

Romans 5 - Finding Peace with God

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Well we've covered a lot in these last few weeks. In a brief history and background about the Church in Rome, and through Chapters 1-4, we've been able to look into the heart of the Gospel through the discerning eyes of Paul. He first challenges us, no matter what side of the "religious aisle" we stand, to understand that none of us are right with God on our own. There is nothing we can do to merit any standing with God. Then he turns us 180 degrees and points us to the One who is going to solve this problem – he points us to Christ. He explains that Christ is not only worthy, but He was also willing to take all the risk, all the pain and ALL THE CONSEQUENCES of that covenant promise when, not if, it was broken.

Many of us have heard this all of our lives, and it may sound like just so much rhetoric. But try to put yourself in the sandals of those 1st Century New Believers. It was almost too good to be true.

Up until then, everyone in the modern world understood "god" to be someone to appease, someone to be feared and someone who was too far above mortal humanity to take on any consequences of mankind. They were gods, and man was man. No magic formula or offering would ever accommodate either being in relationship with each other. But it was a man-made posturing, and in all honesty it felt good to them. If nothing else, they had some control over their destiny. There was one problem, however. It never brought peace!

We've come to Chapter 5. It is another pivotal chapter that challenges the reader to pause and consider the profound impact that these truths have on all of humanity. Whenever Paul comes to one of these pauses, he uses the word, "Therefore". You will see it at various points in Romans when he's presented a truth and then he wants to make plain the results or application of that truth. He used it in Chapter 2, he uses it here, and he'll use it two more times in Chapters 8 and 12.

In Chapter 5 we read:

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character;

and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

When we read further in this Chapter, we get the overwhelming impression that Paul is now sharing with us how incredible this grace really is. He goes on to say in Verse 7:

⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

This chapter is Paul's way of saying, "This is the Core of the Gospel."

As Paul gives us ample time now to stop and think, there is a fundamental question that is begging to be asked:

Are we good people who occasionally do bad things?

OR

Are we bad people who occasionally do good things?

I don't know about how you might answer that question, but I am a pretty positive guy. For instance, I'm the kind of person who would say, "He's really a good kid who just got mixed up with the wrong crowd."

Most of us would say, "I'm really a good person and – okay, sure - sometimes I slip up." We say this because we know OTHER people. We look around, and we start to make judgment calls that make us look . . . well . . . not so bad.

But Paul is saying we are ALL bad people, I know that doesn't make any of us feel great, but that is what is going on here. Paul says in verse 8 that Christ died for us "while we were still sinners" - not sinning, but sinners = Bad People.

As we explore further in this book, one of the things we need to do is remember Paul's own conversion. For those of you who may not know, Paul was once called Saul. He was a law-abiding, Christian-hating Jewish leader on a mission to destroy everything about Christianity. He was on his way to Damascus to round up some more Christians when God stops him in the middle of the road and blinds him. Acts, Chapter 9 – God speaks to Saul in the midst of fumbling around in his own darkness, "Why are you persecuting me?"

Saul was doing what he thought was good and right, not realizing that those whom he hated were those who were on God's side. When his eyes were opened three days later, not only was his name changed, but the way he saw himself and others was changed as well. With that he began to understand the Gospel, the great news of being right with God for no other reason than believing in Him through the faith that He gives us. It was this stopping on the road and his turning from himself that put him right with God. And for the first time in Paul's life, he finds peace.

This is not just any peace; this is peace that passes our own consciousness. It is what humanity longs for when it is restlessly looking for meaning. It is what we crave in the midst of our clamoring to find some semblance of worth, and it is ultimately the fulfillment from our shame and despair.

Paul basically says this is our "End Game". This is what he was looking for and what every human being is seeking in this chaotic, messed-up world.

He then gives us four things that we receive because of this Peace with God status:

The first is **Contentment**: Just the idea of knowing we have no reasons now to feel like we have to match up to some performance grid to gain God's favor is not only freeing, it is rest to the soul.

The Second is **Access**. In Verse 2 Paul states:

²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

We get to have full access to everything that is imparted from God.

The third thing we receive as a result of this Peace with God is **Joy**: The verse says we get to rejoice in good times and in the hard times. The word here is the same word Paul uses for boasting. It can be negative as well as positive. However, this time it is being used as not boasting about ourselves but in what Christ has and is doing in us.

The last is **Hope**: We are given hope in the midst of the turmoil that we find in this world. And nothing can take that away.

And then he makes this really cool contrast between Christ and Adam. However, this is not just one man dying for the other man's sin legacy. Paul is doing something much more interesting. Look at what he says in Verse 17

¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all

who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

To get the full impact of this however, we need to read a little further: Verse 18

18 Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

Paul is helping us understand that, if Adam's sin caused so much devastation in this world, imagine what God's Son's righteous life is going to do for us! We already know that sin and death is conquered, but so much more than just winning that battle is at hand! We are not just set right with God, but we are given a NEW LIFE on top of it - living with God for all eternity.