

THE BATTLE OF THE WILLS

Romans 5:1-2

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Introduction

One foggy night, the captain of a large container ship saw what appeared to be another ship's lights approaching in the distance. This other ship was on a course that would mean a head-on crash. Quickly the captain signaled to the approaching ship, **"Please change your course 10 degrees west."**

The reply came blinking back through the thick fog, **"You change your course 10 degrees east."**

Indignantly the captain pulled rank and shot a message back to the other ship, **"I'm a sea captain with thirty-five years of experience. You change your course 10 degrees west!"**

Without hesitation the signal flashed back, **"I'm a seaman fourth class. You change your course 10 degrees east!"**

Enraged and incensed, the captain realized that within minutes they would crash head on so he blazed his final warning back to the fast approaching ship: **"I'm a 50,000-ton freighter. YOU change YOUR course 10 degrees west!"**

The simple message winked back, **"I'm a lighthouse. YOU change...."**

Recently, I read one authority who said that in a total of 3,530 years of recorded civilization, only 286 of those years have been spent without a war taking place on this globe. During that same period of time, 8,000 peace treaties were broken.

War seems inescapable. War is a test of two wills in conflict; whether you are referring to the wills of different nations or the wills of individuals. All of us have strong wills. We are determined to have it our own way. Conflict at

work, in the church and in the home comes from at least one individual or group must have things go their way. If they don't get their way, it's war!

Why does there seem to be such a battle of wills going on everywhere we look? I believe the answer is pretty simple: few of us truly possess personal inner peace. Inside most of us, there is a war going on. We are fighting to prove our worth and value. When someone crosses us, left to our own devices, we will strike back.

So what is the secret to finding inner peace, or of becoming a peacemaker? I believe that secret is revealed in the book of **Romans**. In particular, we will see part of the answer spelled out for us in our passage for study this morning, in **Romans 5:1-2**.

Review

But before we go there, allow me to set the stage for our study. Back in **Romans 1:18**, we read these words: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”** When we looked at that verse, I took some time to explain what those two terms, **“ungodliness”** and **“unrighteousness”** refer to.

Ungodliness has to do with **our relationship with God**. When someone is said to be **“ungodly”**, it means that that person is **not presently in a right relationship with God**. That **“ungodliness”** is most often **revealed** in one's **personal rebellion against God**.

The term **“unrighteousness”** refers to the **manner in which people act toward one another**. Basically, they are **not honest, just, loving, kind or gentle in their dealings with others**. They don't express the **fruit of the Spirit** that Paul points out in **Galatians 5:22-23**, concerning the way people interact with others.

When we looked at **Romans 1:18**, we also said that **the order** in which Paul writes those **words is significant**. If someone is not firstly, in a right **vertical relationship** with God, then it will show up in one's **broken horizontal relationships** with others. Or, to put it in another way, **the degree to which**

we are rightly related to God will show up in the peaceful manner in which we relate to others.

To make it even more simple, **if we are at peace with God**, if God is not directing **His wrath** at us, **then** we will **more likely be at peace with others**. We will be **peacemakers**.

So, how do we find peace with God? How does the “wrath of God” that is presently directed at people today, go away? How is God’s wrath appeased? That’s what Paul has been writing about since **Romans 3:21** and continues to write about through the end of **Romans 5**. The word that Paul uses to describe how God makes it possible for others not to experience His wrath, is God’s action of **“Justification.”** Justification is God’s **declaring you righteous and therefore completely acceptable to Him, because you have simply, by faith, put your trust in Jesus Christ as your savior.”**

Now, we come to **Romans 5**, where the **overall theme** of this **chapter** is to explain what are some of the **results of having been justified** by God.

Whereas **the scene** from the beginning of **Romans**, **up until now** has been likened unto a **courtroom**, with a case being presented before a judge and jury, the **tenor of that scene was one of sternness, seriousness, fear and heaviness**. But **now**, beginning with **chapter 5**, the scene now **shifts the inside the palace of a loving heavenly Father**. It is a **more of a restful and inviting scene**. Gone are the austere robes of justice, the gavel of judgment and the grueling self-examination. Gone is the pointing of the finger and the pronoun **“You! You! You!”** The **tenor** of these following chapters changes. The tenor is one of warmth, acceptance and the welcoming of a new status of sons and daughters of the King, Jesus. It is almost the picture of having a family dinner with Jesus sitting at the head of the table. This tone is sensed by the change in pronoun to **“We. We. We.”**

This morning, as we look at only the **first two verses** of this section, we are going to **witness several evidences of those who have experienced in their lives, the reconciling work of God that comes in Christ**. We will see how it is that ever since the Fall, there has been a conflict between man and God. But now, that tense conflict is over. In its place is acceptance and tranquility because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. As we look at these two

verses, we are going to see **three personal tests that can affirm whether or not one has truly been justified by Jesus Christ.**

I. Three personal tests that can affirm whether or not one has been justified by Christ. Romans 5:1-2

In Romans 5:1-2, we read, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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. [ESV]

Notice the very first and important word of **chapter 5:1, “Therefore . . .”**. This word tells us that Paul is drawing together some important conclusions or facts based upon everything he has said thus far, concerning our justification and having been made righteous in Christ. **Notice** that Paul declares that our justification is a **past act of God, completed once and for all**. It is a past act based upon our putting our **faith in Jesus Christ**. For those who have put their confidence in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, we have been justified by faith and there **several results that are now true** for the believer. Again, we are given **three results in these verses**. The degree to which these are true in our lives is the degree to which we truly grasp the significance of God’s justifying work in Christ.

A. We have PEACE WITH GOD...the WAR with God is over. V.1

The first result of our justification is stated in the second half of **verse 1, “...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,...”**. We have **PEACE WITH GOD...the WAR with God is over**. This term “**peace**” is used in **contrast** to other words in this chapter, such as in **verse 9, “wrath”** and in **verse 10 “enemies”**. This is the same wrath of God that Paul referred to in the beginning of this letter, in **Romans 1:18**.

This “**peace**” does **not** refer to the “**peace OF God**” in the **sense of calm** one feels, knowing that God is in control, as used in **Philippians 4:7**. Instead, this term refers to the “**peace we have WITH God.**”

As used here, this term “**peace**” refers to the **cessation or absence of hostilities that once existed between enemies**. In turn, it is a peace that has

produced the removal of alienation and replaced that alienation with the **acceptance, well-being, prosperity and salvation** for those who have put their trust in Christ. Paul's point is that **our war with God is over, once and for all**. What Jesus Christ has done on the cross has taken care of not only the results of our wrong actions and problems in the past and present, but forever. No more wrath of God will ever be aimed at the believer.

Furthermore, **this peace** was something that **God had arranged and initiated** from His side of the relationship. **We were helpless**, due to our spiritual deadness, to initiate anything. As **v. 2** states, this is as a result of **God's "grace"** toward us. We have nothing to boast about, in the sense of having earned this peace with God. This peace comes to us as a **gift from God**.

Back in **Romans 4**, Paul used **Abraham** as an **OT example** of one who was **justified by faith**. **Do you know what title the Scriptures gave to Abraham, that signified his justification?** James tells us in **James 2:23 (ESV)** **"...and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'—and he was called friend of God."** He was declared and made forever, a **permanent friend of God** and so is everyone who follows in **Abe's footsteps by putting their trust in Jesus**. **The war is over**. Peace rules our forever relationship with God as his friends, rather than enemies.

Earlier in his letter to the churches in the district of Galatia, **Paul** wrote these words, that **describe all** of those people who have **put their trust in Christ**: In **Galatians 3:26 (ESV)**, we read **"...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."** And then, just a few verses later, in **Galatians 4:4–6 (ESV)** Paul follows up with these comments, **"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"**

We are **not just friends** of God, we are now **permanent members** of God's family, his **adopted children** whom He will **never disown or reject**. Although we will get there in time, look at what Paul writes a few verses later in **Romans 5:10**. He says, **"For if while we were enemies, we were**

reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Notice the past tense, “**were**”. We were enemies of God, but no longer. All conflict between God and us is over.

However, **be warned**, that although our conflict ends with God, as soon as it does, **another conflict** will **begin** between you and **your adversary, Satan**. But **not to fear**, God tells us elsewhere in scripture, that **although we may succumb** to a few of Satan’s **lies and temptations**, in the end, **Jesus has already won that battle for us**. We will **never** be **separated from the love of God** or left defenseless against the enemies’ attacks. I love these words of assurance that flow from Paul’s pen at the end of **Romans 8:37-39**. “**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him [Jesus] who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

1. Three universal experiences of those who have found PEACE with God.

a. Freedom from the FEAR OF GOD. 1 John 4:18

Now let me direct our attention to **three universal experiences** of those who have found peace with God. When individuals understand that because of Christ’s work on the cross, God will never again be mad at them, the fear of God, their being scared of God is removed. Whereas before, we had every reason to be afraid of God, now we experience the **Freedom from the FEAR OF GOD. 1 John 4:18 (ESV)** “**There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.**”

Although we **still stand in awe** of Him, we recognize that He **no longer is our judge, but our Heavenly Father**. Whereas before, we may have been taught or thought that every time something bad happened to us, like getting a flat tire or breaking a valued dish, that God has punishing us, now we no longer feel that way or believe it. But now we realize that we have a loving,

tender-hearted and compassionate Father caring for us. Yes, He may discipline us, but it will never be abusive or out of anger, but out of love. And it's purpose won't be to harm or destroy, but to teach us.

b. Freedom from the FEAR OF DEATH. Heb. 2:15-15

Secondly, when we understand that we are accepted by God, at peace with God and loved by Him, we now no longer **FEAR DEATH** or coming face to face with God. Look with me at **Hebrews 2:14-15**. It reads, “...that **through death He [Jesus] might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and He [Jesus] might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.**”

There are many who live in absolute fear of dying, for many different reasons. I remember **Ray Stedman** telling of how when he was a **young boy**, and had seen one of his friends die, **how afraid he was of dying**. But when I went to see Ray for the last time **at his bedside**, just a few days before he saw Jesus for the first time, face to face, I will never forget his greeting to me when he awakened from his sleep. He opened his eyes, looked up at me and said, “**Oh, Hi Bob. Shucks! I thought I was out of here two hours ago!**” I mean, he not only didn't fear death, but, knowing he was about to die, **he anxiously with joy anticipated his own home going**. He knew that judgment no longer awaited Him, but only glory.

c. Freedom to SERVE Jesus UNHESITATINGLY and CONFIDENTLY. 2 Cor. 3:4-6

When a Christian is convinced of this truth, that he or she is eternally secure in Christ, reconciled to God forever, that person is **not only** freed from the **fear of God** and the **fear of death**, but that person is now **free to SERVE Jesus UNHESITATINGLY and CONFIDENTLY**, even in the face of martyrdom or the possibility of failure.

So often people are **afraid to take on a ministry** or join a church because they **don't want to fail** and thus **bring shame** to God. They **don't feel worthy enough to serve** God because there are so many areas that they think need to get straightened out first in their lives before they can be of any use to God. Not so! Those ideas are a deception from our adversary, Satan, the

accuser of the brethren. **God never said you have to have arrived at a certain point of maturity before you can serve Him.** If that were the case, there would not be one single person in the service of God, for none of us are above failure or doing wrong. When the Apostle Paul was being questioned by some **rebellious Christians** in the church at **Corinth** as to where his confidence lay, Paul confidence was not based in the approval of others or based on letters of recommendation from others. Paul states in **2 Corinthians 3**, “**Such is the *confidence* that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our *sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant,..*” ---2 Corinthians 3:4–6 (ESV)**

My friend, if you know Jesus, you are at peace with God. He has given you the full privilege to step out and serve Him, free of the fear of failure. Should you blow it, confess it, receive His cleansing and move back into service. Don't beat yourself down because of your sin. God hasn't and won't beat you down for failure. You are at peace with God. Free to serve Him with the best you have to offer. **Nothing will ever disqualify** a person from ever serving or being used of God. *Sin may limit* us to certain areas of service, but **sin will never permanently disqualify** a person from fully serving the Lord. That's why **prostitutes and thieves** so **genuinely, whole heartedly and confidently** served Jesus.

B. We have an UNRESTRICTED ACCESS to God and His RESOURCES, which enable us to STAND in the midst of PRESSURES, PROBLEMS, TRIALS and DIFFICULTIES. V. 2a

The **second way to test whether or not you really believe** in God's promise concerning your being **made righteous in Christ** is given to us in the first half of verse 2. Paul says, “**...Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand,..**”

Before coming to Christ, we had no right, no access to enter into God's court to request anything from Him. Who were we to stand before the holy and almighty God of all the earth, His majesty and power and greatness and glory? But Paul says, that **because of Christ's work** on our behalf “**we have obtained this access, this introduction, by faith**” to come into God's presence **any time.** If you will, **Jesus is our free pass into the Father's**

presence. **No matter what time** it is or the **circumstances** involved, we **unashamedly and without fear are free to visit with God**, our heavenly Father.

Notice, will you, that this free access to God was not something we earned. It was something given to us by Christ, as is mentioned here by the term “**grace**” which means “**gift**”, not something we earned.

In addition, note the word, “**this grace**”. Paul is indicating here that he has a **specific grace** in mind. And that specific gift of grace is our state of justification, or being declared righteous or made acceptable by God. **Is there ever a time that you are hesitant to enter into God’s presence?** If so, either you **don’t fully understand Christ’s justifying work** with Christ, or you may not be saved.

Why would we, His adopted children ever feel the need to enter God’s presence? Sometimes it might be just to walk in and say, “**Good night father. I am going to bed now. I just wanted to tell you that I love you.**” Or, maybe it is **to worship Him or confess sin**, or to **draw upon His resources** when we **face temptations, problems and pressures**.

In the use of the term “**stand**”, Paul is stressing our entering into God’s presence **because we need His resources to stand firm against the accusations and lies and threats of our evil adversary**. We stand or depend upon God and His promises and resources to face the daily challenges of serving as His ambassador to this world. Hence, when we are attacked by the lies and doubts and confusing accusations of our spiritual enemy, we stand in God’s presence **resting on what He has promised and said is true about us**. Basically, that we are **deeply loved by God, fully forgiven, totally accepted and completely pleasing to God**, and equipped for every good work God wants us to do, **thanks to Jesus**.

In other words, the second test of whether or not we understand and believe that we are approved of by God is, do we believe that we **have an UNRESTRICTED ACCESS to God and His RESOURCES, which enable us to STAND in the midst of PRESSURES, PROBLEMS, TRIALS and DIFFICULTIES**.

Look at **Hebrews 10:19**, and see how this author supports what Paul says here about our **freedom to enter God's presence** and to draw upon His strength and resources. The author to the Hebrews writes, "**Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place** [God's throne room. How come we have this confidence?] **by the blood of Jesus,**" ... verse 22, "**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;**" There, the writer is exhorting us to grab a hold of the truth that we say we believe and put all our trust in it. Don't back away from it. God promised it, so believe it.

Look at **Hebrews 4:15-16**, "**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.**"

We have an **UNRESTRICTED ACCESS** to God and His resources, which enable us to **STAND** in the midst of **PRESSURES, PROBLEMS, TRIALS** and **DIFFICULTIES**. Who would dare stand before the holy almighty God asking Him for undeserved favors? Answer? **Only those who are at peace** with God, through faith in Jesus Christ and **have been justified** by His works.

C. We rejoice in daily life LOOKING FORWARD with great ANTICIPATION to our FUTURE WITH the Lord. V. 2b

The effect of **putting** these first **two tests** of having been **justified together**, the test of having **peace with God**, and the test of grace whereby we know and take advantage of our **free access to God and His resources** is to **produce a third result** in the Christians life: **a rejoicing approach to life**. Paul says, at the end of v. 2, "**...and we rejoice [boast] in the hope of the glory of God.**"

This term "**rejoice**" means to **boast confidently in the sense of jubilation or to shout or jump up and down and to cheer**. At the root of the word, is the idea of declaring something or to **speak of something that matters deeply to you**. **To take a stand**. It could be to rejoice or praise God, even in the midst

of a difficulty because God has shown you something good about the particular pressure or challenge you are facing...because you have **“hope.”**

This word here for **“Hope”**, is **not** the word for something that might be possible, like, **“I hope the Dodgers win the World Series this year.”** The term, **“hope”** used here **speaks of a certainty, a guaranteed reality based on the words of Jesus himself.**

What is the specific hope that Paul has in mind here and that we can rejoice in? What does this mean, “the hope of the glory of God”? Paul is saying that we rejoice because we have the hope that we are going to partake in God’s glory. In other words, one day, we will be like God; we will reflect His glory to the universe. We will be near Him. No longer will we have this ball and chain called the flesh, it’s bad habits and sinful desires to fight the rest of our lives.

This is **such good news.** For some of you, **life is hard and cruel.** Some of us are living with **emotional problems and scars** that come from **tragic backgrounds.** To make it worse, few people really seem to care, which adds insult to injury. We often **feel alone and abandoned.** But God’s word teaches us that because we are at **peace with God,** and because we have access to God, that **He will enable us to finish out our difficult days.** Then, when these temporal days end, we **will be ushered into His presence to enjoy perfect emotional, physical, spiritual and relational health... forever!** The hope of the glory of God! You may be living a life in the midst of the **“winter of discontent”**, but something of glory awaits you beyond.

Let’s pray: **Father, we thank you that you have made it possible to experience permanent peace with you. That we have been reconciled and reunited with you, who created us in the first place. It feels so good to know that we have your acceptance and the free invitation to come into your presence any time we want, whether to just say we love you or to seek your help about a matter. We rejoice in the hope that we have in you. The hope that one day, we will not only be with you, but conformed to the image of your son, no longer to fight the temptations and battles of this world. As we live here in the days ahead as your ambassadors to this world, help us to rest on these, your truths that we have been looking at this morning. Thanks Lord. Amen.**

