



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Benefits of Grace

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Romans 5:1-5

Clint Pressley

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

(Pastor prays)

In my house, Netflix has changed the way Connie and I watch TV. If there is nothing going on in the evening and I don't have any ministry responsibilities, we will eat supper and, after I have a bowl of ice cream or other necessary dessert, we will watch a few episodes of a show. And many times before the episode begins, there will be a few moments of what happened previously on that show just so you are up to speed.

Well that seems to be what the Apostle Paul is doing right here. In this short paragraph, Paul is giving us an emotional breather, and he's inviting us to celebrate the marvelous benefits that are given to the person who puts his faith in Jesus.

You can see the setup in verse 1:

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And in that little phrase, Paul summed up chapters 1 through 4.

And in Chapter 1:16 Paul says, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

And in verse 18, Paul explains how every person is a sinner and therefore separated from God and how the wrath of God will be poured out on them. In chapter 2 we are told that we are all without excuse and without hope. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, but God has given the solution to our condition in the perfect life of Jesus, His righteousness, the substitution of Jesus with His death on the cross, and His resurrection is so that oppressive religion is taken out of the picture. The work of religion has been done by Jesus, and the way we are made right is by faith. That's what he means in that first phrase: that by believing in Jesus Christ we are declared innocent of all the charges against us. That's grace. It's why we say we are saved by *grace alone* through *faith alone* in *Christ alone*. And in this little paragraph Paul is giving us just a few of the benefits of being saved.

Faith in Christ Makes Life Worth Living

Let's talk about the benefits.

We have a family we can count on

Let me show you what I mean. The pronouns Paul is using here have changed. They started changing at the end of chapter 4, but they show up in earnest here. In chapter 1, Paul says: *I* am not ashamed of the Gospel. In chapter 2 he says: *you* have no excuse. In chapter 3, *they* have no excuse.

Now, I want to read chapter 5:1-5, and I want you to listen to the pronouns.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

When you are purchased by the blood of Christ, you are brought into a *family*, a redeemed, regenerated family where our differences are made beautiful by grace and our affections are changed by God's love. We walk with each other in pain. We are patient in shortcomings and we are quick to forgive. When a brother is in sin, we talk *to* him and not *about* him. The "we" or "us" of the Gospel transcends every "them" out there. If you claim Jesus as Lord, then God is your father and these Christians around you are your brothers and sisters. That means we go to

great links, sacrificial lengths, to love each other in spite of the many differences we have. Faith in Christ makes life worth living because we have a family we can count on. Let me give you a second benefit.

We have a peace we can live with

Let's go to verse 1, read it in its entirety and be thankful. *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul is not telling us to have peace with God like it is something you can *earn*. He's saying peace with God is what we have because of what Jesus has already *done*. In a comprehensive way, peace with God is God's overflowing grace and goodness to His people, and that peace is ours through Jesus Christ. In fact, Colossians 1:20 tells us that Jesus has made peace by the blood of His cross.

Now we need to clarify what Paul is saying here. Peace *with* God is *not* the same as the peace *of* God. The peace *of* God is related but different. The peace of God is that inner sense of well-being. It's what Paul is talking about in Philippians 4: 6-7 when he says, *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*⁶ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*⁷ That's the peace *of* God, and you can't actually have that until you have peace with God. So many people want the peace of God without making peace *with* God. Your biggest problem isn't worry or anxiety or a house note. Your biggest problem is the wrath of God that is poured out on sinners, and verse 1 says we have peace *with* God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Peace with God means that God is a *father* and not a *foreigner*. He is a *friend* and not an *enemy*. We receive the love of God and not the wrath of God. We have joy and not worry. We have confidence and not fear. We have resolve and not anxiety. We have grace and not guilt. Peace with God means that every drop of judgment and anger and punishment has been poured out at the cross of Jesus, and now we are flooded with grace and love and forgiveness at the cross of Jesus. And that is given to us by faith. That's what I'm doing today, asking you to believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and be justified by faith.

Faith in Christ makes life worth living. We have a family we can count on. We have a peace we can live with. Let's look at a third benefit.

We have a grace that stabilizes us

Let me show you that in verse 2. *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* We are standing in grace. There is an interesting phrase in verse 2, through Him we have obtained access by faith. Access to grace comes *through* Jesus. We do not have the connections to meet God based on our own merits or importance. We need an introducer. The Bible says there is *one* introducer, *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. The stress is on Christ's *authority* and not on our *activity*.

And look what we are brought into. Verse 2 says, Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

I want to pay attention to the present tense reality of standing in grace. Verse 1 was the *past* tense: we have been justified by faith. This is the *present* tense: grace in which we presently stand. You are in grace *now* if you are in Christ. You are in grace *now* and you are not in darkness. You are standing *in* grace. *We do not fall in and out of grace.*

And there is a special promise about grace given to Paul and written down for all believers—and especially for you here today. It is in 2 Corinthians verse 12. Paul is begging God to remove some terrible trouble. And God says, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Listen. The grace that saved you by *faith* is the grace you are going to *stand* in. And when you get weary, then that grace is a *pole* you can lean on. And when you can't stand anymore, that grace is a *harness*.

Have you ever seen those baby harnesses people have now? That's how grace works. You hang there like you're doing it on your own but it's God's grace that saves, sustains and stands you up. Faith in Christ means having a life worth living. We have a family we can count on, a peace we can live with, and a grace that stabilizes us. There is one last benefit.

We have a hope that keeps us going

To get the whole punch of this point, you've got to read the whole thing together. The sequence is in verses 3-4, and the cause is in verse 5. Let's read it. ³*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,* ⁴*and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,* ⁵*and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Are you ready to take a run at this last point? You look at the Bible and let me talk. "Rejoice" is a striking word to use of suffering, but it's what Christians do. We don't celebrate the fact that there is trouble; no grave makes it so we can rejoice while we are undergoing the trouble. Rejoice in our suffering, that word "sufferings" is "afflictions" or "pressure" or "struggle" and, especially for the believer, it's living in this *present evil age*.

Sufferings *do* something. In verse 3 we see sufferings produce endurance, and that's the ability to stand underneath pressure. It seems like we are always asking in hard times, what is the Lord teaching me? He might not be teaching you *anything*. He might just be *making you tougher* because you're soft. There's a progression here. Suffering produces *endurance*, and those who undergo trouble are *toughened up* so you can withstand harder things. And when you learn endurance, it *does* something. Verse 4 says *endurance produces character*. That's a Pauline word, one 'who's been tested and proven and is ready for a fight.

When you are in Christ and grinding through difficulty, a *strength of character* develops that was not previously present, and that character *produces hope*. God will complete the process He has begun in you. And verse 5 tells us about hope from a whole different angle. Those who trust God are assured that they will be vindicated for placing their hope in Christ alone because God's love is poured out like a river into our hearts through the Holy Spirit so that all of this is God-planned. It was planned by God the father, completed by God the Son, and poured on us by God the Spirit.

Faith in Christ makes life worth living.

(Pastor prays)