

LIVE ACCORDING TO PEACE WITH GOD
(SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2012)

Scripture Reading: 10 Words; Romans 5:1-5

Paul wrote the book of Romans from the city of Corinth in approximately the year A.D. 57. Paul had not even visited Rome before. From Romans 16 we see that Paul knew a good number of the Christians in Rome, but it is certain there were many he did not know personally. The church in Rome was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Likely some of the Gentile and Jewish members had not been Christians very long, and yet the book of Romans hardly can be called from our perspective basic teaching. Doesn't it amaze you that Paul's letter is so deep and rich? It isn't a mystery or riddle in any sense, but the book of Romans does call for serious attention and thought. The Christian life isn't just a mental exercise. It does not just consist of theological reflection, but there is a great need to take seriously the word of God so that it can be applied to all areas of life. This is not works-based legalism or self-earned salvation. This is the direction and command of God's Word.

What Paul discusses in the opening verses of Romans 5 is that the truth that we are justified by faith alone is a most practical and applicable doctrine.

There are no commands in Romans 5:1-5. Paul is still focused on laying the firm foundation of truth from which many commands will come. But in terms of our own application from Romans 5:1-5 the challenge that is given to you is that you live in terms of the peace that God has secured on for you. **Live according to peace with God.**

We will look at Romans 5:1-5 in three parts: v. 1, v. 2, and vv. 3-5.

1. BECAUSE OF JUSTIFICATION WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD, v. 1

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

How does chapter 5 fit with previous and later chapters? I think it makes the most sense to see that chapters 5-8 form the next major section in the book of Romans. Of course, since this is a letter, we must also look to see how chapter 5 is connected with chapters 1-4. In our opening verses we see new and old words. For the first time Paul speaks of God's love. The word peace is found earlier in Romans but there is a special emphasis here. You also see in verses 1-5 the important but common words – faith and justified. What we can say in summary is in chapters 5-8, Paul expands on the blessing of justification by faith alone in focusing on assurance and hope.¹ These are two very important themes. Assurance is being confident of God's work and His truth. Hope is

¹ Moo entitles Romans 5:1-8:39, The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation. Moo, 290.

needed because God promises to continue His work. What you enjoy now is only the foretaste of the fullness of the blessing of salvation that you will one day enjoy. Hope and assurance are needed because there are many things that seek to attack faith.

I have emphasized that justification is God's work where a sinner is declared righteous for two reasons. 1) Your sin is accounted to Jesus Christ for which He paid the full penalty and from which you now have full forgiveness. 2) His righteousness is then accounted to you so that you can stand before God and find full acceptance. Paul speaks in verse 1 of having been justified by faith. Faith is not the cause of God's justification. True faith is that which God gives so that you can then receive this blessing.

I have also emphasized that it can be very dangerous to speak of a future justification because this opens the door to the idea that your works somehow enter into the picture of how you stand righteous before God. In Jewish thinking, justification was viewed as the final acquittal at the Day of Judgment.² There certainly will be a Day of Judgment. But the glorious truth that we see throughout the book of Romans is that the believer already has passed from judgment into life. Cornelis Venema states,

“When believers come to enjoy the benefit of Christ's saving work through faith, their justification declares, *here and now*, the favourable verdict that God will publicly confirm at the final judgment.”³

Do you look forward to the Day of Judgment? How do you respond when you consider that you will stand before God and before Jesus Christ as the Great Judge?

The final judgment should not represent a fearful prospect of loss for believers who place their trust in Christ, since Christ has secured once-for-all your freedom from the curse of the law and accomplished all that is necessary to secure your right standing with God.⁴

The Heidelberg Catechism asks in question 52, “How does Christ's return “to judge the living and the dead” comfort you?” The answer reads in part, “**That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same Person who before has offered himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as Judge from heaven.**”

Paul has already used the word **peace** in the book of Romans, but there is now special application in light of all that Paul has discussed. In Romans 1:7, Paul's blessing to those in Rome was a blessing of **grace** and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are now in a position to grasp the fullness of this blessing.

² Moo, 293.

³ Cornelis Venema, *The Gospel of Free Acceptance in Christ*, 260.

⁴ I think these are the words of Venema, 261. They are offset as a quotation. I could find a similar article on the internet written by him that used basically the same language.

The word peace is a marvelous word even from the perspective of our own language. This peace is not just an inner feeling. Much more important is God's perspective. This is how you stand before God.

Paul wrote the book of Romans three years after the start of the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero. The Roman Empire claimed to bring true peace. There would have been much propaganda surrounding the further dimensions of peace and victory that would come through the exploits of Nero.⁵

Today people still look to politicians and perhaps especially to celebrities for the comfort of peace. Oprah Winfrey has long promised peace to those who embrace her teachings on spirituality. She speaks of not fearing death because at death you simply become part of the world in a new way. And so very sadly there are countless millions of people who falsely think they have true peace with God.

The peace of which Paul speaks is a peace that is through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a peace that stands against the false peace offered by men. It alone is true peace. The Old Testament speaks much of a time of true peace. Jesus in Isaiah 9:6 is called the Prince of Peace. Ezekiel 24:25 speaks of a covenant of peace. The prophet Haggai encouraged the people of his day who looked at the much less glorious temple built after the return from exile by speaking of the glory of this latter temple being greater than that of Solomon's temple. The true temple, Jesus Christ, would be a place where God would give peace.

Paul, then in verse 1, again is emphasizing that the glorious blessings foreshadowed in the OT are found now in Jesus Christ. The future age prophesied in the OT is already now in the process of being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁶

2. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST WE HAVE FULL ACCESS BY FAITH INTO GOD'S GRACE, V. 2.

Romans 5:2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Grace is a wonderful reality. How many hymns and songs speak of God's grace? Even Roman Catholics commonly sing amazing Grace today.

To understand grace we must seek to understand that it is based on God's freedom and sovereignty. As I mentioned before it is difficult for us to appreciate what is so amazing about God's grace. It is amazing not just because of what it accomplishes. It is amazing because God is under no compulsion to save anyone. God's grace is amazing also because of what His work of salvation involved – the giving of His only Son for us.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ we now have **access** into God's grace. The word access is not a common word in the NT. It is used only here in the book of Romans and then two

⁵ Witherington, 131, 134.

⁶ Dunn, 247.

times in the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians 2 and 3 Paul speaks of our access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ. The usage here is quite similar – we have access to the amazing grace of God.

And in this grace we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Later in Romans 6:14 Paul states that we are not under the law but under grace. This hardly means we no longer have to care what God's Law says or that it is irrelevant. Rather it means we no longer stand under the curse of God's Law for sin. No longer are we bound to salvation by our own perfect obedience. There is a glorious freedom to grace, but not the freedom to do whatever we might please. Romans 6:15 asks, "**Shall we sin because are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!**"

The word **stand** in verse 2 emphasizes the way in which we are now to live our lives. John Calvin wrote,

Faith is not a changeable persuasion, only for one day; but that it is immutable [unchangeable], and that it sinks deep into the heart, so that it endures through life.

The verb stand also has reference to the past and the present. The verb **rejoice** focuses our attention on the future. We rejoice in **hope** of the glory of God.

The verb **rejoice** is earlier in Romans translated as boast in Romans 2:17 and 2:23. In both of those verses it has a negative sense. But here this same verb is translated as **rejoice**. In verse 3 it is translated as **glory** and in verse 11 again as **rejoice**. The verb rejoice speaks of joy and confidence.

We are joyful and confident in the hope of the glory of God. The hope of the glory of God should be understood in light of Romans 3:23. **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Not only does sin mar the image of God in which we were created but because of sin we are not able to properly recognize God's true glory.

In further thinking about the hope of God's glory, think of the request of Moses in Exodus 33:18. Moses requested of God, "Please, show me Your glory." Moses was not able to see the face of God. He was not able to experience the fullness of God's glory.

Listen also to 1 John 3:2.

1John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be **like** Him, for we shall **see** Him as He is.

The hope of God's glory I believe speaks both of the fullness of salvation that will be ours – our glorification – and the blessing of then enjoying the fullness of God's presence and glory. This is our hope. **This is what even now is to bring you great joy!**

3. WE ALSO NOW REJOICE IN TRIBULATIONS, VV. 3-5.

Romans 5:3 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.

Imagine going to a 5-star hotel where they promise you can eat all the food you want in the restaurant and all room service is free, but in the morning you will be awoken with a deafening and annoying sound in your room and then you will be water boarded. You wouldn't walk away from the front desk and say, great I look forward to it. You would stop and ask about the wake-up routine.

In a similar way the language of verse 3 should make you stop and ask, did I read that correctly? The verb glory as we noted earlier is the same verb rejoice in verse 2. You are to rejoice in hope of God's glory and you are to rejoice in tribulations.

The word tribulation is first used in Romans 2:9 speaking of God's judgment. The next three times it is used to describe that which a Christian must face – in rejoicing and in patience knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

The words of John Calvin here are helpful.

By saying that the saints glory in tribulations, he is not to be understood, as though they dreaded not, nor avoided adversities, or were not distressed with their bitterness when they happened, (for there is no patience when there is no feeling of bitterness;) but as in their grief and sorrow they are not without great consolation, because they regard that whatever they bear is dispensed to them for good by the hand of a most indulgent Father, they are justly said to glory: for whenever salvation is promoted, there is not wanting a reason for glorying.

So it is clear that Paul is not saying we become masochists – lovers of pain and difficulty. Rather even in the midst of tribulation we still are to have a joyful confidence.

There is quite a transition from verse 2 to verse 3 isn't there? Douglas Moo suggests that the quick transition might be the result of Paul seeking to counter Jewish teachers who would have said, you suffer too much to enjoy peace with God.

Verse 3 should also be of comfort to you in the midst of many situations you are facing, some of which you might even call tribulations. It is certainly important that you do not exaggerate your sufferings. It is good to take perspective and consider what others face. It is also good that in considering the trials you may be facing that you do not interpret them automatically as a sign of God's displeasure or even worse His inability to bring you help and deliverance.

Verse 3 states that tribulation produces perseverance or endurance. Tribulation by God's grace strengthens your capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty.⁷

James 1:12 states

James 1:12 Blessed *is* the man who **endures** temptation; for when he has been **approved**, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

The verb **approved** from James 1:12 shares the same root as the noun **character** in verse 4. This is a word that is not used very often in the NT. It refers to those who have been tested and who have passed the test. And now they enjoy something that they did not have before – proven character.

One might wish to move directly to the state of proven character just as one might wish with little effort to become a great athlete or a skilled surgeon. But God has an order for how He sanctifies His children.

It is not true that suffering is the only way you learn. But suffering and perseverance are the prerequisites for character.

I don't believe that this passage teaches either that you should pray for tribulation. I do not find that prayer anywhere in Scripture. But we do find the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We also have the prayer of our Savior, "Not My will, but Your will be done." Verses 3 and 4 give you the encouragement to pray even as Jesus did.

The final blessing in the list is again hope. From verses 2-4, we can say that hope is the beginning and end of this listing.

The word hope is related to the word endurance. In the Greek OT, the Hebrew word for hope is both translated as hope and endurance.⁸ Listen to the connection between these two words from 1 Thess. 1:3.

1Th. 1:3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and **patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Hope is a fitting ending to this listing. For hope is the foundation for knowing that God does work all things for the good of His people even when you do not see that good that God promises to accomplish.

One of the great illustrations of what Paul is speaking of here is the life and work of William Carey. After Carey had spent many years working as a pioneer missionary in India, his supporters sent him a printer to help him in his work. Not long afterwards, Carey and the printer were producing portions of the Bible in the local language, which Carey had spent many years learning. Carey also had prepared dictionaries and

⁷ BDAG, s.v. "ὑπομονή," 1040.

⁸ Dunn, 252.

grammars so that his work would continue after him. One day while Carey was away from his mission base, a fire broke out which completely destroyed the building, printing presses, many Bibles, and even worse his precious manuscripts, dictionaries, and grammars. When Carey came back, the awful news was shared with him. But Carey did not give into despair or quit. He instead knelt and thanked God that he still had the strength to do all the work over again. He started immediately on this task and before he died, he had duplicated and improved on his earlier work. Such is the fruit and the rejoicing that belong to those who rest in God and in His perfect work.⁹

Finally in verse 5 Paul writes about the blessing of true hope. This hope does not lead to **disappointment** or **shame**. Those who wait on the Lord will have their strength renewed we read in Isaiah 40:31. Here Paul says that hope will never lead to disappointment.

The truth of verse 5 has to be appreciated in light of the culture of Paul's day – a culture based on honor and shame. To believe in a false god, to place your hope in a hoax and for others to know of this would bring about the greatest humiliation.¹⁰

But those who have true hope in God will not be brought to shame. You may face great pain and tribulation, but you will not in the end be disappointed.

And what is the reason for such a statement? The answer- because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts because of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This is the first place in the book of Romans where Paul discusses the love of God. And how should you understand the expression, the love of God? It is God's love for you or your love for God?

Augustine and others have argued that it is our love for God, but it makes better sense in this context to understand that God's love for us has been poured out into our hearts.¹¹

The verb poured out speaks of abundance and extravagance. It is not just a little bit of God's love you are given. Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus the familiar hymn celebrates. Psalm 103:11 describes God's love.

Psalm 103:11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy/covenant love toward those who fear Him.

Certainly God's love for you should be reflected in your fear and love of Him. The focus, though, is here on His incredible love for us.

Verse 5 concludes by saying that this love is poured out into our hearts through the working of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁹ Taken from www.bible.org - sermon illustrations on Romans 5. (<http://tinyurl.com/d7k4sh>)

¹⁰ Witherington, 136.

¹¹ This was the interpretation of Moo, Dunn, and Calvin.

This is an important point concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 focuses great attention on the work of the Holy Spirit. If you are assured of God's love, if you find assurance in the midst of tribulation, then you have a witness to the great work of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION:

Live according to peace with God.

As we continue our worship by eating and drinking together in the Lord's Supper, consider how our celebration is a celebration of the truth of this passage.

We celebrate justification by faith alone.

We celebrate the peace that we have with God.

We enjoy now the access that we have by faith into God's grace.

We rejoice together in the hope of the glory of God. We eat and drink proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes.

And may this meal give you comfort and strength in facing times of testing and tribulation.

This is a meal which strengthens our souls through the working of the Holy Spirit so that our faith in our sovereign and Triune God is strengthened.

Oh, the deep love of God for His people which we taste and see in the meal set before us.

Prayer

Hymn – 364

BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.