

**PEACE WITH GOD  
Romans 5:1-11**

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On March 10, 1974, a Japanese Army straggler, Lt. Hirro Onoda, walked out of the jungle on the island of Lubang, just south of Manila Bay, and surrendered. But the war between the Philippines and Japan ended on September 2, 1945.

For nearly three decades Onoda refused to believe the reports of peace which he heard on the radio and read about in the Japanese newspapers left on the beach for him. He thought that it had all been an American ruse done in order to lure him into a trap. He refused to surrender. He continued his one-man war for 29 years. He was pursued by Filipino soldiers who tried to find his hideaway. Every day he looked for the Japanese Navy to return and assist him in the recapturing of the island.

The war had ended, but Onoda derived no benefit from the peace. To benefit from the peace he had to believe that the peace had been declared and personally accept it by walking away from his life of resistance.

Onoda's situation on the island is comparable to those who have not proclaimed Christ as their Lord and Savior. As we will see this morning, the death of Christ on the cross has brought peace between humanity and God. But for those who do not accept this peace, for those who refuse reports of the resurrection, there is no benefit. Like Onoda, the unbelieving world continues to wage a war with God, when they could be experiencing the benefits of peace with God.

Making peace with God is the great dilemma that we, as fallen humankind, face. God is good, holy, just, and righteous. But we are at odds with God. We are at war with Him. For just as He is, by His very nature, good, we, in our fallen state, are by nature His foes. That which is good is at war with that which is evil. God can have no fellowship with fallen humanity. By the fact that He is holy, He must have no fellowship with humankind which has fallen with Adam (see Romans 5:14-21).

**I. We need to admit that we really were enemies with God.**

Romans 5:1

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore” in this passage links chapter 5 with that which has gone before. Paul has told us we are not saved by the deeds we have done, but, rather, by faith in Jesus. Remember Romans 4:3 (quoting Genesis 15:6)? Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, like Abraham, we have been reckoned as righteous by our belief, our faith in Jesus.

But we are enemies with God until we are redeemed by our faith through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Yes, we need to realize we were once enemies of God until Jesus. Dr. Karl Menninger related an incident about a man standing on a busy corner in the Chicago Loop. Menninger explained, “As people would hurry by, the man would point his finger to one and then another, and then intone loudly the single word ‘Guilty!’ Then, without expression, he would assume a stiff stance for a few minutes then do the same again. One to whom he pointed turned to a companion and said, ‘But how did he know?’”

He knew because we are all guilty. All have sinned, and all are at war with God (Romans 3:23).

Psalms 14 gives a realistic view of the sinfulness of humankind. “The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

The psalmist’s conscience tells him that if God were to rise up in judgment against humankind, none could escape His condemnation. Thus the prayer of the psalmist, “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?”

The psalmist sang and, likewise, the prophet proclaimed that we all contain sin in our lives. Isaiah wrote, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned everyone to his own way.” In the New Testament, John agrees with the Apostle Paul, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar” (1 John 1:8-10)

The prophets declared, the psalmist has set the message to music, and an apostle has penned in a letter that all have sinned, all are guilty, all are at war with God. We are enemies with God (Romans 5:10).

Humankind’s highest destiny is to know God, to have a personal relationship with Him – creation in harmony with Creator. But, because of our disobedience, because of our sin, we have an estranged relationship. A good God cannot live in community with a sinful humanity.

Turn back to Romans 1:18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

The story starts with a God who is wrathful toward sinful humankind.

## **II. Jesus paid the price for peace.**

We have peace with God. How? Look at Romans 5:1 – “...through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In fact, everything happens “through Jesus” so much, that Paul uses the word “through” a dozen times in chapter 5.

(1) verse 1 – “We have peace with God **through** our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(2) verse 2, “**through** whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand....”

(3) verse 5, we receive the love of God “**through** the Holy spirit which has been given to us.”

(4) verse 9, we have been saved from the wrath of God “**through** Him” – through Jesus.

(5) verse 10, “While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God **through** the death of His Son....”

(6) and (7) verse 11, “And not only this, but we also boast in God [or exult in God] **through** our Lord Jesus Christ **through** whom we have received reconciliation.”

(8) verse 17, “...the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life **through** the One, Jesus Christ.”

(9) verse 18, “...**through** one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”

(10) verse 19, “...**through** the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

(11) and (12) verse 21, “...even so grace might reign **through** righteousness to eternal life **through** Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Through. Through. Through. A dozen times. Everything you have in God is through His Son, Jesus, or His Holy Spirit.

You remember the Christmas proclamation of Matthew 1:21 – “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Or Luke 19:10 – “The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

1 Timothy 1:15 – “The saying is true and worthy of full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

Loving us so much, and knowing He must send His wrath against sin, He sent His Son to die in our place that we could have peace with Him. Every time you think of your salvation, you think of “through Jesus.” We are reckoned as righteous through Jesus and through our faith in Jesus alone. Your salvation is not about the deeds you have done, but about your faith in all that has been accomplished **through** the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ.

While Jesus was crucified, there was darkness over the whole land, which lasted for three hours until Jesus died. With the darkness came silence, for no eye could see, no lips could tell the agony of the soul which the spotless Lamb of God now endured. He was abandoned by God – God, who was holy, would have no fellowship with His own Son because of the weight of our sins. Then came the cry from the one who was abandoned by his Father: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” Christ tasted the torment of the soul estranged from God. Bearing our sins, He died our death. The Father could not reach out and save, for He must bear our sin that we might live – through Jesus, through His death, and through the glory of His resurrection.

### **III. Though we have peace with God, the world still wages war on God's people.**

While we do have peace with God, don't make a mistake here. Paul is not referring to a "peace of mind." Oh, to be sure, those of us forgiven may feel the tranquility as the weight of sin and troubled conscience is lifted (Isaiah 32:17). But Paul himself admits to feeling utterly, unbearably crushed, despairing of life (2 Corinthians 1:18), perplexed (2 Corinthians 4:8), fearful (2 Corinthians 2:5), suffering from anxiety from all his churches (2 Corinthians 11), and having sorrow upon sorrow (Philippians 2).

Peace of mind is not what we are talking about here. Rather, we have peace with God. Having peace with God means that Christ's followers, unlike the wicked (3:17), no longer stand under God's wrath (5:9; cf. 1:18), but have security, well-being, and wholeness from their restored relationship with God. You remember the priestly benediction in Numbers 6:26? "The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace." Or remember Isaiah's prophecy? "'Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,' says the Lord, 'and I will heal them'" (Isaiah 57:19).

Those have been fulfilled through Jesus, Paul is saying in Romans 5. Peace with God.

Isaiah further asserts the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness – quietness and trust forever (Isaiah 32:17).

What God has done through Christ, however, even goes beyond what was imagined by the prophet. Isaiah declares there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 57:21), but now (Romans 3:21) even the wicked who put aside their brazen defiance and smug pretensions and accept God's offer of grace are made right with God and have peace with Him.

We are still at war with the world, however – those who say no to God's offer of grace through Christ. Even more so because we've left the ranks of the unrighteousness and joined God's army of glory. Notice how he continues here. Paul uses the word "boast" twice in this passage. First of all, he says in verse 2, "...we boast [exult] in the hope of the glory of God." But also, oddly enough, though we have peace with God, "...we boast [exult] in our tribulations" (v. 3) – that is our suffering – "knowing that our tribulations bring about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (5:3-5).

Suffering is a harsh reminder that the followers of Christ are at war with the world. If we were to look at Paul's own body, we would see that he had endured multiple hardships as Christ's apostle that left him branded with scars from multiple beatings (Galatians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 3:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:21-33). This isn't just any kind of suffering, but suffering that results from being a follower of Christ, from our open commitment to Christ.

Christians then and now faced ostracism, rejection from their families and acquaintances, and prosecution and persecution from governmental authorities because of their faith. The truth, I myself have been reminded recently, is not always welcomed with applause.

You see, even though we have peace with God, the gospel does not offer our best life now. The gospel is about our best life in the world to come.

#### **IV. We have the hope of glory.**

But, we do also exult in the hope of glory. Look back at verse 2. You see, Jesus did not rescue us from an earthly death just to prolong our life on this planet. Rather, we are redeemed to an eternal glory and the kingdom of God. Christians pile up hope upon hope (4:18) and face life with greater fortitude. The word here (v. 3) translated patience or perseverance is better translated “fortitude.” How we respond during those hard times, whether one cracks under suffering or not, reveals one’s character. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 that he’s an earthen vessel, afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. But he realizes through his suffering he conveys to the world the treasure of the gospel that shines through the cracks of his own fragile clay pot.

Not only to we exult or boast in our tribulation, we also boast in our glory. Look above to verse 2. Christ did not save us just to plod along the path of this earth. No, we are saved for another kingdom of which we are citizens. Paul used the imagery (v. 2) of unhindered access to the sanctuary, the place of God’s presence. This access was only available to those who were pure and unblemished. And now that our sins have been paid for, God sees us that way. We have access to be ushered into the presence of God.

Turn over to Romans 8:17 – probably just a page or two in your Bible. “...heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”

We boast not just in our tribulations but in the glory that is to come. You share in Christ’s sufferings, you’ll share in his glory. And the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. God’s love comes in the clearest focus on Christ’s cross, as the divine power that overcomes enmity between the Creator and the creature (v.4).

Jesus comes at just the right time, doesn’t He? Look at verse 6. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” This is that time. This is when the Bethlehem baby is born – born to die that we might live. Look at verse 8. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Calendars did not determine the timing, nor did human worthiness. But Christ died for us when we were powerless (5:6), ungodly (5:6), sinners (5:8), enemies (5:10), and worthy of divine wrath (5:9).

Yes (v. 10), we were enemies but we have been reconciled to God. How? Through the death of His Son. We are reconciled through His death and, how much more, through that glorious resurrection (v. 10).

Yes, God has made peace available to those who proclaim the Lordship of Jesus, and we have the hope of eternal glory.

#### **V. Lastly, I want you to see the decision is yours.**

It’s true: God loves you just like you are.

Isn't that the message? While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly? Hardly anyone will die for a righteous man, but God died for us, while we were yet sinners. God loves you right now. He loves you "as is."

**Ed McManus heard a priest in Puerto Rico share this story. A woman is dying of AIDS. A priest is summoned. He attempts to comfort her, but to no avail.**

**"I am lost," she said. "I have ruined my life and every life around me. Now I'm going painfully to hell. There is no hope for me."**

**The priest saw a framed picture of a pretty girl on the dresser. "Who is this?" he asked. The woman brightened. "She is my daughter, the one beautiful thing in my life."**

**"And would you help her if she was in trouble, or if she had sinned? Would you forgive her? Would you still love her?"**

**"Of course I would!" cried the woman. "I would do anything for her! Why do you ask such a question?"**

**"Because I want you to know," said the priest, "that God has a picture of you on His dresser."  
(Bits and Pieces)**

But you have to be willing to receive it.

God took the initiative. God paid the price. Christ went to the cross on that Friday afternoon. He made Him who knew no sin to bear our sin. But even though the battle is over, you must accept the truce. God will not force your hand. You are free to reject reconciliation with God. Like Hirro Onoda, if we act like the war is still raging, if we want to keep fighting against God, living our own lives, we can act as if peace with God has not been obtained despite the fact that God enacted it 2000 years ago when Christ surrendered His life in place of ours. God loves, God gives, God provides – but He leaves us free to reject His peace.

Some of you need to make that decision today.

**Ronald Reagan had an aunt who was very kind to him and liked him a lot. She took him to the shoe cobbler and told the cobbler that she wanted him to make a pair of custom shoes for young Ronald Reagan. The cobbler inquired, "Do you want square toes or round toes on the shoes?" And Reagan hem hawed around; he didn't know what he wanted. The cobbler told him to come back in a few days to let him know so that he could begin work on the shoes. Several days passed and the cobbler ran into young Reagan around town. He inquired, "Well, Ronald, what do you want – round toes or square toes?" Again Ronald indicated that he just could not decide. "Well," said the cobbler, "Come in two days and I will have your shoes ready." Reagan explained that when he went to pick the shoes up, one was square-toed and the other round-toed. The old cobbler looked down at young Reagan**

**and said, “Never let people make your decisions for you from this time on.” Reagan recalled, “I learned right then: Make your decision; if you don’t, someone else will.”**

This Sunday of Advent – Peace – we have peace with God. You going to put off your choice? You going to delay your decision? Or are you going to bow to that Bethlehem baby – die when He dies so you can rise when He rises.

Let us pray.