

Romans, Part 23 11-20-22

Peace With God

Romans 5:**1-2** *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.* So many great words in these two verses that we can cherish, but I would have us begin with the first one. *Therefore*. It is a conjunction. It is a transitional word. It is intended to connect for the reader what is about to come with what has preceded. It suggests some logical connection. We read “therefore” and we ask “wherefore.” We ask, “what is the therefore, there for?” It is a word that is especially utilized in the writings of the great theologian of the infant church, the esteemed apostle Paul. Why, in the book of Romans we encounter the word around twenty times and it comes at strategic moments in the flow of the letter and the gospel argument it contains. A quick survey may help us appreciate Paul’s favorite conjunction. After indicating that humanity failed in their central duty of honoring God, Paul says 1:**24** *Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity.* In the same flow of argument Paul then answers objectors by writing in 2:**1** *Therefore you have no excuse.* In addition to our text for today, in this fifth chapter we see the word again in 5:**12** *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.* We will get to this soon enough, but you see how the apostle uses *therefore* to connect his ideas, to demonstrate their consistency. After saying more about the good news, he offers this in chapter 6:**4** *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death.* And again eleven verses later 6:**12** *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.* Repeating the good news he comes back to our justification in Romans 8:**1** *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* And maybe my favorite use of the conjunction in Romans, as Paul goes from telling us all that Jesus has done for us, he then turns it around to speak of our response to this grace. 12:**1** *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.* What is the *therefore* there for? To show you how the Christian faith all fits together, makes sense and is consistent.

Paul takes his reader from glory to glory. He shows us how one element of gospel faith leads to another. He has been showing us the way to justification

through faith in Jesus. He is about to transition, but the transition is marked out by this phrase – *having been justified by faith*. You got that? “Having been.” I have labored in previous weeks to explain that justification for us as believers is a done deal. It is not something we are only hoping for at the end of this life. It is a completed work that we celebrate and live out of. So, here he does not say, “therefore, hoping to be justified by faith.” No-no. *Having been justified by faith*. Our justification is the finished work of Jesus and it is a completed work. It now forms for us the context for what follows – the gift of peace with God. But the context of that peace is our justification – we can call that point one.

Our next, and, I suppose, our primary point for today is the gift of peace. What a glorious affirmation this is. *We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. And Paul puts this in here as something important to know – as something that is far from obvious, as something that is great news. But, if I came here today and announced, *Let’s celebrate fellow Americans, we now have peace with Canada*, who would be excited about that? Well no one. And why not? We have not been at war with Canada. An announcement of peace suggests that the parties involved have been in conflict - which we have. And the conflict has been with God. Verse 11 will speak of our reconciliation with God which, again, implies that there was enmity before. If you have read what comes before in Romans you already know this. Chapter one announced that God is angry with you and that you have been hostile towards him. There is a barrier to peace on both sides of the relationship. The gospel addresses God’s enmity toward us, through propitiation. It also addresses our enmity toward God via regeneration – the changing of the heart. But so many people fail to grasp this reality of their need for reconciliation with God. They might say, *Oh, I am certainly not hostile to God*. But Scripture says you are and you likely don’t know it because it is just the water you swim in. Fish probably don’t think they are swimming, that they are in water. It is always around them. It is all they have ever known. But it is this alienation from God that is the context and explanation of all the brokenness we experience in our world. We see how troubled relationships are – how cultures are sick, how individual lives are disordered and we wonder why. Well, Scripture gives us the answer. We have separated ourselves from God by our sinful choices and we are reaping the fruit of that those choices. The prophet Isaiah said numerous times, “There is no peace for the wicked,” says the Lord” (48:22, 57:21)

But now, Paul comes with good news – Peace has come. Peace of the most central and significant variety. Peace with the Lord who made us, with the Lord

who is our judge. And where does that peace come from? Not from some endeavor of human beings. We lacked the disposition to try to reconcile and even if we had tried, we lacked the means. But the point of Romans is that what we could not do – God did. You don't make your peace with God – Jesus made it for you. Ephesians 2:**14** (NLT) *Christ himself has brought peace to us. Or **14** He Himself is our Peace.* This is what is behind the little prepositional phrase in our text – *through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is through Him for all the reasons we have been learning. He is our redemption, our propitiation. He took care of the wrath of the Father for us. He imputes His righteousness to us. Our peace is through the blood of the cross.

What kind of peace are we talking about here? “Peace” is a flexible word. It can refer to something internal to a person – an inner tranquility. We might call that the peace of God. You may know Philippians 4 which says that if you pray **7** *the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* That is a type of peace. But then the word “peace” also refers to the relationship between two or more parties. In this case, the parties are God and the sinner. The apostle says that now there is peace with God. Not of God. With God. The enmity is over. The barriers we erected by our sin are removed. This peace with God announced in our text is the starting point for all spiritual blessings. Without this you have nothing and you are destined to destruction, which means there is an obvious relationship between having peace with God and enjoying the peace of God. You can't have true peace within if you are at odds with your make. Carl Jung, the psychologist said, *“no one can live in peace in a house he knows is shortly to tumble about his ears.”* Now, for some of you, the things necessary for peace are not realities. You have no peace with God for you are still in your sins. You have never trusted in Jesus Christ. You should **not** have peace. You have every reason to fret and worry and fear. St. Augustine is famous for saying that God has made us for Himself and we shall be forever restless until we find our rest in Him. I hear of the great preacher of a generation past, Donald Grey Barnhouse, that he used to give an unusual benediction at the end of worship services. He would call down God's peace on those who love Christ and then say, *“and if you do not, may the Lord visit you with restlessness until you find your rest in Him.”* For you who know not Christ and His peace that is my prayer for you. That your conscience would be troubled and pained until you bow the knee before the Lord of glory and rest indeed in Him.

For others of you, maybe you have experienced peace with God but you are lacking peace within. That is a possibility. It is a fruit of weak faith. Things are good with you and the Father, but the devil has sewn doubts and you have not vigorously nurtured your soul. So, you are not experiencing one of the great blessings of trusting Christ. Joseph Scriven, wrote in the mid-19th century these lyrics you may know - *What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear.* His point? As believers we have a peace with God that should deliver us from fear and anxiety, but our failure to use the means of grace – such as prayer – have left us vulnerable to the unnerving lies of Satan. You can't have the peace of God without peace with God, but you can have peace with God and lack the peace of God, but the more we grasp the riches of our peace with God, the more likely we are to experience the peace of God. Amen?

So, all of that was about the gift of peace. It implies a previous hostility. It comes through Jesus. It is peace with God. Now, we move on to the next gift which Paul will unwrap for us – this is the privilege of peace, which is access. Many versions of Romans use that word in verse 2. Our NAS uses “introduction.” There may not be the perfect word to depict what is conveyed here. Paul is saying that we have been introduced by another, namely Jesus, into a place where we may access the presence and the goodness of our heavenly Father. The NLT says it this way: **5:2** *Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege.* I love that! I long for us to grasp how privileged we are as believers. Here the privilege is that of just being with, communing with our Lord. The word translated “introduction” or “access” is also found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. There he says, Ephesians **2:18** *Through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.* This is one of the most wonderful concepts in all of God’s word. Christ has won for us, thru His perfect life and sacrificial death, not only the forgiveness of sins, not only peace with God, but actual, personal access to the living Lord Himself. You remember how when Jesus died the veil of the temple, that veil that separated men from the holy of holies, that veil was torn from top to bottom. Hebrews 10 talks about this new access that we have found by the death of Jesus **19-20** *Since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.* The new and living way of approach to God, access to God. Ephesians **3:12** *We have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.* This envisions access to our holy and

loving Father. Imagine the busy executive, the company president who has people lined up outside hoping to see him, some have been there almost an hour. And as they watch, into the office, comes this seven-year-old kid who walks right past them and into the president's office, and on to the president's lap. That is the access of a child to a father, a special privilege of that status. That is a picture of what we are given.

I think too of a term we sometimes use in our online world. Perhaps you sign up for something on the internet – maybe a special presentation of a new film. You try to get into the movie, but you are blocked. Sometimes they ask you to supply what? An access code. Without that code you are blocked aren't you? Frustrating! But then you figure out how to get one. That code allows you entrance to the website – access. So, what is the access code for us? Lots of directions I could go with that one, but I am going to suggest it is something like this "Ichthus." More than a bumper sticker – this represented an early creed of the church. The five Greek letters stand for *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior*. If you have any difficulty getting into the presence and around the blessing of God, try that Access Code. Jesus, the Christ, Son of God, my Savior. The green check mark will come on, the doors will open and you will find yourself in the place of privilege.

There is in the Old Testament a fascinating story of gaining access. It is in the book of Esther. Esther was the Jewish lady who became a queen of sorts under King Ahasuerus of Persia. At least she was one of his wives. Then, as providence would have it a member of the Persian cabinet hatched a plot to kill many of the Jews in the land. Being a Jew, Esther was, of course, quite concerned. So, at the urging of her uncle she decided to utilize her position to influence the king away from such a wicked plot. But her position did not guarantee her anything. She may have been in the harem, but approaching the king without an invitation meant risking her life. Nevertheless, after much prayer, she takes this bold step and entered his royal presence in hope that he would extend his royal scepter which, apparently, was the symbol of his favor and acceptance. We read it in Esther 5:**1-2** *it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.* ²*When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter.* From that place of privilege, she was able to speak her petitions to the king, with the end result that

her people were spared. In a sense, Esther is a Christ figure. Her access to the king, rooted in her beauty, flowing out of the king's delight in her, became access for all her people and that access meant the difference between life and death for many.

One more phrase to consider and we will be done. Verse 2 says (NLT) *Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand.* NAS says *into this grace in which we stand.* Where are you standing today? Where are you placing your weight?

I Corinthians 15:1 *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand.* "Stand" is a very popular word in the New Testament. Often it comes with the modifier "firm." *Stand firm.* That suggests to us an image of combat. We brace ourselves for an attack with the intention of maintaining our ground and fending off the assault. Here, however, I think Paul just has in view the simple choice that we all make concerning personal alignment. During the political campaigns some will say, "I stand with John" or "I stand with Cari." Popular in the summer were shirts and memes that said, *I stand with Ukraine.* It is a way of saying which side you are on, where your allegiance lies. Right? Does that choice make a difference? Oh my! Oh my! Does it ever! The apostle announces that Jesus provides us with a place of grace, which we may enter by faith. In that place of grace, we affirm *I stand with Jesus.* That won't always win us friends. It may win us enemies – powerful ones. But in the final analysis, when the day of judgment comes, this is the only place you want to be found – standing in the grace, standing in your undeserved privilege singing from the heart the praise of Christ. Where are you standing today? Good news! It is possible to change sides, to align with Christ and join us in this place of privilege which we surely did not deserve. The great thing about Christian privilege, unlike other kinds, is that it is open to anyone.

Final word – there is a verse in Revelation – in a section depicting judgments to come upon the earth. It says in 6:17 *The great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?* The answer to that? Those who stand in the grace of Jesus.