

March 12, 2006  
Lent 2

*"Peace with God through Jesus"*

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### **ROMANS 5:1-11**

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**T**herefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through 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. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. <sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The night before he died our Lord Jesus told his disciples "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The peace Jesus gives us is radically different from what this world offers. The world promotes finding greater peace inside your feelings and emotions. It encourages greater peace by getting along better with others at home, in school and with other nations. The multi-billion dollar advertising industry says we can find more peace by buying more things and having more money, or even winning the lottery. A noted atheist once said the greatest peace in his life came when he became convinced that God did not exist.

The peace with God that you have in Jesus is totally different. It is the peace of knowing that you are loved in this life by God, the God who created you. Think of the peace you have because you know that people love you in your family. There is even greater peace in knowing that God loves you in Christ Jesus his Son. This peace is not based on your performance or your attempts of self-improvement. It based solely and entirely on the solid ground of the life Jesus lived for you and the perfect atoning sacrifice he made for your sin. As the one hymn says this peace flows like a river and it allows you to say, "It is well with my soul. It is well with my soul."

### **Look at what you have**

A person who drifted away from the Christian faith remembered fondly the peace and tranquility that his grandmother had in her life even when she was undergoing troubles and difficulties. See more of this peace that you have in Christ and more inner peace will come in your life. Think of how many times you have found peace in these well known

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

In the previous chapters the Apostle Paul painted a dark and gloomy picture of all humanity as it tries to find its own peace with God. In one grand sweeping statement he said, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight (God's sight) by observing the law, rather through the law we become conscience of sin." We cannot justify ourselves or make peace with God on our own. Martin Luther said, "Sinners can no more embrace God than fire can embrace straw." I cannot move God to love me even in the smallest amount on the basis of my performance because I always fail to measure up to God's standard. That is why it so comforting to hear over and over again that I have been justified. That means "declared not guilty" on the basis of the life Jesus lived for me.

Billy Graham has often preached in his sermons about peace with God and being justified. He says being justified means "Just as if I never sinned" because of Christ. When the English sailors went to the South Sea Islands, the native people combined their native language with English and created what was called "Pidgin" English. The Pidgin word for "justify" is "God 'e say 'im alright." If God says that I am all right on the basis of what Jesus has done, then I know I am loved in this life and for all eternity with what the Bible calls an everlasting love.

Because of this peace with God through Jesus we are told we have access with God. "Through whom we have gained access by faith in this grace in which we now stand." Jesus told us that we have direct access to the Father through him with this statement, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you." I read somewhere that the great Zulu warriors in Africa would come to their Zulu king and roll around in the dust and squeal in a high falsetto voice to show their unworthiness and humility before asking a request. The prophets of Baal cut themselves with knives to get the attention of their gods. This morning we come to worship to remind each other that we have a peace this world cannot give, the peace of direct access to the father. We don't have to pray to saints or the Virgin Mary as some people do. After the lost son was welcomed home royally by his father, do you think he even hesitated for one moment to speak to his Father? He knew he was loved and that gave him access.

Because of this peace you have with your God you can live each day rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character; and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Have you ever been disappointed? Sure you have, more than once. You may have even been disappointed when someone in your family did not live up to your expectations and let you down. Or maybe you can remember when you planned a trip, a fun time with family and friends, or even a meal at a restaurant, and it did not turn out the way you wanted. I should have done this or I should have done that. Life is full of disappointments. I remember talking to a man who had invested a lot of money in real estate. He had just retired and then found out he had cancer that was terminal. He told me how he had planned all these wonderful trips with his wife. Then he said, "God had done me dirt."

Because of the peace with God that you have in Jesus, you can look forward to glory that

will some day be yours in the place that Jesus has prepared for you. Some of you sitting here have never seen the mighty redwoods of Northern California, or hiked into the Grand Canyon, or walked up the Virgin River gorge of Zion National Park. And what if you never see these places? You will not be disappointed. The new heaven and new earth that Jesus has prepared for you will even be more spectacular than anything in this life. It is the Holy Spirit that keeps this hope alive. The Spirit keeps pumping into your life this living hope that says, "I know that I will never be ashamed or disappointed." So powerful is the Holy Spirit that he can lead you to rejoice in the midst of pain and suffering, creating patience and endurance that causes other people to stand up and take notice. A man once called me on the phone and said, "Can you talk to me? I want to know the peace that one of your members has who is working for me."

Take your hand and you can feel a pulse beating inside of your body. That is your heart beating. Put your hand on the life of a Christian who knows the peace they have in Jesus and you will feel their life beating with the hope of glory that will someday be theirs. The Holy Spirit keeps that hope alive and enables us to rejoice in our hope especially in the worst days of our lives. You see that soldier over there in Iraq with the big smile on his face. What is wrong with him, why is he so happy? He is going home tomorrow. In a few days he will be sitting down to dinner with his family. There will be BBQ chicken and ribs and tri tip, mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, mom's special corn bread, pumpkin pie and apple pie. He cannot hide the smile on his face.

Look at the front color of your bulletin and you will see a grove of aspen trees. They are actually one tree connected together. The cold weather comes and they turn a brilliant yellow and shimmer in the breeze. So we rejoice together in the hope of the glory of God. We remind each other of the peace we have in Jesus. We keep each other from getting discouraged. Like the aspen tree, our best moments, our shining moments, come when the weather changes.

### **Look at how it was given to you**

Wait a minute. How can I be sure that this peace is really mine, especially when I don't feel it? That is why we focus on Jesus who said, "My peace I give to you." How much does Jesus love you? Can you ever exhaust the comfort of these next words? "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." How I know that Jesus died for me personally? It says it right there. It says he died for the "ungodly." There is no question that I am in that category. I can take any slice of my life this past week and find that I have not always been godly. In fact I have been ungodly, a sinner. As Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to die for sinners and I am the chief." My name is written in the contract.

And how much does Jesus love me? "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were sinners Christ died for us." An SUV rolls over on the freeway, the kids crawl out but the mother is trapped in the driver's seat. A car stops. A college student runs over and is able to free the woman before the car burst into flames. This past week there was tragedy in Central California. A father and a son were found drowned in a manure pit on a dairy farm. They went out to check on the animals at night. The boy must have gotten too close to the pit, started slipping in and the dad tried to

rescue him. They said the eight year old was good student in school even though English was not his first language. When he was off of school he would walk across the fields to bring his dad lunch. We die for people we love and respect. Would you really want to administer the Heimlich method on a hardened criminal and murderer choking on a piece of meat? We know the peace with have God is really because it says right here, "While we were sinners Christ died for us."

Justified by Jesus blood, it says we are going to be saved from the wrath to come. The blood of Jesus justified you. You are declared you not guilty. When Jesus died he cried out "It is finished." The wrath of God against sin was all poured out on Jesus. Not only were we reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, it says we will be saved by his life. You know that you have peace with God because Jesus is alive. He is sitting at God's right hand and making daily intercession for you.

*"When peace, like a river,*

*attends my way,*

*When sorrows like sea billows roll;*

*Whatsoever my lot,*

*You have taught me to say,*

*It is well with my soul.*

*It is well with my soul.*