



Lesson Overview

Week of July 25

1 Life Need:

Discuss ways people sometimes respond to difficulties.

2 Bible Learning:

Note some results of being justified by faith.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit: Poster and Reproducible Sheet—The Romans Road to Life*

3 Bible Application:

Discuss what hoping in God can bring.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit: Reproducible Sheet—Why Me?*
■ Two sheets of newsprint, markers, tape
■ Index cards, pens or pencils

4 Life Response:

Hope in God.

Church/Home Theme:
We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Hope in God, who gives us peace through Jesus.

Lesson Scripture:

Romans 5:1-11

Peace with God

Hope and Peace—There are blessings God wants His children to enjoy, here and now on earth. Paul said that spiritual blessing comes with faith in Christ. Hope and peace are two recurring advantages of the Christian life. Those who are not acknowledging Jesus as Savior are at eternal odds with God, in total opposition to Him. They are unable to follow God's instructions or work out a life that God created them to fulfill. Thankfully, Jesus paid it all on the Cross, taking our sin upon Himself, and He makes it possible for us to find and live that life God wants for us.

Peace with God in the New Covenant—This is peace with God, the peace that can only come from Jesus; through Him, the battle between God and us is over. He came to make peace, and He is our peace. The Lord and Christians are now on the same team. The old covenant was about separation. The veil in the temple kept the Jewish worshiper who visited the temple out. The wall of the temple kept the Gentiles out. But when Jesus died, the veil was torn in two, and He also broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14), He also gives glorious hope that one day in the future the saints will share in His glory.

Closer to Him through Suffering—Our "tribulation" (Rom. 5:3, KJV) can bring us closer to the Lord and make us more like Him. The word "tribulation" comes from a Latin word that means a substantial piece of timber with spikes used for harvesting the grain. It separated the wheat from the chaff. The trial purifies us and helps us to get rid of the chaff.

God's Present Attitude—God looks on believers in Christ Jesus with favor, seeing them in terms of joy, beauty, and pleasure. He doesn't just love His children—He likes them. Each one is forgiven through Christ and brought into a place of high favor with God. He pours His love into our hearts. God also offers an abundance of hope. This hope assures us that God will complete the work He started in us. Faith, hope, and love are all given to the believer through the Holy Spirit.

As Your Students Arrive

Write the word "Hope" on a board or sheet of newsprint. Ask students to share what they think this word means or some thoughts that come to mind when they hear it. Summarize answers on the board or newsprint. They may include wishing something is true, having a strong desire for something to happen, or having faith that something will happen. Explain that

today's lesson will focus on what hope means from a biblical perspective and how hoping in the right thing can bring about peace.

Link to Last Week

Some of your students may want to share how having an unwavering faith helped them this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss ways people sometimes respond to difficulties.

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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?**

LESSON FOCUS: Hope in God, who gives us peace through Jesus.

Read the opening story in the student book, then divide the class into small groups and ask students to discuss their responses to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

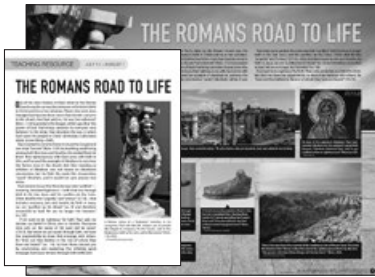
Regarding Question 1, people sometimes blame God or say, “Why me?”; sometimes they fall into despair; sometimes they abandon hope that they will experience anything good in this life; sometimes they become emotionally paralyzed or socially isolated; sometimes they respond by moving on, by making the best of a bad situation, by reaching out to others who have faced similar trials, or by strengthening their relationship with God.

For Question 2, if the only things that provide hope are ourselves or our circumstances, we can easily fall into despair or a sense of hopelessness when things aren't going well. Seeing things from a more eternal perspective can result in being able to look beyond our current circumstances toward what God has in store for us in this life or the next.

Question 3 reminds us that God promises we will grow in faith and character if we trust in Him during times when we are suffering or have doubts about His love for us. Focusing on our eternal home rather than on our present circumstances can give us peace knowing that better times lay ahead as long as we continue to trust in God.

2 Bible Learning

Note some results of being justified by faith.



Paul explained that forgiveness is a grace-based proposition. We are saved by faith, not by works or self-effort.

This should result in peace, knowing our place in eternity is secure and that we will continue to grow in faith, even when suffering, as long as we continue to place our hope in God.

On the poster handout, read paragraph four and note on the poster the photo of the heel bone with a nail driven through it.

BIBLE EXTRA

Eirene Peace

The Greek word translated as peace in verse 1 is *eirene*. It means to be in a state of quietness or rest or to be undisturbed. Paul used the same word in Philippians 4:6-7 when he wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The *Classic Amplified* version of this passage includes this expanded meaning of *eirene*: "That tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is."

Paul wrote in Romans 3 that the way to *eirene* peace was not experienced by Jews or Gentiles (vs. 17), who thought that the path to it was either through obedience to the law or by disregarding it. Paul maintained that a person "is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (vs. 28). It is faith in Jesus and this faith alone that results in *eirene* peace.

EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Read Romans 5:1-5 and highlight these points:

- Our justification is not the result of works or self-effort. It is by the grace of God that we are forgiven; it is not something we deserve or have earned.
- We can be at peace knowing we are no longer at war with God and are accepted by Him without any conditions other than faith.
- We now have unencumbered access to God's

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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



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 420-421 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

grace. This results in a confident assurance of sharing in God's glory.

- We can rejoice while suffering knowing that we will grow in character if we continue to trust in God.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Our justification—the forgiveness for our sins—is not something we've earned. It didn't come about because we were good or because we did something to earn God's favor. It is a matter of grace or unmerited favor. Our redemption is not something we gained through self-effort but is the result of

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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

putting our faith in the means God provided for our salvation: Jesus' death on a cross.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Wages of Sin

Earlier in Romans, Paul wrote, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:23-24). All of us are undeserving of God's grace. But all of us are justified (forgiven) without any preconditions because of the tremendous love God has for us and the redemptive work of Christ. Paul noted that this is a free gift. He wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

What Jesus did for us can be likened to exonerating a criminal who has been found guilty of some heinous evil and deserves nothing less than death for what he's done. Our sin is that bad in God's eyes. We deserve nothing short of death. Yet it was at the very time when we deserved the worst that Jesus showed His great love by stepping in and in effect saying, "I will take the punishment you deserve; I will die in your place."

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

We are at peace knowing that God's love for us is unconditional and that we are forgiven in spite of the fact that we don't deserve it; we have complete access to God's grace, His unmerited favor; we have a confident assurance that we will share in the glory of God and that we will become like Him.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

Although gratitude can be hardest to feel when times of suffering come, we can rejoice in the midst of suffering knowing that if we persevere, that we will grow in faith and character.

We shouldn't respond with anguish or despair like those who have no hope but instead should respond with confidence knowing that the outcome will be good if we continue to trust in Jesus.

WHEN WE WERE JUSTIFIED

Read Romans 5:6-8, then note these key points:

- It was when we were at our worst and could do nothing to save ourselves that Jesus died for us.
- God doesn't require that we first have something worthwhile in us in order to be saved; He doesn't ask us to be good before He will save us.
- God demonstrated His great love for us by letting Jesus die for us when we least deserved to be loved and forgiven.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Torn Curtain

The temple in Jerusalem and the tabernacle that preceded it were designed to separate the people from God. God is, after all, holy and they were not. They could, therefore, not come into God's presence under any circumstances. To remind them of this, God commanded that a thick curtain be hung to separate the holiest spot of the temple where God dwelled from the rest of the temple.

In the days of Jesus, it is believed that this curtain was 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, 6 inches thick, and may have weighed as much as six tons. The high priest was the only one allowed behind this curtain and he could do so only one day a year—on the day of atonement—after observing some strict requirements regarding the cleansing and sacrifices that must take place beforehand.

Paul mentioned three times in today's lesson text that Christ died for us: verses 6, 8, and 10. When Jesus gave up His last breath and died on the Cross, the curtain in the temple was miraculously torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:50-51). This symbolized in a dramatic way that Jesus had done all that was required to allow everyone equal and unencumbered access to God's presence.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Although a person might be willing to sacrifice themselves for someone who is good, few if any would be willing to do so for someone who has nothing good in them. God demonstrated His great love for us by sending Jesus to die for us when we were "ungodly" (vs. 6) and "sinners" (vs. 8).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Paul said that we are "powerless" (vs. 6) to do anything to save ourselves. We cannot create any righteousness for ourselves; that is fruitless. Just trying to be good can result in our doubting that

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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,

we are good enough for God or we can feel that we haven't done enough to earn His reward.

WHERE OUR HOPE RESTS

Read Romans 5:9-11, then highlight the following:

- Another effect of being justified by faith is knowing that we are no longer subject to God's wrath. This too is a result of His grace. It is not something we've earned.
- We are no longer alienated or estranged from God. Those who have accepted God's gift of reconciliation through justification by faith are now His friends rather than His enemies.
- Looking at our lesson text, Romans 5:1-11, as a whole, we see that we will be at peace knowing

that our place in eternity is secure and that we will grow in faith and character in this life as long as we continue to trust in Jesus.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

We are no longer subject to God's wrath. This too is a matter of grace. It is not something we deserve or have earned. We are also reconciled to God. At one time we were separated from God, estranged from Him. But now that we have accepted God's gift of reconciliation through justification by faith, we are His friends rather than His enemies.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 10

We see that because we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God. We don't have to strive to earn God's favor. That's because our assurance of salvation and having a right relationship with God is no longer based on ourselves and how good we are. It is tied solely to His character and what He is accomplishing in and through us. We can respond to trials and suffering with hope knowing that we will grow in faith and character as long as we continue to trust in Jesus.

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?

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Access to God

The writer of Hebrews wrote this regarding the effects of the "torn curtain" and that because of this that we now have complete and unencumbered access to God: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:19-23).

3 Bible Application

Discuss what hoping in God can bring.

Photocopy the page and give instructions to each group. Give two sheets of newsprint to the group doing the acrostic. Give index cards and pens or pencils to the group doing the personal reflection. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout: 'Why Me?'

Read the handout and respond to the questions at the end.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Quit Striving" in the student book and respond to **Questions 11, 12, and 13**. Forgetting that our relationship with God is grace-based and is not the result of works or self-effort can sometimes result in doubts about His continued love for us. Peace comes when we hope and trust in Him in all our circumstances, including those times when we harbor doubts about His love for us.

Hope and Peace Acrostic

On a sheet of newsprint, write out some words or phrases beginning with the letters in the word "HOPE" that describe some things you are confident about (or should be) regarding your relationship with God. On a second sheet write out some words or phrases beginning with the letters from the word "PEACE" that describe what this does or should result in. Discuss how what's on the first list can contribute to what's on the second.

Personal Reflection

On an index card, write out your response to the following: Regarding my relationship with God, I have hope (a confident assurance of) _____. This results in _____ knowing that _____. Share your responses with the other members of your group.

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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?*

4 Life Response

Hope in God.

We can't escape the difficulties this life often presents. And sometimes they will result in harboring doubts about God's love for us and the benefit of continuing to trust in Him. But placing our hope in God in all circumstances, no matter how difficult they are, can result in peace knowing that the outcome of trusting in Him will always be better than placing our faith in ourselves or our circumstances.

Ask students to read "Hope in God, Who Gives

You Peace" in the student book and let them record their responses to the question. Some may note a way they are struggling and their need to trust in God for the outcome. Others may be harboring doubts about God's love for them and need to remember that God loves and cares for them in any circumstance.

Close the class in prayer. Thank God for His great and unconditional love for us. Pray that students will place their hope in God no matter what their circumstances so that they can experience the peace that comes from continuing to trust in Him.

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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



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Read Romans 10:5-17. Ask students to think about these questions: "How is God speaking to me today? What does He want me to do? How does He want me to respond?"

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.