

Peace with God
March 19, 2012

We have come in our study to Romans 5 which will introduce some concepts challenging to our natural minds, which is why we need God's instruction. As I mentioned last week chapters 5-9 introduce the two sided reality of the Christian life. On the one hand when we have admitted we are sinners and accepted God's offer of the free gift of salvation then we are complete in Christ, secure and on our way to heaven, we have been delivered from the penalty of sin. On the other side we find ourselves living in a fallen world, tempted by the flesh and the devil, growing in Christ and learning to avoid the power of sin. I know you understand what I mean when I talk about the tension between our fleshly desires and our desire to live a godly life.

Romans 5:1

We discussed the beginning of Romans 5:1 last time. Since the verse begins with "therefore" we know the statement is a conclusion based on what Paul wrote before. If I said "its cloudy therefore it will rain", I have stated the reality and drawn a conclusion, beginning with therefore. To review: Paul wrote the observation that mankind has sinned that would be Romans 4 and the discussion of salvation by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And as it says in Romans 4:25; He (Jesus) was delivered over because of our transgressions and He was raised because of our justification".

We can conclude therefore since we have this amazing gift of justification, that is declared righteous, we have peace with God. Now this peace is what I want to begin with today. Colossians 1:9 says: "It pleased God the Father that in Jesus all fullness should dwell. And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Jesus to reconcile all things to Himself". It is past tense; it is finished and done and all you have to do is submit and reap the reward.

Here is the crux of the matter; God in His grace and mercy has made peace with you by sending a Savior and no other peace can be made. On your own merit you cannot make peace with God, since it is He Who is offended, making peace is His to do. God will have no other peace than that which was made at the cross of Christ. The one who rejects the peace, which God has provided through the Lord Jesus Christ, he remains hostile to God. That one who rejects the peace with God that Christ made possible must bear throughout all eternity the wrath of God because he has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace, according to Hebrews 10:29.

Do you have a problem with the idea of the "wrath of God" have you heard endlessly that "God is love". God is love and He is so loving He has provided the way for you to be justified, declared righteous because Jesus has taken the punishment, the wrath for your sin. This is not based on merit, talent, looks, or race. If you will accept this wonderful free give He has already given, you will have peace with God. There is no other way; nothing on the earth will give this peace. Peace with God is an accomplished fact only when we are justified by faith.

If you are searching for peace in the world, the fleshly gratification, worldly pleasures; you are on the wrong track, there is no lasting peace in those places only craving for more, because the flesh is never satisfied.

The bible says when we accept by faith this wonderful gift of salvation that there is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which cannot fade away reserved in heaven for us.

So Romans 5 is a message for the one who has turned his back on his sin and come to Jesus for salvation. If you have not done this then there is one truth for you; you need to be born again. You cannot cash the check on heaven's bank for salvation if you do not have an account there cosigned by Jesus.

Romans 5:2

Now this is the wonder of it all, not only has Jesus justified us and given us peace with God but He has also give us personal access to God. If you are saved, you have access to God. This is a very important doctrine.

There are some false, that is non biblical, ideas about access to God and one is that everyone, no matter the state of his soul, may anywhere or anytime come to God to ask favors. Remember what Jesus said about this? "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by Me". Here is the truth about access to the Father; friends how can anyone expect to pray and be heard by God the Father if they reject the One through Whom the access is granted, the One Who is the Way, the One Who is the Door? Now days we hear all kinds of opinions about how people plan to get access to God by their own plans which do not include Jesus, this can be discussed at length, defended by human opinions but it can never be true. God's Word is truth and He has provided the only Way to have access to Him. Jesus did not say "I am a good man, an excellent example and a fine teacher of the right way to live", He said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life and there is no other Way to God".

If you are saved by faith in the finished work of Christ the bible says you are a "joint-heir with Him". God is your Father; you have access to your Father because of Jesus. The bible says also that you have received all things you need through Jesus so you don't need to go through anyone else, you have access through Jesus. And you have access to the greatest gift every imagined, the grace of God, it is unlimited, available and free.

Access to God is not a doctrine for church it affects the daily life of every believer. How is this true? It is our way to God's Presence, it is the means of receiving answer to prayer, and it is the way to power for living.

How to reach God has been on the mind of mankind forever and has resulted in false religious practices in every corner of the earth.

What does the bible teach about access to God?

In Genesis we read that God created man offered easy and friendly access to personal relationship. Man chose to go his own way, to sin, and thus lost his access to God. What happened next? Did man cry out to God? No God came looking for His creation, the wayward little dust person. The bible shows us that men do not seek God, God seeks man. Every false religion on the earth is a man's idea of a way to reach God his own way, not God's way and there are 1000's of religions to prove this point.

If you have ever spent anytime reading the first 5 books of the bible you know that God presented very limited and specific ways by which man could come into His Presence. In addition their race, their tribe and their gender limited the people who were granted access. Now God has opened up the Way to Him how could anyone think the new access would be less specific than the first?

Jesus the Son of the Living God is my access, He takes me by the hand and leads me into the presence of His Father and I am there in that Holy Place based on my relationship with Jesus.

So as Romans 5:2 says "through Christ we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand."

And so we are rejoicing in our hope of glory. This is the first blessing described from the access we have gained through Jesus. The hope of the believer in Christ is that we will go immediately to heaven upon death and dwell with God forever and this not wishful thinking but the promise of God's Holy Word. We will see Jesus, face to face and praise and worship Him and thank Him for the love He showed us in leaving heaven, living on earth and dying for sinners.

One more fact about heaven and that is that we will be free from sin, won't that be grand? I long for the day when my heart will be pure and the weeds of sin will no longer grow there. There will be no more sickness, pain, sadness, crying, loneliness, separation, sorrow or death.

Randy Alcorn has written an excellent book called HEAVEN and in it he carefully describes all the bible tells about our heavenly home. We don't hear much taught about the place we will spend eternity by God's grace and by the free access Jesus has provided us. It is worth your time to study this subject.

Romans 5:3

Now we move from the future benefit of our hope in Christ and we talk about the present benefit. And that is, by God's grace we can suffer tribulation and find joy in it. Tribulations are the common lot of man and woman and only believers can find something good there. Jesus said, "in this world you will have trouble, I have overcome the world". We should expect that tribulation, problems, suffering would be our lot here on earth. The word tribulation means "pressed, to oppress, to afflict. If you have

believed the religious groups that say otherwise, who teach you that as soon as you are a believer all your problems are over, well that is just impossible to reckon with Jesus' statement. We all make plans that fail, we suffer ailments from the common cold to cancer, we age, we lose loved ones, we lose our earthly wealth, it goes on. Now how could anyone say that believers will have no problems, its absurd?

Here is our hope in tribulation; the believer has been redeemed by Christ and given an endless supply of grace and spiritual blessings. Rejoicing in tribulation is a supernatural experience. Joy can be ours in any situation.

Let's talk a bit about suffering. Suffering or tribulation can have several causes. The first is the suffering that is corrective. Just as disciplining a child who misbehaves is meant to be corrective and meant to be done in love so suffering is sometimes meant to correct a believer who has stepped out of the will of God. Some say that all suffering is a result of an individual's sin, just think of the book of Job. His so-called friends were determined to blame him for his suffering when in the first chapter of the book God stated that Job was righteous. No man's suffering pays for his sin, Jesus paid the price, and it is finished.

Consider Hebrews 12:5-7

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son Whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure, God deals with you, as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

No real son grows up without any correction of the father, if the father truly loves the son. God corrects us all our lives to teach us about His holiness and to conform us to the image of His Son.

The verse in Hebrews goes on to say that no disciplining is pleasant, frankly it's unpleasant. But it produces the fruit of righteousness if we endure it by God's grace and without complaining.

When we face this kind of corrective discipline from the LORD the best approach is to "not lean on our own understanding but in all our ways acknowledge Him". We must seek Him with all our heart, be surrendered to Him and to His will.

What about constructive suffering, God is building something in us? I think of David who wrote in Psalm 119:67 that before affliction he went astray but after affliction he observed the Word of God so affliction was a factor in his growth, just as it has been in your life and mine.

This constructive suffering will be ours until we are a finished product in heaven with our Father. In my opinion, old age and the deteriorating of the body is a type of constructive suffering.

Peter summarized the teachings on constructive suffering speaking of the glory of our future salvation when all the work of the LORD in our behalf will be completed and we shall be forever in the land of joy with our Savior and our God. He speaks of rejoicing in that hope that while we are protected by the power of God for a little while we have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof or genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Christ Jesus; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your soul. 1 Peter 1:6-9

Here is the crux of the matter, we who are believers are being made perfect or complete by our suffering and we can therefore rejoice because we have a hope and a future. There are many who suffer who do not love the LORD, who are outside of His protection, who are not His children and they have no hope and no future. So if God is using the suffering of this human experience to refine us for heaven our reward will be eternal joy in His Presence.

I quote DG Barnhouse: "It is certainly possible for the Christian to glory in tribulation that turns him from wandering into the by-paths and brings him back into the way of God. It is also possible for the believer to glory in the tribulation that chips away the unimportant things of life, the secondary things, the dirty things, the alien things and reveals the life of the LORD Jesus Christ within".

What is the expected result of suffering as we are taught here in Romans? Tribulation works perseverance or patience. We have endlessly discussed the gift of salvation; how that it is free and no good works can be done to purchase it from God. However, once the believer experiences salvation then some things should flow out of that life, such as patience, which is produced by suffering. God says we have been saved by faith to do good works Ephesians 2. And so the first fruit or good work produced in the life of the believer by the Holy Spirit is patience or perseverance or endurance. The Greek word used here has several shades of meaning thus the list. The idea is that of bearing trials without complaining but there is something more than contentment and calmness. It is the idea of a person unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his faith and piety by even the greatest trials and suffering. There is also the idea of difficult progress, think of walking in a foot of snow, you progress very slowly, but you do progress.

Does it encourage you to know that your suffering is working something in you that is amazing and will be a source of reward for eternity?

One more thing, suffering in the life of the believer is producing virtue not mere tolerance. There is no dull hopelessness. The believer accepts the suffering knowing that God is bringing him through to glory; and from the hope of the past to the hope of the future, he sees the connection running through his suffering like a thread that binds all together.