

Peace with God

Are you still there?" yelled Mercedes.

"Yes," Corey said calmly.

He had been holding the phone for the last 10 minutes listening to his ex-girlfriend talk about how she needed him to jump into the middle of what sounded like a lot of confusion. Corey hadn't spoken to Mercedes since re-establishing his relationship with Christ—over a year ago.

Corey had invited Mercedes to various women activities at his church, but she had said she was not interested in the "religion thing."

"But if that's what you feel you need, that's fine," Mercedes had said. "I want to live my life and have fun."

The problem with "fun," Corey knew, is that it would always run its course. So now, Mercedes was asking him about funds to help bail out her first cousin from jail, and her needing a place to stay to "get off the radar and lay low for a few weeks."

"I can't personally help you with any of that, Mercedes," said Corey. He did give her a number for a bail bondsman.

After Corey ended the call, he prayed that Mercedes would be driven to seek the Lord. He also thanked God for the peace he had found in Him. Corey was grateful for his salvation, which gave him peace with God—which he wouldn't change for the world!

- 1.** *What are some ways that people respond when experiencing a loss or an unexpected difficulty?*
- 2.** *How can one's perspective on life affect how they respond to circumstances they find challenging?*
- 3.** *Why can placing our hope in God be of help with facing difficulties?*

Effects of Justification by Faith

Romans 5:1-5, KJV

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:1-5, NIV

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.

⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

In the previous chapters of Romans, Paul explained what it means to be justified by faith. He wrote that our relationship with God is not based on self-effort and that God forgives us without any preconditions. It is matter of grace, not our works.

In this passage, Paul noted some results of being justified in this fashion. One of them is being at peace with God. This means that we are no longer striving to be approved or loved by God. God accepts us without asking for anything in return except for trusting that having faith in what Jesus did to secure our redemption is sufficient. We can be at peace knowing that we don't have to do anything more to be accepted by Him.

A second effect of being justified by faith is knowing that we have unencumbered access to God's grace. Grace means receiving something we didn't earn. We don't deserve

grace. What we deserve is judgement. God's forgiveness is entirely a grace-based proposition. It's not something we merit or work for. It is a free gift (Rom. 6:23).

A third effect of justification by faith is having hope in the glory of God. Hoping in this context does not mean wishing something were true. It is the confident assurance that something is true. Notice the chain in verses 3 and 4: suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; and character, hope. Hence, a believer can have a joyful attitude in the midst of suffering because he or she can be certain it is not meaningless. Such pain can bear Christlike fruit, namely perseverance, character, and hope. Paul affirmed that hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured His love into our hearts. Such love enhances our hope because it does not hinge on circumstances.

A fourth effect of justification by faith is the assurance of growth in the midst of suffering. The world often sees difficulties and tragedies as reasons for despair. A Christian ought to see these as opportunities to increase in faith and character.

4. *What does it mean to be justified by faith?*

5. *What are some effects of being justified by faith?*

6. *What should a Christian's response to suffering be? What should it not be? Explain your answer.*

When We Were Justified

Romans 5:6-8, KJV

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Romans 5:6-8, NIV

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

One thing that should be encouraging and give us hope as we consider the effects of being justified by faith is knowing that Jesus died for us in spite of our inability to assist in the process. It was essentially when we were at our worst and couldn't do anything to save ourselves that Christ died for us. Christ came when we were "powerless" (vs. 6). Here, it points to those who are weak in terms of their ability to create any righteousness for themselves.

The contrast between the One who laid down His life and those for whom He died is stark. Such an act of self-sacrifice can only be motivated by unfathomable love, a love demonstrated when Christ laid down His life on our behalf. His death on the Cross illustrates the relentless and amazing pursuit of the wounded by the wounded.

In verse 7, "righteous" may refer to upright morals while "good" goes beyond this to genuinely good character. Of course, we were neither righteous nor good. God demonstrated His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us when there was nothing in us worthwhile.

7. *What is one evidence of God's great love for us?*

8. *In what ways can this be encouraging?*

Where Our Hope Rests

Romans 5:9-11, KJV

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,

Romans 5:9-11, NIV

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son,

much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Another effect of being justified by faith is knowing that we will not experience God's wrath. This too is a result of grace. It is not something we've obtained by being good. It is grace that saved us. And it is this same grace that protects us from God's wrath. The only thing we have a right to boast about in this respect is that God redeemed us in spite of our inability to do anything to deserve it.

One additional effect of faith-based justification is being reconciled to God. In our pre-faith days, we were alienated from God. We were considered enemies of Him. We did nothing to change this except to trust in the mechanism God provided to make His enemies into friends. Once we were estranged from Him. But now, because of what Jesus accomplished by dying on our behalf, we are reconciled to God and are no longer separated from Him.

We didn't earn God's love. We don't deserve it. But because of Jesus' death we no longer have to wrestle with doubts regarding our relationship with God. That's because it is based entirely on grace and not on self-effort. God accepts us without pre-conditions other than having faith in Jesus and what He accomplished when He died on a cross to secure our redemption.

Because our hope is in God, we have peace knowing that our place in eternity is assured and that our current struggles, though painful for the moment, will result in proven character as long as we continue to trust in Jesus.

9. *What are some additional effects of being justified by faith?*

10. *What is the sum result of our lesson text, Romans 5:1-11?*

Quit Striving

I don't struggle with accepting that I have been saved by faith and not by works. I believe that I didn't deserve to be forgiven but that God did so anyway. What I do struggle with is being at peace with God in my daily life. I sometimes fear that I will lose God's favor if I don't continue to do what is right and good in His eyes or that I will do something wrong that will result in experiencing His wrath.

Some of this fear comes from recognizing that God hates sin and that if I continue to sin there will be consequences. But forfeiting God's love is not one of them. My salvation came about as a result of faith alone. It was not something I earned. Knowing this ought to result in continued confidence that nothing will ever separate me from God's love.

Sometimes being at peace about this seems to be elusive. I know I ought to quit striving to earn God's favor and to instead accept that God loves me just as I am. But for some reason I continue to wrestle with doubts about this, wondering if there's enough good in me to avoid falling away from His grace, thinking that I perhaps need to do more or do something else if I want God to continue to love me.

When I have doubts like this, it's usually because I've forgotten that the grace I experienced when I first put my trust in Jesus is the same grace that sustains me in my relationship with Him today. Peace comes when I quit striving to do what I think is required to earn God's love and instead rest my hope on the truth that He loves me unconditionally and asks for nothing in return except for faith.

11. *Do you sometimes have doubts that God continues to love and accept you unconditionally? Explain your answer.*

12. *How can remembering that you have been justified by faith be of help as you struggle with this?*

13. *What else do you need to remember if you want to be at peace regarding your relationship with God?*

Hope in God, Who Gives You Peace

Sometimes we get so overwhelmed by our struggles or doubts that we forget how much God loves us. When encountering difficulties, we sometimes end up in an emotional turmoil, questioning if God truly cares for us, wondering if we're stuck having to face our problems alone.

Peace comes when we remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God; it comes when we place our hope in God and not on ourselves or our circumstances; it comes from knowing that God's good plan of redemption will be fully realized at Christ's return. No matter what difficulties we may be facing, we can continue to trust in Him.

► *In what situation do you need to place your hope in God so you can experience the peace that comes from fully trusting in Him?*

KEY VERSE

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: —Romans 5:1, KJV

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

—Romans 5:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 26 through August 1

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 30:6-14—Obey God with Heart and Voice.
- Tues.** Isaiah 52:1-10—God's Salvation Announced.
- Wed.** Joel 2:28-32—Call on the Name of the Lord.
- Thurs.** Galatians 3:6-14—Gentiles Believe by Faith.
- Fri.** Romans 10:1-4—For the Salvation of the Gentiles.
- Sat.** Romans 10:18-21—Regret for Not Hearing Christ's Word.
- Sun.** Romans 10:5-17—Salvation Is for All People.