

Our All-Sufficient Savior

Part Four

Luke 7:36-50

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We conclude this series now with an examination our Lord's heavenly words, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." With these words, the redemption which began with the decree of God, "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4) was applied to this woman in time and space through the instrumentality of saving faith. In this series, we have been reminded of the good news that reconciliation is God's work on behalf of the sinner, and not the sinner's work by which she brings herself to God. We have been reminded that grace is not only necessary, it is wholly sufficient to save, apart from any works of righteousness on the part of the sinner. Salvation is of the Lord from start to finish. This woman came to Christ because of the prior work of the Spirit whereby she was "born of God" (John 1:12-13). She was drawn by the Father to the Son (John 6:44-45), and therefore her acceptance by Christ was certain (John 6:37). And this was not a probationary acceptance. For he that began a good work in her would most certainly complete it (Philippians 1:6). There is no spiritual abortion in God's redemptive plan. The life God births in you, he will see to full maturity.

What is more, as glorious as it is that this woman came to Christ, this event does not represent the end of the redemptive purpose. For the saving purpose of God does not terminate at justification, but at glorification (Romans 8:27-30). God had decreed in eternity past that that this woman would be glorified with his Son. And if you are in Christ, glorification is your future destination as well. For it is God's paramount purpose not only to reconcile you to himself through his Son, but to also conform every believer into the image of his glorified Son. And not until we are glorified with him will God's eternal decree of redemption be fully realized.

In this series, we have discovered how grace produced in this woman a genuine repentance, devotion, and love for Christ. When she entered Simon's house, it was the acceptance of Christ she sought, and not the approval of the Pharisees. Saving faith does not seek to please religious leaders or to derive salvation from a system, but from Christ alone. One can only imagine how sweet it was for this woman to hear our Lord's words, "Your sins are forgiven." And then, in the immediate presence of Simon, Jesus told her, "Your faith has saved

you. Go in peace.” Jesus gave her something that Simon’s self-justifying religion could have never produced: Peace with God, and peace within herself.

What is more, our Lord’s words make it clear that it was not her repentance and devotion that earned her forgiveness, it was her faith — a faith which came to her as a gift of saving grace. And her faith was saving because it rested in the only One who could forgive her sins. We are saved by faith, but only because that faith has Christ as its sole object. We must always be cautious against having faith in faith, or faith plus works, or faith plus you, or faith plus Mary, or a saint, or celebrity pastor, or faith plus sacraments, or faith plus your church, and so on and so forth. We have learned that saving faith has Christ alone as its object.

By these words, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace,” we learn also that saving faith precedes peace. Most professing Christians today do not know peace because they do not possess a saving faith. Perhaps they once said a prayer, or responded to an altar call, or raised their hand in an evangelistic meeting, but they have yet to know genuine peace with God, and to find peace within. “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” These words convey the sum of the gospel. But if you are attempting to add anything to the finished work of Christ, you will not find peace. You will be no better off than an unbeliever. If this you, I beg you, repent of your religion, and come to Christ as you are, with the empty hand of faith; cast yourself upon Christ and upon him alone.

It is not likely this woman had ever known much of peace. She was a daughter of Abraham by birth, but also a slave to sin (Romans 6:16-18). Only the Son could set her free (John 8:31-38). Her prior sinful life had no doubt been defined by the chaos, fear, and daily strife, which is the lot of the wicked. The words of Isaiah come to mind, “There is no peace, ‘says the LORD, “for the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22; 57:19-21). Isaiah spoke these words within the context of a rebellious people who, despite the many acts of divine deliverance and care, nonetheless rebelled against their God. There is no peace for such a people.

Simon would never know peace. His system of self-justification may have earned the praises of men, but the God of peace was not with him. There Simon sat; self-assured, self-justified, but with no peace. He no doubt heard our Lord say to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven . . . Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” But he did not fall to his knees and cry out, “Lord have mercy upon me as well.” No, Simon had his system. He did not need anything from Jesus, or so he thought. But Christ came to bring peace to the woman, the least likely candidate in that room. And he has come to bring peace to all his own. There is no greater blessing than

knowing one truly has peace with God. *Objective*, unconditional peace with God is necessary before one can ever know *subjective* peace within. Christ is our peace, and this is the case for all people in all times and in all places. But in every age, men have attempted to redefine the gospel in a manner which departs from the gospel of Christ alone, and therefore, from genuine peace.

One Savior. One Gospel.

In this series, I have contended for the faith once for all handed down to the saints (Jude v.3). I have warned you of those who would rob you of the joy and peace of salvation by grace by luring you into some form of merit-based formula of salvation. Satan never ceases to appear as an angel of light, and he always has his human agents working to advance his soul-destroying lies. Another lie that is growing in popularity today is Christian Zionism. This is further proof that heresies never really go away. False teachings must be identified, exposed, and condemned, but the devil is persistent, and we can expect to confront false teachings again and again. And Christian Zionism is one of those that must be dealt with in our day.

Christian Zionism teaching has its roots in the apostolic era. During the early days of the church some taught that the Jews held a special place and access to God that was not available to the Gentiles. Some Jewish Christians even formed churches to separate from the Gentiles.¹ And this erroneous thinking is with us today in so-called “messianic churches” and the “Hebrew Roots.” When I say Christian Zionism, I mean the teaching that God has a separate plan of salvation for the Jews, and they need not therefore believe in Jesus. It is only “Christian” in that many Christians teach this gross error. Among them are evangelicals such as John Hagee have taught that those of Jewish dissent need not believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.² Even the Vatican recently dismissed the need for the Jewish people to believe in Christ.³ Such thinking is a grave error, for these movements once again diminish the necessity and sufficiency of Christ and his finished work. Paul addresses this error in his letter to the Ephesians,

But now in Christ Jesus you who were far off [Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace, who has made both one [Jew and Gentile]

¹ Gordon D. Fee, “Romans” audio lecture series. Lecture one.

² John Hagee, *In Defense of Israel* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2007).

³ “Catholics Should Not Try to Convert Jews, ‘Vatican Says,’” BBC on-line article <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35061357>

and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and those who were near. For by Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:13-18).

Jesus is the sole source of peace with God for Jew and Gentile alike. The glorious and wondrous news is that it is God's purpose to create one "new" humanity in Christ, and the church is to be a unified voice of Jewish and Gentiles, proclaiming the praises of God in the midst of a fallen humanity (Philippians 2:14-16; I Peter 2:9-10). The Greek word translated "new" above in "new man" means something entirely unlike what it was before.⁴ No more Greek or Jew, only one new human creation in Christ, like Christ (Galatians 3:28-29). Therefore, there is not one gospel to the Gentiles and another gospel to the Jews. There is but one gospel for everyone who believes "for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16). And there is but one covenant, for Jew and Gentile, the new covenant sealed in Christ's own blood (Luke 22: 20; II Corinthians 3: 4-6; Hebrews 7:20-8:13). God has called both Jew and Gentile and united them in Christ and made of them both one new humanity — a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17-21). The Abrahamic covenant and promise are fulfilled in Jesus who is himself the true "Seed" of Abraham, meaning Jesus is true Israel, and those in Christ are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:15-29). And he that is a Jew is one inwardly, not merely outwardly (Romans 2:28-29).

Listen please, what I am contending for here is that the only program for salvation God has ordained is found exclusively in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ, and in him alone. Christ is the all-sufficient Savior for both Jew and Gentile alike. Still, there are those today who teach that Jews need not receive Christ to be saved, that God has a separate plan for them. What is this but yet another denial of the necessity and sufficiency of Christ alone? But Jesus made the necessity of believing in him vividly clear to the Jews of his day, saying, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24, KJV). Jesus spoke these words to the leaders of Israel, the collective

representatives of all the Jewish people. “Ye must be born again,” Jesus told Nicodemus. And Jesus addressed Nicodemus as a representative teacher of all Israel (John 3:3-8).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul mourns the collective state of Israel as a people zealous for God but ignorant of God’s righteousness (Romans 10:1-3). Why would the apostle mourn their spiritual state if there existed a separate covenant and program for them apart from Christ? No, there is but one way to heaven for all, Jew and Gentile alike, and that is faith alone in Christ’s finished work. He himself is our peace. And this principle of salvation in Christ alone has application not only for Jews, but to anyone seeking a path to God apart from the Christ of the Bible. And there are many teachers today who offer such paths. Many are former Christian leaders who have renounced biblical faith, and made up a new teaching of their own. Spirituality is now defined by the individual and therefore is purely subjective in its meaning. Most people today are deeply offended at even the mention of saving truth being objective and exclusive to the revelation found in Scripture. This is a fulfillment of Paul’s warning that a time would come in which people would not endure sound doctrine, but would turn away from the truth and look for teachers and doctrines that affirm them in their lusts (II Timothy 4:3-4).

Let’s look now at how that peace is applied.

Finding Peace with God and Peace Within

Look at Romans 5:1-5. These verses speak of peace with God — first, the objective peace with God which comes by faith through Jesus Christ, followed by the subjective peace which is of such a quality that it allows us even to rejoice in our tribulations. Let’s read that passage,

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this **grace** in which we stand, and **rejoice** in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only *that*, but we also **glory** in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the **love** of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was **given** to us (Romans 5:1-5, **emphasis mine**).

The first part of this passage speaks to the objective status every believer enjoys with God. In one decisive act, God in Christ removed the final verdict of your justification out of your future and placed it in your past at the death and resurrection of His Son. This, of course, means

before you were even born God had wonderfully provided for your reconciliation to him. And when the time was right, he acted to bring about your spiritual birth which included the gift of saving faith in Christ alone, which you then exercised to apply that justification which was secured by Christ's work on your behalf. Can you see now, how absurd it is to think you can or must add anything to the finished work of Christ on your behalf. Christ did not die to simply make your salvation possible, but to secure it on your behalf long before you heard the gospel and responded in saving faith. This is why I say any attempt to add anything to the work of Christ on your behalf would not only be an act of depraved ingratitude, but also an utter rejection of the work of Christ. Yet this "Christ plus me" false gospel prevails within global Christianity. The truth is, if you are in Christ, your justification originates with a work of God whereby you have peace with God based upon the finished work of Christ, alone.

Having been justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, you now have peace with God. It is an objective, unconditional peace with God; it is shalom. Shalom is the Hebrew word for great peace; it conveys security in a full and final peace, a well-being that comes from reconciliation, and not just a cessation of hostilities. The peace with God every believer possesses is that of an altogether new status with God as his beloved child, a joint-heir with Christ. This means God the Father loves you with the same love with which he loves Jesus (John 16:27; 17:26). There is therefore nothing here of a probationary, or temporal status which can be lost. At times you may display more of the old person, rather than the new creation that you are in Christ, but you can never lose the positional status you have with the Father. You contributed nothing to gain it, and you can do nothing to lose it. This isn't the shallow doctrine of eternal security as taught by some, but the security which comes from possessing a new status with God.

Now, someone will ask, "What if I fall into sin?" If you fall into sin, you will experience the discipline of the Father, just as any father disciplines his children. God will discipline you so that you may repent and partake in his holiness (Hebrews 12:3-17). But God will *never* abandon you if you fall (Hebrews 13:5-6). I realize there are all kinds of teachings about losing your fellowship with God when you sin, or about the so-called "carnal" Christians being left behind in the "rapture" or losing your reward in heaven, etc. These are all man-made teachings designed to motivate you not to sin. It is tragic how people resist good news.

But the gospel really is good news, and the good news is that God has reconciled you to himself in the death and resurrection of his Son, and by faith alone you are now justified, and

adopted into the household of God — forever. You will persevere in the faith because God is able to keep you from falling permanently. This is the glorious truth revealed in Jude’s doxology:

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude v. 24-25).

With this awareness, we now move from our objective peace with God, to include also a subjective, emotional experience of the peace of God: “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2). The point here is the fact that God chose you to glorification, that is to say, to participate in the glory of his glorified Son, is cause to rejoice. Justification was necessary to reconcile you to God, but the process of election, calling, and justification have as their ultimate purpose your glorification. Christians are predestined to glorification (Romans 8:28-30). This is the end purpose of God for all those in Christ.

Now, when you grasp this truth, you realize you are living out of a new narrative, and the balance of what Paul says in this passage makes much more sense: “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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” (5:3-5). Suddenly, even our sufferings have new meaning, for there is no such thing as random suffering in the Christian life. That is not to say suffering is pleasant, nor should it be sought after. If we can find relief and healing, we should do so. It is only to say that the new narrative of our life informs every aspect of our present-day existence, even suffering. Suffering now serves to produce endurance, character, and hope, because the love of God transcends all things; a love which is poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Now and Not yet

So, we presently live in a *now and not yet* status. We are now justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, we now enjoy peace with God (Romans 5:1-2); and it is an objective, unconditional peace with God as beloved children. And we also now subjectively rejoice in hope of the glory God, knowing ours is a certain hope. This means true peace is not a psychological issue, not a circumstantial issue, nor is it an emotional issue; true peace is a

theological issue. That is to say, true peace is tied to how we think about God.⁵ And this is another reason why it is so important to understand the gracious nature of justification. If we are spending our lives seeking to work our way into God's favor and heaven, we will be utterly without peace. It is a false path. But once we grasp the wondrous reality which is ours in Christ, we discover that even tribulations take on new meaning. We lose that haunting sense of futility in living, for we now have a new narrative out of which we to live. We are not like those who have no hope and subject to random circumstances and despair. Life for us has meaning and purpose, and a trajectory of glory.

When Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you. God in peace," she likely had no idea of the fulness of our Lord's words. But as a child of God, she no doubt later came to a deeper understanding of what it meant to be at peace with God and to experience true peace within. I hope this series has helped you also to a deeper, richer understanding of what it means to be at peace with God, through faith alone in the all-sufficient work of Christ alone. He is your all-sufficient Savior. **AMEN.**

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⁵ John MacArthur, "What Faith is." Sermon at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA. available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PORNve6DG6M&t=7s>