

May 21, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Peace in Chaos
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Romans 5:1.

1. How is a sinner justified?
2. What happens when we are justified?
3. What is the connection between justification and righteousness?
4. What is the result of justification in our relationship with God?
5. How does a sinner who is spiritually dead and spiritually blind exercise faith in God's Word?
6. Contrast your past condition as God's enemy with the present reality that you have peace with Him?

WHERE PEACE BEGINS
Romans 5:1

Here are five recommendations for finding peace in less than five minutes according to www.oprah.com.

1. During rush hour traffic pop a peppermint because researchers at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia found that pumping peppermint-scented air into the cars of ticked-off commuters helped decrease anxiety and fatigue.
2. Stop listening to the 6:00 news broadcast. Exposure to media coverage of upsetting events cannot only spike stress levels, but

it can also make you feel worse physically, found a 2012 Israeli study that assessed 55 chronic-pain patients.

3. Breathe from your diaphragm. Anne Marie Albano, PhD, director of the Columbia University Clinic for Anxiety and Related Disorders, says proper breathing is one of the best and most effective stress-management techniques.
4. Eat trail mix. Recent experiments have shown that the simple sugar glucose (which is found in raisins) can counteract the negative brain changes wrought by decision fatigue.
5. Take the right kind of break. Leave your phone and your coworkers behind, and find a quiet place to stand and actively observe the world around you.

And there you have all the information you need in order to have peace. The experts know that you need it, and we know it is the universal goal for which everyone is seeking. But if you have tried any or all of these techniques, you know that they are a very temporary solution at best. We don't need just peace from the distractions of life. We are searching for peace in our hearts. We need to be at peace with life.

Many experts are fully aware of the difference between temporary removal from stress and spiritual peace that effects our minds and consciences. Therefore, in recent years there has been a huge interest in Yoga, Eastern Religious Meditation, and the Kabbalah. These are promoted as means to attain spiritual peace. The Kabbalah is a form of mysticism that provides a series of guidelines and rules that allow the mind to be opened up to allow the full beauty of the universe to be explored.

Oh wow! That's it! That is what the human race has been looking for since it evolved from animals a few million years ago. Or maybe not. In the first place, such attempts to find real peace are foolish at best and deceptive at worst. What does it even mean to open the mind to explore the beauty of the universe? True appreciation of the universe must begin by getting to know the Creator of the universe. And therein is the problem. We will never have genuine peace in our souls until we acknowledge our Creator. But as soon as we acknowledge that we have a Creator, we realize that our sins and natural sinfulness are an offense to Him. There goes peace right out the window!

The great need is to find a way to be at peace with our Creator to whom we owe everything. Like Job we struggle to find God, communicate with God, and come to terms with God. Over 1,500 years ago, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, stated the solution to the problem in his work titled *Confessions* where he wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You.”

That struggle brings us to the wonderful news of our text. God Himself has provided the means for us to approach Him, communicate with Him, be reconciled with Him, and, therefore, to have genuine peace with Him. That is the peace the human race has searched for ever since creation’s fall into sin. It is the great promise of our text: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).*

Since We Have Been Justified by Faith.

This simple verse announces the astonishing news that God has justified us. The question of “how to be justified” was the previous argument found in chapter four. There we discover that God presented Abraham as an example of a sinner who was justified through faith. The Greek word translated “justified” (*di-kai-o-o*) in 5:1 also shows up in 4:2,5. Paul argued, *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (Romans 4:2).* Furthermore, *And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (Romans 4:5).*

But there is another word used in the longer argument that is built on the same Greek root word but is translated “righteousness” (*di-kaios-oo-nei*). That word shows up in 4:3: *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (4:3).* Also, *And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (v.5), just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works (v.6).* Then we see it again in verse nine: *We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness (v.9b).* The same word appears in verses eleven, thirteen, and twenty-two. *He received the sign of circumcision*

as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well (v.11). For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith (v.13). That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness (v.22).

The obvious and only possible conclusion to these statements is that righteousness, being justified, does not come through works but through faith.

To be made right with God is the great need. Because Adam and Eve brought the whole creation into sin by their disobedience, we each are born in sin. Sin is opposed to God and God is opposed to sin. Sin, our natural condition, is not at all right by our Creator’s assessment. We are guilty of being wrong and doing wrong from the moment of birth. Then, how can we be made right?

We are made right with God the same way Abraham (the example) was made right with God. Abraham believed what God told him. Paul argued from the Old Testament record, *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3).* Abraham’s faith in God’s word, God’s promise was firm. *No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:20-22).*

God declares us to be righteous in the same way. We, like Abraham, long for the peace that comes through having sins forgiven, being made righteous by God. We agree with David who said, *Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin” (Romans 4:1-8; Psalm 32:1-2).* Do you believe what God promised? What did God promise? Among other things, our text declares that God has justified those who believe Him.

God’s promise of justification is astonishing. Justification is the forensic work of God. Justification is the instantaneous act of God whereby He puts the righteousness of Jesus Christ on the account of the sinner who believes God’s promises. We need to get our minds

around what actually happens when God declares the believing sinner to be right with Him. Justification is a legal statement, a declaration. It is not what God does to or for a sinner. It is what God says about the sinner who comes to Him in faith. It is an instantaneous change of the trusting sinner's standing before God. In the statement of justification, God declares that we are no longer His enemy, but His child. God declares that we are no longer guilty of sin but clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

How or why or when does God do this for the individual? It certainly is not because God owes us something or because we have obligated Him to ourselves. God has justified us by faith. That is the simple truth in the first part of 5:1. *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith (5:1a).* That was the same argument regarding Abraham's righteousness. *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (4:3). [Abraham was] fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness" (4:21-22).*

Faith is a matter of trusting God. It believes all that God has said and all that He reveals about Himself. How do we know what God says about Himself? He has revealed what we need to know about Him in creation. *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).* He has revealed His character in our consciences. *They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (Romans 2:15).* Most important, God has revealed the details about Himself and us in His Word. *Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged" (Romans 3:4).*

Therefore, the only means for a sinner to be right with his or her Creator is to believe God's self-revelation. *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him*

(Hebrews 11:6). Do you believe it? Ask God to help you believe. Ask God to open your understanding.

When God opens the sinner's spiritual eyes to who and what He is, He gives the sinner ability to believe. God's gift of faith is the link to justification. Through His grace God opens our spiritual eyes to be able to believe. By nature, being born in sin, we are dead to God and to God's truth. *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:1-3).*

God, showing us great favor, undeserved favor (grace) gives us spiritual life. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5).* God gives us the gift of faith so that believing Him, we are saved from the penalty of sin. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

The result of all of this work of God is justification. By God's grace through faith, He declares that the believing sinner is made righteous before Him. There are no variations to this plan. There are no versions two or three and no new releases. There never have been, nor shall there ever be any improvements or changes. This is God's plan for sinners to be made right with Him who created us, with the result that we have this wonderful promise of peace with God.

We Have Peace With God.

The promise reads: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1).* Peace with God is not a nice little option – something someone might want to think about someday. Peace with God is absolutely critical because our natural condition is war with God. In that position we

will lose because the wrath of God is being poured out against His enemies.

We who are ordinary, natural people by birth are in conflict with our Creator. *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot (Romans 8:7)*. Being described as “flesh” is the condition of every single person by birth. We are governed by the impulses and desires of the flesh that are in direct contradiction with God's law. We are hostile toward God.

As we grow and live, becoming “normal” people of the world, things don't get better. *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4)*. Therefore, God is altogether justified in pouring out His wrath on sinners. And so, through the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (Romans 1:18)*.

God's wrath is an emotion, a swelling up and running over of anger. God does not take the rejection of His truth and His person lightly. It is not that God will one day pour out His wrath in a great apocalyptic display, though He will do that. It is not that God's wrath will be revealed at that final judgment when He casts sinners into the lake of fire for eternity, though He will also do that. But God's hot, boiling anger is being revealed from His presence right now on all of His enemies.

Is God's wrath being poured out on you and on me? Yes, because we are His enemies by birth. We are born at odds with our Creator. It is not that we have to do something to become guilty before God. All we need to do is live and our very lives will be an offense to God. Because we are born with the sin nature, we will undoubtedly break God's law. No one is able to keep God's law in his or her own strength or wisdom. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, *For the law brings wrath (Romans 4:15)*.

That truth should shake us to our foundation. What can we do to be right with our Creator who we offend by our sins? Now we come to the most astonishing truth of this promise. Our Creator offers peace with Himself. The Creator who we offend offers peace to us

offenders. He does so because peace is the Creator's intended relationship between Himself and His creation. It is tranquility, rest, quietness. Imagine what it would have been like in the Garden of Eden. In that condition of fellowship, there is no fear, no guilt, no worries, no pain, no sorrow.

What joy the person who is declared righteous enjoys in his or her relationship with our loving Heavenly Father. We approach His word without fear because He has made us right with Himself. We read about all kinds of judgment against sin and sinners without fear. We do not tremble to read about the final apocalypse and the final judgment. We are able, not only to look our Creator in the eye (so to speak), but are able to crawl up in His lap and rest in His embrace.

Even when we face uncertainty and troubles because we live in a sinful world, we are at complete peace because we trust our Father to control all things for His glory. Those who are at odds with the Creator worry and tremble when circumstances go haywire. We who are right with Him, rest in His will because He gives peace.

How can God do that for us? Why does He give us peace? When God declares a believing sinner to be right with Him, there is peace. That is the problem. We are not right with God by nature. Sin is the problem. Sin is distrust of God and rejection of His truth. Sin then impacts not only our relationship with God but our relationship with others. Sin causes lust, greed, envy, jealousy, hatred, theft, covetousness, and seventy other sins listed in the various lists in the New Testament. Those wrong thoughts, attitudes, and activities are the opposite of peace.

When God draws the sinner to Himself, opens his or her understanding, and they embrace God's word, God's truth by faith, God removes that sin from his or her life. He declares that we are right with Him. When we are right with God, we better understand His plans and purpose for this world. When we are right with God, we better understand why sinners think and act the way they do. Most important, when we are right with God, we are comfortable with His will.

Being justified by God is the whole reason we have peace with Him. His declaration that we are right lays the foundation on which He builds peace. However, we are not content and at ease in our consciences because of our great ability to not worry about things.

We are content because of God's work in our behalf. Being justified, we ought to be content to leave things with God whom we trust implicitly.

This reminds me of a poem written by Mr. Anonymous.

As children bring their broken toys
With tears for us to mend.
I brought my broken dreams to God
Because He was my Friend.
But then instead of leaving Him
In peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help
With ways that were my own.
At last I snatched it back and cried,
"How could You be so slow?" –
"My child," He said,
"What could I do? You never did let go."

Peace with God means that we are content to let Him fix the problem.

We Have Peace Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's look at the promise one more time. *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ** (5:1).* Our Lord Jesus Christ is the channel through which we obtain justification by God and, therefore, peace with God. The three titles that identify our Lord are significant.

He is Christ our Savior. The title Christ is very important because Scripture attaches it to the work of being Savior. The title refers to Jesus, the Son of God, as being the one ordained to pay the sacrifice for sins. Christ was the longed-for Messiah. Christ was the one who would fulfill the "Prince of Peace" role (Isaiah 9:6). He is the "Savior, Christ the Lord" as the angels announced to the shepherds (Luke 2:11). He is the Christ who died for us (Romans 5:6,8). Therefore, through Him we are reconciled to God the Father (Romans 5:11).

This means that the Christ has to be the object of our faith. Faith is not unbounded, haphazard belief. Faith that brings peace is not our

ability to believe more, or believe harder, or believe more sincerely. Faith leans upon, focuses on the object which is Jesus Christ. We fully trust in His person, that is, who He said He is. We fully trust in His work, that is, what He said He came to do. Peace with God comes through fully resting, completely trusting in Christ.

Christ is our Savior and Jesus is our example. The title Jesus often highlights the human aspect of the Christ. As a human living like us on earth, we discover that circumstances never disrupted Jesus' faith. Of course we can understand how that might be the case. In that He was fully God, nothing ever occurred to Jesus. He was never taken by surprise. He was never frustrated.

However, Jesus was also one of us, born of a woman, and was therefore tempted in every way like we are. In that He was fully human he experienced all the emotions we experience. But even if Jesus became angry, He was at peace with the Father. Even if He rejoiced, His joy was within the bounds of the Father's will. As a human, Jesus set the example of resting in the Father's perfect will and wisdom. Peter reminds us that *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23).*

Jesus set the standard for life at peace with God because He was confident in the Heavenly Father's will. He often told doubters that He came to earth specifically to do His Father's will. He didn't come to do the Father's will some of the time and His own will the rest of the time. He was always "about" His Father's will. The object of His faith was His Father.

Following Jesus' example of implicit trust in the Father's will brings peace to our souls. When things don't seem to be right, are not working the way I think they should, or don't seem to fit, my solution is simple—make it fit. More times than I would like to remember, I have caused myself more work by forcing a nut that is cross-threaded on a bolt, or hammering on a pipe to make it fit, only to cause a leak, or forcing a board into a spot that is too small only to throw the whole wall out of plumb. Too often I try to do the same thing with people. I want to help them drive their cars, attend church, serve the Lord. But when I try to make them do my will, I get frustrated.

Jesus never got frustrated because He always trusted the Heavenly Father's will and timing of that will. Often He told people

it was not His time yet. And when His time came He prayed, “Not My will but Yours be done.” In the face of horrendous suffering, Jesus was able to peacefully say, “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” He died in peace and rose from the grave in astounding victory.

He is Christ our Savior, and Jesus our example, but at the same time He is also our Lord. He is Master over us because He purchased us so that we can have peace. He paid the ultimate price to cover the cost of our sins. When we accept that payment by believing Christ’s work, we gain peace with God. Therefore, peace with God is found in being owned by another, the one who bought us.

If He is our Lord we can rest in Him. Our sinful nature is to want to be Lord, to be in charge of our lives. If we understand that we are bond slaves to the Lord and Master who bought us, we are content to know and follow the Master’s will. We will forfeit the peace we have in Him when we insist on being in charge.

The wonderful promise teaches us that peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ is not something we gain by working harder, believing harder, or by being more devoutly religious. Peace with God is the work of God that He accomplishes in our behalf through Christ. We whom He has declared to be justified, made righteous, only have to rest in the peace that He gives us because He has made us right with Himself.