



## Peace with God

Romans 5:1-5

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This morning we are opening up the fifth chapter of Romans. We'll be looking at the first five verses of what is this second main section of Paul's letter to the Romans. Please give attention to the reading of God's Holy Word. For the Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, the Word of the Lord is completely sufficient, and the Word of the Lord is completely authoritative. Romans, chapter 5, beginning at verse 1:

*"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. Not only that, but 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."*

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. Heavenly Father, we ask this morning that you would open up your Word to us, that by the power of your Holy Spirit we would see the Lord Jesus Christ in it, that we would see the blessings you have given to us and that we would serve you. This we ask all in Christ's precious name, amen.

This morning we start the fifth chapter of Romans. This fifth chapter starts the second main section of Paul's letter to the Romans. The first section covers the first four chapters that we've looked at, and that section explains justification by grace through faith. Paul has gone to great lengths to talk about what it means to be justified, how we are justified, and our need of justification.

Now here in chapter 5 through chapter 8 he turns in this second section to the *consequences* of justification or, we might say, the *fruit* of our justification. What does justification bring to us? How are we affected by being justified now in *this* life? These are the questions Paul is about to explain to us. This morning, I would like us to see two broad categories from our text.

First, *what the Lord gives to us*. That is, the fruit of justification is what the Lord gives to us in justification. Secondly, *what the Lord brings about in us*. The Lord doesn't just bring things *to* us as a fruit of justification; he also works *in* us and brings about things *in* us. So we see two trios of benefits that God has given to us in the opening verses of chapter 5. What the Lord gives *to* us, and what the Lord brings about *in* us.

As Paul begins this chapter, he begins with a phrase that points us back. "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith..." What Paul is beginning here is to describe for us that everything he is going to say depends

on justification, both in *this* passage and in the next few chapters. In order for us to experience the benefits and blessings Paul is describing, we must believe in Jesus Christ, and we must believe in what he has done.

Only by being justified can we experience these benefits Paul is describing. Paul makes that clear in his opening language. The first word of chapter 5 is *therefore*. Some of you have heard me say this before, but it always bears repeating. When you come to the Bible and you see a *therefore*, what you need to do is immediately look backward and see what the *therefore* is there for. In other words, all that Paul is about to say depends on what he has already said. The *therefore* points us back.

Even more, Paul describes, "...since we have been justified by faith..." He's making clear in his opening language that what has happened affects what he is about to describe. This phrase *since we have been justified by faith* is actually, grammatically, a participle. Those of you who enjoy grammar know a participle is sort of part verb, part adjective stuck together, and that's exactly what's happening here.

The verb here is *to be justified*. It's an action, but it is in a participial form, which means it acts like an adjective. It describes the people Paul is talking to, the church at Rome, you and me. We are described as those who *have been* justified. It is something that has happened in the past, and now it describes who we are. This is the foundation Paul is laying. In this very short phrase, he is summarizing all that he said in the last four chapters.

"...since we have been justified by faith..." Well, what does that mean? You may be wondering, "What does it look like to be justified by faith?" You may be asking, "Is there anything to faith in Christ now, today, or is all of it just a future hope?" Well, once again, as Paul often says, "I'm glad you've asked that." He's going to now take us to the answer to this question, what justification means for us *now*, what benefits we receive *now* from our justification.

### **What the Lord Gives to Us**

The first and most important thing is we have *peace with God*. Now, the words Paul uses are important. I want you to notice Paul does not say the peace *of* God. That may be what you're thinking, because it's a familiar Bible phrase from Philippians, chapter 4, where Paul tells us that when we're discouraged the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will come to us. That is not what Paul is talking about here. What he's talking about is peace *with* God. The preposition is important. This word *with* actually means toward or to. It is peace *to* God.

This makes sense in the context of Paul's argument, because Paul has just been telling us how we have all sinned and we're all under the wrath of God and that by faith the work of Christ pays our debt and frees us from God's wrath so that we no longer have anything to fear. God is no longer opposed to us. He no longer sees us as under judgment, because Jesus has wiped out our sin. Paul makes clear that this is a peace *with* God that has been purchased by Jesus.

The next phrase is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. All of the words Paul uses are important here. The preposition *through* carries with it the idea of instrumentality. It is *because* of Jesus Christ that we are justified by faith. It is on account of Jesus and his work. That preposition is important. It's also important that we realize that it comes through Christ. Christ is the Messiah. He is God's Anointed One. He is the one sent by God to rebuild this broken relationship. He is the one who restores all things at God's initiative.

But it's not just Christ; it's *Jesus* Christ. The name *Jesus* reminds us that the angel told Joseph, "You shall call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins." The name *Jesus* means savior. The Messiah has come, the one who will save, but let us not forget that other word: *Lord*. Jesus Christ is God himself. He is the King of all things. He is the Lord of the universe. All of this comes about through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what is it that Jesus brings about? What he brings about is an objective and real peace, not a feeling. That's why it's important to understand this is peace *with* God, not the peace *of* God. Once we are justified by the work of Jesus, we are free. We have a new life. The starting point for all of the blessings we receive is the peace we have with God through Jesus. This is important. It is not just that we feel better. It is not a change of feelings, but it is an objective change in our relationship and our standing before God.

This is critically important for our lives, because you need to hear the truth that it is possible to be at peace *with* God yet not experience a feeling of peace at a given time. Notice that Paul is not saying that if you believe on Jesus your life will be perfect and you'll never be anxious and you won't have any problems ever. No. That kind of subjective peace *can* come, but it is not the most important thing we need. The most important thing we need is to know the good news that we are free from the wrath of God, from judgment, and from sin.

It is not about how we feel; it is about how we stand before God. If we don't understand and take this truth to heart, then we think our standing with God depends upon our feelings and circumstances. If we are nervous or anxious, we think somehow God has abandoned us, or worse yet, we are with someone who's experiencing trials and difficulties and say to them, "You've got to get peace about this. God wants you to be at peace. If you don't have peace, there must be something wrong with you. There must be something wrong with your faith. I don't know about you."

No, that's not what Paul is saying here. What Paul is saying to you is it's okay to be nervous and not calm when you get a really bad report from the doctor. When you lose your job, it's okay to be upset. You don't have to be a mark of serenity and calm. You have to be at peace *with* God to receive these benefits, not just experiencing at all times the peace *of* God. This foundational benefit we have from Christ's work is peace with God, and until that comes nothing else really matters, but once it comes other benefits do also.

Think about how Paul would talk right now to those of you who have believed on Jesus Christ. He started with a past accomplishment of peace with God, and now he is going to move to a present benefit: *access to God*. That's what we see here in verse 2. He moves on to something else. He says, "Through him [Jesus] we

have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." Notice this is also a benefit of justification. Through Jesus by faith, again, we have this benefit. We have access. That is, we have a relationship with God.

There is an interesting use of a verb here. The word *have* or to *have possession* or, as it's translated in our text, to *obtain*. It's actually a very common word. It's the word *to have* in the Greek. The thing that's interesting about it is it's in a past tense, a perfect tense. This tense describes something that has happened in the past that has a present effect. You experience this all the time. Something happened in your past, and that affects your life right now today, what you're doing, how you're living.

That's what Paul wants us to know. There is a present consequence to this past action. In other words, we have gotten access in the past, and that means we now *have* access to God. So what *is* this access? It is a way of approach, a way that we can get to God. This access has the connotation of a freedom to enter in or even an introduction to someone. That means we are perfectly within our rights to approach the throne of God.

We see an example of what this does *not* look like in the Bible that helps us. You may remember the story of Esther, the queen. There was a plot made to kill all of the Jews. Esther's relative Mordecai found out about this, and he told Esther, "You need to go and tell the king what is going on. You need to beg his mercy and get him to change the law so that our people will not be destroyed."

You may recall Esther's response was, "I can't do that. You're not permitted to go into the presence of the king. If you just walk into the presence of the king, he could have you put to death. You have to wait for him to summon you, and he hasn't summoned me for weeks. I don't know what to do." Mordecai tells Esther to pray about it and that perhaps she was risen to this place for exactly this time and reason. The story ends with Esther coming into the presence of the king and him accepting her and hearing her plea.

The point I want us to understand is we are not like Esther on the outside of the throne room, worried about if we come to God he'll get angry. "If I pray to God, will he get angry I'm wasting his time or will he say he's too busy or will he somehow not want to speak to me?" No. What Paul tells us is we have access directly to God by grace through faith by the work of Jesus Christ, and that access is something we have right now.

Notice what Paul says. "[We have] access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." This is a present possession. We are able to draw near to God right now. We need to see that Jesus has done more than to give you the forgiveness of sins. Jesus has done more than to give you freedom from the wrath of God. He has brought you near to God himself. Do not lose sight of that. In Jesus Christ, you are not just not guilty. You are a part of the family of God. You are a child of God.

We must remember that our access to God is direct because of Jesus. You don't need to pray through saints. You don't need your pastor to approach God for you. You don't need your parents to approach God for you.

You don't need other believers to go to God for you. No. The newest Christian has the most complete and effective access to God from the very moment he believes.

Paul finishes verse 2 with a third benefit: the Lord gives to us *hope*. He says, "...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Paul wants us to experience the full blessing that comes from justification. Notice something important here. Paul is using the word *we* or *us*. Paul himself has these blessings, and he is glad to have these blessings.

Eight times in our passage this morning Paul says *we* or *us*. In the remaining part of the first half of chapter 5, he uses it 12 more times. Paul is identifying with us. He wants you to know you have the same blessings *he* has. What a thought that is. Paul, the apostle, the writer of the Bible. I have the same blessings Paul has. These are very real benefits, and Paul experiences them for himself.

He moves from the past benefit (peace with God) to the present benefit (access to God) to now a future benefit (hope), because that is what hope is. *Hope* is the present experience of a future blessing. You don't have it yet, but you know you will, so you look forward to it. You anticipate it. Paul talked about this hope in chapter 4. He said that Abraham leaned on the promises of God, and that gave him hope. He had hope because he trusted the promises of God and knew those promises were sure.

What Paul is reminding us is that justification brings to us a sure hope in the future. This is not just a vague wishful thinking. We shouldn't think of hope here in *this* manner. You know the way we speak often. "Oh, I hope it rains. It sure would be nice if it rained, but I don't really expect it to rain. I hope it rains." Something that I *hope* happens and *maybe* it'll happen, but I don't really *expect* it to happen. No, *this* hope Paul is talking about is something sure, actually *so* sure it changes the way we live.

That's what Paul means when he says "we rejoice in hope." This word *rejoice* we have seen before. It also means to boast. We saw it in chapter 2, verse 23, of the Jews who boasted in the law. But we, Paul says, do not boast in the law. We boast in the hope God has given to us in Christ. We cannot help but tell others about it. We are so excited about our hope we rejoice in it and boast of it. That's the hope we have.

What is this hope *in* that we boast? Here's something interesting. We might expect Paul to say, "We rejoice in the hope of heaven" or "We rejoice in the hope that we will one day be perfect and sinless" or we might think of something that is related to *us* that we would hope in, but he doesn't do that. What he says is the "hope of the glory of God." This phrase helps us to understand what salvation is all about.

We often, when we think about salvation, think about ourselves and focus on what *we* get, but the Bible focuses on God and on who *he* is. Paul tells us we boast in the hope that the glory of God will finally be revealed perfectly. It will be revealed in his work of redemption that has been perfectly accomplished, and it

will be actually revealed in us, in you and in me, as we are made in the image of Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

This reminds us of our chief end. The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is, "What is man's chief end?" We might think about it *this way*... *What is the primary purpose of people?* The answer is not to be happy. It is not to be blessed. It is not even to enjoy heaven or good relationships. It is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

That is what we are to long for. That is why we want sin to be done away with: so that God would be glorified, so that God will be all in all. Do you long to see God glorified in all of creation? Are you seeking to be more and more like Jesus Christ so God will be glorified in *you* and in *your* life? That is what we are called to do.

### **What the Lord Brings About in Us**

Well, there is a second set of benefits from justification. We've looked at what the Lord gives *to* us, and now let's see what the Lord brings about *in* us. This is another trio of things that Paul sets forth in verses 3-5. They are the result of God's work in our lives, the change that justification makes *in* us. Now, it is not just changes in our relationship with God that justification accomplishes. No, it is also a change in who we *are* that justification accomplishes.

Paul tells us there is more to justification. Look at verse 3. He says, "Not only that..." When I hear those words, I can't help but hearken back to old-time commercials, especially infomercials. Do you remember the commercials? "It does *this*. It does *that*. But wait! There's more." What's the more? "It does *this*. It does the other thing. But wait! There's more." What's the more? I have to have the more. I have to buy this so I can get more.

That's what Paul is saying to us. Those three things justification brings to us are glorious, but wait: there's more. The first thing he mentions seems impossible. He says, "...we rejoice in our sufferings..." He uses this word *rejoice* again. It's the same word he has just used. It means to boast, to glory in, to take pride in in the best sense, not in a bad sense of pride, that we rejoice and boast in our sufferings.

Those who don't know Jesus Christ can't understand this at all. Why would anyone rejoice in suffering? It might be that we could bear *through* suffering and not go into despair, but *boast* in suffering? *Rejoice* in suffering? Notice Paul does not say we rejoice in the middle of our sufferings, that we rejoice in spite of our sufferings. No, that's not what he says. He says something much more radical. He says we rejoice *because of* our sufferings, in them themselves.

How is this possible? Is Paul crazy? Is he saying I should *want* to suffer? No and no. He does not say you should seek suffering out, but he's saying that you should see meaning *in* suffering. Christians rejoice in

suffering because they know suffering is not meaningless. This doesn't mean we always know what the particular meaning of a suffering is.

I may not know why I have cancer, I may not know why I lost my job, I may not know why the other kids don't like me, but just because I can't explain at the moment why this suffering has come to me does not mean it is meaningless and purposeless, because I *do* know God. I know he's in control, I know nothing happens to me that is outside of his power, I know he's wise, and I know he loves me. Therefore, even if I don't know what the purpose of suffering is, I know God has a purpose in my suffering.

God is not against you in your suffering. Oftentimes, we leap to this conclusion, and it is wrong. We think, "I'm suffering, so I must have done something wrong and God is punishing me for it," but that's the view of someone who doesn't know God through Jesus Christ. That person assumes God is against him or that God is out to get him. We must see that God is *for* us in our sufferings. That doesn't make our sufferings enjoyable, but it does put them in perspective.

Well, what could God's purpose be? A few broad examples. It could be to correct us and to take us away from sin, but that's not punishment. That's correction that he brings in love. It could be to show his glory. The best example of this is found in the Bible in John, chapter 9. You may remember the story. There was a man who was born blind, and Jesus came to him and healed him. They asked Jesus, basically, "Whose fault is it that he's blind? Who sinned? Him or his parents?"

Do you remember Jesus' answer? "Neither. But he was born blind so that the glory of God might show forth." That can just as easily happen in *your* life. You can be experiencing suffering so that God's glory can be seen in your life. God may have you suffer for his glory. Or the third thing God could be doing is building us up through suffering. That's actually the second thing Paul tells us the Lord does *in* us as a benefit of justification. He builds us up in Christ. He is growing us up in Christ.

We can rejoice in suffering because we know God can use it. Now how does he use it? He uses it to produce A Christlike character in us. Look at verse 3 again. "...knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope..." What Paul is saying here is that there is a chain, as it were, that begins with suffering. Suffering produces endurance.

To understand this, we must see what Paul means by *suffering*. It is more than just having things we don't like happen to us. The word for *suffering* means to be pressed down. It's actually also used to describe the process of pressing olives to make olive oil. It is a heavy pressing down. It is distress, it is trouble, even affliction. It is something we *must* respond to, either for good or for ill.

What, then, is the endurance this suffering produces? It is bearing up under the pressure of suffering. The idea is that we live under the suffering without only looking as to how to get out from under it. We continue on

in suffering, looking for God in our circumstances. It is a patience, a steadfastness. It is not running around like crazy, screaming and yelling, "How do I get out of this?" It is an endurance of the situation we are in.

Suffering produces a mindset in us that looks first for God, not to circumstances. Endurance then produces character, Paul says. When we're focused on God and our suffering, our endurance leads to character. What character means here is proof, something that is tested or approved. You might think of something on a packaging, a stamp that says, "One hundred percent approved. Tested and passed."

That's what suffering and endurance bring to us. It brings out the proof of our relationship with the Lord, of our commitment to the Lord. Perhaps a good example of this in the Bible is Job. You remember Job, how Satan said to God, "Job only gives you any attention or pays you any mind because of all of the things you give him. If you took stuff away from him, he would curse you."

God, to prove Job's commitment to himself, to show it forth, allowed Satan to take everything from Job: his family, all of his possessions, even his health, but that did not take the commitment Job had to God, the fact that he loved the Lord and was in a relationship with the Lord. Perhaps the greatest example of this is Jesus Christ, because the Bible tells us in Hebrews, chapter 5, that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Jesus glories *in* his sufferings. This is what suffering brings to us.

Finally, Paul moves to the third thing God does in us: he gives us an understanding of his love. We rejoice in sufferings, and we see how God is making us more like Christ *in* our sufferings, but think about this for a moment. Jesus bears the marks of his sufferings for *you* for all eternity. In glory, the only one who will have scars is Jesus.

What does that tell you about the love of Jesus Christ for you? His scars remind you of his love. That's why endurance under suffering is not foolish. We hope in the midst of our sufferings because Jesus shows his love to us. This gives us hope, and this hope does not make us ashamed. It is not foolish. It is not something we have to apologize for. It is a reminder of God's love for us, that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This unchangeable love of God comes to us, and it comes in full measure. It comes poured out. You'll notice Paul doesn't say his love is measured out to us or his love is dripped out to us or his love is siphoned off to us. No, he uses a word to describe God's love coming to us in abundance. You might think of it *this* way. When you think about God's love for you, think about a young child in your home pouring a heavy pitcher of juice. Now don't try this at home, kids.

You know how when they pour that heavy pitcher of juice, and it goes in the cup and fills up the cup, and they don't know when to stop, so it goes outside the cup, it rolls on the outside of the cup, it rolls onto the counter, goes onto the floor. It's all over the kitchen. It's all poured out. That's not fun with juice, but think

about that with respect to the love of God. You can't contain the love of God. The love of God is more than you can even receive. It is poured out in abundance upon you.

This is the benefit and blessing of justification: to not just be not guilty but to know that God loves me and he loves me so much he sent his Son to die upon a cross that I might know the forgiveness of sins. This love, Paul tells us, is steadfast and sure, because it's poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, the Spirit who is the seal of God's love on our lives.

In conclusion, do you know the love of God? You can. You can by believing in Jesus Christ and his work to free you from sin and guilt. That is what Paul is telling us here. The forgiveness of sins is just the beginning of what God is doing in salvation. He has brought peace. He has given access to himself. He has given us a hope for the future. He is not finished with you yet. Each and every day, through his Word and through trials and through sufferings, he is making you more and more like Jesus. There is no love like this kind of love.