

The Peace of God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I'm not sure who cooks the meals in your house. In our house, Michelle very kindly, Michelle my wife, very kindly does most of the cooking. Well, all of the cooking, I should say.

And one night we were trying to get our children to eat more fish and Michelle experimented with a new fish dish. But when our youngest tasted it, she screwed up her face and said, Mum, this chicken tastes funny. Michelle said, that's because it's fish. And with the mention of fish, the moans and groans came thick and fast. It didn't help that I then offered to make the kids some toast. Don't do that.

And so it all offended Michelle, who had provided us with this meal. And so Michelle rightly said, well, no dessert for any of you. Me included, I think. And at the mention of dessert, Megan, our youngest, ran around, hugged her leg and said, I'm sorry, your chicken dinner tastes funny. Don't think she'd quite got it right. But eventually we said, sorry. Michelle said, that's OK. And now we were right with Michelle. And with that came the blessing of dessert.

Now, the point of the story is that being right with someone often comes with blessings. And today we're returning to the book of Romans. We started earlier this year. And as we start, that's how Paul starts.

He says that being right with God, that is being a Christian comes with blessings. Do you see verse one? He says, therefore, since we have been justified or made right through faith, we have dot, dot, dot these blessings. And he goes on to list them.

[1 : 4 3] Now, it's this first phrase here that summarizes for us the first four chapters of the book. And so since it's been a while since we've looked at Romans, let me quickly remind you about those first four chapters.

Paul began by reminding us that we are all guilty of doing the wrong thing from time to time. And if we're honest with ourselves, we know we have done the wrong thing from time to time.

And so that comes with a consequence, with judgment. So chapter one, verse 18, we heard that the wrath of God, the judgment of God is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of people.

And he says in chapter two, verse six, that God will repay each person according to what they have done, which is bad news because we've all done wrong.

For chapter three, verse 10, there is no one righteous, not even one. Rather, the whole world, chapter three, verse 19, will be held accountable to God.

[2 : 5 0] So he presented the bad news, but then he gave us the good news that God has provided a way for us to be right with him, to escape the judgment we deserve.

And so if you've got your Bibles there, just turn back one page, just one page, page 1129. And under the heading righteousness through faith, have a look there from verse 21, page 1129, left hand column, chapter three, verse 21.

But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known to us, to which the law and the prophets in the Old Testament point to.

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. And here's what we heard before. There's no difference between Jew and Gentile.

Well, everyone has sinned and everyone has fallen short of the glory of God. And yet all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came through Christ Jesus.

[3 : 59] You see, that God has made a way to justify us freely. The word justify here means to make right. And we often try and do this ourselves, don't we? We do something wrong and we try to justify ourselves, don't we?

I like the person who was pulled over by the police for running a red light. And they said, I'm sorry, officer, but I'm colorblind. They still know red is at the top. But they try to justify themselves, make themselves right.

You see, to justify someone means to make them right and not guilty. But when it comes to sin, no one can justify themselves. We can't do it. Only God can. God justifies or makes us right as a free gift, it says, by his grace, which gave his son to die for us.

And so God makes us right with him, forgives us, justifies us when we believe in Jesus, when we have faith or trust in Jesus, when we become a Christian.

And when we are Christians, then these blessings follow. So come back with me to chapter five, verse one. He says, therefore, since after spending four chapters on this, since we have been justified with God through faith in Jesus, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also, it should say, we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

[5 : 26] And we have or boast in the hope of the glory of God. You see the blessings we have here? Now that we are right with God, we have the blessing of peace with God.

We have access to the grace of God. And we have the hope of the glory of God. These are just three benefits that come with being right with God. Three things that make it worth being a Christian.

Now, they may not sound like much, so let's think about them for a moment. Firstly, peace with God. I mean, it naturally follows on. If you are right with someone, then you're often also at peace with them, are you not?

In fact, being justified and being at peace or reconciled, it's the same thing. One is using courtroom language to say we're now right. And peace and reconciliation, that's relationship language to say we're now right.

See, often in the world when fighting stops, when there's a ceasefire, we think there's peace. But peace with God is much more than a ceasefire. It's a restored relationship.

[6 : 34] I once heard of some neighbours in Sydney who were fighting. Some friends were telling us about this. The neighbours were fighting with each other. Apparently, one had put up a new fence, which had just crept over into the other person's property by an inch.

And that sparked conflict, like you would not believe, from yelling abuse, to hiding each other's bins, to putting garbage on each other's property. And in the short time, this conflict had actually caused such stress and sleeplessness that the people telling me this story said you could see it on their faces.

You know, bags on their eyes, grey hair appearing. Well, maybe not that bad. But there was no joy and rest. It was just tension and stress. It's what conflict does.

And finally, the council and the police were called in and the fence was moved. And at that point, the fighting did stop. There was a ceasefire, so to speak. There was a sort of peace, but it wasn't true peace.

Because do you think their relationship was restored? Were they friends? No way. If it was true peace, then the fence would have been removed altogether.

- [7 : 43] They wouldn't have needed a fence anymore because they would have been in perfect relationship with each other. They'd freely walk into each other's house with complete confidence and ask to borrow, I don't know, a bowl of sugar.
- And then neighbours' answers would be a joyful, of course you can, your family. This is the type of peace we have with God. A fully restored relationship from enemy to family.
- From being God haters in chapter one to being God's children. People are often so stressed about jobs and money and life, whereas we can rest with contentment and even inner peace.
- Knowing God will never leave us nor forsake us because we are his love children. Knowing that we can freely come before God and ask for help with confidence because we are now his family.
- That doesn't mean life will be easy, but it does mean we'll never be alone in it. That God will always help us through it. Because we have this restored relationship, we have peace with God.
- [8 : 45] What's more, our self-worth is no longer tied up in what job we do. When you meet someone new, what's the first question they ask often? What do you do for a living? Our whole identity is tied up with what we do for a living.
- But now, it's no longer tied up with what job we do, how much we earn, how good we look, how good a mum or a dad we are. Our self-worth is now tied up with who we are as God's precious and loved children.
- It's what it means to have peace with God, you see. It's a great blessing, which makes being a Christian a great thing. What's more, now that we are family, now that we have peace with God, we also have free access, not to a bowl of sugar, but to God's storehouse of grace.
- You see verse 2 again? It says, Through Jesus also, we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.
- See, God's grace that saved us and enables us to stand forgiven is the same grace we have access to for ongoing help. God's grace is God's generosity.
- [9 : 51] And his generosity gave his son to save us, though we don't deserve it. And in this generosity, he continues to give us help. The help we need to follow him to heaven.
- On the next slide, some verses which kind of capture this. It says, We have access to this grace that will continue to help us.
- Down the bottom there, Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
- I was talking with someone just this morning before church, And often God's grace comes at the last minute, But it comes at the point we need it. And he was telling that. He needed a new house.
- And everything just fell into place, he said. God provided. Being right with God means we have peace with God, And with it, unrestricted access to his unlimited storehouse of grace.
- [10 : 57] It would be like having unrestricted access to Fort Knox, Where America's gold storehouse is. On the next slide, there's a picture of Fort Knox. It's pretty incredible, isn't it?
- And all that gold there. You know, it would be like, you know, Just being able to walk in there confidently, Ask for a few bars of gold to help you out. Of course, our problem is that we get more excited by gold than grace.
- But gold only helps us in this world and lasts but a lifetime, if that. God's grace helps us to the next world, And that lasts an eternity.

God's grace is actually worth much more than gold, And Christians have unrestricted access to an unlimited supply of it. Well, not only do we have peace with God and unrestricted access to God's grace, We also have an unshakable hope now that we are right with God.

So in verse 2, he continues. He says, And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Instead of saying we have hope, he says we boast in this hope.

[12 : 04] That is, we glory in it, we revel at the idea of it, We rejoice in it. And so what is this hope that we boast in? Well, it's the hope of sharing in God's glory.

Sharing in the glory of his character that we have fallen short of, As we read in chapter 3. It's sharing in the glory of reigning with Christ over the next world. It's enjoying the glory of a recreated world where everything is perfect.

Enjoying perfect relationships with perfect people in a perfect paradise. In fact, later he will say that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to come.

So great will it be. No wonder Paul boasts in it. Of course, in the meantime, we may suffer. Yet even then, we can boast, he says. So verse 3, he says, You see, we can boast or rejoice in our sufferings, not because they are painful, but because of what they produce.

How does that work? Well, when things are tough, we have to exercise perseverance, don't we? And as we do, it strengthens our character, which in turn, our character leads to greater conviction of hope that heaven is real.

[13 : 30] So let me see if I can illustrate. I received a prayer letter from a friend of ours. We receive regular prayer letters from them. His wife died to cancer a couple of years ago. He has four children, all of whom are still at home.

And in his letter, he wrote, Today marks the second anniversary of her passing. And while we still mourn, we rejoice in our certain hope of seeing her again.

You see, his suffering forced him to exercise his faith, his perseverance, which in turn strengthened his character and bolstered his hope.

That's how it works. And so Paul says, we can even boast in our suffering, not in a self, you know, not loving pain, masochistic.

I had that word in and I couldn't pronounce it. But in a masochistic way where you enjoy pain, you know, I've got some broken ribs for falling off my bike. Excellent. No, no, not like that. But rather boast or rejoice in what it produces.

[14 : 35] A strengthened character, which in turn lifts our eyes with greater conviction of hope. Of course, the nature of our hope is that we don't have it yet. I mean, that's what hope is, isn't it?

Who hopes for what they already have? You hope for things you don't have. And so some may argue that the Christian hope is actually hopeless. You know, it's pie in the sky when you die. It's wishful thinking.

Someone once said to me, not a Christian, but trying to be funny, he said, I don't understand Christians. They say that gambling is wrong, but then they bet their entire life on there being a heaven. Of course, it would be a joke if our hope was not certain.

So that's what Paul goes on to say, that it is certain. It is assured. It will not show us to be fools or put us to shame. See verse five? He says, and our hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

In other words, our hope of glory is certain because it is based on God's love and secured by God's Spirit who lives in us.

[15 : 45] And this love itself is certain because it's been demonstrated in history. Do you see verse six? You see, just at the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Here we see that God's love sent God's Son to die for us.

And this is no ordinary kind of love. It's the pinnacle of human love. Sorry, it's even greater than human love. The pinnacle of human love is someone dying for another righteous or good person.

You hear stories of this sometimes from time to time when a father saves a child or in the war times when one soldier gives his life for his mate. But it rarely happens.

But God's love, on the other hand, gives what is most precious to him for his enemy. Verse 7 calls us ungodly.

[16 : 54] Verse 8 calls us sinners. And verse 10 calls us God's enemies. And yet while we were still all of these things, while we were still at war with God, while we were still rejecting God, Christ died for us.

I can imagine dying for my kids and my wife. Sorry, Michelle. My wife and my kids. I can imagine dying for some friends, but for my enemies?

I don't think so. Yet that's what God did for us. The question, of course, is how does this love guarantee our hope?

Well, if God's love saved us in the past, then we can be certain it will save us in the future. That is, if God's love has already done the hardest thing of giving his most precious son for us, his enemies, then it will certainly do the easier thing of bringing us home to glory.

See verse 9 and 10? Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath? Through him. For if while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled now, shall we be saved through his life?

[18 : 22] Here, Paul says the same thing twice, really. First, using courtroom language of justified or made right. And then secondly, in verse 10, by using the relationship language of being at peace or reconciled.

And his point is, if God has done the harder thing of giving his son to reconcile us and to make us right, then how much more so will he do the easier thing of saving us from judgment and bringing us home to heaven?

Especially now that we are no longer his enemies, but his family. And someone gave me a Ferrari the other day. True story. It's a matchbox car, but it's still true.

I love it. But imagine I said, look, I'll give you a piece of cake, chocolate cake next week, and the week after, I will give you a real red Ferrari.

Now, you'd be sceptical, wouldn't you? Even if I gave you the piece of chocolate cake next week, you'd still be sceptical about the Ferrari the following week, wouldn't you? Because the Ferrari is the harder and more costly gift to give, isn't it?

[19 : 28] But imagine I gave you a red Ferrari next week instead, and then promised you the chocolate cake the week after. Having received that Ferrari, then you'd be all the more certain that you'd get the chocolate cake the week after, wouldn't you?

Having received the harder and more costly thing already, you'd be confident you'd receive the easier thing the week after. Now, that's what Paul is saying.

Don't get your hopes up, by the way. It's just, I said, imagine. That's what Paul is getting at here. If God loved us enough to do the harder and more costly thing of giving up his son to die for us, then how much more so will he do the easier thing of saving us from judgment in the future?

In fact, we've already been justified. God found not guilty right with him. So it's going to be dead easy for God to save us in the future. If he has saved us while we're his enemies in the past, how much more will he save us now that we are his children in the future?

I mean, do you think having paid the penalty for us, he will then punish us on the last day? Of course not. Do you think having reconciled his enemies that he won't then save his friends?

[20 : 43] Of course he will. See, what he has done in the past makes our hope of the future certain. And he adds in verse 10 that he's secured not only by the death of Jesus, but also by the life of Jesus, who lives to intercede for us.

This hope makes all the difference. Remember back in verse 1 and 2, he says we have peace, we have access to grace, and we boast in hope.

He changes from we have hope to we boast in hope. He singles out this hope idea and spends the rest of the time showing us how hope is certain. Why? Because hope makes all the difference.

You see, hope gives us something to live for, to find meaning, to help persevere towards. If you take away hope in life, you take away life itself. I mean, it's why people have a midlife crisis, because they think their life is over and they have nothing to show for it.

They have no meaning, no hope for the future. And so they try and find meaning and hope by having an affair or by buying a red Ferrari or whatever it is. That's why people sadly commit suicide, because they see no hope.

[21 : 52] It's why people get depressed, because they have no hope. Hope makes a huge amount of difference in life. And having been made right with God, we have the greatest of all hope.

A hope that is guaranteed, a hope of glory. Earlier this year in March, a lady called Amanda Knox, who was charged with murder, was found not guilty after four years in custody in Italy.

I think we've got a slide of it. Here it is. The headline, Amanda Knox full of joy after being acquitted or justified. And she said later on in the article that now, now that she's been found not guilty, now that she's been declared right, she has hope for life.

And she's filled with joy. Paul is saying here that we have been justified or made right, not with the Italian court, but with God himself. And now we not only have peace and grace, but we also have a certain hope, not just for this life, as Amanda has, but for the life to come.

If we are Christian. And so the question at the moment then for us is, are we Christians? Do we believe in Jesus? Because if we don't, we don't have any of these blessings.

[23 : 08] But if we do believe in Jesus, then it ought to fill us with joy. Amanda was full of joy, having hope of a new life. Now we've got hope for glory to come.

Indeed, this is how Paul ends in verse 11, which is where we'll end. Verse 11, not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

I don't know what it is you boast in, what excites you, whether it's the sunny weather yesterday, which was very nice. Actually got to mow my lawns. It was very exciting. I don't know if you boast when your kids actually say please and thank you without being threatened to do so.

It's pretty exciting for us. Whether you boast in a good night's sleep or good health. But if we truly understand the blessings we have as Christians, as those who have been made right with God by Jesus, then this will excite us also, such that we will boast in God and his son Jesus, through whom all this has come.

In fact, that's how he started and ended this passage, with that phrase, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We'll boast in Jesus, not just here at church, but outside church, but outside church, to our friends and family.

[24 : 27] We'll take opportunities that come. When they say, what did you do on the weekend? We'll say we went to church, amongst other things. We will boast in God and his son Jesus, through whom we have received all these things.

In the words of our next song, I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom, but I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.

Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you that, having been made right with you, as Christians, we receive these great blessings, of peace, of access into your grace, and of our unshakable and certain hope.

These blessings may not be tangible, but they're worth so much more. Father, help us to remember all we have in Christ, all you have given us through Jesus, that we may continue to boast in you, and your son.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.