

PEACE ON EARTH

Romans 5:1-11

Paul's letter to the Romans is one sustained argument. He makes the case for righteousness not by works but by faith for all who believe. As he goes, he comes to what we might call "gospel vistas" – majestic views of different aspects of the gospel where he wants us to linger and take in the view.

Today our passage starts with "Therefore" – a pastor once said that when you see this, you must ask "What is the 'therefore' there for?"¹ It's there today because we've been climbing this glorious mountain range of the gospel and Paul says, "Stop. You see all the way we've just climbed – justification by grace through faith for all who believe? Now look this way" – breathtaking gospel view – "this is what happens in the lives of the justified."

We're entering a new phase of Paul's argument – our passage today and the next few chapters answer this question: "what impact does justification have on the lives of believers?"² As we approach the text, listen for the answer(s).

[READ Romans 5:1-11]

Remember what the angels sang to the shepherds?

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth **peace** among those with whom he is pleased" (Lk. 2:14).

In most Nativity sets, everything looks so peaceful – animals frozen in place, Mary and Joseph calmly kneeling by the manger. So why does it seem like peace is so rarely our experience? Does being justified by faith really have an effect in our day-to-day lives?

Paul says it has a life-altering affect: **we have peace**. Peace *with God*. Not the artificial peace of a porcelain nativity set, but a cosmic peace between our souls and God that changes everything.

And peace is not the only change justification brings. This morning we'll see five.

¹ Pastor Harry Reeder, Briarwood Presbyterian Church

² Frank Thielman, *Romans*, p. 258.

First and foundationally,
 Since we have been justified by faith...

I. We Have Peace with God (v. 1)

What is this peace?

Two meanings:

1) Peace **WITH** God: (Foundational) – no more hostility between the believer and God. Before being justified, we were justly under God’s wrath; claiming to be wise, we became fools – worshiping anything but God; none of us was good, none righteous. But it wasn’t just that we were indifferent to God – we were hostile toward him. Verse 10 says that “we were enemies” of God – we were anti-God, God-cancelers.

So before being justified, you could say we had “war with God” – not peace.

And what God does in justification is he says, “you can’t change your situation – nothing you can do can make us not at war. I will do it. I will take the hostility on myself. Because (as we’ll see in vv. 5-8), *I love you.*” That is the meaning of: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Ro 3:23-24).

No longer at war. We have peace *with* God.

2) Peace **OF** God (Experiential – secondary, flows out of the first meaning – only those who have peace *with* God know the peace *of* God)

Peace *with* God doesn’t just mean the absence of hostility; it also means the presence of intimacy.

This means we don’t have to worry about our status with God. Is he for us? Is he against us?

One commentator says: “The relationship of believers with God is free from both hostility and anxiety.”³

³ Thielman, p. 263.

This would've been big for Paul's Gentile readers, many of whom were used to trying to appease the anger of the gods towards them.

Note the present tense: "We **have** peace with God." This is not an iffy status – "wellll, you have peace with God now, but you never know..." No, it's one and done. You. **Have**. Peace. With. God. His wrath has been replaced by his favor.

[APP: We see this play out in our relationships. Do you have a relationship where you wonder if they're mad at you? Or if they even like you? Maybe they're slow at texting or calling you back, and you imagine that it must be because they hate you. You really believe it.

Paul is saying: "that's gone with God. Wonder no more how God sees you. Instead, as Paul says in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

I have a suspicion that when we're waiting for that text, the problem isn't the other person. The problem is that we feel that they see us like that because we feel that God sees us like that. He doesn't. Brother or sister in Christ, you have peace with God.]

And peace with God unlocks other changes in the believer's life.

II. We Have Access to Grace (v. 2a)

Peace with God is not just the absence of enmity but the presence of intimacy. It is not simply that we do not stand in God's wrath – no, now we stand in God's favor.

This word "access" is interesting. A skilled Greek scholar notes one instance in a secular Greek writing where only the friends of a powerful ruler could give others 'access' to that ruler.⁴ [Khano – Legion FC]

This access, Paul says, is "Through him" – through Jesus, we experience God's favor – Jesus gives us access to God's grace. Did he not say of

⁴ Frank Thielman, p. 266. Quoting Xenophon.

himself, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find good pasture” (John 10:9). We have access to God’s gracious smile through Jesus.

The idea is that the only way we can experience the grace of the King is through the King’s gracious Son.

Finally, this is a grace “in which we stand.” We do not simply taste God’s grace at salvation. We stand in it always. It is our new and permanent status: those in whom God delights.⁵ Do you see yourself that way?

But not only do we have access to grace,

III. **We Boast in Eternal Hope (2b)**

Paul says, “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

That word rejoice is more literally translated “boast” – to experience pride in being in a certain circumstance.⁶ In this case, we boast in hope – not just any hope, but “hope of the glory of God.”

This is talking about hope for eternity, the new heavens and the new earth where the glory of God will be all-encompassing.

Paul is saying that those who are justified by faith in Christ have new eyes: eternal eyes. We have one foot on earth and one in heaven. We experience the joys and deep losses of life on earth, but always with an expectant eye to eternity.

[Danielle and I moved into a house this weekend. The whole process of searching and getting our hopes up and getting our hopes crushed and then finally finding this house has made me think. This house is a massive gift, don’t get me wrong. But there’s this whisper I can’t ignore: “Blake, this is your home but this isn’t your *home*. Root in, laugh, cry, hang curtains, mow the grass, but let all that whet your appetite for the hope of glory.”

⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, p. 573.

⁶ William Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 197.

Then something staggering: when this hope of glory is our boast, Paul says, “we also rejoice in our sufferings.” This is a whole sermon in itself. Why rejoice in our sufferings? Because they are productive.

Suffering produces endurance – the ability to keep on keeping on.⁷ If there were no suffering, what would there be to teach us endurance?

And endurance in time produces character. Character here is “the quality of being approved through testing.”⁸ Some translations – “proven character.”

[How do we describe the piece of furniture that stands the test of time – bumps, scratches and all? “It has character.” What do we mean? It’s been around the block and it’s still here. The bumps and scratches are what make it beautiful. The truly beautiful people we think of are those who have character – the quality of being approved through testing. The scrapes and bruises reveal radiant diamonds inside.

And this inner character produces...*hope*.

Do you see what Paul just did?? He connects hope to suffering. **Hope is always the result of suffering.** Not all suffering results in hope (unbeliever), but the promise for the believer is that **suffering will ultimately bear the fruit of hope.** Often the most hopeful people are those who have suffered the most.

[Anna the prophetess knew suffering as a widow of at least 50 years. That produced endurance in her, which produced godly character – “she did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.” This character made her a woman of profound hope – when infant Jesus visited the temple, Luke records that “she began to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Her eternal eyes were undimmed by her many years.]

⁷ Danker, p. 366.

⁸ Reformation Study Bible, p. 1986.

But Blake, this sounds nice, but what if this is a fool's hope? What if Christianity and justification by faith are just fabrications to soothe naïve hearts.

IV. **We Have Assurance of God's Extravagant, Costly Love (v. 5-8)**

Experienced lawyer that he is, Paul knows the value of solid proof.⁹ So what's the proof that this hope is not a mirage?

Paul gives one undeniable piece of evidence: the death of Christ. Let's see how he gets there.

v. 5 – “hope (this hope of glory) does not put us to shame” – it does not disappoint. Why? “because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

The hope of glory is real because God's love is real. And God's love is real because the Holy Spirit has made it undeniable.

Literally, having “poured” the Father's love into our hearts. A picture of extravagance. It's like a full glass of water and the pitcher keeps pouring into it. Or since we're in the South, it's like biscuits and gravy – you get your plate and wonder, “where are the biscuits??” because the gravy has been lathered on so abundantly.

But brother or sister, I wonder if you have forgotten this. I wonder it because I often do. What if your hope is low because you don't really believe that God loves you much. Certainly not like gravy over biscuits.

Let me share something that will prove us wrong when we feel unloved, out of God's favor, standing in his frown, not his grace:

This is something that not even the most committed atheist would deny because it's historical fact. Ready? **Christ died for us.**

Paul repeats this truth three times in verses 6-10 like a trumpet to awaken our unbelieving hearts.

⁹ Jerome Hall, *Paul, the Lawyer, on Law*, Cambridge University Press.

God loves you, fellow believer. And here's the proof: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." He loved us to death.

Paul describes the timing – Christ died for us:

- V. 5 – "While we were still weak" (unable)
- V. 8 – "while we were still sinners" (undeserving)
- V. 10 – "while we were enemies"(undesiring)

Verse 7 – Paul admits, on a very rare occasion, someone might die for someone else – if that person is a good, righteous person. But this is different. Jesus died for people who were not good or righteous, who didn't want to be died for, who hated him. The technical word Paul uses is that God "*reconciled us*" to himself – literal meaning: "to make a friend out of an enemy."¹⁰

As we grow, we see that God's love for us is both extravagant and costly. And finally,

V. We Have Certainty of Final Salvation (v. 10-11)

Simple logic in v. 10: "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*."

Simple math equation: when enemies, God reconciled us by Christ's death [therefore] now that we've been made friends, saved eternally by Christ's life.

[Maybe you're not a math person, but a creative type: you've fallen overboard into icy enemy waters – dying – ship approaching – hope! – enemy flag – rather die – they lower a lifeboat, the captain himself drags you up from the icy water – says, "You who were once our enemy, I now call friend." – mind blown – if I'm in the lifeboat, how much more will they now take me into the ship, never to fall overboard again?]

Paul ends where he begun: Reconciliation – peace with God.

¹⁰ Danker, p. 191.

Sister, brother: the Prince of Peace has come. He has made peace between us and God through his blood when we didn't want him. "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him" (Isaiah 53).

Cease striving. If you are in Christ, it is well between God and your soul. He has done all to secure peace for us.

What if you don't know this peace? Listen for the angel's song still echoing: "He's here, he's here! Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men." Come to this humble Prince of Peace.