

Peace with God

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[0 : 00] I want you guys to open up your copy of the Scriptures to Romans chapter 5.

Now, if you're using one of the Bibles that we've left out in the chairs for you, that's going to be on page 942 of those Bibles. But otherwise, you'll find it. Romans, right? After the book of Acts. Romans chapter 5. Would you guys stand with me as we read God's Word together? The Apostle Paul writes, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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.

We give you thanks for this Word. I pray you'd give us understanding now. In Christ's name we ask. Amen. You guys take a seat. A lot of you probably remember, it's become now sort of a famous scene in the Matrix movies.

[1 : 19] The scene where the main character, named Neo, is offered a choice. Right? You can take the red pill or you can take the blue pill. And what he's been told is that his entire world is really just an illusion.

He's living in a dream world, in sort of a computer simulation. Him and everyone around him, everyone that he knows that he's ever known, they've just lived in this sort of dream world computer simulation.

But, he's now offered the opportunity to see the real world. To see what things are really like. And I feel as if when we come to God's Word, we are in a sense allowed to see we are given insight into reality as it actually is.

And not as we sort of conceive of it every day. We live in a world and we live our lives oftentimes on the basis of things that are simply not true. Or we see the things happening in the world around us and we think that all of those things are of primary importance.

And yet, we come to the Scriptures and we see and begin to realize the things that ultimately matter. We begin to have a true understanding of who God is and what God is like.

[2 : 32] And so every time I come and stand up here to proclaim God's Word for you, I feel as if I'm saying to you, journey with me to see reality. To see things as they really are.

And I can't think of any book in the Bible that approaches that in a more systematic way than the book of Romans. Romans, in reality, really does present to us a clear picture of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What Paul in this book helps us to see not only the Gospel itself, but also the implications that flow out of the good news of Jesus Christ. And so we spent from the beginning of June up until the beginning of December, about six months in the first four chapters of Romans, going verse by verse, making sure that we have a clear understanding of what the Gospel is.

And Paul has laid that out for us. And now here we are after taking several weeks off, we've come back to Romans to hear once again from the Apostle Paul about this great Gospel that he has been proclaiming.

But at chapter 5 we began to see the Apostle turn a bit of a corner. There's still a lot more theology to come in this book. He's not even close to finish filling us in on what the Gospel is, what God is like, how God has acted both in eternity past and now in the present in history and how he will act in the future.

[3 : 59] He's not even close to being finished with that. But he does begin to turn a corner here at chapter 5 verse 1 and he begins to show us many of the implications of the Gospel.

If we have rightly understood what he has said in these first four chapters, now we get a view, now we get a vision of the things that will flow out of that Gospel, the things that that Gospel will begin to

produce in our lives, the changes that will be wrought within us, and the hope that we can now have because we have believed in and received the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You can see that turn in the text very clearly. Notice what Paul says at the beginning of verse 1.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith.

Or quite literally, therefore, having been justified by faith. So now Paul moves beyond describing the doctrine of justification to assuming that his readers have experienced the great reality of justification.

In fact, we've seen this language over and over in the first four chapters. We've seen the language of justification, justify, justified, righteousness. All of those terms built upon the same basic root word in Greek to communicate with us this idea of God declaring people to be righteous.

[5 : 27] That's what it means to be justified. To be justified means that God declares you. He makes a definitive statement as the judge of all the earth. He makes a statement about you.

You are now in his eyes, in his sight, by faith in Jesus. You are righteous. And there's all the difference in the world between saying that God declares us righteous when he justifies us, and saying that God makes us righteous when he justifies us.

Because at the point in time when you initially trust in Christ, and God declares you to be righteous, you are not yet in and of yourself, you do not possess righteousness.

You don't have a righteousness of your own. You don't have anything that has been done not only in accordance with the law, but for God's glory that you can point towards as your own righteousness.

You are, as Martin Luther says, at that moment, at the same time, justified and sinner. When you trust in Christ, you are no more personally righteous one minute after that than you were one minute before that.

[6 : 38] But you are, in God's eyes, you have now moved from the category of sinner to saint. You have moved from unrighteous to righteous in his sight.

And we spent a number of months grappling with, trying to understand what Paul wants us to see about that great doctrine. And now he begins to assume that his readers have in fact trusted in Jesus.

That his readers have in fact believed the message about Christ, and therefore have received that verdict in God's eyes as righteous. I declare them to have a right standing before me and in my eyes.

He assumes that now. Therefore, having been justified, or since we have been justified, now we get to see the great benefits of being declared righteous through faith in Jesus.

And the first benefit that Paul mentions is peace with God. Notice how he words it. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[7 : 49] Now I think that particularly today, we are often prone to misunderstand exactly what the Apostle Paul means when he says that we have peace with God. I think that we often assume that peace is no more than sort of an inner feeling of tranquility, or a kind of calmness, or a kind of acceptance of things as they are.

That peace is primarily a feeling that we experience, rather than a status that we have. And to be sure, the Bible does speak about that kind of peace.

A kind of peace that is an overwhelming feeling of safety and security. So that when the Bible tells us that we can, in Christ, have a peace that passes or surpasses all understanding, I think that's primarily what is in mind there.

But Paul does not have here in mind a feeling of safety and security. There are no warm and fuzzies here when Paul says, because we've been justified, we have peace with God.

In fact, what the Apostle Paul means is that the war that existed between us and God is now over. We move from being enemies of God to being the beloved of God.

[9 : 09] From being His foes to being His friends. And all you need to do is look a little bit further down in this chapter, and you can see that fairly clearly. In verse 10 he says, For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

We were enemies. We were in a hostile position. Now, I seriously doubt that any of us have ever, at any time in our lives, described ourselves as enemies of God.

I really doubt that we have had that thought. Oh, I feel like I'm an enemy of God. I might want to remedy that situation. I don't think any of us actually thinks that way. I don't think that the average

lost person that you encounter, either in your family, or at work, or at school, or at McDonald's, I don't think that the average lost person conceives of themselves as being an enemy of God. But in fact, that is our status apart from Christ. That is who we are. Whether or not we would use that terminology, whether we're comfortable with it or not, the Apostle Paul says that apart from Christ, we are, in fact, God's enemies.

Why? Because we are sinners. He says, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He says in chapter 1, verse 18 of this book, that the wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

[10 : 31] But then he tells us in chapter 3, verses 10 and 11, that there is no one righteous, not even one. So you and I, apart from Christ, belong to the category of unrighteous.

And those who belong in the category of unrighteous have the wrath of God ready to be poured out upon them on judgment day. So that we are indeed, from God's perspective, apart from Jesus, we are his enemies.

Whether we like the terminology or not, we are. But people are uncomfortable with that. People are, in particular, uncomfortable with the idea that we must come to Christ, that we must believe a particular message about who he is and what he's done in order for us to have peace with God. People are uncomfortable with that altogether. In fact, I don't know if you guys recall this, but it's been several months now, several months ago. Quarterback for the Redskins, RG3.

You may not be a football fan. Regardless, this illustration will still make sense to you. After one of his games, he wore a t-shirt with a pretty well-known Christian slogan on it.

[11 : 39] The problem is that the NFL does not allow their players to wear apparel not endorsed by the NFL. So he was forced to turn that shirt inside out. But the shirt itself said, and you've probably seen this on bumper stickers, it says, Know Jesus, Know Peace.

But in two different ways. K-N-O-W. You know Christ, then you know peace. But then on the other hand, N-O. Know Christ, know peace.

If you don't know Christ, you don't have peace. Right? So that his shirt makes a statement not only about how to have peace, but it also makes a statement about, Apart from Christ, you can't have peace.

Which a number of people took issue with. Not the fact that he was wearing a Christian t-shirt in general, but with that aspect of the message of, Apart from Christ, you cannot have peace.

Let me read you what one writer said. He says this. He says, It's one thing. This is just a journal article, a newspaper article. He says, It's one thing to say, Know Jesus, Know Peace.

[12 : 40] That's K-N-O-W. It's one thing to say that. He says, It's a pretty positive statement about one man's religious belief, about the power of Jesus in his life. But, Know Jesus, Know Peace.

And now he spells it N-O. Know Jesus, Know Peace. Tells me that because I don't believe in Jesus, I have no peace in my life. And then he describes that as, That's 100% negative.

And then he goes on and he says, He, RG3, Hey, he has no idea who has found peace in their life, and who has not. There are plenty of Christians who live life in turmoil, and many non-Christians who live a beautifully peaceful existence.

Somehow, I had expected more of this man. Now, you could say on the one hand, First of all, he's got the wrong definition of peace. He's describing peace as the absence of trouble and problems in your life.

If that's what peace means, then Paul flatly contradicts himself in one chapter. Because he goes on to say in verse 4, or verse 3, he says, We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

[13 : 51] Paul acknowledges, We're in the midst of suffering. When he says, We have peace with God, he does not mean we lack suffering, we lack pain, or we lack turmoil.

So this writer has missed the boat altogether in understanding what we're saying when we say we have peace with Christ. He's okay with people, with Christians saying, Jesus gives me peace, because he conceives his peace as the absence of trouble in your life.

And if Jesus makes you feel better, and makes things go better for you, that's fine for you. But, if we begin to say that Christ is the only means by which the war between us and God might be put to an end.

He is the only means by which we might escape God's wrath. that will not work for this writer, that will not work for people in our culture at large.

But nevertheless, it is the truth. Only those who are in Christ, only those who have been justified by faith, and achieve peace through Jesus Christ, can claim to have legitimate peace between themselves and God.

[15 : 16] Notice the emphasis. I mean, he emphasizes this. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He makes no bones about it.

Peace with God comes first by faith, because faith justifies us, and secondly, that faith must be in Christ. All of this peace that we get to experience as a Christian, the cessation of hostilities, can only come through Jesus Christ.

And then he begins to elaborate on that point. Notice he begins the next verse by also saying, through Him. He's continuing to describe what comes through Christ.

Verse 2, through Him, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We have, he says, obtained access by faith into grace.

Grace, we know, of course, is God's unmerited favor. Grace is God giving to us good things that we do not deserve.

[16 : 26] It's a free gift, and He gives it to us. But, Paul says, grace is only available through Christ. And he's specific about the kind of grace that he has in mind.

He speaks of that grace. What grace? The grace of justification. The grace that he's been talking about now for four chapters, and we're into chapter 5. God's free gift of imputed righteousness, righteousness counted to someone else, for all those who trust in Jesus.

That's what he has in mind. That's the grace that he's thinking of. We have access to that grace through Jesus. And in no other way can we obtain access to God's grace.

There is no other way. There's no other means. There's no other path. There's not a hidden back door somewhere. Only through Christ do we have access or we granted entrance into the place where the grace of justification can be found.

Nowhere else can we find it. And it doesn't merely have reference to the past act of justification. I don't think.

[17 : 34] He uses the same word have twice here. First he just simply says in present tense we have peace. But when he says we have access he uses the same word have but he puts it in a different tense.

Because his point here in saying that we have access is to say now that the access that we have was obtained in the past just like our peace just like our justification it was obtained in the past by Christ and received by us when we trusted in him.

But the tense here indicates that there are ongoing benefits that accrue from the reception of past grace.

so that Paul says we have we continue to have we continue to derive the benefits of the access to this grace of justification in which or by which we now stand.

You stand before God as a follower of Christ on the basis of the justification that you received when you trusted in him. This is good news for so many of us because so many of us rejoice in the grace of God at our conversion but then we live our Christian life as if it is based simply upon our work and our toil as if it's good at the beginning it's all grace at the beginning but the rest of it is a whole lot of work and a whole lot of effort to live a good Christian life and to check off all the boxes that you need to check off to be viewed by other people in your church as measuring up to the standards of a good churchgoer but Paul says our present standing and our continued access is all of grace and it's all earned for us by Jesus Christ whatever victory you might experience in your walk with Christ whatever feeling of overcoming some particular besetting sin or whatever temporary relief you might experience from suffering those things do not come about simply because of your effort they come about because of the grace of God does God use what we do in our lives to bring these things of course are you supposed to resist temptation of course you are you supposed to try to avoid situations in which you bring unnecessary suffering on yourself well of course that's just simple easy logic anyone knows that but all the good things that come into your life and all the victory that you experience in the course of your walk with Christ is ultimately derived from the grace of Jesus the very same grace that justifies you is the same grace that enables you to stand now before God there will not be a point in time or in eternity regardless of the amount of sanctification that you experience in this life there will not ever be a time when you stand before God on the basis of your own righteousness that you perform it is always and only on the basis of

Christ's righteousness counted toward all those who believe we have peace with God because we have been justified and declared righteous and had his wrath removed from us and for us all of that is free because of grace but do not for one moment begin to think that because it is free for us it is absolutely free because it cost Jesus a great deal to provide this grace to us

[21 : 45] Paul intends for us I think to keep that in our minds I don't think we ever encounter grace from chapter 3 of Romans on without remembering the cost of grace that Christ has paid in fact I want you to look back just a couple of chapters to chapter 3 of course many of you have memorized verse 23 but there's a lot that comes after that that's significant Paul says for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified so there it is here it is justified by his grace there's the grace as a gift just emphasizing the freeness of grace through the redemption that is in Christ justification grace they come to us because of the redemption that's in Christ and how does that redemption come to us verse 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation a sacrifice that removes and absorbs wrath a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith justification costs a great deal it just doesn't cost you anything grace costs a great deal it just does not cost you anything but Jesus came into the world to be an atoning sacrifice to be a propitiation to remove the wrath of God that ought to justly fall upon us it's costly but it's free for you and when you see that when that mindset becomes firmly fixed in your own brain then there's really only one possible outcome

I think we see it in verse 2 of chapter 5 at the very end he says we've obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and then he says and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God if you understand the access that you have to grace if you understand how your justification was won and then wrought in you if you understand the means by which peace came into your life you cannot help but rejoice the word here is to boast to exult and specifically Paul says to boast or exult in hope of the glory of God now hope for the apostle Paul is not wishing he's not saying I hope to experience the glory of God it is a firm certain knowledge that he will indeed experience the glory of God and in case you wonder what that means for us he draws us a picture in chapter 8 of this book turn over real quickly he helps us to begin to get a glimpse of the glory in which we hope that we know through Christ we will someday experience chapter 8 verse 18 he says I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God that's those who've trusted in Jesus the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God for the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God there is held out for all those who are in

Christ there is held out for us glory glory that the entire creation has been waiting to see since the day that Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden of Eden since the day that the entire creation was subjected to futility the rest of the creation is waiting for what not merely its own redemption not merely the lifting of the curse from the earth that God placed upon the ground no the creation no doubt wants to see that but the creation is waiting for longing for looking with expectation towards the revealing of the glory of the sons of God there is awaiting for us infinite beauty that's what the glory of God is it is the infinite display of his beauty and majesty and the wonder is that we who are in Christ get to participate in that glory that's the wonder that's what's so amazing about the hope of glory that we share those of us who are in

Christ that's why the apostle Paul tells us in first Corinthians he says that no eye has seen no ear has heard nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love him we can't even fully conceive of that which awaits us we can't even wrap our minds around the glory of God that we will someday experience can't even begin or in second Corinthians he tells us that our light and momentary affliction is merely preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison beyond all comparison this is good news the gospel is not limited to the news of peace with God oh that's the first outcome of justification and it's glorious and it's good the gospel does not end there

[27 : 55] Paul would have us know that there is more to come the whole point of peace with God is so that you can be in the presence of God without being destroyed by God so that you can see and rejoice in infinite beauty so that whatever you might experience in this life however dark your moments of suffering and pain may have been and I do not doubt that for many of you they have been dark there have been very dark days for some of you and yet Paul says it's light and momentary compared to the glory that's to be revealed or we could turn it around the other way

because we have all experienced great moments of joy great moments of delight in this life we really have whether it's the birth of a child or your wedding day or just some other great moment in your life we all of us have had moments that just stand out above all the others in our lives moments of beauty moments of joy and yet they are as a match held up against the light of the sun they are nothing compared to the glory that is to be revealed not merely to us

Paul says but in us so I plead with you if you do not know the grace of justification I plead with you to trust in Jesus because glory awaits you but only if you are in Christ only if you have trusted in him and I plead with the church don't plod through life don't let the moments of joy be the highest points of your reflection and don't let the dark days ruin your vision of the future but understand and know and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God let's pray again