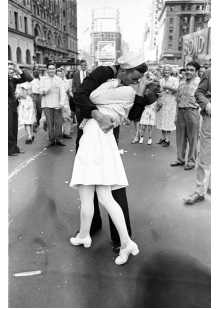


At Peace
March 29, 2020
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Romans 5:1-11

Some images from history need no caption to explain them. For baby boomers one of those is the iconic picture of a sailor and a young girl kissing in New York's Times Square. **What story does the picture tell? What news prompted such celebration? Do you think the people reveling in Times Square had to be urged to celebrate? Why?**



After almost four years and over 420,000 Americans dead, World War II was over. This week as we're "sheltering in place," our President has declared himself a wartime leader naming Covid-19 the "invisible enemy." The world is fearful, people are sick and dying, the economy has cratered. What would things be like if our smartphones all buzzed suddenly with the news, "it's all over?"

In his commentary on Romans Chuck Swindoll writes, *"I once asked my sister, Luci, 'What, in your opinion, is the very best emotion a person can experience?' I expected her to say something like love, delight, contentment, accomplishment, or joy, but her answer surprised me. She said immediately and with confidence, 'Relief.' After thinking a short time, I had to agree. And experience has confirmed for me that relief is indeed the best and most enjoyable of all life's emotions. Consequently, relief is a key ingredient in art and entertainment. Great stories, symphonies, speeches, and even roller coasters gradually build tension to a climax and then resolve the crisis. It's a formula that never fails to satisfy audiences."*

The Apostle Paul spent the first four chapters of Romans explaining the tension that exists between a Holy God and sinful human beings. All humans are sinful by nature (thank you Adam and Eve.) God is righteous and cannot give sin a "pass." For God to be "just" someone had to die to pay for sin. God the Father sent Jesus His Son to earth to die on a cross as the sacrifice that was needed. Now in chapter five Paul relieves that tension with the news: the war is OVER.

Big Idea: Every human is born at war with God. Jesus died on the cross to end the hostilities, we simply have to accept the terms of surrender and begin enjoying the amazing life He has for us now, and eternally in Heaven.

In our text this morning in Romans five Paul outlined for his Roman readers (and us) the benefits of being justified by God through Christ. Let's look at the text to see what it says, what it means, and how it should change us this week.

Romans 5:1–11 (ESV)

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Last week we defined the “human condition” as “all have sinned.” (3:23)
- God provided the way we can be made right with Him without having to earn our way into Heaven with good deeds (which would be impossible.)
- The “grace solution” for the “human condition” is “faith in Jesus for all who believe.” In other words, believing Jesus died for our sin as our Savior, and “turning the keys of our life” over to Him as Lord.
- When we accept that free gift God looks at us as “justified.” He no longer sees our sin because we are “clothed” with the righteousness of Christ.
- In Romans 5:1 Paul uses another of his “therefores.” Since we’ve been justified by faith (salvation) we have peace with God through Jesus.
- **“Peace WITH God” here is not the same as the “peace OF God.” How are those two different?**
- Followers of Christ have access to the “peace OF God” (“a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, people, or things”ⁱⁱⁱ)
- Peace WITH God is the declaration that the war between Him and mankind is over. Some might say, *“I haven’t been at war with God! I don’t have anything against God. I don’t even think about God that much.”*
- Question: **If we don’t perceive this war exists, how can it be reality?**
- Turn over to Romans 8:7-8. Reading it in the NLT: ⁷ *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will.*
⁸ *That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.* ⁱⁱⁱ [Our “human condition” is to be at war with God.]
- **YOU might not think you’re at war with God but GOD _____.**
- *“Wait a minute! Everyone knows God is love.” He IS! “Billy Graham said I could come ‘Just as I am.’” YOU CAN! As it has been said, “God loves you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you as you are.”*
- People may say they don’t sense any hostility between them and God but I would contend they feel it and just haven’t identified what it is.
- If you’re a follower of Christ and someone who is not begins to ask you questions about what it means to BE a Christ-follower, that’s an indication that they sense something is not quite right in their heart, their inner being.
- That’s God’s Holy Spirit convicting them of their sinful nature and the hostility between them and God. That’s our opportunity to make them aware that they and God can be “reconciled.” They can be at peace!
- I’ve spent over half the lesson on just verse one. But we’re all stuck at home so who’s in a hurry right? (Kidding) The rest will go faster.
- Now that we understand we can have peace with God, Paul outlines the amazing benefits of being “justified.”

² 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.

- Have you ever gone through a friend to gain access to an important person for something you need? **Why would direct access to God have been a radical concept for Jews in Paul's day? Why for Gentiles?**
- Hebrews 10:19 and 20 tells us: "...we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us..."^v "The Greek word...describes the process of being ushered into the court of a king and then being announced, which thereupon implies the right or opportunity to address the ruler."^v
- Talk about an ALL ACCESS PASS! In these days of fear, doubt, and bad news one of the amazing benefits of being a follower of Christ is to have DIRECT ACCESS to God the Father in prayer. Literally, Jesus is relaying everything we pray to God the Father. What a concept!
- It's as if we open the door to the throne room and back out quickly because we think we aren't allowed in there and God the Father says, "Come right in because you're my child, you have "standing," and you're covered in my grace!"
- Ephesians 3:12 (NLT)¹² Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.
- Also in verse two: "...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
- The word "rejoice" there really means to "boast." So Paul is saying we should "boast" about the "hope of the glory of God." **What is that hope?**
- Wiersbe: "Peace with God" takes care of the past: He will no longer hold our sins against us. "Access to God" takes care of the present: we can come to Him at any time for the help we need. "Hope of the glory of God" takes care of the future: one day we shall share in His glory!"^{vi}
- Trusting Christ as Savior and Lord doesn't remove us from the problems of the world. However, a Christ-follower has God's power to deal with suffering in an amazing way.

³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- On one of our walks this week Susan was talking about this current crisis and wondering aloud how God will use this to prepare us.
- A few years ago a government official cynically stated, "A crisis must never be wasted." He meant exploiting a national crisis for political advantage. Without going too far, I'll say we've seen that this week!
- Our Heavenly Father doesn't cynically exploit suffering as leverage. He doesn't need leverage; He's God! He DOES use suffering for our good.
- Have you ever observed a Christ follower who was able to have joy in the midst of suffering? Have you ever been there yourself? **If a Christian friend asked how to have joy in suffering, what practical advice would you give them? How can we apply this in the current crisis? How can this apply to us as role models for our kids?**

- We don't rejoice BECAUSE of our suffering. We can rejoice IN SPITE of it.
- A Christ follower who displays joy, patience, and endurance during suffering isn't living in denial or being irrational. It's the work of God's Holy Spirit living inside us. When people ask for an explanation we would have to say, *"I don't even understand it myself, I can only "boast" in God."*
- When I've felt peace in the middle of trials I know it's God and not me because if it's me I'm freaking out and walking the floor at 3 a.m.
- Next Paul circled back to how God made the first move to initiate a "peace treaty" between Him and us. Let's look quickly at verses six through eleven:

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- It's not so hard to imagine giving up your life to save a family member or even a friend. You might risk your life to save an innocent stranger as first responders do daily. Would you EVER give up your life for your ENEMY?
- That's what Jesus did for all mankind. He didn't say, *"Get your act together and change your behavior and I might die for your sins!"*
- While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That's how God shows His love for us. While we were enemies of God, He made the provision for us to be "reconciled" because of Jesus' death on the cross.
- If THAT isn't love, what is? I thought of a song Dottie Rambo wrote:
*"He left the Splendor of Heaven
 Knowing His destiny
 Was the lonely hill of Golgotha
 There to lay down His life for me.
 If that isn't love
 The ocean is dry
 There's no stars in the sky
 And the sparrow can't fly
 If that isn't love"^{vii}*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- The war is OVER! If you've accepted God's free gift of salvation, and promised to serve Him as Lord of your life (your Master) peace is at hand.
- Justification in God's eyes comes with eternal life forever and incredible benefits for right now: access directly to God, the ability to grow closer to Him during suffering, and best of all to have the "hope" of Heaven.

- My challenge to those who ARE followers of Christ is this:
 - Are we bragging on God daily for what He has done for us in Christ? Are we reveling in the fact that all our sins are forgiven and we don't have to earn our way to Heaven through good deeds?
 - When we remember there's nothing between us and God does it make us want to celebrate like those people in Times Square at the end of World War II?
 - This current crisis is a perfect opportunity to brag on God.
- My challenge for anyone who HASN'T followed Christ yet:
 - Why not? Peace is at hand, you just need to accept the terms of surrender and begin enjoying the lavish benefits of being "in Christ." God the Father loves you so much He sent Jesus to die for you.
- The war is over, and if we've been justified by faith in Christ, peace is at hand.

ⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Romans (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (p. 89). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 95). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Ro 8:7–8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 10:19–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Romans (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (pp. 91-92). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 527). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vii} Source: Musixmatch Songwriters: Dottie Rambolf That Isn't Love lyrics © Designer Music, New Spring Publishing, Inc.