**WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD**

***Romans 5:1-21***

***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…” (v. 1)***

Sometimes we may feel that if it were possible, we’d like to delete all our past wrong doings in our lives and run a new race. Is it possible? Yes! In the last passage, we learned that it actually happens in us through our Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe that Jesus died on the cross as a ransom sacrifice to forgive all our sins, God declares us righteous in his sight. At this moment, he wipes out all our sins and the due penalties recorded in our personal accounts. At the same time, he writes down “Surely this person is righteous because of my righteous Son, Jesus.” Wow! What a marvelous grace it is for helpless sinners like us! Indeed we can live a new life before God through faith in Christ. But God’s grace doesn’t stop here. Justification is only the beginning of many blessings God lavishes on us in response to our faith. Through today’s passage, let’s count the blessings we have in Christ. May God help us to deeply accept this overflowing grace, give thanks to him, and live by faith to the end!

1. **The outcomes of faith: Peace, hope and love (vs. 1-11)**

First, we have peace with God. Look at verse 1. ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…”*** Peace with God is an immediate result of justification. The opposite condition of peace is war. Someone has pointed out that over the past 4,000 years in human history, there have been fewer than 300 years of peace. It is said that currently 67 countries are involved in war between nations or with militias, terrorists, or drug cartels. Imagine the continual fear, anxiety, restlessness and exhaustion! The world is desperately searching for peace—deep, inward, satisfying peace. It yearns for freedom from conflict and war, freedom from hatred and strife which divide families and communities, and freedom from fear of the future.

Where can we get such peace? The world thinks peace would come if everyone made a lot of money, but people haven’t found peace in possessions. In the search for peace, people also pursue a lot of knowledge, so they got all the degrees they could get, but still didn’t find it. Some rely on physical rest, entertainment, even drugs and alcohol to escape from reality for a few moments, for a few hours at most, and then it’s back again—the old burden, the old suffering, the old emptiness with ever-increasing anxiety and restlessness. People have also thought the world would have peace if all arms were destroyed. Yet in Genesis chapter 4, Cain killed Abel without a handgun. It is man’s heart that is the problem.

The simple fact is: there can be no real peace in the world until we have peace with God. Cain, out of his rebellion against God and his unrestrained jealousy and hatred, killed his brother, Abel. As a result, he suffered from fear of punishment, tried to hide himself from God’s presence, and became a restless wanderer (Ge 4:13-14). People are restless because they have become like Cain, the enemies of God. Although God has never been humanity’s enemy, we by choice became enemies of God. The breach was made by us, by deliberate choice to rebel against God. Yet, most people do not realize what their real problem is. So they seek human solutions that fail. The history of mankind has been the record of a futile effort to live happy and peacefully apart from God. True peace comes only from God when we are reconciled to him. St. Augustine confessed, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

To give us peace, God first initiated his reconciliation with us by sending his Son as the Peacemaker. So verse 1b says, ***“…we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…”***   
***“Through”*** Jesus, we have peace with God. Dr. Billy Graham, in his book entitled, “The Secret of Happiness” introduces a picture he saw in England which showed a soldier who had gone to the front line to repair the communications lines. The message which was to flow through those lines meant life for hundreds and perhaps thousands of men. He found a breach in the wires but had nothing with which to repair the break. While the enemy shells were bursting around him, he took one broken cable in his left hand and, stretching his right hand as far as it would go, grasped the other cable and made the connection through his own body. The dramatic picture had a one-word title: ***“Through.”***

On the cross, Jesus took all God’s wrath that was supposed to be poured upon us, and opened a new and living way to God (Heb 10:20). In his terrible death on the cross, he repaired the breach between God and us. So the Bible says: ***“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”*** and *“He himself is our peace”* (Eph 2:14). By faith in Christ now we can gain access to God with freedom and confidence (Eph 3:12). Subsequently, now we stand in totally different territory, not the sphere of war, condemnation and punishment, but the sphere of peace, forgiveness, understanding, and love. Through our Lord Jesus, our peace is deeply and firmly rooted in our heavenly Father, who perfectly understands, cares for, and guides us with his almighty power and sovereign will. Peace from God gives us true rest regardless of our situation or circumstances. Peace with God frees us from any fear, even fear of death. When we have peace with God, we can have peace with others in the home, church, community, and the world as God’s peacemakers (Mt 5:9).

Second, we have joy in hope. Look at verse 2b. ***“…And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”*** In Greek, the word “boast” can also mean “rejoice.” So when this verse says, “we boast” we can understand it as “we boastfully rejoice.” What makes us boastfully joyful? We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Here “the hope of the glory of God” refers to the full restoration of God’s kingdom. But even more precisely, it refers to the complete transformation of each believer into the glorious image of our Lord Jesus. We will be like Jesus in the perfectly restored paradise. We often groan over the hard realities of the world, and over the weaknesses in our bodies and wills. However, one day we will be like Jesus, perfected in character, nobility, and splendor after our own resurrection. We will enter the beautiful and magnificent land, the restored paradise, where we will praise God and reign with the Lord forever and ever. Even the most beautiful place, and the most joyful moment of our earthly lives are just shadows of the kingdom of God. Whenever we think of this promise of future glory, we are overjoyed.

Look at verses 3-4. ***“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*** Although Paul has said the Christian life is full of peace and joy, it is not without sufferings. The “s” on the end of “sufferings” indicates that there is not just one suffering, but many sufferings, one after another, throughout our pilgrimage in this world. Are you scared? To people of the world, suffering is a terrible thing, to be avoided if at all possible. Suffering makes people sorrowful, bitter and fatalistic. But to those who live by faith, sufferings are not to be avoided. We glory and rejoice in our sufferings.

Why is this so? It is because we know that sufferings are ingredients for our spiritual growth. Through suffering, God refines our faith, as a refiner purifies gold (Mal 3:3). First of all, suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance means the ability to remain under difficulties to the end, until they are overcome. Therefore, sufferings do not make us weak; rather they make us strong, producing perseverance in us. Sufferings also shape the beautiful character of our Lord Jesus Christ in us. In our suffering, we think of Jesus more, who suffered and died for us, and we come to love Jesus with many tears and learn from his heart, humility, empathy, love, and so on. Moreover, suffering produces hope for our future glory. Through suffering, God purifies us from false hopes of the world to give us a living hope in the kingdom of God that never perishes, spoils or fades away (1 Pe 1:3-4).

In the Bible, Joseph was one of the greatest figures who most remarkably resembles our Lord Jesus Christ in his life and character. Due to his brothers’ jealousy, Joseph, an innocent boy, was sold to Midianite merchants as a slave (Ge 37). He was taken down to Egypt, and sold again to Potiphar. Joseph worked faithfully in whatever position he was in, but he was falsely accused and thrown into a dungeon. In the prison, even though he served Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and baker and interpreted their dreams, he was totally forgotten for a long time. Indeed, he had experienced suffering after suffering. But in God’s time, he was raised as the prime minster of Egypt to rescue many people from the severe famine. Later Joseph helped his brothers to repent of their sins and forgave them unconditionally. At that point, he could have enjoyed a comfortable life, but his hope was not in this world. When his end was near, he prophesied about the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions to carry his bones up from Egypt (Heb 11:22). For he was looking forward to his eternal home, the kingdom of heaven.

As we see in Joseph’s life, our sufferings are never meaningless in Christ. Rather, they convince us of God’s wonderful purpose and our final victory. The event which proves the meaning of suffering most vividly is Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus knew that his sufferings would bring him resurrection and ultimate glory. Hebrews 12:2b says, *“…For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”.* Whatever sufferings we are in now, no matter how heavy they are, let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. More than that, let us keep on rejoicing in our sufferings with our final victory in mind. Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 4:13, *“But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”*

Third, God’s love has been poured out into our hearts. Look at verse 5. ***“And 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.”*** Our hope does not disappoint us because it is based on God’s promises. God assures us of his promises by pouring out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can feel the love of God when the Holy Spirit enters our hearts. God’s love poured into our hearts melts all our doubts, worries, and fears about the future and strengthens us to live by his hope. God also proves his love to us in another way. What is it? God demonstrates his love throughout history through Jesus Christ. When we seriously contemplate all that God has done for his people on the cross, God’s love becomes so real to us, and more reliable than the ground we walk on.

Look at verses 6-7. ***“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.”*** God’s love was expressed to us when we were powerless and ungodly sinners. Due to sin, we had no power to live by God’s moral standard and save ourselves. Also, sin blinded us to fail in acknowledging God as our Creator. We didn’t glorify him as God nor did we give thanks to him. We became idol worshipers and lived based only on our selfish desires and ambitions. As a result, we were slaves to sin. The grip of sin binding our minds, hands and feet was too strong, we could not be freed from its power. Here and there, wherever sin directed us, we were dragged. Eventually, we were enemies of God (10). If we had simply been unable to do anything, we might have been more endurable to God. But we were rebels, actively provoking God’s anger and grief as instruments of Satan. Who can love such sinners?

Human beings tend to love those who are attractive, beneficial, and worthy, but feel burdened by powerless and rebellious people. In rare cases someone may give his or her life for a good person. However, God’s love is beyond human love. Look at verse 8. ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** In order to save useless sinners, God gave his one and only Son to die on the cross. If God had sent a man or an angel to save us, we would still have been grateful. But God sent his one and only Son, his own being, actually God himself. It would still have been wonderful and amazing if God had only become flesh to live among us and serve us on earth. But God gave himself over to the horrible shame of being despised, the extreme torture of crucifixion, and the unbearable pain of abandonment. For whom? For powerless, ungodly, and rebellious sinners like us. Self-giving is a symbol of love. God gave himself on the cross for those who deserved nothing but wrath from him. That is God’s unshakable proof of his love toward each of us.

In verse 8, the verb ***“demonstrates”*** is in the present tense. Today, God continues to show his love for us in our personal lives, earnestly urging us to look at the cross, the ever-unchanging evidence of his love. Based on God’s sacrificial and unchanging love, we are convinced that he will graciously give us all things (Ro 8:32). We can believe and rejoice in God because he will perfectly guide us during our life’s pilgrimage and bring our salvation to completion until we fully participate in our Lord’s glory in the eternal kingdom (9-11).

So far, we learned the outcomes of faith after our justification. We can have peace with God, joy in hope, perseverance in sufferings, and assurance of God’s love. These blessings cannot be found in this world, but only in Christ through faith. At the same time, love, joy, peace, and patience are among the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Ga 5:22-23). As we continually live by faith and remain in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit works in us and helps us to bear such blessed fruit. In doing so, God wants his grace to overflow to the world through his children. Our vertical relationship with God must have a horizontal outworking. May God bless us to continually grow in faith, so that we may more freely taste and share his grace with our neighbors and many troubled souls!

1. **God’s grace is greater than sin (vs. 12-21**)

Now, to help us to stand firm in God’s grace, Paul compares two men—Adam and Christ. Through one man Adam’s disobedience, sin entered the world and death reigned. Through one man Jesus’s obedience, however, the grace of forgiveness came to the world and this grace reigns in life.

In his comparison, after mentioning Adam’s influence, Paul repeatedly uses the phrases ***“how much more,” “all the more”*** and ***“overflow”*** in stating Jesus’ influence (15, 17, 20). What does this mean? God’s grace is stronger than our sin. The power of sin is truly fearsome and devastating. Just one man Adam sinned, but sin spread to all men. Sin spoiled, wounded, and destroyed all God’s creation. Sin seems irrevocable and incurable. But the grace of Jesus is stronger. Look at verses 20-21. ***“The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** God’s grace is sufficient to cover all sins that our human beings have dug up since Adam. God’s grace is powerful to heal all wounds and scars that we have made. God’s grace overflows to reach out to any kind of sinners in the world. Where sin increases, grace increases all the more. As a result, grace reigns in life and God’s glory is revealed.

Wouldn’t you come to this abundant grace and freely taste it by faith alone? Isaiah 55:1 says, *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”* Let’s come as we are, as helpless sinners, and entrust our lives to this overflowing grace of God. God will save, restore, and heal us and be glorified through our lives. Amen!