

Romans: The Good News of God

Peace with God

Romans 5:1

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February 10, 2008

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Scripture

During the spring of 57 AD the apostle Paul was living in Corinth at the home of his convert and friend, Gaius. Paul was completing the last leg of his third missionary journey. He was soon to go back to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift from the Macedonian churches to the Jerusalem Church.

Paul's long-term desire, however, was to go on a fourth missionary journey to Spain. He planned to visit Rome along the way. So he wrote to the Roman Church about his desire to go to Spain. However, the main purpose for writing his letter to the Roman Church was to clarify the good news of God.

After beginning his letter with the customary greeting, Paul wrote that all people are sinners. As such, God is angry with us, and we are all under his just condemnation. We are guilty, we deserve to be punished, and we are desperately in need of God's righteousness if we are to come into a right relationship with him.

But God, in love, has made provision for us to receive his righteousness. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to take upon himself the punishment that we so richly deserve. The good news of God is that we can come into a right relationship with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

If we will now rely totally on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, God will remove our guilt from us. He will legally declare us, "Not Guilty!" And that is called *justification by faith*.

And that is what the apostle Paul explained in the first four chapters of his letter to the Romans.

Now, as he begins chapter 5, Paul writes about the blessings of justification. Having explained *how* we receive justification, he now explains *what* justification gives us.

In Romans 5:1-11 we read of several blessings of justification, beginning with peace with God in Romans 5:1. Let's read

Romans 5:1-11, paying special attention to verse 1, which is our text for today:

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 More than that, 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.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-11)

Introduction

Many years ago, *Look* magazine ran a personality feature titled “Peace of Mind.” Sixteen prominent Americans were asked how they were able to find peace in our stressful world, and the article consisted of their answers.

James Michener, author of many best-selling books, said that he found peace by taking his two dogs for a “walk along old streams and into fields that have not been plowed for half a century.”

Barry Goldwater, the former Senator from Arizona and Republican presidential candidate, said that he found peace in his hobbies—photography, boating, flying, and camping—but above

all by “walking in the Grand Canyon.”

Former CBS news anchorman Walter Cronkite found peace in solitude, usually by “going to the sea by small boat.”

Margaret Mead, the well-known anthropologist and author of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, sought “a change of pace and scene.”

Sammy Davis, Jr., said he found peace by looking for “good in people.”

Bill Moyers, former television personality and press secretary to Lyndon B. Johnson, tried to find peace in a family “reunion, usually in some remote and quiet retreat.”¹

As I read these answers I was struck with how subjective and dependent upon favorable circumstances most of the approaches were.

But I noted something else too. Although each of these prominent Americans differed in his or her methods, all were nevertheless seeking peace of mind and recognized that pursuing it was important. No one considered a search for peace to be irrelevant or unimportant.

What is it that people are most seeking in life, once their basic physical needs are satisfied?

Some say they are seeking freedom. Movements for national liberation are usually based on this intense human desire. But Americans are free. We have been free from foreign domination for over two hundred years, and our constitution and legal system affirm our individual liberties. Yet most people are as restless and discontented (and perhaps even more so) as those living under strongly oppressive regimes.

Is it wealth people are seeking? One of the richest men in the world once said, “I thought money could buy happiness. I have been miserably disillusioned.”

Others seek fulfillment through education, fame, sex, or power, but most are discontented even when they attain such goals.

Why is that? It is because what people are really seeking is

¹ *Look* magazine, July 27, 1971, 21-30.

peace, and the ultimate and only genuine peace is found in a right relationship with God.

Even conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh, not noted as a theologian, in answer to an interviewer's question on how a person can be happy, said the following: "Jesus. Jesus holds the answers to all of the everyday problems that you face. I am talking about an acceptance and belief in Jesus, heaven, and God. . . . The quest for happiness is too often centered on materialism and wealth. Anyone who has had those things will tell you that they don't contribute to internal happiness or self-satisfaction at all."²

Perhaps the great North African Christian, Saint Augustine, expressed it best more than 1,500 years ago when he wrote in his famous *Confessions*, "You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you."³

Lesson

In the first four chapters of the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, he has explained how sinners come to rest in God.

In Romans 5 he begins to explain the blessings of justification by faith. And so, beginning today, I would like to describe the blessings of justification by faith, the first of which is peace with God.

I. Our Position in Christ (5:1a)

As we begin today, let us notice in the first place our position in Christ.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1a, "**Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. . . .**"

The apostle Paul begins by stating our position in Christ. If we are Christians, then **we have been justified by faith.**

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states that "justification

² *Bookstore Journal*, December 1993, 12.

³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1961), 21.

is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."⁴

Have you seen the illustration sometimes used with children of the three crosses at Calvary of Jesus and the two thieves?

Over one cross is written: "In but not on."

On another cross is written: "On but not in."

And on the third cross is written: "In and on."

What does that mean?

Well, those statements are speaking of sin.

The penitent thief—the one who, after initially reviling Jesus, suddenly became repentant and cast himself on the mercy of Jesus—trusted Jesus and asked for forgiveness. From that point on he had sin *in* him but not *on* him. His guilt was removed. His sin was transferred to Jesus.

On the next cross, Jesus had sin *on* him but not *in* him. He was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. The penitent thief's sin—and ours—was placed on him, or, was credited to him, and he was punished for it.

The impenitent thief was on the third cross. He did not turn to Jesus in repentance and faith. He did not cast himself on the mercy of Christ for salvation. Thus he had sin *in* him and *on* him. When he died, he suffered the penalty for the sin that was still on him.

What about you? Is sin still in but not on you? Or is it still in and on you?

It is by faith that we receive justification. It is by doing what the penitent thief did—by turning to Jesus and saying, "I accept your claim. I believe that you are God's Son. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Lord and Savior of sinners. I trust in you alone for my salvation. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

Jesus is the only one whose righteousness is accepted by the Father. When we believe that the perfect righteousness of Jesus is

⁴ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), Question 33.

credited to us, and that our sin has been paid for by Jesus, then we are justified by faith.

That is our position in Christ.

II. Our Possessions in Christ (5:1b-2)

But what are the blessings of our justification? What are our possessions in Christ?

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1b, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have. . .”** certain possessions.

A fascinating study is to discover all of the possessions we have in Christ. If you want to be amazed at all that we have in Christ, take a concordance and study all the **“we have”** references in Scripture. You will be blown away by all the blessings we have in Christ.

In this portion of God’s Word, the apostle Paul mentions several of our possessions in Christ. Today, however, we shall simply notice the first of our possessions in Christ.

A. *Peace with God (5:1b)*

Our first possession in Christ is peace with God.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1b, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God. . . .”**

It is very important to note that the Bible speaks of **peace with God** and also of the *peace of God*. **Peace with God** is not the same as *peace of God*.

What is the difference?

The *peace of God* is described in Philippians 4:6-7, where Paul said, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the *peace of God*, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” The *peace of God* is having a calm and satisfied frame of heart and mind in the midst of troubles and pressures. The *peace of*

God is peace with regard to the cares of life. It is subjective.

On the other hand, **peace with God** means that there was a state of hostility between God and us, which is now over. **Peace with God** is *peace with regard to God*. It is objective, and it happens whether or not we feel happy and secure.

This means that until we are justified by faith, until salvation, there is a war going on between God and us. Before justification, before salvation, we are not only breaking God's law, but we also assume the right or authority to do so. In other words, we claim kingship over ourselves and our world. But God also claims kingship over us. And whenever two parties claim kingship and authority over something, there is war.

But more than that, it means that God has a problem with us. It is not just that we are hostile to him. Paul told us that God's wrath is upon us (Romans 1:18).

But, now in Romans 5:10, we are told that we are "reconciled to God," which indicates that God's anger has been taken away.

God's wrath, as we observed in Romans 1:18, is not the same as ours. God's wrath is not vengeful or vindictive; God's wrath, rather, is *legal*.

There is a sentence of death upon us and it cannot just be discarded or ignored. The penalty cannot just be wished away. But, by the death of Jesus, we have been reconciled to God.

And the glorious blessing is that we now have **peace with God**.

As Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones pointed out in his commentary on Romans 5, "there is no peace between man and God until he grasps this doctrine of justification. It is the only way of peace."⁵

We must come to that point where we are able to say, "I recognize that God is holy and I am a sinner. I deserve to die and pay the penalty for my sin. I deserve the wrath and condemnation of God. I deserve to go to hell for all eternity. But, by his amazing grace, God sent his Son, Jesus, and he paid the penalty for all of

⁵ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 5* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 18.

my sin. The Father's justice has been satisfied. He can now forgive me, even though I am an unworthy sinner.”

And when we are able to say and truly believe that Jesus died for us, we are justified *and* we now have **peace with God**.

On March 10, 1974 Lt. Hiroo Onada was the last World War II Japanese soldier to surrender.

Onada had been left on the Lubang Island in the Philippines on December 25, 1944, with the command to “carry on the mission even if Japan surrenders.”

Four other Japanese soldiers were left on the island as Japan evacuated Lubang. One soldier surrendered in 1950. Another was killed in a skirmish with local police in 1954. Another was killed in 1972. But Onada continued his war alone.

All efforts to convince him to surrender or to capture him failed. He ignored messages from loudspeakers announcing Japan's surrender and that Japan was now an ally of the United States. Leaflets were dropped over the jungle begging him to surrender so he could return to Japan. He refused to believe or surrender.

Over the years he lived off the land and raided the fields and gardens of local citizens. He was responsible for killing at least 30 Pilipinos during his 29-year personal war. Almost a half million dollars was spent trying to locate and convince him to surrender. 13,000 men were used to try to locate him.

Finally, on March 10, 1974, almost 30 years after World War II had ended, Onada surrendered his rusty sword after receiving a personal command from his former superior officer, who read the terms of peace. Onada handed his sword to President Marcos of the Philippines, who pardoned him. His war was over.

Onada was 22-years-old when he was left on the island. He returned to Japan a prematurely aged man of 52. Onada stated, “Nothing pleasant happened in the 29 years in the jungle.”⁶

Like Onada, all people are fighting a war against God. Jesus

⁶ Summarized from a 1974 story in *Newsweek* magazine.

offers peace and reconciliation to all who will receive it. The terms of peace were sealed by the blood of Christ at the cross of Calvary. And when we accept the terms of peace and believe that Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sin, and that his righteousness is credited to our account, we have **peace with God**.

Further, I want you to notice that the peace we have with God is **“through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1c). All of our blessings come through Christ. We do not receive a single blessing that is apart from a relationship with Christ. Our access to God is through the mediatorial work of Christ. And our blessings from God are also through the mediatorial work of Christ.

Finally, there is such a thing as false peace. What is false peace? Let me suggest several characteristics of false peace.

First, false peace is characterized by simply giving an intellectual assent to the gospel. Some people understand that God is holy and that we are sinners. They know that Christ lived a perfect life and died to pay for sin. But that is far as it goes. True peace is much deeper than that. It is not merely having an understanding of the gospel and assenting to the truth of the gospel, but it is entrusting oneself to Christ. As Martin Luther used to say, “Faith is not saying, ‘Jesus died for sinners,’ but really saying and believing, ‘Jesus died for me!’”

Second, false peace is characterized by an interest only in forgiveness and not in righteousness. A person who has false peace only wants to be forgiven. He doesn’t want to go to hell. He only wants fire insurance. He is only concerned about the negative side. True peace is concerned also about the positive. It is not merely wanting forgiveness, but wanting to live in light of that forgiveness. It involves a heart transformation and a desire to walk in holiness before God and in being holy.

And third, false peace is characterized by a low view of sin. A person who has false peace sins and says, “Oh, that’s okay. The blood of Christ covers me.” And he gets up and goes on as if nothing has happened. True peace has a high view of sin. A person who has true peace with God is troubled that there should now be any

appearance of rebellion by his sin against God. He is troubled that anything on his part would break fellowship with the One whose Son died to secure that peace.

But what are the characteristics of true peace? Let me suggest some characteristics of true peace.

First, true peace is characterized by soberness. A person who has peace with God has had a glimpse of hell, and realizes that there is only one reason that he is not bound for hell. And that is that someone else—Jesus Christ—went to hell in his place.

Second, true peace is characterized by gratitude. A person who has peace with God is constantly thankful to God for his amazing grace. He deserved to pay the penalty for his sin for all eternity, but instead God declared him, “Not Guilty!” He cannot help but living the rest of his life in gratitude for the gift of eternal life that was given to him when he did not deserve it.

Third, true peace is characterized by joy. A person who has peace with God says with the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:8, “Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.”

And fourth, true peace is characterized by holiness. A person who has peace with God agrees with the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:3-4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

Conclusion

The first blessing of justification, then, is peace with God. Paul said, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (5:1).

I pray that you have been justified by faith, and that you have peace with God. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the blessings of justification by faith.

I thank you that the first blessing mentioned by the apostle Paul is peace with God.

O God, awaken anyone here today who has a false peace. If anyone here today has merely an intellectual assent to the gospel, or is interested only in forgiveness and not in righteousness, or has a low view of sin, will you show that person the peril in which he or she is in.

May each one of us have a peace that is characterized by soberness, gratitude, joy, and holiness.

And all of this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.