

Romans chapter 5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through 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.³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.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.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today we are continuing our study of the book of Romans having reached chapter 5, a chapter which my Bible announces with the words 'Peace and joy'. The chapter starts with the conjunction 'therefore', leading us to link the early teaching of this chapter to the previous one. You see the peace and joy described at the beginning of chapter 5 can only be understood in the light of the teaching of chapter 4 and it is for this reason that I am going to start today by tracking back into this previous chapter.

The scriptures were only organised into chapters for relatively modern readers in the early 13th century and so it wasn't Paul's intention to put a break between his thoughts at the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5. Within chapter 4, Paul has taken considerable time and care to lay down the doctrine that 'righteousness comes by faith alone'. Not only so but he describes how even Abraham himself, regarded by Jews as the father of all Hebrews, the founder of Judaism, the physical and spiritual ancestor of the Jewish people, and the first of their Patriarchs, was only reconciled to God in this way - not by works, not by the outward sign of circumcision but by his faith alone. The essential verse within chapter 4 is verse 3 which declares simply that 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness'. This verse communicates the very linchpin of the Christian faith – that salvation does not come by anything other than by faith. I chose to use the term linchpin here quite deliberately as it conjures up a useful picture in the circumstances. For a linchpin is the device that keeps a wheel from coming off its own axle and unless we grasp a hold of our walk with God by the understanding contained within this verse then sooner or later the wheels will just as surely come off our faith and we'll end up in a proverbial ditch somewhere. Such has happened to me more than once in my Christian walk but one time in particular sticks out in my mind. I had well and truly taken my eyes off the fact that through faith I was right with God and had begun measuring myself by my actions alone without the grace of God. The inevitable happens when you start doing that – and I began to feel very unworthy and despondent. It was at this moment in my life that God gave me a scripture that would stay precious to me for the rest of my life. I received it whilst sitting on a train on my way towards Redditch from Birmingham. Ephesians 5 verse 12. As I began looking up the verse I wondered what words of condemnation or correction would await me from the Almighty. Turning there this is what it said:

'In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.'

He was indeed correcting me but not in the way that I'd expected. He was telling me that He didn't see me as I saw myself. The day I had accepted Jesus as my Saviour my sins, all of them, were forever put away as far as the east is from the west. God no longer has record of them and neither should I. But most of us carry a log of them somewhere. We judge our lives by them as if they carried the same weight as the inspired Word of God but God says my Word will be a light to your path and a lamp to your feet. And His Word says at the beginning of Romans 5 that we have been justified by faith! Justified never sinned!

Within chapter 4 Paul uses the word 'credit' or 'credited' no less than ten times. In fact it is used so frequently as to make the reading of the chapter quite cumbersome and repetitive. Paul however intentionally trades eloquence with the need for absolute clarity about the means of our salvation – righteousness has been credited to those who believe. Credited to

you. It has been credited to you. I think it is with considerable restraint on Paul's part that he doesn't end the chapter with the sarcastic words 'Do you understand what I'm trying to say here?' In verse 23 Paul states that the 'words "It was credited to him" in reference to Abraham, were not for him alone, but also for us'. So it's vital we understand what this means.

The word 'credited' is the Greek word 'logizomai' [la-gids-oh-my] which is referenced in Strong's for those who'd like to know as G3049. Now the term 'logizomai' means 'to reckon, to count, to compute or to pass to one's account'. The Greek word is robust in its use, attaching force and weight to the meaning it conveys. In financial terms it would be stating that a transaction had been fully and completely ratified. In the context of Romans chapter 4 Paul is saying that the righteousness of God has been fully, wholly, completely, absolutely given to those who believe. It has been passed into your account which no longer registers any unrighteousness at all but instead registers righteousness.

Strong's goes onto say this about the interpretation of the word 'logizomai':

'This word deals with reality. If I reckon 'logizomai' that my bank account has £200 in it, then it most certainly, factually has £200 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers more to fact than supposition or opinion.'

I really love that last bit: 'This word refers more to fact than supposition or opinion.' Through faith in Christ the believer is not made righteous in some figurative or pictorial way but in the truest and most complete of ways. Now the question that remains is this: 'Do we live within this reality that as a believer we have full and complete right-standing with God or not?'

The Message translates Romans 4 v 3 in this way:

'Abraham trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own.'

Having right-standing with God is less about us and more about God. To give an analogy. It's like a husband wanting to become a father by carrying and giving birth to a baby himself. It doesn't matter how much he might want that to happen, it won't, it can't. It's biologically impossible. Instead he needs to allow his wife to provide that for him. Now obviously he has a rather minor role at the beginning!

Now although this husband cannot carry and give birth to the child himself and although he must rely upon his wife to do this for him, nevertheless, at the end of the nine month period he is a father in every way. You see, it is impossible for us to get righteous before God by our own selves, no matter how much we try and no matter how much we want to. The only way we become righteousness is by receiving it from Him as a gift through our faith. Linking this to our analogy again, the only thing that makes a man the legal father of a child is the role he has to play at the beginning. The mother plays the major part of bringing the child into the world. In the same way God is the one who brings our righteousness to us. Our role is to believe. This is why this doctrine of righteousness by faith is such a stumbling block to so many people – because it's so counterintuitive. We live in a world where you

don't get anything for nothing and yet in order to have full and everlasting remission of our sins, all of our sins, past, present and future, all we must do is simply believe. It's our enemy the devil who attempts to convince us that we can work our way into God's good books because then as we fail he knows we are going to beat ourselves up time and again with self-condemnation. Yes of course there are other vital elements to us living as a Christian, just as there is far more of course to being a father than simply having a child. You would hope that a father would cherish his children and embrace the responsibility of having them wisely. In the same way the believer must cherish their salvation and embrace it wisely too. But salvation is wrought by God and not by ourselves and we will always be less effective as a Christian until we accept that important truth. This is what Paul takes a whole chapter explaining in Romans 4.

Having understood then that through faith we come into right-standing with God we can now begin to grasp the message at the beginning of chapter 5 which says:

'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into his grace in which we now stand.'

Allow me to read out the first part of that again.

'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace..'

Do you have this peace manifest in your life? A peace that the Bible describes in Philippians 4 v 7 as a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a peace that transcends all circumstances in your life. A peace that comes from the knowledge that you are forever right with God with an eternity with Him assured. It is a peace that Paul goes on to say allows the believer to rejoice even in their sufferings.

We all struggle at times to grasp how incredibly powerful and far-reaching the effects of Calvary are. Within chapter 5 Paul uses a comparison with the far reaching effects of the Fall to demonstrate to his readers the power of Calvary's cross. Paul describes the impact of Adam's sin as bringing death to us all, making us all sinners under God's judgement and condemnation. Now Paul uses the argument that if such destruction can be wrought through the single action of one created man then how much restoration can be brought about by the obedience of the everlasting Son of God.

In Romans 5 v 17 Paul puts it like this:

'..if by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!'

‘The gift of righteousness.’ Now I don’t know about you but the last time I received a gift I didn’t spend the rest of my life trying to earn it. What I do however is try and get the most out of it.

The Message version of Romans 5 v 18 says all of this so wonderfully and I quote:

‘Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it.’

I think sometimes too much intelligence can get in the way of the gospel can’t it. Accept the simple fact today that whilst your sin has been an issue for you it isn’t to God. That’s why Jesus uttered on the cross the words “It is finished”. Now that doesn’t mean we should abuse His forgiveness of course but we will must grasp that all of our sins have been put away.

As I Christian I don’t want to survive, or strive but thrive – now there’s a sound bite David Cameron would be proud of. When we take our eyes off the gift of righteousness and right-standing with God we begin striving and our works dry up. When we set our eyes upon the riches we have in Christ we stop striving and our works flow as a natural consequence – after all He has placed His Holy Spirit within us. You see with the gospel we often make the mistake of putting the cart before the horse. We feel that better character yields a better standing with God. Let me tell you unequivocally today that it does not. Right-standing with God is gained through the work of Christ alone, that allows the peace and love of God to be poured into your heart and out of this renewed, redeemed, righteous life Christian character then arises. The reason we often don’t see the character in our own lives is because we stifle the work of His Spirit within us as we try to earn our salvation. Trying to do better works will not allow you to realise the place you desire in God. No, realising the place you have in God allows you, inspires you, releases you to do the better works.

An example of this appears in Luke chapter 7 where a sinful woman anoints the feet of Jesus with perfume and wipes them with her hair. Jesus said about her to his disciples that she loved much because she had been forgiven much. He went on to say that those who loved little had been forgiven little. Love flows naturally from forgiveness. The woman in Luke 7 had the realisation that her sins had been forgiven and as a consequence her heart overflowed with love and joy. Those without this realisation of forgiveness Jesus says will love less.

As believers we often struggle with the sins we commit after coming to salvation as if only the sins we’d committed before this time could be forgiven. Chapter 5 of Romans totally demolishes this argument – in fact Romans 5 v 10 is the veritable wrecking ball to this wrong philosophy.

In it Paul says:

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Note the past tense used here – having been reconciled. You either are reconciled to Him or you're not. To use my earlier analogy again, have you ever met a woman who was slightly pregnant? A woman is either fully pregnant or she's not pregnant at all. In Christ we are either fully reconciled, fully righteous or we're not. The church has allowed the enemy a foothold in this area into having us believe that there are scales of righteousness. There are not. Isaiah stated boldly that all of our 'righteous' acts are like filthy rags to Him. If we keep our eyes on our own lives we will always feel condemned because our lives are corrupt and rotten – even the very best of us. Paul said that he was the worst of sinners.

1 Timothy 1 v 15 (The Message)

Here's a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I'm proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy.

The closest Christians to God have the greatest revelation about how rotten they are and the greatest revelation of how much they have been forgiven. This is why they love much. This is why they know the peace of God in their lives above and beyond any circumstances in life.

The final verse of chapter 5 is a suitable one to conclude the sermon with:

'The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

At housegroup this week Esther paraphrased this using the following words:

'The law brings only behaviour modification whilst grace brings heart transformation.'

No matter how big your sins were, are or will be in the future, His grace is greater. You can't out sin God's grace. What, are you saying your sin is more powerful than God's grace? Well it isn't. How do I know? Because Jesus already broke it's power over you – all we need to do is walk in the light of that.

Sandra my wife's a PE teacher and for years she used a school spreadsheet to work out which children had achieved a gold, silver or bronze award from all of the current data available. She did this for all of the various sports taught within the curriculum. This used to take her hours until one day an IT technician at school showed her how she could type in a formula that would do it all for her automatically. It took him less than 30 seconds to enter the formula which has since saved her literally hours of work. The point I'm making with the illustration is this. The formula would always

have worked for her on the spreadsheet but until she walked in the light of it, it had no impact upon her life. If as a believer we don't walk in the light of the fact that our sins are forgiven then we won't experience the benefit of that this side of eternity.