

## Peace With God Through Christ

### Justification and Peace

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When the average person talks about peace his or her definition seems most often to be externally personal and dependent upon favorable circumstances. But there is something else too; although each person may differ in his or her approaches, all, nevertheless, seek peace of mind and recognize that pursuing it is important. No one considers a search for peace to be irrelevant.

What is it that people are most seeking in life once their physical needs are satisfied? Some say they are seeking freedom. Movements for national liberation are usually based on this intense, human desire. But in a sense, Americans *are* free, we have been free of foreign domination for over 200 years, and the Constitution and legal system, up until recently, have affirmed our individual liberties. Yet, most of us are restless and discontent, perhaps even more so than those living under strong, oppressive regimes.

Is it wealth we are seeking? One of the richest men in the world once said, “I thought money could buy happiness. I have been miserably disillusioned.” Others seek fulfillment through education, fame, sex, power but most are discontented even when they attain such goals. What is the reason? The explanation is that what people are really seeking is peace. And the ultimate and only genuine peace is found in a right relationship with God. In my last sermon, I talked a little about what Christ told His disciples in Matthew 10:

**Matthew 10:34** Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

The “sword” there is a metaphor for the inevitable separation between those who believe in Christ and those who do not; even within a family. That is, faith in Christ may set a man against his father. Now, Jesus' own family opposed Him before they came to recognize His true identity. Therefore, as

Christ said, “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Jesus asked for unqualified allegiance, something even the most esteemed rabbi did not demand in the Jewish belief.

The central point of Matthew 10:34-37 is that love of God and His Kingdom must take precedence over every other human relationship. But peace on earth among human beings is not what I want to talk about today. My sermon today is concerned with peace *with* God. More specifically, peace with God through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Turn with me, please, to I John 2. It may help our understanding if we look also at the contrast of peace with God through Christ; that is, false peace. What are the characteristics of false peace?

**I John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

This is a description of people without peace with God. They are unsettled. Now take also the people described in the sixth chapter of Hebrews. They had certain experiences but finally, they were lost; apparently, never having peace with God. And we have to test and prove and examine ourselves, say the Scriptures, whether we are in the faith or not to avoid such failing. We are all very familiar with this next verse.

**II Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

So, it is very important that we have peace with God and you will see why as we continue. The characteristics of false peace generally result from thinking that faith simply means believing and giving an intellectual ascent to certain propositions and truth. The false belief that any man who says, “I believe Jesus is Lord; I believe He is the Son of God” is thereby saved and that all is well with his salvation is a dangerous way of thinking because all may not be well with him.

Now, you can subscribe to the truth and have an intellectual acceptance of it and yet not really be saved by it. There are people who have a form of godliness but denying its power. Faith is not only a matter of intellect; it is much, much deeper than that. Also, people with a false peace are generally found resting on their own faith rather than on Christ and His work. They really look at their own believing rather than at Christ and what He has done. And they persuade themselves, "I now believe, therefore I must be alright." They are not looking to Christ, they are looking to their own faith and they turn faith into a kind of work on which they rest. They look strictly at the actions that they perform.

Another characteristic of false peace is somewhat surprising and unexpected: The man who has false peace is never troubled by doubts. But that is where Satan makes his mistake. The counterfeit is always too wonderful, the counterfeit always goes much farther superficially than the true experience.

When Satan gives the person a sense of false peace counterfeiting the true peace, he creates a condition in which the person is never troubled at all or rarely ever troubled. That type of man is in a psychological state and he does not truly face the truth so there is nothing to make him unhappy. Often it is portrayed as kind of a blissful state and that is the state the world is in most of the time. They think they are happy and they think they have peace when in reality, their minds are in a chaotic state and they are anything but peaceful.

Let me put this in the form of a very practical question: Can you sit in Sabbath services without being made to feel uncomfortable at all? If you can, you had better examine yourself seriously. This is assuming, of course, that God's truth is being preached because when it is being preached we realize that we are so inadequately fulfilling our responsibility to God that it does make us squirm; sometimes a lot.

When Satan gives a person a false peace counterfeiting the true peace he creates a condition in which the person is never troubled. Now, it does not matter how long you may have been in God's church, if you are truly justified, you will be made to feel uneasy, lacking, deficient, and coming up short. But you will thank God again for justification by faith and will feel compelled to examine yourself once again.

But, the intellectual believers are never troubled at all, they are always perfectly at ease, without doubt, without concern, they think to themselves, "Ever since I made my decision I've never had a moment's trouble." Such talk is always indicative of a very dangerous condition; it is always very suspicious because it looks too good to be true.

The attitude of the Laodiceans comes very close to that: I am rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. To put it another way, this kind of person seems much too full of good fortune. The people who have this false, counterfeit peace are much too superficial, much too simplistic in his advice and solutions regarding spiritual problems.

Compare them with the New Testament picture of a Christian: The New Testament Christian is careful, thoughtful, and sober, mulling over things. And he approaches God with a reverence and godly fear especially regarding spiritual problems. But the people with the false peace know nothing of that. They feel fine spiritually as all is well and they have need of nothing. They have all the answers and are always ready to tell people what the solution to their problem is even though they have no experience in it at all. Nothing like that is found in the Scriptures.

Can you imagine the apostle Paul speaking in that manner with such glib, clichés falling from his lips? His speech is, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." And "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." And "work out your salvation in fear and trembling." That is what Paul faced and that is what he knew God's people faced.

Sadly, many people just want to have fun like the Cyndi Lauper "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" mentality. And even some young people attending in God's church think hooking up with someone in a drinking establishment is fun. How perverse. In reality, it is playing with fire and the many failed marriages prove that very thing. False fun is a type of false peace.

Another characteristic of false peace is that it is only interested in forgiveness and not in righteousness. The person who has the false peace is only interested in being forgiven. He does not want to be condemned, he wants to be forgiven. He does not want to hear bad things about what is

going on in the world and he does not stop to think about being positively righteous; he is not concerned with being holy and walking in holiness before God. He is negligent about his life and does not pursue righteousness. He does not heed that exhortation in the epistle to the Hebrews in Hebrews 12:

**Hebrews 12:14** Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Since no sin can stand in God's presence, Christians must and will be sinless when they see God. That realization offers motivation for pursuing holiness here and now. But the author may also have had in mind the thought that one's perception of God, even now, is conditioned by his real measure of holiness. In other words, the less righteous a person is, the less true his view of God is. That is why sanctification is a process as we go through life, we learn along the way, and God reveals Himself to us more and more. Without the obedience to the Ten Commandments, we cannot understand God's love.

Another characteristic of the person with false peace is that when this person falls again into sin, he takes it much too lightly. He is not like the person whose faith is shaken by Satan when he falls into sin. This person says almost as soon as he has fallen, "It's alright. The blood of Christ covers me." He never worries. And up he gets and on he goes as if nothing had happened. You cannot do that if you have any true conception of what sin truly means and what the holiness of God really is. This person with the false peace heals himself much too quickly, much too easily, and much too lightly. It is because he takes sin as a whole too casually.

**Proverbs 19:16** He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of his ways will die.

Now turn with me, please, to Romans 5. If you are restless in seeking peace, the verse that begins the fifth chapter of Paul's magnificent letter to the Romans is addressed to you because here Paul speaks of peace and tells how it may be found.

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

It is a simple but powerful statement full of doctrine. Now, to begin, let us put this verse in its context. To do that, we need to think ahead to what we are going to find in the next major section of Paul's letter. That is Romans chapters 5-8.

It is traditional among commentators to suggest that at this point in his letter, having explained a doctrine of justification by grace through faith, Paul lists what most writers call the fruits of justification and then moves on to discuss sanctification. Now, peace is one such fruit but there are others. For example: Access to God through prayer, hope as we heard about earlier, joy, perseverance, and the sense of being loved by God.

According to this view, Paul interrupts his listing of these fruits of justification in verse 11 to deal with the parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21. He then deals with sanctification in Romans 6:1 through chapter 8 and verse 17. Then, he returns to the assurance that nothing can separate the believer from God's love; which is another fruit of justification found in Romans 8:18-39.

Commentators taking this approach, that is, that this is talking about the fruits of justification found in Romans 8:18-39, conclude that the main concern of the apostle in this section of Romans is sanctification. If the traditional approach is correct, Romans fall into four major sections: A portion dealing with justification, that is in chapters 1-4 of Romans. The second one is a discussion of sanctification in chapters 5-8 of Romans. The third is the problem of God's dealing with the Jews in chapters 9-11 and the fourth is practical matters in chapters 12-16. That is the traditional approach of commentators in mapping out or outlining the book of Romans.

However, at this point, I think that what Paul is actually presenting in Romans 5:1-11, which is our concern, is not the fruits of justification, though

we mentioned some of them, but the beginning of a well-developed statement of the security in Christ—the security in Christ that comes to a believer as a result of his or her justification.

Now, do not let the word “justification” scare you. I think many times ministers stray away from justification because it just sounds like such a technical word. But I think you will get a little more clarification in a slightly different area to this sermon.

There are several different reasons for this interpretation by commentators. There are reasons why they are important which I will explain later. But let us look at Romans 5:1-11 and just read that through very quickly:

**Romans 5:1-5** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God [Peace with God is the theme of this sermon.] through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us.

This is an interesting phrase at the end of verse 5. In the Greek, this last phrase can be interpreted in either of two ways in the original Greek:

1. By the Holy Spirit which *was* given to us.
2. By the Holy Spirit *who* was given *for* us.

Both are correct; the second version refers directly to Christ, however. It is interesting, if you go back to the original Greek, this can be translated either way and both ways are extremely important and both ways work. They even show the differentiation between the use of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. And how, sometimes, they can be the same.

**Romans 5:6-9** For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will

one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood. . .

Everyone who has been baptized and has God's Holy Spirit has been justified by His blood.

**Romans 5:9** . . . we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

So, justification is an absolutely necessary part of our conversion.

**Romans 5:10-11** For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

As I said earlier, according to the traditional view of verses 1-11, Paul seems to interpret his treatment of the firstfruits of justification to deal with the parallel between Adam and Christ and sanctification. Yet, interruptions are not what we have been led to expect in this letter by Paul.

Up to this point in Paul's letter, we see a model of consistent and systematic organization. Right down the line, he does not jump around, he has an organized progression. The best reasons against the traditional view are from verses 1-11 themselves. Look at the first sentence. In the New International Version (NIV) there is a period in the middle of verse two separating the sentence, "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" from the previous one. It is one of the few translations to do this and I believe it is not correct to do that. It is not extremely harmful to, but it takes away from the meaning.

But in the Greek text, this is actually a continuation and a climax of the entire first sentence. In Greek, the passage says what the King James Version (KJV) allows it to say. The KJV says:



**Romans 5:1-2** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Since hope of the glory of God refers to what is commonly called “glorification,” the opening sentence of Romans 5 actually directs our minds to the final, glorified state of those who have been justified. All the way from justification to our glorified state being glorified with God.

Now, hope is tied to justification and what it opens up to us in verse 2, we are encouraged that we can rejoice because we look forward to sharing in God's glory. That is exactly where we come out at the end of Romans 8, where Paul argues that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This suggests that Paul has chapter 8 in mind as he begins chapter 5 and that he moves consistently toward his conclusion in the intervening material.

There is another question as well. In Romans 5:1-2, Paul moves from justification to glorification without mentioning sanctification, which we know is in between the two. It is the matter that the traditionalists suppose to be his main concern. The traditionalist commentators focus on sanctification whereas, if we follow Paul's consistency throughout the letter of Romans, the progression, and how he moves from justification to glorification at the very beginning of chapter 5.

Now in Romans 8 he does the same thing, writing:

**Romans 8:30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

He does the same thing there and does not mention sanctification; there is a reason for that. So, justification then glorification in both of these texts (one at the beginning of Romans 5-8 and one at the end) the one idea, justification, leads directly to the other, glorification.

It is true that a great deal of sanctification takes place between justification and glorification, and that much of what is found in Romans 5-8 bears upon it. But why does Paul not mention sanctification either at the start of this section, that is Romans 5:1-11 or at the end, that is Romans 8:18-39 if this is the primary subject he is writing about? Probably the reason he does not mention sanctification is that it is not his main concern in this context and that these chapters are actually focusing on another issue.

What is that issue? It is the believer's security in Christ; as I mentioned earlier.

It is our security in Christ or, in other words, assurance of our salvation. The apostle Paul seems to be concerned primarily from this point onward, that is from Romans 5:1, to show us the absolute character, the fullness, and the finality of the salvation which comes to us in the way he has already described; namely as a result of justification by faith.

Turn with me, please, to Philippians 4. Let us make another distinction before we get back to the importance of justification. I want to look at the distinction between having peace *with* God, which is what this section covers, and having the peace *of* God, which is another matter altogether.

Most Christians are acquainted with this section of Scripture which tell us about the peace of God.

**Philippians 4:6-7** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Those two verses envision upsetting situations that come into our lives. Peace *of* God relates to upsetting situations that come into our lives. Now, turn over to in Psalm 46 if you would, please. Maybe we have lost a job and worried about earning enough money to provide for our family or we are

sick or our friend is sick or maybe someone very close to us has died. Suddenly, everything seems in turmoil. At times like these the psalms are specially meaningful.

**Psalms 46:1-3** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah.

“Selah” means: peace. The answer to these troubles is that God will give you peace to handle the situation and we receive the peace of God to do that. The peace *of* God but this sermon is more about the peace *with* God; which I will distinguish.

Trouble has been described as being like having an egg-beater thrust into the mixing bowl of our emotional lives. In such times of stress, we need personal peace in our lives and it is this about which Philippians 4:6-7 is speaking. We can have personal peace by asking God for it specific to the trouble and it works! People who have lost a close family member are encouraged by believing that God, who loves them and cares for them, will give them a peace that transcends all human understanding and that is exactly what God has done for them. He has given them peace in the midst of their emotional turmoil.

But, this is not the peace that Romans 5:1 is talking about. Romans 5 is not referring to the peace of God but peace *with* God. And the idea here is not that we are upset and, therefore, need to become trusting or tranquil but, in a sense, rather that we have been at war with God and He with us because of our sin and that peace has nevertheless been provided for us by God, if we have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ.

When we see this, we realize that nothing is more appropriate and logical at this point in Romans than such a reference. Because, what Paul has been saying in the previous section is that God is not at peace with sinners but is at war with them because of their ungodly behavior and the word He has been using is “wrath.”

**Romans 1:18-19** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

Now, God's people are not sinners in the sense that it is our way of life. Every human being in God's church occasionally sins and has to repent of it. It is in the nature of human beings to sin and we in God's church still have some human nature in us and we are trying to replace it with God's Holy Spirit as we work with God. We are trying to overcome and replace that human nature by using God's Holy Spirit which we have in us. But the world sins as a way of life and that is the target of God's wrath.

Having shown what this means and having answered the objections of those who feel that it is an appropriate description of the condition of other people but not themselves, Paul then reveals what God has done to satisfy His wrath against the faithful in Jesus Christ. The Son bore the Father's wrath in our place. He died for us and we received the benefits of His atonement by believing on Him and in what He has done. And this is the point at which the fourth chapter of Romans ends and Romans 5 picks up. Where does this lead in Romans 5?

Obviously, to peace with God. Since we have been justified by faith the cause of the warfare between ourselves and God has been removed and peace is the result. We, therefore, have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a permanent state. That is not the peace of God that we get when we are having difficulties and turmoil and tribulation. This is a permanent peace that we have as a result of our justification.

Peace has been provided from God's side because He has removed the cause of the enmity through Jesus Christ's death. Peace has been received on our side because we have believed God and have found the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be credited to us by God as our righteousness.

Now, there are some practical applications that we need to make at this point. The first is the starting point for all spiritual blessings. In this life and in the life to come is the peace that God has made with us through the death of Jesus Christ, through the spirit sown in peace. Peace is necessary.

**Psalm 29:11** The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

It is no accident that Paul begins Romans 5 with this theme. Many people would like the peace of God or some other kind of peace in difficult circumstances. They would like to be calm under fire, self-assured in highly pressured situations, to be always under control. And many more would like other blessings but if God is the ultimate source of all good things, as He clearly is, we can only have them when we have first entered into a right and proper relationship with Him. And how is that done?

The only way is by faith in Christ as Paul has been stressing. But suppose you will not go that way. In that case what can you possibly expect but a continuation of the wrath of God? A wrath greatly intensified in your case by your rejection of Christ.

Now, the second practical application is that having been justified by God through faith in Jesus Christ we can know that our salvation is secure forever and that now nothing can separate us from God's love.

**Psalm 72:7** In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more.

This is the main point of Romans 5:1-11. We have already seen how the first two verses of Romans 5 pass directly from justification to glorification just as Romans 8:30 does. These chapters also move inexorably to the great conclusion which we find in verses 38-39.

**Romans 8:38-39** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If this were not enough we should be led to the same conclusion by the fact that the text itself speaks, not of seeking peace with God, but of having peace. "Having been justified we have peace with God," is what it says,

clearly. It is hard to emphasize this too much since all Christians need to be sure of their salvation. True, there is a false security about which we need to be warned. Mere intellectual assent to doctrine is not a saving faith and boasting of one's security while continuing to sin is presumption.

With such qualifications aside it is important to know that we have been saved by God, that peace has been made between God and ourselves and that the peace made by God will last forever. Only those who are sure of this salvation can help others.

I am, of course, not in any way suggesting the idea that the Protestant's have of "Once saved, always saved." I have made that statement many times but that is not what I am talking about here.

The third practical application is that it is possible to be at peace with God, and know that we are at peace, while at the same time fail to experience peace in a given situation. That is, fail to experience the peace of God in any given situation.

**Psalm 37:37** Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace.

It is important to point this out because, if we do not know this in advance and cling to it, we can be thrown into paralyzing doubt whenever tragic circumstances or upsetting situations arise. Death will come into our experience and we will be agitated. Bad breaks will come and we will be confused by them, disappointments will shake us and we will feel a lack of peace.

But that is the lack of peace; the peace of God that God gives us. Though He sends that to us for a specific tribulation or trial, we may feel that anxiety. But that peace with God we have as a result of our justification. So, there is one for permanent peace and one that God gives us for specific incidents.

In such situations we need to go to God for the help that we so desperately need and that is why Paul tells the Philippians not to be anxious, as we read earlier.

“But in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And as a result, the peace of God, the peace *of* God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This peace of God is given in specific, troubling situations. One great secret of the Christian life is that we can take all troubling matters to God in prayer thereby finding peace even in the midst of them.

The fact that these situations sometimes cause us to lose our sense of the peace of God does not mean that the peace with God has been destroyed. In fact, knowing that God has made peace with us and that nothing will destroy the peace enables us to go to Him quickly and boldly and when we do need help. It is part of the assurance we have.

It will be in evidence of the fact that we have peace with God. That we do so safe in this matter is like the needle of a compass; it always points to magnetic north. It is possible to deflect it by a hard blow or by bringing another magnet close alongside. But these deflections are temporary and the needle will always return to the proper position. That is what faith is like. It can be jarred and deflected but it will always return to God because God has made peace with us. Faith knows this and God is faith’s true home.

Now, the fourth practical application is that these blessings are nevertheless only through Jesus Christ as Paul says.

**Psalm 55:18** He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many against me.

Paul has been writing about Jesus at the end of Romans 4. He has spoken of His death and His resurrection and then in Romans 5 we might have expected him merely to assume the earlier references as a given and simply say, “Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God,” stopping there. But Paul does not do that. Although he has already mentioned Jesus Christ, he now mentions Him again because he does not want us to imagine that we could get anywhere without Him—without Jesus Christ.

Paul understands that any feeling of acceptance by God that is not based upon the work of Jesus Christ is merely an illusion. One of the most

important principles of sound biblical interpretation is that not everything written in the Bible is for everybody at the same time. This seems strange and wrong to some people but it should not be because we acknowledge this principle widely in everyday life.

What would you think of a postman who mixed up the addresses on the mail he was entrusted with delivering? And suppose he gave a letter containing a birth announcement to a person who did not even know the child's parents or a bank statement showing an overdrawn account to someone who actually had a large balance? What about death notices or invitations to a party or bills? What if the postman delivered those to the wrong people? Sometimes that happens in real life. It is obvious that unless the letter is delivered to the right person the postman is not doing his duty.

A minister is something like a postal worker, except we do not go postal, thankfully. But we deliver biblical messages to the right people, to God's church. The Bible is our bag of Christ's messages and our duty is to see that the right message gets to the right individuals.

I am emphasizing this because we have passed from a section of Romans in which Paul has been explaining the gospel for the benefit of those who have *not* yet believed it and move to a section of Romans in which he presents the benefits to those who *do* believe, to those who *have* believed it. This means that while the first four chapters have in a sense been for everybody, both an offer of salvation for the lost and an explanation of the nature of salvation for those who have received it, this present section (chapters 5 through 8 of Romans) is only for those who have believed in Jesus Christ. This is clear from the opening words in Romans 5 which I will read again to you:

**Romans 5:1-2** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

So we have gained access into this grace by faith in which we now stand. What a wonderful stance we have.



When we are baptized, receive God's Holy Spirit, and have been justified, we have already seen one of these benefits of the first verse: It is peace with God. This is a military metaphor and we have seen that it points to the fact that before our justification by God on the basis of Christ's work we were not at peace with God; we were at war. Human reasoning may be inclined to differ with that by saying, "I'm not at war with God" but that would be a lie. Jesus Christ said that man's primary responsibility is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And that the second is to love your neighbor as yourself.

We do not do that completely and perfectly. In a sense there are times when we actually hate God; or better stated: love God less. Love Him less and love others less than we love ourselves. God is not always the top priority in our lives. Nevertheless, God's people are much more loving of Him than the world is. We live our lives in a way that shows we love God; we just do not do it perfectly.

However, having been justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, this state of spiritual warfare has been changed to one of peace. We have peace with God, make peace with others, and experience a new measure of personal peace ourselves. This is the first great benefit of our justification.

Romans 5:1 speaks clearly of having peace with God and then in verse 2 we come to a second benefit of justification: that is, assurance.

**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.

There are a number of very important words in this verse: access, faith, and stand. But these can be used in different ways and it is not easy to see how they all go together in a sentence. Now, let me make an attempt to briefly define each one. Taking them in order, I think, will get us to the meaning of this verse most quickly. Remember the subject matter in this point is assurance.

Take faith. Faith has a variety of meanings. Generally it means believing God and acting upon that belief but the emphasis can be either upon the

acting, that is, being faithful, or upon the believing, that is, taking God at His word. Or it can relate to a variety of things that we are called upon to believe. Now since the word is linked to grace in Romans 5:2 and since this grace is the grace of justification, the faith referred to here is the faith in Jesus Christ by which we are justified. In other words faith, in verse 2, has the same meaning as faith in verse 1. Faith by which we are justified is implied throughout.

Now, the second word is: access. The Greek word lying behind this term is a long word: *prosagóge*, which can mean access, right to enter, freedom to enter, or even introduction. It is used of the power of the Holy Spirit to enable prayer in Ephesians 2.

**Ephesians 2:18** For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

What does the word “access” mean in Romans 5:2? The important thing to see about its use is that it is preceded by the verb “have gained” and that this verb is in the past perfect tense. Now the New International Version translation says the word “have gained” in order to make the point I am making but the word is actually “have had” in the past perfect tense. The proper translation is “have had”.

Therefore, what Paul is saying is that we have had our access into the grace of justification. Paul uses the special past tense to show that the justification in which we stand is something that has been accomplished for us and into which we have already entered. It has a present significance too of course, but the reason it has a present significance is that it is something that has already happened to us and we have been justified; therefore we remain justified. We have had our access and it is because of this that we still have it.

The next word I want to go over is “stand.” The final key word is the verb “stand.” By now, we can see how it should be taken. By the mercy of God we have been brought into the grace of justification and that is the grace by which we now have the privilege to stand. Before, we were standing without as children of wrath; now we are standing within, not as enemies or even as pardoned criminals, but as sons and daughters of the Almighty God.

Let me sum this up: The central purpose of the apostle Paul, in Romans chapters 5-8, is the overriding theme of these chapters; that of assurance. That is what Paul is emphasizing; security in Christ.

So, although there are these benefits in being justified; from having peace with God, to access, to rejoicing in hope of the coming glory, all nevertheless are also evidence that we have been made secure in Christ—now and forever. If we continue, and that is an if; *if* we continue to have faith in the Father and the Son and obedience to Them as we continue to repent of and overcome our sins.

The story of Queen Esther illustrates the nature of our standing in grace. You know the story well. It is only a mere physical example. Nevertheless, in a basic way it illustrates our access to God and our peace with Him. Now, let me summarize the story.

Esther was a young, Jewish woman, as you know, living in the days following the fall of Jerusalem. As a result of which, the majority of the Jewish people had been carried off to Babylon. At the time of her story, the king was Xerxes and he was ruling at Sousa. Xerxes sought a bride to replace the deposed queen Vashti and found one in Esther.

She became the queen, and after being taken from the home of her cousin and guardian, Mordecai, to live in Xerxes' palace, a great enemy of the Jews, named Haman, was also living in the palace. Haman hatched a plot against the Jews in which Xerxes unwittingly signed a decree that would result in death for all the Jews in Persia. Mordecai got a message to Esther telling her about the plot and telling her that she must go to the king and tell him what was about to happen and try to prevent it.

Sadly, explained Esther, there was a problem. It was a law of the Persians that **no one** could approach the king unbidden. If the person approached the king in the inner court without being summoned, there was only one result, death, unless the king held out his golden scepter to that person and thus spared his or her life. And although queen Esther had not been summoned to the king for 30 days, even she could not approach him without danger of being put to death.

Mordecai explained to Esther that she had undoubtedly been brought to her royal position for such a time as this and that there was no one else who could intervene to save her people. Esther agreed to go to the king. She spent three days in prayer and fasting, asking the Jews, through Mordecai, also to fast and pray with her.

At the end of her period of preparation, she put on her most royal robes and stepped into the king's inner hall. The king was sitting on his throne facing the entrance. And when he saw Esther, he was so pleased with her beauty that he stretched out the scepter that was in his hand and so accepted her. So, Esther had access to the king and through her the Jews were eventually spared.

That is what Paul says has happened to us through the work of Jesus Christ and the application of that work to us in our justification. But the parallel is not exact and for us the result is even more wonderful. Esther was beautiful and the king was pleased with her but in our case, sin has made us highly offensive to God and we had not even tried to approach Him before our calling.

So God has loved us, He sought us when we were far from Him, and He sent His Son to die for us and He took the penalty of law, the punishment of our sins upon Him.

Please turn with me to I Timothy 2. Because of Christ's work, we have been brought into the palace where we enjoy God's favor and have continuing access to Him through Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. There is one Mediator, that is Christ. There is only one between us and God and that one is the Son.

**I Timothy 2:5** For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

I was going to have you turn there but I am going to save time and just refer to it. I John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things I write to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." So, whatever is needed, Jesus Christ will supply it. He will continue to stand between God and us because a priest is one who

bridges a gap between different parties to bring them together. Christ promises: I will always fill the void and be there when you need Me by means of the Spirit of God.

Christ, our High Priest, brings us close to the Father. He not only enables us to serve Him but He also enables the Father to serve us because we are in His presence and He can distribute to us the gifts that enable us to continue. Jesus Christ, the Mediator of our peace between God and us and the Advocate of forgiveness between us and God, passes on the benefits to us.

These benefits work to rid us of failings and flaws; helping us to reflect the character and attributes of our God. We can then have a continual and eternal relationship with Him having His laws written on our hearts and being transformed into His image; qualifying to receive the inheritance of the promises from Him because we have become like Him. He does all the real work but we have our part to play in it and our effort to make.

Please turn with me to Hebrews 10. The author of Hebrews tells us to go before God in the full assurance of faith. Now what does that mean?

**Hebrews 10:19** Therefore, brethren, have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

**Hebrews 10:22** Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The “full assurance of faith” means an unwavering confidence; a fullness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubts. We are permitted to come before the Father because He has revealed Himself to the Redeemer in every way deserving our fullest confidence.

No one approaches God in an acceptable manner who does not come to Him in this manner. What parent would feel that a child came, with any right feelings, to ask a favor of him who did not have the fullest confidence in him? The phrases “having boldness to enter the holiest” and “let us draw near with a true heart” obviously deal with prayer.

This suggests that, although Romans 5:2 is not speaking explicitly about prayer since its concern is primarily with assurance, all this obviously has bearing on our right to approach God in prayer and receive answers from Him. Besides, we are encouraged in this thinking by the fact that one of the key words in this verse, that is “access,” occurs in two other passages in the New Testament and that each of these has to do with prayer. Both are in Ephesians.

**Ephesians 2:18** For through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father . . .

**Ephesians 3:12** In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

These passages teach two things about prayer which are based on the fact that we have been given access to God through His work of justification.

The first is that our access to God is direct. I mean by this that we do not have to use human mediators to get us to God since the one true Mediator, Jesus Christ, has opened the door to God's throne and given us access to the Father once and forever.

This truth is taught in the first of the two passages from Ephesians because it comes at the end of a paragraph in which Paul has been referring to the barriers that once divided men and women from God and from each other. In the Jewish temple to which he refers, there were walls designed to protect the approach to God.

If you were to have approached the Temple Mount in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus Christ, you would have been confronted with a wall that divided the courtyard of the Gentiles from what lay beyond. And that wall meant what it said: No Gentile could go beyond it, and the penalty for violating the sanctity of the inner court was death. Even the Romans upheld the penalty and there were signs placed in warning; two of which have since been discovered and are in museums to this day.

The Jews could go forward, of course, but even Jewish worshippers would come to a second wall. This wall divided the court of the women from the

court of the men. Here, all Jewish women had to stop. Beyond that was still another wall and past it only the priests could go. They could perform the sacrifices and enter the Holy Place of the Temple. But here there was a final barrier; the great curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Beyond that barrier only one person could ever go and that was the high priest who could enter only on the Day of Atonement and present the blood of the sacrifice that had been offered for the sins of the people moments before in the outer courtyard.

That elaborate system taught the way to God was barred even for the elect people of Israel. God could be approached but only through the mediation of the priests. The Gentiles were without access at all unless they first became Jews and approached by the Jewish route of priestly mediation.

But now, says Paul, those dividing walls and partitions have been broken down and the reason is that, when Jesus died, God removed the ultimate barrier; the curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

Do you remember how the great curtain was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross? I am sure you do.

**Matthew 27:50-53** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

This signified that the atonement for sin had been made and accepted. The barriers of sin were now gone for all who would approach God on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ. For these, everyone who has been justified by the grace of God and Christ, access to God is now directly through Christ. There are no mediators needed. None except Jesus Christ, so we can come to God directly at any time of day or in any place and know that He hears us and will answer our prayers.

Now, let us move on to the second thing about prayer. It is very simple: our access to God is effective. This truth is taught by the second of the verses from Ephesians because it emphasizes that through faith in Christ we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Confidence in what?

Obviously, that He will hear us and answer our prayers according to His wise and perfect will. We have that guarantee. We can pray wrongly, of course, and we often do. But when we pray according to the wise will of God we can be confident that He will both hear us and answer our prayers.

Now, let us begin to wrap this up. What are the characteristics of true peace? What does it produce in us? They are the exact opposite of false peace. To simplify it I will not be covering everything but just to touch on a few:

First: The man with true peace is *never* superficial. The person who is a true Christian is a person who considers the end result of what he is about to do and when he is in doubt about whether or not something is sin, he does not do it because whatever is not of faith is sin. That is always present with him so he is not superficial and not insincere.

Second: He is a man who is always filled with a sense of wonder and amazement at what God has done and is doing. Now, this seems to me to be inevitable. The man who has true peace is a man who never ceases to be amazed that he has it. Amazed at the fact that he has ever been justified at all; that God has ever looked upon him and called him by His grace.

Which leads to the third characteristic. Namely, that he is humble. You remember that one of the characteristics of Abraham's faith was, as Paul mentions in Romans 4:20, he did not waver in the promise of God through unbelief but with strength and in faith giving glory to God. And giving glory to God is a form of humility and submission.

Going through the New Testament you will always find that the most outstanding characteristic of the Christian is that he is humble, full of spirit, meek, but not weak.



**Romans 12:16** Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Realizing the truth about himself and about God and realizing that he owes all to Christ, the Christian is a humble person, a lowly person. That is another way of saying that his sense of gratitude to God and to Christ is always prominent.

For a final scripture, please turn with me to Titus 3. There is no better index of where we stand than the amount of praise and of thanksgiving that characterizes our lives and our prayers. Some people are always making requests or making statements. But the Christian, having realized something of what God in Christ has done for him, is always thanking God and is always praising the Father and the Son. It is inevitable. It is incontrovertible. The man who realizes his position truly must be filled with a sense of wonder and love and praise and hope and faith.

And fourth, he is a man who is always careful about his life. This applies to a man or a woman, you understand that. We will read verse 8.

**Titus 3:8** This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men and women.

Not that he may be justified as a result of carefulness that he has. He is careful because he has been justified.

Again, this is quite inevitable. He does not fall back on works and try to justify himself. His position is that because of what Christ has done for him, he wants to show his gratitude to Him. Realizing the terrible character of sin, he wants to leave it, and in addition, he is anxious to be holy and to be in God's Kingdom. There is an excitement. He sees that the Word of God is dynamic every time he reads it.

The person who is not careful to maintain good works is a person who is proclaiming that he has a false sense of peace. The person who has the true peace is a person who is always careful to do good works from a heart of humility and gratitude. Never parading himself or his family.

I Timothy 3:9 says we are to hold not only the mystery of the faith but we must also hold at the same time a pure conscience. A pure conscience is genuine and truthful and humble and thankful. If you are baptized and have God's Holy Spirit, you have been given peace with God.

What a miraculous and wonderful gift that is; one that we on a regular basis do not give enough credit to. And since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. And because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.