

Reconciled to God

Lesson for May 19, 2024

Unit III: Reconciled to God

Adult Topic: Remaining Strong

Scriptural Background: Romans 5:1-11

Printed Text: Romans 5:1-11

Key verse: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1, NIV)

What is justification? It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Savior. It is not mere pardon. Pardon is free forgiveness of past offenses. It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. Justification has respect to the law, and to God's future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as righteous--as if he had not sinned. The basis for this is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, merit that we can plead as if it were our own. He has taken our place and died in our stead; He has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own heads if He had not interposed.

Albert Barnes

Key Terms

1. **Access** (verse 2) – The audience or right of approach granted to someone by high officials or kings; a bringing to; to have contact with.
2. **Glorify** (verse 2) – Praise; honor; the unspoken manifestation of God.
3. **Grace** (verse 2) – A gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ; kindness.
4. **Hope** (verse 2) – Expectation; trust; confidence.
5. **Justified** (verse 1) – Shown to be righteous; declared righteous; “just-if-I’d” never sinned.
6. **Peace** (verse 1) – oneness; quietness; rest; harmony; tranquility of mind that arises from reconciliation with God; serenity.
7. **Reconciled/Reconciliation** (verses 10, 11) – The results of atonement. Reconciliation is the end of the estrangement, caused by original sin, between God and humanity. Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man or man and man. It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now there has been a change from a state of enmity and fragmentation to one of harmony and fellowship.
8. **Tribulations** (verse 3) – Persecutions; afflictions; distress; “sufferings” (NIV).

Lesson Background

The author of the book of Romans is the Apostle Paul. He wrote to Christians living in Rome who were primarily Gentiles. They met in house churches, practicing their faith as a minority in a pagan culture of many deities as well as the cult of emperor worship. These believers were likely well educated, in comparison with some of Paul's other letter recipients.

The first four chapters of Romans seem to state a lot of bad news. However, all of that bad news is there to put us in the right frame of reference to receive the Great News of Romans 5:1-11. Romans 5 begins by exploring the great benefits that come with being declared righteous by God, through faith in Christ's death for our sin on the cross. By justifying us in this way, in Christ, God made peace with us forever. We also stand in God's grace by our faith. We continue to receive good from God, instead of the judgment we deserved before our sins were forgiven. More, we can now rejoice in the sure hope that we will one day experience the glories of God.

Lesson in Depth

I. Justification's Blessings (Romans 5:1-8)

Paul begins chapter 5 by discussing the peace Christians have resulting from our justification through faith (see Romans 3). The Bible defines justification as the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous only through faith in Jesus. As a result of God's act of love and grace to us through Christ's death and resurrection, Paul says that we have peace with God.

The first four chapters of Romans tells us that man's willful rebellion has placed us at enmity with God. We are literally at war with Him. Still, into this realm of hostility Jesus Christ entered as a propitiation or appeasement to turn God's wrath, and Romans 5:1 proclaims peace with God! John Stott said of this verse: "God does not confer the status of righteousness upon us without at the same time giving Himself to us in friendship and establish peace between Himself and us." (The Message of Romans, p. 139) Paul continues to explain the blessings associated with justification.

Peace with the Father comes when we accept what His Son did on our behalf.

The peace discussed in verse one can only come through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The world looks for peace to come through a UN decision of force, a government action or program, a relief agency, a doctor, or counselor's appointment. This peace is temporary. However, the Bible tells us that true and eternally lasting peace comes through only one source, faith in Christ!

Through Christ we have access to the Father. Have you ever had someone say: "Feel free to use my name..." Maybe for an interview or application or to get a better deal. Why do we do it? Because we hope the existent relationship between those two individuals will positively benefit us. That is exactly what Christ has done for us. We were alienated, separated, hostile towards God but through faith in Christ and dependence upon the eternal relationship between Jesus and His Father, we have been ushered into a relationship of peace given by grace.

Through faith in Christ we are standing in grace. (v. 2 a)

IN Christ we find a haven of rest, as shelter from the storm. What Paul is saying is that when we attempt to work our righteousness in the flesh with our works, we are storm tossed by the tempest of life. But through Christ we find a permanent harbor of safety and security through Christ our Lord.

“Through Christ, “we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.” Access means “right to enter.” “This grace” refers not to God’s grace in general but to a particular manifestation of His grace, in justification itself. Stand has to do with position. Therefore, Paul is reminding us here that, when we placed our faith in Christ, we entered into the gracious state of justification. We are in a new relationship with God, and we have complete assurance. The God who has justified us will complete His work in us, even unto our final glorification.” (“Our Cherished Hope”, Ligonier Ministries)

We rejoice in our hope. (v. 2b)

It is very telling that, in modern English, we frequently speak of our “hopes and dreams,” treating the two words as virtual synonyms for outcomes we would like to see happen but which may or may not come about. As today’s passage shows, this is not the way the word hope is used in Scripture at all. Our Biblical hope is no dream.

We rejoice in our sufferings. (vv. 3-5)

Paul tells us that our suffering as Christians is purposeful. It’s not for nothing. Paul clearly states that there is a spiritual benefit in the sufferings we face. In verse 3 he refers to the “tribulations” we face in this life. Greek word, *thilipis* – literally means “pressure”. It is true that the Christian life is glorious, but its twin truth is that it is also hard. It is hard to live a life of obedience to Christ in a culture that is becoming dead set against Christ. However, it was harder for Paul living in Rome! Uncertainty, persecution, troubles, loneliness, health concerns, unpopularity, were just as difficult for the Apostle then as is for us today.

Yet, the Apostle tells the Christian that all of this pressure has a goal: “perseverance”. *Hupomone* – fortitude- its more than endurance, it is an undaunted spirit even in the face of the tribulation. “It overcomes the world. It means a spirit which does not passively endure but which actively overcomes the trials of life.” (Barclay, p. 75) When we face the pressure of living life for Christ in a hostile world and we say: “The world behind me, the cross before me...” That is *hupomone*. What is the result of an overcoming attitude? Paul tells us that this overcoming attitude results in producing “character” in the life of the believer. The word used for character in this passage is the word for metal which has been passed through the fire so all impurities would be purged.

Every time we obey the Word of God when it would be easy or more convenient to “go with the flow” or “look the other way”, the Lord is building “character” in our lives. The metal, the steel, of who we are as a person is getting stronger, our witness and testimony is getting sharper. Our life is being honed to a finer point, all for the glory of Christ. When a blade is tested it either withstands the pressure of the test or it shatters.

The end result of Christian character is hope. (vv. 2, 4 -5)

What is “hope”? It is a future expectation not yet realized. Paul clearly states our hope does not disappoint! The reason our character is different is because we know there is a righteous standard. We know there will be a judgment. We know there will be heaven! Why is this? Because as Paul says, the hope of glory will not let us down because we have already tasted the love of God in our hearts through the Spirit.

Paul continues to explain justification’s blessings by pointing to the actions of our Savior.

Paul goes on to say that if, while we were still without strength (unable to do anything to save ourselves from sin, and its consequences), God, in His perfect time, sent Jesus to die for us ungodly people, then how much more, after being justified by His blood (His death), will we be saved from the wrath of God through our faith in Jesus. He takes a little detour and says, that it’s a very remote possibility that anyone would die for a righteous man, and then adds that someone might choose to give his life to save a good man. He then goes on to say that God was quite different, in that He demonstrated how much He loved us when He sent Jesus to die for us humans, while we were still sinners. That’s divine love. No earthly form of love can match that. This love caused Jesus to give His life to save us from the pangs of hell, and separation from God forever, and it caused us to be reconciled back with God.

Christ died for us when we were unlovely. In a wedding ceremony at a certain point, after the pledging of the couple’s vows, the minister often asks, “what symbol do you give of these promises?” (A ring) Why the symbol? The ring? Evidence or proof of professed love. To the world, the cross was an implement of Roman cruelty. To those who are saved it is the symbol of God’s great love for us. The world is full of bad news today. But there is good news, and His Name is Jesus Christ.

Paul gives four explanations describing our condition when Christ died for us that further proves His love toward us now. Paul tells us that Christ died for us when we were:

- **Helpless** – (v. 6) In our culture, we often hear about God’s “unconditional love” for humanity, but the notion of God’s unconditional love is frequently misunderstood. The Lord does love sinners unconditionally in that nothing in ourselves moves Him to love us. We do not meet a condition that makes us lovable; in fact, He loves us when we are most unlovable. That is Paul’s point in Romans 5:6–8: God loved us to such an extent that Christ died for us when we were set against Him in our sin. Still, God’s saving love is not wholly unconditional. It is conditional in one important respect: God cannot show love and mercy to sinners at the expense of His holy justice.
- **Ungodly** – (v. 6) Instead of loving God with all of our being, we have rebelled against Him with that same zeal. Results: ungodly
- **Sinners** – (vv. 7-8) We have all missed God’s standards. We have all fallen short of God’s required perfection. Notice verse 7, it lays out the condition of the human experience. If someone appears to be a good person, we may venture to help. But a rotten person, well, they’re getting what they deserve. No remorse.

- **Enemies** – (v. 10) Someone you are at war with. Someone where there is hostility or enmity between you. Christ saved us when we were His enemy!

II. **Justification's Security** (Romans 5:9-11)

We are saved from God's wrath (vv. 9-10)

Christ's justification delivers us from the wrath of God. So far, the Apostle has declared to us what is done: we have peace, we have been justified, we rejoice, we stand in grace. In verses 9-10 we see the tension between what is already and that which is not yet. Between our past, our present reality, and our future hope.

This justification has taken place through Christ's blood. He made the eternal sacrifice. "God does not forgive us unilaterally; He requires repentance." We must recognize that we owe God everything and yet cannot pay. We must see that He owes us nothing but wrath, that our only hope is in His mercy. Those who approach the Lord in such a way, receive His forgiveness.

Although we are reconciled through Christ's death we shall be saved by His Life. Again, a beautiful twin truth is displayed for us. We have been reconciled/justified through the death of the Son, yet we "shall be saved" by His life. The death of Christ paid the penalty of God's wrath, the bodily resurrection of Christ as the second Adam secures our eternal life!

What should our response to this news be? REJOICE!

We rejoice in Christ's provision. "Exult" – "Exulting in Christ is evidence of the Spirit's work! The focus of the church is not on the dove but on the cross. As J. I. Packer puts it, "The Spirit's message to us is never, 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,' but always, 'Look at Him, and see His glory; listen to Him, and hear His word; go to Him, and have life; get to know Him, and taste His gift of joy and peace.'" (MacArthur, *Strange Fire*)

If we were to look back to Romans 2:17 there we would see that Paul criticized his countrymen for their boasting about God. Yet here in 5:11 he says, "We boast in God". The verb, the noun, and the proposition all exactly the same. Yet, the intention is very different. In 2:17 the point was boasting or bragging, here it is exulting or rejoicing in. What is the difference? The Jews boasted as if God was their exclusive property, and they held a monopoly interest on Him. Christian exultation in God begins with the recognition that we have no claim on or to Him, realizing that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us! All we can do is rejoice.

Finally, since we have been justified by God, we now have peace with Him. We have access into His grace and can therefore rejoice in the assurance that one day we will see Him face-to-face, and be with Him forever. We can also rejoice in the process of perfecting this assurance that we possess, the steps for which are tribulation, perseverance, and Christ-like character. We will then be unshaken in our assurance. We will also be sure that God will not disappoint us. He who began the work in us, will bring it to completion. For all of this, we can now rejoice in God, and with Jesus, through whom we received all these blessings.

Lesson Summary

Romans 5:1-11 contains several key lessons that can be relevant to life:

1. **Justification by Faith:** This passage emphasizes that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, not by our own works. This teaches us about the importance of faith in Christian doctrine.
2. **Peace with God:** It speaks about having peace with God through Jesus Christ, highlighting the reconciliation that believers have with God through Christ's sacrifice. This teaches us about the peace that comes from a relationship with God.
3. **Suffering Produces Endurance, Character, and Hope:** The passage talks about the value of suffering, explaining that suffering produces endurance, which in turn produces character, and ultimately leads to hope. This teaches us about the potential for growth and positive outcomes through difficult times.
4. **God's Love:** It emphasizes God's love for us, demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice. This teaches us about the depth and extent of God's love for humanity.
5. **Salvation from God's Wrath:** It speaks about being saved from God's wrath through Jesus Christ, highlighting the concept of salvation in Christianity.
6. **Reconciliation through Christ's Death:** It explains that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, demonstrating God's love and the reconciliation that is possible through Jesus' death.

Overall, this week's lesson teaches us about the foundational beliefs of Christianity, including justification by faith, peace with God, the value of suffering, God's love, and salvation through Jesus Christ. They offer hope and encouragement to believers, reminding them of God's love and the benefits of their faith.