

3-15-20

Sermon: Called to a Working Faith

Scripture Romans 5:1-11, CTW: Ps 95

Hymns: 223, 779

Theme: As Christians, all aspects of our lives are to bolster our faith. Good times and bad all come together in Him to develop our Christian character. Have you assessed your character lately? What is God trying to teach you right now?

Introduction: What or Where is your "Happy Place?"?

A. The term itself reflects a desire for an ideal world, a quiet place to think, a place to be alone, or with people you can trust. Who among us cannot identify with those longings?

In this hustle-bustle world where we live in a continual pressure cooker, we all would like to find that "old stream" or that "little boat" or those forgotten towns where we can stroll down the street unnoticed.

In the modern madness of today, I often hear cries for a thing called "peace of mind", and that peace of mind is not always tied to worldly goals like money, fame, success or power.

So, what are we left with? If money, success and power won't satisfy, what will? The satisfaction we seek—the peace of mind we crave, the sense of fulfillment we so desperately want—is quite simply not found in this world.

We must conclude that if nothing in this world satisfies the hunger within; the answer must come from outside the world.

B. Satisfaction comes from God—and from nowhere else. That's what Augustine was trying to say 1500 years ago when he wrote his famous prayer: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

If we try to fill that restlessness with the things of this world—money, success and power—the result is spiritual indigestion. Our tummies are full but our hearts are empty.

We need to go to God, for only in Him we find what we seek. I feel sorry for people who are too stubborn to embrace that truth. With the goal of some good introspective time for Lent which focused on reconciliation with God I saw Paul's letter to the Romans as a great place to visit.

II. Now as we return to Romans chapter 5, Paul's letter to the Romans takes a decisive turn.

Up to this point in the letter, Paul's focus has been on the power of the gospel to put people who are locked up in sin and under sentence of God's wrath into a right relationship with God.

A. Here we see that Paul's entire description of the gospel may be summed up in one word: Justification.

The word means "to declare righteous." Think of the courtroom and picture that moment when a verdict of "Not Guilty" is declared by the judge.

Robert Mounce offers this excellent summary of justification: "To be justified means to be acquitted, to gain a right standing. Justification frees the guilty man from paying the just penalty of his sin. It declares that he is totally exonerated. All charges are dropped." (Themes From Romans, pp 43-44)

Therefore Justification is the act whereby God declares a sinner righteous, not guilty, the moment he or she expresses their faith and repentance by being baptized into Jesus.

And of course, this acquittal is absolutely free because it is based on the unmerited favor (grace) of God.

B. In Jesus, God arranged a plan by which He could justify the guilty and still remain the supreme moral being, and then carried it out.

It's a free offer - the only option we have is to accept it or reject it. Justification means that God has done everything necessary for us to go to heaven.

His Son has paid the price for our sin. Nothing you or I do, can add, in the least bit, to our salvation.

As Romans chapter 5 begins, Paul now turns his attention to what comes after one's justification.

Take another look at the first five verses of Romans 5 and rejoice and marvel at the blessings that are ours because of our justification in Christ.

Romans 5:1-5... 1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. 5 This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

C. Justification by faith is supposed to be the universal experience of all who put their faith in Jesus.

In Paul's mind, there is no such thing as an "unjustified" Christian. If you are not justified by faith in Christ, then you aren't a Christian at all.

Therefore, the only way to be right with God is to trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Nothing else can gain us a right standing with God.

III. Here Paul reveals three great blessings that come to the believer as a result of our justification by faith.

A. The first great blessing from our justification is: We have PEACE with God through Jesus.

The word "peace" means to be in a state of well-being and prosperity because the war has ended.

Some of you may remember V-E Day or V-J Day at the end of World War II. Many of us can remember the celebration at the end of the Persian Gulf war in 1991. This peace means that the fighting is over, and the soldiers have put down their guns.

But more than that, peace means the restoration of a broken relationship. It's more than just the end of fighting and bickering.

It's what happens when two people who haven't been speaking once again become friends.

Peace is a positive change in a relationship between two people who once were enemies! In the beginning, Adam and Eve lived in peace with God, but sin entered the relationship, and humans turned to their own devices, and the relationship with God was broken.

The Bible tells us that our sin causes every person to become an enemy of God. But now, Paul says, through Jesus and as a result of our justification we have peace with God.

Please do not confuse peace **"with God"** with the peace **"of God"** – they are 2 different things.

The peace **"of God"** is that sense of moment-by-moment happiness which we may have as we trust our Heavenly Father in the midst of the problems of life.

But peace **"with God"** comes as a result of accepting Christ's sacrifice for our salvation.

Some people ask the question: "Have you made your peace with God?" The Bible never uses that expression because it is impossible to "make peace with God."

Humans can't do that, **Colossians 1:20** says that Jesus "made peace by the blood of his cross."

Therefore we must conclude that If Jesus "made peace" when he died on the cross, then all that is left for us to do is to accept by faith that peace which He has already made.

B. The second great blessing from our justification is: We have ACCESS to God and God's grace.

In Verse 2, Paul reminds us: We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand...

The word "access" means "to enter the presence of a king." It speaks of the right to enter the inner chambers and speak with the king face to face.

“Access” is a privilege given only to the king’s family and close friends, and associates. Paul is saying that through Jesus Christ **we may now enter the very presence of God.**

Consider how revolutionary this truth is and was - especially for his Jewish readers. They were accustomed to a system that kept a respectful distance between God and man.

The Gentiles were restricted to the outer court of the temple called the “Court of Gentiles.” If a Gentile went beyond that court, he could be put to death.

Next was the “Court of the Women” for Jewish female worshipers. Then next was the “Court of Israel” for Jewish men.

Next there was the “Court of the Priests where the altar of sacrifice was.

Finally, inside the temple proper, there was the “Holy Place” where only the priests could minister and behind it was the “Holy of Holies,” separated by a thick curtain.

Entrance into the “Holy of Holies” was restricted to the High Priest—and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

So, the message was clear: “Keep your distance!” So the miracle here is that all of us now have access to God through His son.

How? “Through Him”—that is, through Jesus Christ. Everything God has for us comes through Jesus Christ! Jesus himself said, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” **John 14:6**

But when we come through Jesus Christ, we are admitted into the very presence of God himself - not the outer courts, not into some drab waiting room, but we are admitted into the throne room of heaven.

Also notice Paul says that access is based on the **“grace in which we stand.”** Our standing before God is based entirely on grace. How many times have you said the phrase: **“There but by the grace of God, go I?”**

As one writer put it, when you stand on grace, you’re not standing on slippery ground but on a solid rock! No ground is as

solid as the grace of God. Actually, **Hebrews 4:16** speaks of "coming boldly to the throne of grace."

John Newton the writer of Amazing Grace, wrote: Thou art coming to a King, Large petitions with thee bring. For his grace and power are such, No one can ever ask too much.

C. The third great blessing from our justification is: We Have the Hope of Glory.

In Verse 2, Paul says we are to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The word "hope" can be misleading because in common usage the word hope means "maybe it will happen and maybe it won't" "I hope the Eagles will win the Super Bowl."

But the biblical concept of hope is much different: It means "a confident expectation that something will happen because God has said it will happen." Biblical hope is not a "hope so," but a "know so." We are to have the confident expectation of the "hope of glory."

What is this glory? It is that of which we all fall short...remember **Romans 3:23, "we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."**

It's what we shall be like when we see Jesus face to face **1 John 3:2**. It's what we were meant to be - it's what we want more than anything else in the world.

In short, the "hope of glory" is the confident expectation that one day God will fulfill all his promises to us. The "hope of glory" is the assurance that when you die, you are going to heaven.

Paul would have us conclude that **The truth is: we are to find all that we need "In God" and "from God."**

So, if you want peace like a river, then turn to Jesus. If you want joy like a fountain, then turn to Jesus. If you want love like an ocean, then turn to Jesus.

The most sought after things in life are found in Him...and that is meant to give us peace, joy, and love.

Our greatest need is to know Jesus – to receive justification through Him, which results in **peace** with God, **access** to God and His grace, which leads to **hope**.

For this Lenten time of introspection, Let's focus on putting our faith and trust in Jesus and experience all we need from Him, Amen? Let us Pray...