

Message Series: The Reign of Grace

Today's Message: We Have Peace with God: Rom 5:1, 9–11 / 9-11-2022 / Jeff Kennedy

Rom 15:12–13 “Isaiah says, **‘The root of Jesse will appear, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; the Gentiles will hope in him.**”
13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Introduction: Paul has hammered two thoughts that are undeniable: **(1) No one is righteous**, and all stand condemned in sin before God. **(2) The Gospel of Jesus reveals a righteousness** that is by faith from first to last—that is from Abraham to Christ.

However, Chapter 5 marks a new direction for the epistle. Notice the change in terms:

Faith/believe occur 33 times in 1:18–4:25, but only 3 times between 5:1–8:39, while the terms life/live occur only 2 times in 1:18–4:25, but 24 times in 5:1–8:39. The word “hope” becomes significant as well (4:18; 5:2, 4–5; 8:20, 24–25; 12:12; 15:12). The word “hope” is used in the book of Romans more than any other book of the Bible.

It is used more than the first five books of the NT combined.

Paul's rhetoric changes also...

- Paul's **polemical tendency** is replaced with a more **personal tone** of friendship and solidarity.
- Paul's focus shifts from the **righteousness revealed** by the Gospel—by faith from Abraham to Christ (first to last) to the **life that is a consequence** of justification by faith (Rom 5:1–8:39).

For those who say that Romans is about Justification by faith that's just a misnomer. They've only read the first four chapters. Let's turn our attention to the results of justifying faith and grace...

Main Thought Today: Justifying faith results in peace with God.

How so?

1. As justified believers, we've been pardoned not paroled. Rom 5:1, 9 “Therefore, *since we have been justified by faith, we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... How much more then, since we have **now been justified** by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath.”

There is a very prevalent teaching among scholars that we still await a final and future event when God will, in the **final analysis of one's life**, decide whether a person is justified or not. Some people have this idea that God has only bailed us out—that we are in some kind of probationary period to make sure that we're worthy of grace, or deserving of the offer of salvation.

But this turns salvation into nothing more than a **provisional pardon** pending our future compliance. Should we fail to meet with our heavenly parole officer by skipping our morning devotions, or should we find ourselves desiring things or people that God has set off limits—then it's back in the slammer. Believers live with an anxiety over their eternal status because they're worried they may have sinned themselves out of saving grace.

But Look at the finality with which Paul speaks of our justification and pardon.

v.9 states that since we **now have been justified** by his blood, how much more will we be saved through Jesus from his wrath? Who's wrath? God's. Jesus'. We are saved by God from God. From his judgment of condemnation on sin. And that justifying change of our status before a holy God is in the past (for the believer).

Just look at how Paul spoke of justification elsewhere.

Rom 8:30 “And those he **predestined**, he also **called**; and those he **called**, he also **justified**; and those he **justified**, he also **glorified**. From God's perspective even our future glorification in resurrection is a done deal. That's how secure our salvation is.

1 Cor 6:11 “But you **were washed**, you **were sanctified**, you **were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Even our sanctification is past tense from God's perspective. When God looks at us he's sees the finished work of Christ and as **Charles Spurgeon famously said, the Christian life is a matter of working out what He has worked in.**

Titus 3:7 “so that, **having been justified** by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.”

Listen, in one very significant way, ***you are as saved today as you are ever going to be.*** Having received a full and legal pardon for sins, the believer is now free to live in the abundant resources of Grace.

We're not on probation—*we're pardoned.*

2. Our peace isn't merely a "ceasefire" but a covenantal relationship. The word for "peace" here is *eirēnē*. This word generally means the absence of hostility between two warring parties. It also envisions not merely a "ceasefire" but an active, cordial relationship.

Example: It can be said that we have "peace" with all the nations in the world, but the peace we have with Russia or China looks very different than the peace we have with the UK—which was so warmly displayed this last week at the death of Queen Elizabeth. We technically have peace with countries that mean us harm. But that's not the kind of peace this text speaks of.

The peace Paul envisions here is covenantal. It is the fulfillment of a promise God made in the prophets to bring a new covenant under his Messiah and King.

The Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 34 and 37) saw a day when God would enact a new covenant of peace with the divided houses of Israel and Judah.

Ezek 34 is a prophetic oracle in which Yahweh says "Here's how I'm going to solve the problem of these wicked shepherd-kings in David's line—Ezek 34:11 "For this is what the Lord God says: See, I myself will search for my flock and look for them." He says I will search for the lost, I myself will rescue them, bring them back, feed them, bind up their wounds, "I myself will be their king." 34:23–24 "I will establish over them *one shepherd*, my servant *David* (David has been dead for 400 years), and he will shepherd them. He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd. ²⁴ I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among them. I, the Lord, have spoken. I will make a *covenant of peace*." This future Davidide will enact a new covenant of peace as Yahweh reigns through this human servant.

Ezek 37:23–24 The chapter begins famously with a striking picture of a valley of dead and dry bones—God breathing on those bones and suddenly they spring back to life in resurrection, this is the imagery of God reconstituting his people; he resurrects the nation. "I will save them from all their apostasies by which they sinned, and I will *cleanse* them. My servant *David* will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them. I will make a *covenant of peace* with them; it will be a *permanent covenant* with them. I will establish and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forever. ²⁷ My *dwelling place will be with them*; I will be their God, and they will be my people."

This new covenant of peace that God ratifies among the people is based on he himself becoming their King in an embodied Son of David. This new David will reconstitute the people of God, resurrecting them from the dead; he will cleanse them from all their sins and be the high king over them. This is the permanent covenant of peace that God makes with his people.

Let's read these astonishing passages reflecting on how Jesus fulfills this promise in Ezekiel, Col 1:19–22 “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by ***making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*** ²¹ Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. ²² But now he has reconciled (made peace with) you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.”

Heb 13:19–21 “Now may the **God of peace**, who brought up **from the dead** our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—through the **blood of the everlasting covenant**, ²¹ equip you with everything good to do his will, working in us what is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.”

When Paul says we have been justified resulting in peace with God—this is not just a statement about a ceasefire between two hostile parties. It's a restoration of a previously broken relationship through a new and permanent covenant of peace—set into motion by a new David who is the embodiment of Yahweh and his rule, cleansing us from sin, establishing his sanctuary in our midst by pouring out the Holy Spirit; raising us back to life—a washed, sanctified, justified, redeemed people.

3. We needed peace with God because we were helpless to end our hostility toward God.

We were helpless in our sins Rom 5:6 “For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.”

This term *asthenē* meaning “helpless.” This word means debilitated, weak, feeble.

Illus. As a teenager, I stayed in England, the family I stayed with a family while working with a local church for a summer. And the dad, Nigel, he was so excited to show me his boat. He’d been working on it, patching holes, making it seaworthy. And it looked great. They took me on Holiday to Wales and we stayed there and he pulled his boat out on the beach, right up on the sand—and we jumped out of his vehicle and began to try and push this thing into the water. Now, I assumed he knew what to do. But it became apparent within a few minutes that he had no idea what he was doing at all. The waves kept pushing back into the shore and we finally, using up nearly all our strength got the boat out into the water. Nigel’s 17 yr old son, James, had MS. The disease had progressed to the point where he had no use of his lower body, and could only move his arms around a bit, but he couldn’t grasp onto anything. It occurred to us that we forgot to put James on the boat.

So Nigel through out his anchor, we hauled his son out of the chair, and he told me, “Now Jeff, just carry him out to the side and we’ll hoist him over the side of it.” When I grabbed him from the front, I did not anticipate how heavy he was. I literally had to drag him through the waves to the edge and try and lift him pushing him over the side—his dad grabbed him by the coat and then he slipped and I caught him—his head went under and I pulled him back up and he was freaking out. We finally him in but only with much effort and exhaustion.

When I think of *asthenē* “helpless” this is the picture I have in my mind. A person who is so powerless they are at the mercy of another. Utterly without the capacity to help themselves in any way.

While we were helpless—Christ died for us. We had no capacity, no ability to better ourselves or make ourselves more pleasing to God or acceptable before God. While we were in this helpless and hopeless state—Christ died for us. Our sins becoming his and his righteousness becoming ours.

We were hostile to God. Sin is not just being broken and needing rescue. Rom 5:7–10 “For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still **sinners**, Christ died for us. ⁹ How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were **enemies**, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.”

It's not just that we were helpless he says, we were hostile to God. There is an assault on Paul's teaching from every direction today—people want to soften the notion of sin. Our sins become mere “mistakes” or “hang ups” or “annoying habits” or “psychological disorders.” But Paul says the sinner is ungodly and while we were in this state we were enemies of the cross—in opposition to God.

You say, “Wait a minute. I thought God loved us. If he loves us then how can he also view us as enemies.”

Rom 11:28, he says of his Jewish countrymen “**Regarding the gospel, they are enemies** which has been to your advantage. But regarding election, they are loved because God they are descendants of the patriarchs.” If a child grows up and decides they despise you and want nothing to do with you—that doesn't change your relentless stance toward them. You love them. Even if you have to make some hard choices and allow them to suffer consequences for poor decisions. You can love a person who is a self declared enemy of your values and your beliefs.

James 4:4 “You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is **hostility** toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God.”

God has torn down the wall and removed the barrier of sin between himself and us and between Jew and Gentile. And in its place we now have peace.

Closing: Every generation has certain defining events. For my mom's generation that would be growing up in post-WWII society going from the prosperity of the 50's to the turmoil of the 60's and the desegregated world of the 70's—the assassination of JFK, and MLK, Vietnam and the rise and untimely demise of Elvis.

For me it was the Reagan revolution, Glasnost and Perestroika, the Challenger space shuttle exploding, and the most famous historical event of that era—the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. This event paved the way for the reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990, and the liberation of Central and Eastern European countries previously bound under the Warsaw Pact with the Soviet Union. On one side of the wall life was a communist prison state. On the western side of the wall Germans enjoyed free and fair elections, democracy, and a free market.

With the death of Mikhail Gorbachev this last week, we are reminded of that the fall of the Berlin Wall marked a new beginning. I remember watching it unfold and thinking “How is this even possible?” When Reagan told Gorbachev famously to “Tear down

this wall” at the time I thought that would never happen. That it *could* never happen. Over 30 years later, the wall has been torn down longer than it stood as a barrier and a symbol of hostility and imprisonment.

While that wall stood, no one would live near for fear of being shot. Today, home values there have skyrocketed some 400%. The famous checkpoint is now a tourist trap, with shops, restaurants and cafés lining the streets, and millions of international tourists come to see the remnants of a world that should have never been.

Segue: What was once the very symbol of hostility between peoples—the barrier, the wall has been torn down. And now there is peace and salvation. God has torn the curtain that separated us from the holy of holies—the inner sanctum of his presence. Eph 2:13–15 “But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the ***blood of Christ***.¹⁴ For ***he is our peace***, who made both groups one and ***tore down the dividing wall of hostility***. In his flesh,¹⁵ he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in ***peace***”

Since we have been justified, we now have peace with God.

God we thank you that we’ve received a full pardon not some temporary or tenuous parole.

And we thank you that we have a true and lasting peace in the new covenant made in the new David and his blood shed for us on the cross.

And though we were helpless in sin, and hostile to the reign of your grace, now the wall that separated us from you has been torn down that we may live in the ample resources of grace today.