glory. The first and most important thing that Paul tells us is that we have peace *with* God. Paul uses words that are very important for us to see. He does not say the peace *of* God. Your mind may have supplied that. You may be very familiar with that famous passage from Philippians 4:7 in which Paul writes that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, comes to us, but that's not what Paul says here.

Paul says, we have peace with God, that is peace toward God. This preposition is important and it also makes sense. Paul is telling us that we are no longer under the wrath of God. We are no longer under sin for by faith Christ has freed us from sin and God's wrath. We have nothing left to fear. God is no longer opposed to us. He no longer sees us as under judgment. He no longer sees us as those who are sinners. No, this has come about through the work of our Savior and Paul makes that clear by saying that this justification we have, this peace with God, comes through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was perhaps the most brilliant man who ever lived. He was brought by God to saving faith and used mightily. Every single one of the words that Paul uses is significant here. It begins with an important preposition, 'through' that is there is instrumentality here. We are brought to God. We have peace with God *through* the work of Jesus Christ. It's nothing that we can do. Nothing in our hands do we bring to God. There is nothing that we can do or say that makes us favorable or lovable to God. It is through the work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we are made at peace with God, that reminds us that our Savior is God's Anointed One. He is the promised Messiah. Christ reminds us that all of the promises in the Bible are ours through our Savior. In II Corinthians 1:20 Paul says all of the promises in Scripture are yea and amen in Jesus Christ.

Jesus reminds us of the name that He was given. You shall call His name Jesus. Why? It is because He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Then, of course, don't gloss over the other title – Lord, which reminds us that Jesus is God Himself. He is the King of all. There is nothing that He cannot do and it is through our Savior that we are brought to peace with God. This is a real and objective peace. It is not a feeling. Before we are justified, we are guilty and condemned. We are hopeless. We cannot stand before a holy God but once we are justified by the work of Jesus, we are free. We have new life and we have a starting point for all of the blessings that we receive. This begins with the peace we have with God. It is not that we just feel better. It is not a change of feelings. No, it is an objective change in our standing before God.

It is possible to be at peace with God and not to experience feelings of peace at a given time. This is important for us to understand because notice that Paul is not saying if you believe in Jesus, your life will be perfect and everything will be better. You'll never be anxious. You'll never have problems. No, that kind of subjective peace can come to us at times, but that's not the most important thing for us. It's far more important for us to know the good news that we are freed from wrath, freed from judgment, freed from sin.

You need to be encouraged this day that if you're having a difficult day, if you're discouraged by news you've gotten from the doctor or you're having difficulty in your relationships or your business is having bumps in the road, that doesn't affect your relationship with the true and living God. It's not dependent upon our circumstance and our feelings. It's dependent upon the objective work of Christ. This foundational benefit that we have from Christ's work is peace with God and until that comes, nothing else matters. But once it does come, other benefits come as well.

Think about Paul talking to you right now, you who have believed on Jesus Christ. He started with the past foundational peace with God and now he moves to a present tense possession. He says in Romans 5:2, 'through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.' There is a present benefit that comes to us and that is access to God. This also comes through Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we have this benefit but there is an interesting verb that Paul uses here. When a preacher says that, you're expecting a Greek lesson in which someone can show off their seminary chops at you and say, 'This word is only used here, it's very intricate and you'll never really understand it, but let me try and help.' That is exactly not what is happening here.

Paul uses a very common word. It's a word that children understand. *Have* – you *have* obtained, you possess. You have in your hand. It's very easy for us to understand that for it's a present benefit. It's something that you are holding right now in your hand. It is a consequence of what Jesus has done. In other words, we have gotten access from Jesus, and that means now we have access to God. What is this access? It's a way of approach. It's a way we can get to God. It even has the connotation of a freedom to enter in, of an introduction to God. It means we are perfectly within our rights to approach God. We do not need to be afraid of God at all. We do not need any other mediator. We don't need parents or ancestors or the saints to come to God. We have direct access to God because of Jesus.

Perhaps a Bible illustration might help us understand how important this is. You may remember the story of Esther and how in the Book of Esther, Esther's relative, Mordecai, found out that there was a plot to destroy all of the Jews, to put all of the Jews to death through a law. Mordecai said to Esther, 'You're the queen. Go into the king and tell him that this is an unjust law and that your people are going to be destroyed. You need to speak to him to see if he will repeal this law.' Esther said, "I can't do that. Everyone knows you can't go into the presence of the king to go into the presence of the king uninvited means to risk death unless the king calls you and he hasn't called me for weeks. I don't know what to do." The rest of the story in a nut shell is Mordecai says to her, 'Perhaps you were born just for this time and place' as she risks death, goes into the king's presence, he hears her and the Jews are saved.

I want you to think about your access in the completely opposite way. You had the freedom to come into the throne room of God. You can always go to God in prayer. You can always bring your needs to Him. You can always bring your concerns to God. You can pray Scripture back to Him. You can hear from Him in His Word. You have nothing to fear. He will never turn you away. He will never tell you He is too busy. You will never be faced with death because Jesus has purchased that access with God. It's something we have right now. It's a present possession.

Paul then finishes Romans 5:2 with a third benefit that the Lord gives to us and that is hope. Paul wants us to experience the full benefit and blessing that comes from justification. I want you to notice something that Paul does here. It's interesting. Martin Luther had a saying that all of the words, especially the small words in the Bible, are important and especially the pronouns. In Romans 5:1-5 Paul uses the words 'we' or 'us' eight times in this short passage, and in just the first half of chapter five, in the next passage, he uses them 12 more times. Why does Paul do this? Paul wants us to understand that these are very real benefits, that he has these benefits. He wants you to know that you have the same benefits that the Apostle Paul, the author of the Scripture, had. These are real and tangible benefits.

So, Paul moves from a past benefit, established peace with God, to the present benefit of possessing access with God, to a future benefit, hope. Hope is the present experience of a future

blessing. You don't have hope yet, but you know you will. You look forward to it. You anticipate it. It is a sure and certain thing. Hope here in this sense is a noun more than a verb. It's something that we have but just do not possess yet. Justification brings us a sure hope in our future and this is not just a vague wishful thinking.

When my wife and I arrived here in Birmingham, we were glad that it is so cool where you all are, because in Houston, Texas, we have had over 100-degree highs every single day of the month of August, and I think we had one day of rain. It's very hot, very dry. I would often get up in the morning like others and say, 'you know, I hope it would rain today. It really would be nice if it would rain today. I don't really expect it to rain. It didn't rain yesterday. It didn't rain last week, but I hope it'll rain.'

I think sometimes we view the Biblical word *hope* that way – I hope I'll have blessings. I don't really expect them. I hope that God will draw me closer to Himself and bless me. I'm not really sure I deserve it, but it's out there. It's something to shoot for. That's not what Paul is talking about here. Paul is talking about a hope that is sure, a hope that changes the way that we live. That's what Paul means in Romans 5:2 when he says that 'we rejoice in hope.' Rejoicing here has even the connotation of boasting, of telling others about this hope. This hope we have is so certain and sure, we can't help but tell others about it. I am glad that your congregation and my congregation have effective means of evangelism and missions but at the bottom, we don't really even need them. It's just telling others of the hope that you have. And the more certain you are of your hope the more certain and sure others can be that this hope can be theirs also. That's what Paul is saying to us.

What is this hope in which we boast? We might have expected Paul to say, 'We boast in the hope of eternal life. We boast in the hope of being sinless forever, or even we boast in the hope of being in the presence of God' but you'll notice he doesn't say that. He says here in Romans 5:2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' It's a very interesting phrase. He points us to God. This is helpful and it helps us to understand what salvation really is. We, when we think about salvation, often focus upon ourselves, what we receive, the benefits that we have. But the Bible, when it talks about salvation, focuses on God, who He is. So what Paul is telling us is we will boast and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God that is finally and perfectly revealed. It will be revealed in His work of redemption, perfectly accomplished, and it will be revealed in us because we are made in the image of Christ. That reminds us of our chief end or purpose which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That is what we long for. That is why we want sin to be done away with so that God will be all in all and God will be glorified in all creation.

There's a second set of benefits that come from justification – a second trio. We looked at what the Lord gives *to* us and now let's look at what the Lord brings about *in* us. These are the result of God's work in our lives and the change that justification makes in us. It's not just that justification changes our relationship to God. It does do that, but it also changes who we are because of the relationship we have with God. So, Paul tells us that there is more to justification in Romans 5:3, "Not only that, but..." When I read Paul writing those words, I hearken back to my youth and old time commercials. Perhaps you remember these kinds of commercials. This product does this and this product does that but wait, there's more. This product does the other thing, and it does this third thing, but wait, there's more. If you were like me, you say, "I've got to get this. Give me the more. Tell me what the more is." That's what Paul wants us to see. He wants us to be excited about salvation.

The first thing that Paul mentions seems impossible. He says 'not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings' (Romans 5:3a). Now, those who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ can't

even understand this concept. Why would anyone rejoice in sufferings? It might be that we could bear through sufferings. It might be that we could avoid despair and sufferings but why boast in sufferings? Why rejoice in sufferings? Paul doesn't say that we rejoice in the middle of sufferings, that is, in spite of our sufferings. No, he says something far more radical. He says "We rejoice *in* our sufferings" – because of them. How is that possible? Is Paul crazy? Is Paul saying I should want to suffer? No. And no. He doesn't say you should seek suffering but he does say that you can see meaning *in* suffering. Christians rejoice in suffering because they know suffering is not meaningless. Now that doesn't mean we always know what the particular meaning is.

For example, I may not know why I have cancer or why I lost my job, or why the other kids at school don't like me but I do know God, and I know that God is in control. I know that nothing happens to me that is outside of His power. I know that the Lord is wise and that He's good. Most importantly, I know that He loves me and that allows me to know that there's a purpose in my suffering, that God is not against us in our suffering. We often leap to this conclusion. We think I must have done something wrong to cause this bad circumstance or trial to come upon me but that's the view of someone who does not know God through Jesus Christ. That person sees God as being against him, as being out to get him. We must see that God is for us, even in our sufferings. Now, that doesn't make our sufferings enjoyable, but it does give us perspective on our sufferings.

What could God's purpose be in our sufferings? It could be to correct us, to take us away from sin that we're cherishing and that's not a punishment. That is correction that is done in love. It could be simply to show His glory. There is the story in John 9 of the man who was born blind and the disciples came to Jesus and they said, "He was born blind, so obviously someone is to blame for this. Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Do you remember Jesus's response? Jesus said, "Neither, but he was born this way that the glory of God would be displayed." If God can display His glory through that blind man in John 9, why can He not display His glory through you and me and through our circumstances and our suffering?

Perhaps it could be God's way of building us up, of making us more like Christ and that's actually the second thing in this third trio that Paul tells us. A benefit of justification is that we are built up in Christ. He puts it this way in Romans 5:3b-4, "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame." So, we can rejoice in suffering because God uses it. He uses it to produce character in us and not just any character, but specifically a Christ like character. We are made more and more like Jesus. Suffering produces endurance and that doesn't mean that it's easy or joyous.

The word here that Paul uses for suffering is a very interesting one. It means to press in or to squeeze. I'm Italian, and so when I go out to eat often, as I did last night with my wife and some friends, on my salad, I often order as addressing oil and vinegar and they bring me the finished product. They bring me the little carafes so I can pour it in but that's not how the oil gets made. The way oil gets made is they take olives and they squeeze them between presses, metal or wooden presses to squeeze out the oil. It's a difficult process. That's the same word that Paul is using here and so our sufferings are difficult, but they produce a result that God desires.

What then is this endurance that we bear up under? It means we bear under the pressure of suffering. The only way to do that is through our relationship with Jesus Christ. The only way that we could bear under suffering is to know Jesus and to know the purpose and love He has for us. The idea is contrary to when we are under suffering, we often only are looking to find a way out of the suffering. I have to say I'm guilty as charged here. What can I do to stop this? How can

I fix this? Often God has a purpose for us in that suffering. He puts us in that suffering to make us grow in Christ and become more like Jesus, to develop patience and steadfastness. Suffering produces a mindset in us that causes us to look first to God and not to our circumstances.

This endurance, Paul says, produces character. Character here means proof. It means tested or approved. It's like when you open up a package of clothing and a tag falls out that says 'Tested by number 42' or when you have a package of food and it says 'tested and 100% authentic.' That's what Paul is saying here. We become known as followers of Jesus Christ. I think a great example of this in the Scriptures is Job. In Job 1, Satan went to the Lord and said, "The only reason Your servant, Job looks for You is because of all the things you give to Him. If You didn't give him all that he has, he would curse You and die." So, God takes everything away from Job, including his health and Job remains steadfast in looking to the Lord. I think the greatest example of this is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Hebrews 5:8 says that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. He glories in suffering. One of the benefits of justification is that we become more and more like Jesus, that we grow up into the character of Jesus.

Paul finally moves to a third thing that God does in us. He says that God brings us an understanding of His love. Romans 5:5 says "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." So, we rejoice in sufferings. We see how God is making us more like Christ in our sufferings and now think about this; Jesus bears the marks of His sufferings for you for all eternity. The only scars that there will be in glory will be Jesus's scars. Now, what does that tell you about the love of Christ for you? The scars of Jesus remind you of His love and Paul says that we have hope in the midst of our sufferings.

We have this hope that does not make us ashamed. It's not foolish. It's not something we have to apologize for. It's a reminder of God's love for us, this unchangeable love of God that comes to us and it is poured out. Paul uses a very vivid verb. He doesn't say it trickles out to us or it drips on to us. He says it's *poured* out. To help you picture this I'm going to appeal to all of the parents of very young children or perhaps in bygone days. I want you to imagine a young child who's able to start serving themselves food and drink and they go into the refrigerator and pull out a big pitcher of juice. They set up a cup and begin to pour the juice but because they're a young child, the juice fills up the cup, runs over outside the cup, goes all over the counter, goes all over the floor. It's poured out everywhere.

Now, with juice, that's a disaster but with the love of God, that is a picture of how blessed we are, how God pours out His love lavishly upon us. We don't need to be miserly in our thoughts of the love of God. Sometimes when I have something that's before me, perhaps a plate of chips or a snack or slices of pizza, I want to be careful how much of it I take, because I want to make sure there's enough. You don't ever need to worry about if there's enough of God's love. God's love is always poured out upon you and it's steadfast and sure. Paul tells us that we have the Holy Spirit – God's love sealed to us by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Do you know the love of God? You can by believing in Jesus Christ and His work to free you from guilt and sin. That's what Paul is telling us here. The forgiveness of sins is just the beginning of what God is doing in salvation. He's brought peace. He's given us access to Himself and He has given us hope for the future. He's not finished with you yet. Each and every day, through His word, through trials and sufferings, He is making you more and more like Jesus. There is no kind of love like that love. Amen. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You that You are indeed the only true and living God and that Your love is something not only that You give to us, but that You tell us about, that You show us that we might know that You are real and our relationship with You is secured through the work of our Savior. So, we ask this day, Lord, that You would point us to the Lord Jesus Christ, help us fix our eyes upon Him, that we might receive these blessings of justification and share them with others. This we pray in Christ's precious Name, Amen.