



## PEACE WITH GOD

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Storms continue to batter island nations around the world, and our southern coast. At the same time, drought continues to threaten many nations drinking water supplies, and crop productions.

Global economic inflation makes life harder for the lower classes and increase homelessness.

Grassroots feminist protests in Iran continue to grow, in spite of some violent crackdowns. Russia continues to threaten and pummel Ukraine cities. The government of Myanmar continues to oppress its citizens, prompting massive emigration.

Ethiopia has suffered a brutal civil war for 2 years, yet may now reach a peace accord.

Meanwhile, Peruvian citizens clash with police in anti-government protests. Leadership changes in Britain, China, Brazil, and Israel have further shaken the precarious balance of powers, and US mid-term elections are before us this week.

Issues, both natural and man-made, real and imagined, deepen the divide among Americans. Civility in the public square has largely been lost, and vitriolic voices vie for center stage.

All this is just a glimpse (from 30,000 feet) of the world you and I live in today.

Is it any wonder that people are desperate to find peace?!?

Some believe they can find it by abandoning their difficult family members or neighbors. Some believe they can find it by relocating to what they hope will be a more tranquil community. Some can only hope to find it through over-stimulation with every pleasure they can find. Some can only hope to find it by dulling their senses with alcohol or drugs. Some can only hope to find it by ending the noise and conflict once and for all by their own hasty exit.

Yet, we sit here today, in the midst of the Church of Jesus Christ, in a service of worship, because Jesus has said, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"* (John 14:27). *"I have told*

*you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage—I have conquered the world” (John 16:33).*

I want to explore with you that beautiful, yet precious, gift that our Savior has provided. Will you open a Bible with me to Paul’s Letter to the Romans, chapter 5?

Let’s look at the first two verses:

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2)*

Now, join me for a slow, thoughtful walk through those verses, to see what we can extract that will help us in our present life. Perhaps we can find that peace, and faith, and hope, and joy!

***Therefore,***

This word ties the first 4 chapters to what is now before us, as a cause is to its effect, or as the foundation of a house is to its superstructure.

It’s like saying, “Because all that I have just told you... now this...”

A brief summary of those 4 chapters would be this:

- The natural world reveals the existence of God as Creator; therefore, people are without excuse for ignoring Him.
- The Gentiles, who had no further revelation of God, are still sinful and have earned God's wrath.
- The Jews, who also were given the law and the prophets, are still sinful and have earned God's wrath.
- Circumcision as a ritual, and obeying the Law in fits and starts, are not enough to appease God's wrath, so, all people (Jews and Gentiles) are powerless against sin. No one is righteous before God based on their own merit.
- Yet God has granted us forgiveness (justification) as a free gift, which can only be received through trusting the good heart of the Giver, who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bear our sin and shame, and receive the judgment in our place.

***Therefore, having been justified***

This is plainly in the past tense—something that already has been accomplished—to emphasize that Jesus stood in our place, and died in our place, and rose in our place, and we were then justified by God.

This is a done deal!

Jesus was not the down payment for our justification; He was the entire cost, paid in full, from the outset. Like buying a new car with cash!

Therefore, our justification is also complete, finished, accomplished, with no interest due, no payments yet to be made. Done. “The car is yours! Here are the keys; drive it off the lot!”

*Therefore, having been justified **by faith,***

Our justification cost Jesus everything; He paid for it with His life.

Your only part in this arrangement is to have faith. That is, to trust the One who sent Him, and to trust the One who paid our debt, to trust that He meant this for us, and to trust that He will make good on His promise—not only for the sake of His word and His own reputation, but also for the sake of His Son, who paid so high a price.

This is faith, not only as a mental agreement to the matter, nor only as a momentary flash of awareness, but faith as your reciprocal promise to the trustworthiness of God Himself. Faith, as the ongoing character of your new relationship with God. Faith in everyday living. Faithfulness in mind, heart, and strength—body, soul, and spirit.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, **we have peace with God***

This is not “we have peace” as in calmness of mind and heart, or an experience of restfulness.

This is peace WITH GOD, as in the complete cessation of all hostilities—not a temporary truce, but the end of the war!

And not just an end to the resistance and fighting, but a new Union, a new Nation, a new Kingdom, with a new charter, a new constitution, and a new people, and a new vision.

Peace with God, because we have come over to His side.

*“[God] rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14)*

And right here, we may see why every effort to find peace for ourselves, while ignoring the life-controlling tension between us and our Creator will be frustratingly fruitless.

If you should see steam or smoke pouring out from under the hood of your car, the solution is not to turn on the windshield wipers, nor to turn up the volume on your music. DO NOT ignore it; pull over and stop and take care of the problem.

So it is in everyday life, when you feel the weight of guilt, or shame, or fear pressing on your mind... don't self-medicate, don't sublimate, don't ignore it. DEAL with it. These are the warning lights on the dashboard of our hearts, put there by God to alert us to our needs, and to our need of Him.

If you take it to God, instead of trying to hide it from Him, He will help you.

And how does He do that?

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ,***

It was Jesus who said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). When He said that, He meant it. He said, "no one," and that means not even one.

He is the Way, and no other path will bring you to the Father.

He is the Truth, and everything else is either imagination or hallucination.

He is the Life, and apart from Him you are only dying.

Do you know this Jesus today?

We have peace with God THROUGH HIM. He is our Peacemaker. He is our Peace. And we are *"those who believe in [God] who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead—He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."* (Romans 4:24-25)

He cancelled our sins, erasing our guilt and shame, and He justified our lives, driving out fear with His love.

To Christ be all the glory! To Him alone give your praise! Who would make such a sacrifice for His enemies? Such love! Such wondrous love!

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **through whom also***

But wait, there's more... There's more?!? Yes, there's so much more!

On Tuesdays, we have been studying some of the parables that Jesus told the crowds who came to hear Him speak.

One of the best known is the story of a farmer who sowed seed on four kinds of soil, with four different results. The farmer was the same, and the seed was the same; it was the soil that made the difference.

One area was littered with thorny weeds, and when the good seed sprang up, the weeds overwhelmed it and choked it so that it produced no fruit. Jesus explained that He was talking about people whose thoughts and lives were “choked” with worries about life’s circumstances and illusions that wealth could protect them.

What you have to deal with or what you think you lack cannot determine the fruitfulness and effectiveness of your life as you put your trust in Jesus Christ.

And just look at what else Jesus has accomplished for us...

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also **we have obtained our introduction by faith***

Jesus has introduced us to the King of the universe. To the One who made all things, who understands all things, and whose throne is always accessible to us... through faith. *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16)

Jesus has introduced us to the King as our Father.

*“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him. He who has seen Me has seen the Father!”* (John 14:7-9). He is not a distant or remote celestial being, but an ever-present Helper, a good, good Father.

Jesus has introduced us to an enduring relationship with God, who has said, *“I will never leave you and I will never abandon you.”* (Hebrews 13:5)

We have obtained this introduction because we have trusted Jesus Christ, and trusted God’s way of making us right with Him through Jesus.

We started with faith, and we continue in the same way—trusting the Lord (what He said, what He’s done, what He is saying, and what He is doing). Each day, we may approach Him in the same way—by faith—and find Him true and faithful.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith **into this grace in which we stand;***

This amazing relationship we have today with the King of the universe, our Heavenly Father, is a solid relationship—dependable, open, and caring.

He called it, and we call it, a relationship of *grace*. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Begun in grace, covered in grace, and sustained by grace. Grace, through faith.

You may count on this. Whenever you approach the Lord by faith, you will be received with grace. That doesn't change. You can stand on that.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; **and we exult in hope***

“Exult” is an expression of ebullient joy. The kind of joy that results from knowing that all your sins have been forgiven. The kind of joy that results from having shame lifted off your shoulders and replaced with a robe of righteousness. The kind of joy that comes when your fear has been driven out by God's complete love. It is indescribable joy, and full of glory!

And in this case, also full of hope. “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 15:13). This is our greatest joy!

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope **of the glory of God.***

We may bring glory to God outwardly by the things we say and the things we do (especially to and for others). “*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

But we also bring glory to God by the things we think and say within ourselves. When we live like this, it eventually shows up on the outside. “*Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.*” (1 Peter 3:15)

But the glory for which we hope through Jesus Christ, is more than God's own glory, or the hope of seeing that; it is also the glory we will *share* with Christ our King, for He has chosen to share His glory with us. “*Jesus responded, ‘Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?’*” (John 11:40)

The resurrection of Jesus is not only the stamp of God's approval on His fulfillment of the plan for our salvation; it is also the example of what God has in mind and in store for us—that this life of faith would bring us to a resurrected life of our own, which we will share forever with our Resurrected Lord.

Look what the Lord has done! And look at all we will do in His name. *“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). Here and now, and also forevermore.

This life in Christ, your resurrection life, has only just *begun!* There is so much more still to come. *Therefore...*