

All About Him: Peace Through Jesus

Romans 5:1-2

August 26, 2018
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I often have opportunities to describe Bethel Church. Sometimes at length. Sometimes it must be very quick. What would you say in the elevator that our church is all about? We have many wonderful options as our church has lots of great things going on. We are a regional church with four campuses and lots of outreach. We are a family church with great kids' and students' ministries. We are an expositional preaching church. We are a growing church. We are a doctrinal or creedal church. We are a this or a that. There are lots of things to choose from that describe who we are and who we aspire to be.

But many years ago when I came to Bethel Church, I intentionally began to say and preach and talk about us being a church that is *All About Him*. Whether we are or not is something Christ himself determines and will evaluate someday. But I know of no better, more biblical, more inspiring, more visionary, more God-glorifying goal as a church than for us to do all the other things for the overall purpose of glorifying our blessed Savior Jesus Christ.

This is not anti-trinitarian. How can it be as God is solidly trinitarian and rejoices over God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit? The summary is the greatest command: we are to love God, the trinitarian God, with all our hearts, soul, mind and strength.

However, Scripture is clear that the underlying purpose behind why God created the universe, time, galaxies, people, angels, Satan, and all of history past and future is, "*that in everything he might have the supremacy.*" (Colossians 1:18 NIV) "*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.*" (Romans 11:36 ESV) These and many, many others show God's deepest purposes in why he does what he does; that the glories and perfections of Christ might be unveiled, platformed, and praised by every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10).

Let's make clear once again, why does this church exist? What is the purpose of Bethel Church? Let's make clear why you exist. What is your purpose? Why did God save you? Yes, because he loves you. Go deeper. It is because of the love within the Trinity. What is God's purpose behind your marriage or singleness, your family, your career, your money, your life, death, and eternal destiny? So "*that in everything he might have the supremacy.*" That is why *All About Him* is so important to us; it aligns everything in our lives with God's will and keeps us tethered to him.

We have worked hard in our teaching series in Romans to arrive on this date at this text, Romans 5:1-2. It begins a new section in Romans in which the implications of chapters 1-4 are applied to salvation, living as a Christian, the question of the Jews' salvation, and practical matters in chapter 12 and following. Chapter 5, verse 1 has one of the most important "*therefores*" ever.

What is drawing to conclusion? Chapter 1 says all Gentiles are under God's wrath. Chapter 2 says the Jewish people are under God's wrath. Chapter 3 shows us that a right standing before God is possible by faith as God declares us righteous via justification. This is not earned, merited, or accomplished by us. It is entirely earned, merited, and accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross in our place for our sins. His righteousness is given to us as a gift which grants us eternal standing before God and eternal glory to Jesus. It is a gift to us and

glory to him. In chapter 4, we find that even Abraham, the hero of the Old Testament story, was saved by faith. How can anyone think they are saved by a good life if even Abraham had to be saved by faith? This leads to this wonderful *"Therefore."* "Therefore" means, based on all that I have said thus far, it means this.

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2, ESV)

Here is where we are going. These two verses show that justification has a past, a present, and a future dimension. The past was when I was justified. The present is peace and grace. The future will be hope and glory. When I get that, I *rejoice* in all of it.

Verse 1 is an unusual verse of the Bible in that there is virtually no difference across the English translations. Almost word for word it's the same. It couldn't be any clearer and Paul said it in straightforward language. *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The Christian's Past – Declared Righteous Forever

"Therefore." Based on what? *"Since we have been justified by faith."* Notice that he uses "since" not "if." "If" would insinuate a condition or an uncertainty. Not "if." *"Since we have been justified by faith."* There is Paul's summary of what four chapters have explained in detail anticipating counterarguments both from Gentiles and Jews. He has countered each objection and comes to this verse and summarizes all of it with, *"since we have been justified by faith."* There's his bottom line. Since right standing before God is granted by personal trust and not personal effort or merit, there is a wonderful byproduct in justification. What is it? *"Peace with God."*

Before we get to that, how is this "past"? To be a Christian is to be declared righteous by God. To be justified. There are no non-justified Christians running around. At some point in each Christian's life, we go from guilty before God to righteous before God. The Greek language has ways of indicating a time stamp—past, present, or future. The word for "justified" is past tense. Simple past tense. A beginning. A moment. Something happened. *"Since we have been justified by faith."* Justification has ongoing blessings which the next six chapters will display. But all of that requires a beginning. Do you have one? Or are you just perpetually circling the field but never landing the plane of faith? Land it. Believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and be declared righteous by God forever.

What about the present for the Christian? What does justification produce?

The Christian's Present – Peace and Grace-Based Living

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Peace. We tend to think of peace as a state of internal tranquility and indeed it is that. But notice it isn't the peace *OF* God. Subjective peace. Internal peace. It is peace *WITH* God. This is objective peace. Relational peace.

You may say, I didn't know that I wasn't at peace with God. Why is peace needed?

Here we go back to how Romans began, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."* (Romans 1:18)

Romans is the greatest explanation of the gospel ever and it doesn't begin with God's love or God's grace, it begins with God's wrath at us because of our sin. There is hostility between God and people. We are not naturally in a state of peace. No. It is war. Mankind has joined Satan in his war on God. There is no winning against God. We are objects of his wrath and the urgent warning of Scripture is that his wrath is an eternal wrath and our experience of it is called hell.

Only when we get a sense of the reality of wrath and the eternality of hell and our personal experience of it, does the prospect of peace with Almighty God become wonderful. *"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God."* It is our present possession. We have it now.

Paul links justification by faith to peace with God. How is that? The only way peace can be peace is if justification is total and complete. How do we have peace with cancer when the doctor says after chemo, *90% of the cancer cells are gone?* Do I have peace? *95% of the cancer cells are gone.* Do I have peace? *99.9% of the cancer cells are gone.* Do I have peace? No. The only way I have peace is if I hear, the cancer is completely gone! Now I have peace with cancer.

And this is justification through Jesus Christ! We are at peace with God because our guilt is entirely gone. When your guilt is 100% gone, your peace is 100% wonderful. Justification means the full measure of our guilt is gone.

But wait. That doesn't necessarily provide peace. Why? How do I know someone else, even Satan, might not accuse me? Here is the comfort—we have peace with GOD. There's no one higher! *With God.* The highest court. The highest authority. It's one thing to have peace with the local sheriff. But if the matter is taken up by the state, now peace is gone because there is conflict with a higher authority. If the state stays, *we're good* but the Feds get involved and say, *no wait, we have a problem,* now there is no peace because a higher authority has a problem. That is, until the highest court, the Supreme Court says, *we're good. You are acquitted and pardoned.* Now I have peace! The highest authority has declared me innocent; no one else can accuse me.

"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Romans 8:33–34) The summary? *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31)

But something about peace is still missing. *So, you are saying since I am justified by faith, I have objective peace with God? Yes. But won't I feel it? I still feel guilty.*

I remember when I was first in ministry I went with my senior pastor for a hospital visit. My memory is that the man was dying of lung cancer and HIV. He had grown up in a Christian home but rejected Christ and now was about to die. The pastor had me wait outside for the visit, but told me what happened. When he went into the room the man was smoking a cigarette through the trach tube in his neck. He asked the pastor for assurance that he was going to heaven.

I remember asking the pastor, "What did you tell him?" He said, "I told him, 'Objective peace before subjective peace.'" What does that mean? The vertical relationship with God must be objectively made right before the subjective, internal, spiritual sense of peace can truthfully be experienced. There certainly is false assurance and false peace and many will be shocked to find their eternity as hell and not heaven. But true peace begins with vertical reconciliation with God and the appropriation of that vertical peace to the feeling of peace, the sense of peace, the experience of peace with God. First peace *with* God, then peace *of* God.

"Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand." (5:2) We are justified by faith and we gain access to God's grace by faith. See it there in verse 2. Faith is the access door to God's grace. Grace is un-earned, undeserved kindness from God to us. What is the means to this grace? The same faith that was the means of our justification. We are saved by grace and we continue to stand by grace. We are saved by grace and we stay saved by grace. How? Through faith we have this access.

Last week I had a flight out of a major US airport. I was there in time, but you probably know that sinking feeling when you get to airport security and there are masses of people all looking unhappy. Sure enough, I got myself in the queue and the line disappeared out of view and around corners with hundreds, maybe thousands, shuffling slowly around the line dividers. I was in line a long time when I rounded a corner and there were a few lines that were completely open all the way through to the scanners. I still had many people ahead of me, but here were pristine clean totally empty lines, right on the other side of the ropes, two inches away. I could easily slip under the rope and be through security in one minute. Would the TSA officers notice or care? Everyone was thinking the same thing when a TSA agent opened part of a line behind me and let people pour through into the lines. These people hadn't waited as long as I had. Why are they getting to go? They were so happy. They were getting through quickly. Me and all the others around me were *not* happy. *Why do they get to go? We have waited in line longer!*

In that moment my mind went to the theoretical line of all lines as all humanity waits in line for the judgment from God. Billions standing in line. Billions shuffling. Billions dreading their moment before the divine Judge. Everyone looking around desperate, searching for another line, hoping for an escape. And right there next to them is another line. The people in that line are incredibly happy. They are in the line going to heaven. They are in the line of eternal life. Why do they get to be in that line and I'm in this line? Why do they get to go to heaven? There's my cousin. There's my coworker. There's my brother. I know them all too well. They are no more or less sinners than I was on earth. Why are they in that line happy and I am in the line going to hell forever? Can you imagine the scene with me? The line of all lines. And the answer to the question of why they are going to heaven and billions of others are going to hell is they they are *at peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ*.

The Christian's Future – Confident Hope in Eternal Glory

"and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2)

I take this verse to mean the opposite of Romans 3:23, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* There is the indictment on all humanity. We all fall short of God's glory. We all fall short of God's design for us to live for his glory and consistent with his glory. We all fall short of seeing and experiencing eternal glory.

That's Romans 3, not Romans 5. Not after justification by faith. Not after peace with God. Not after the grace of God. No. Having been justified by faith we have the righteousness of

God. We have peace with God. We have the grace of God. And therefore, we have the promise of God guaranteeing our future experience of the glory of God. That's what hope is. It is confidence about something in the future. For us, it is the confident expectation of future glory. God's glory. God's glorious heaven and God's glorious new earth and God's glorious resurrection and the glorious experience of God's joy, forever, time without end.

So, we see how these all tie together. A past justification means a present peace. A present peace guarantees a future glory. It means we are in the right line. The justified line. The righteous line. Our confidence in this causes us, see in verse 2, *to rejoice*. To be glad. To live in the pains of this world knowing they are fleeting when compared with the glory yet to be revealed in us and experienced by us.

So how is this all about Jesus? How did peace, grace, and hope ever come to us?

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

"Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have access and grace through him. While we may rejoice in the benefits of justification, we must see afresh that all this comes to us by him and through him. What about justification? He gave his life on the cross that we might be righteous. Peace. He is our peace; our peace who has broken down every wall. The angels said it at his birth, *Peace on earth and goodwill to men*. (Luke 2:14) Indeed, he is the Prince of peace.

What about access? When Jesus said, *"It is finished"* and died, this thick curtain in the temple of Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom. The holy of holies was now accessible through Jesus for sinners. What about the grace of God? *"From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace."* (John 1:16) What about hope? *"To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* (Colossians 1:27) Justified in him. Peace through him. Access by him. Hope in him.

Why the dive deep? Why mess with justification? Can't we leave such things to pastors and theologians and we just live on *"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so"*? Sure, and my daughter can stay in kindergarten for the next 12 years. But oh, the things she'll miss.

The deeper our confidence in justification by God, the richer our experience of the peace of God. The deeper our understanding of who Jesus is, the higher our joy in being in the right line, having the grace of God, eagerly awaiting a future glory which shall be ours forever.

There in that place of eternal glory, what shall we say? The same thing we say now. *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever."* (Romans 11:36) *It's All About Him*.

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