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ROMANS

Lesson 15

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Romans 5:1-11

Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment

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Introduction

"Peace with God," what a wonderful expression! Assuming that there is a God, what could be more satisfying than the enjoyment of reconciliation with Him? What could be more rewarding than the feeling that our relationship with the Creator and Ruler of the universe is harmonious? What could be more comforting and consoling in the midst of the hard experiences of life than to know that our relationship vertically, if not horizontally, is untroubled?

But what is "peace"? And, more particularly, what is peace with God? As for peace, it is one of the words that is commonly on our lips, but its meaning has become difficult to untangle from the confusion and corruption of misuse. Our politicians are very fond of the word, for they know that it is not in the average man's heart to desire war, since that has personal consequences that are bad. In times of international tension we know what peace usually means; it means no armed conflicts. And few men want them. It is probably true that even those who profit from war, the makers of arms and explosives, would prefer to make their fortunes by more peaceful endeavors.

Peace is often used of the relationships within a home. "Peace in the home," Luthi comments, "is the sort of thing that the warden of a certain church guest house must have in mind every time he receives new

guests, and says, 'Ladies and gentlemen, we have no set household regulations, but we have an orderly house.' For when there is order in a house and everything is done in an orderly manner, then there is peace in that house. Who would not like such household peace?"¹

Perhaps the most common identification of the word peace is with the expression peace of mind. Now, that is something with which our society can relate. If there is one thing that characterizes our day, it is the absence of peace of mind. Frenetic is the adjective that characterizes us. To use Daniel's expression, we are busily "running to and fro," and yet not finding that for which we are looking. How nice it would be "to feel like a fish in water, or a cat purring at the fireside, or like a father reading his paper and smoking his pipe after dinner." That is, to feel this way in a deeper and more spiritual sense.

And that brings us to "peace with God." What could that mean? That is something that is above all mere contentedness. In one of Paul's other writings he says it is won by Jesus Christ "through the blood of his cross" (cf. Col. 1:20). In Paul's mind peace with God is the result of reconciliation with God and justification before God (cf. Rom. 5:1, 11), as the present passage shows. It is the consummation of the process by which we are tried before God and given the judgment of acquittal from the exalted Judge. Simply put, it is to be saved by grace through faith. It is what Augustine, Luther, and Wesley and the rest of the saints have found.

The Apostle Paul, having set out his doctrine of justification by faith, now turns to the certainty and the enjoyment of the peace that believers have through faith in the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the following section he points out that the believer can be safe and certain of it for several reasons, namely, the tribulations of God, the love of God, and the reconciliation of God. We turn to his words concerning them now in the continuation of the exposition of Romans.

THE TRIBULATIONS OF GOD

What we have (Rom. 5:1-2). In the opening of the fifth chapter the apostle writes, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." It is possible that he is implicitly answering a question that might have arisen from the conclusion of the preceding chapter. It would have been a natural thing for a doubter, or questioner, to ask in objecting to the faith way of salvation, "Is this method safe? Will it enable us to hold out to the end? After all faith is a very tenuous thing. Can it stand up when the trials of life come to us?"

A question exists over the correct reading of the original text in verse one. Many of the ancient manuscripts of Romans have the finite verb of verse one in a form which should be rendered let us have, rather than the Authorized Version's "we have," based upon some other less ancient manuscripts. If the former is to be preferred, and I am not sure that it is, the sense is let us go on enjoying peace. That would be the likely force of the present tense. Paul would mean that we should go on enjoying peace, because that is what we have through Christ, and it cannot be taken from us by any trial of life. On the other hand, it does seem more in harmony with Paul's thought here to prefer the rendering "we have."² It is not an easy decision, and fortunately either reading makes sense.

In setting forth what we have Paul mentions peace, which was obtained in the past, access, which is our present possession, and hope, which stretches out into the future (cf. Col. 3:4). The peace is possible because of the work of justification that the apostle has just expounded in some detail. It is obtainable by those who meet God at the appointed meeting place of Calvary. That is the place at which God waits to meet with men, and it is the only place at which there can come the agreement that means justification for us (cf. Am. 3:2).

What we should do (Rom. 5:1, 3). The apostle has said that we should go on enjoying the peace we have (if we accept the reading supported by the most ancient authorities), and he adds in verse three that we should also glory in tribulations. That seems a rather strange thing to say, does it not? It fairly cries out for explanation, and that is what Paul gives in the following verses.

Why we should do it (Rom. 5:3-5). The word "knowing" introduces the ground upon which we should boast in our tribulations. Knowledge is the ground of faith in Paul's mind, and in this case it is the knowledge of a spiritual process. Tribulation introduces a pattern of growth in the believer's life that concludes with the possession of what we had before it began and an approved character. Tribulations really strengthen us, contrary to what one might think.

The first thing Paul says is that tribulations work patience. Trials come from Him (cf. 8:35-39), and they give occasion for the exhibition of His power and grace (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). Otherwise, there might be impatience in His saints. There is an old story, often told by teachers, that illustrates the point. It is said that a young man, who found himself very impatient, once asked Robert Chapman, the well-known Brethren Bible teacher, to pray for him that he might learn patience. He was rather surprised to hear Mr. Chapman immediately turn to the Lord in prayer and say, "Oh Lord! Send this young man tribulation." The young man expostulated that he had not asked him to pray that prayer, but the older, experienced man of God answered, "But young man, it is tribulation that worketh patience." Of course, he was right, and, if we let God speak to us in our trials, we shall be the better men and women for them.

The apostle says that patience does its work, too. It produces experience, a word that means something like an approved character. Cf. Phil. 2:22; 2 Cor. 2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3.

And finally, experience works hope. As Cranfield says, "To have one's faith proved by God in the fires of tribulation and sustained by Him so as to stand the test is to have one's hope in Him and in the fulfilment of His promises, one's hope of His glory (v. 2), strengthened and confirmed."³

The final step in the process is expressed in verse five, "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." We have what we began with when the tribulations came, that is, hope, plus the approved character given through the trials. And this hope does not disappoint us by proving to be a false and illusory thing. The reason is given in the words that follow. The love of God for us is the pledge that the hope it promises is valid through the indwelling Spirit (cf. 8:16). The verb "shed abroad" expresses the unstinting lavishness of the giving of the Third Person of the Trinity. The lavish nature of the giving will be spelled out in verses six through eight.

THE LOVE OF GOD

What we were (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10). The following three verses, verses six through eight, describe the nature of the divine love referred to in verse five. And, if one were to ask, "Paul, how do we know His love?" the answer would come, "by His death." That is the theme that the apostle expounds in these verses.

Four descriptions of the sinner are given in these verses. In verse six he is said to be, "without strength," and "ungodly." In verse eight he is referred to by the word, "sinners." While in verse ten he is described by the term, "enemies."

To sum up what Paul says about the terms we could say, the helpless He died for, the ungodly He justified, the sinner He saved, and the enemy He reconciled to Himself.

What He did (Rom. 5:8). What He did is expressed in the eighth verse, one of the most touching and beautiful that the apostle ever wrote, "But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The apostle's use of the present tense in "commendeth" should be noted. While the act of dying on the cross is an event of the past, the fact that it did occur remains as a present proof and encouragement of the love of God for His saints. That the apostle has believers in mind is clear from the use of the first person plural pronouns, "us," Paul makes much of the fact that He died for us when we were yet "sinners." He is contrasting the love of man and the love of God. We are able upon occasion to die for those who are dear to us, or good, or perhaps for a righteous person. God's love is distinguished from human love by the fact that it is exercised for His enemies. "My child," said a dying French saint, as she gave a last embrace to her daughter, "I have loved you because of what you are; my heavenly Father, to whom I go, has loved me malgre moi." ⁴

THE RECONCILIATION OF GOD

It guarantees our future salvation (Rom. 5:9-10). Cranfield comments, "Having described in vv. 6-8 the nature of God's love for us, to the reality of which (brought home to our hearts by the Holy Spirit) he had appealed in vs. 5 as proof that our hope will not disappoint us, he now returns to the subject of our hope's not disappointing and affirms the certainty of our hope's fulfillment, of our final salvation, in two parallel statements (vv. 9 and 10), both in the form of the argumentum a minori ad maius (called by the Rabbis kal wahomer, i.e. 'light and heavy' - see SB 3, pp. 223-6)."⁴ It is a marvellous fortiori, and it contains one of the most convincing arguments for the security of the believer, and for the definiteness of the atonement also.

It is a brilliant climax to the section as Paul reasons from the death of Christ to the certainty of final salvation. The "then" introduces the inference from the preceding statement concerning His death.

The key verse is the tenth verse, which contains the second of the argumenta a minorj ad maius. This type of argument is one that contains a conclusion that follows with even greater logical necessity than another already accepted in the argument. In this case the argument already accepted is the reconciliation of enemies to God by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. If that is accepted, then with even greater logical necessity it follows that the former enemies will be saved by the sharing of His life.

In the verse there is a triple antithesis, with an advance in the last phrase, rendered by the Authorized Version, "by his life." The first antithesis is that of "enemies" and "reconciled." The second is that of "were reconciled" and "shall be saved." The third is that of "through the death of his Son" and "by his life." The advance in the last clause is seen when one notes that the preposition translated by "by" in the Authorized Version is the preposition *en*, which means in. One would have expected another "by," or another dia in the original, for the phrase rendered "by the death of his Son" contains a *dia*. The apostle advances from through His life to in His life, because he wants to stress the union that now obtains by virtue of the representative death of the Son.

What, then, is the resulting sense of the apostle's argument? Simply stated, it is this: If He has done the most for us, giving us a crucified Savior for our reconciliation when we were enemies, He surely will give us the least, save us through to the end, now that we have become friends, reconciled to Him. Or, surely if He has done the best for us, He will do the rest. As Sanday and Headlam put it, "If the first intervention cost the death of His Son, the second costs nothing, but follows naturally from the share which we have in His life."⁵ They in

their comment refer to the Pauline use of en in the last phrase of the verse when they speak of "from the share which we have in His life." The reference of the en may be to 8:34 and the intercession of the Son for us now. It is surely not a reference to deliverance from the dominion of .sin, as some Bible teachers have thought. The salvation is defined by the statement of verse nine; "saved from wrath." Paul is thinking of the deliverance of the believer from the wrath and condemnation of sin, not from its dominion in the believer's life, except insofar as the latter follows from the former.

The argument, thus, is the ne plus ultra of the doctrine of the security of the believer. If, when we were enemies. He reconciled us to Himself by giving His Son as a penal, substitutionary sacrifice for sin, He will surely do that which is less, now that we are friends, reconciled, deliver us from the wrath to come, and especially since we now share in the life of our Representative through the union consummated with Him. It is the kind of argument that cannot be refuted. The logic is inescapable. Cf. Jud. 13:23.

The force of the argument for security is made even stronger by the fact that it is one of the implicit kinds, one not seen at first glance, such as the one drawn from John 10:28-29. It is not so obvious, but just as powerful.

It may be turned also to the service of the doctrine of the particular redemption of saints also. If He did the greatest thing by dying for certain persons; He surely will do the lesser thing and give the Holy Spirit in convicting and converting ministry to them, will He not? If that is so, then He must have died for the purpose of saving only His elect. Otherwise, we would have to conclude that universalism is a biblical doctrine, which, of course, it is not. The personal pronouns, then, refer to the people of God,

From the verse, therefore, we derive the greatest assurance of the certainty of the salvation that is given by grace through faith. As the

little Irish convert once said, "I often trimble on the Rock, but the Rock never trimbles under me." ⁶

It guarantees our future exultation (Rom. 5:11). Verse eleven is the climax of the section. There are several things to note. In the first place, the rendering of the Authorized Version of the Greek word katallagen, "atonement," is surely wrong. The word means reconciliation. The word atonement is an Old Testament word, referring to the covering of sin. It is not found at all in the New Testament, for sin is there not simply covered by the death of Christ, but paid for and removed.

In the second place, there exists a question over the rendering of the participle kauchomenoi, rendered in the Authorized Version by "we joy." It may be taken in this way, construed as an indicative, and many commentators take it that way. ⁷

It may also be taken as an imperative, being translated, then, "And not only so, but joy in God," etc. That is less likely, since the construction is not frequent in the New Testament.

In the third place, the most obvious way to take the participle is to take it as modifying the subject of the last finite verb. In this case it would modify the subject of the last finite verb. In this case it would modify the subject of the verb rendered "we shall be saved." That is the most common force of a participle, and the sense is excellent here. The antithetical "now," opposed to the future sense of the verb, "we shall be saved," supports the taking of the participle as modifying the subject, "we." We would then render the last verse, "And not only so, but we shall be saved" boasting in our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." The meaning of Paul, then, would be simply this: We shall be not only saved by sharing in His life, but we shall be saved, or carried right on through to heaven, boasting in our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, a triumphant, abundant entrance into glory is assured the saints for whom He has died . We -

shall not enter the glorious presence of the Lord with morose and lugubrious countenances, woe-be-gone and sorrowful, but we shall enter His presence exulting, in Him and His work of grace for us! As the psalmist says, "My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and be glad!" Cf. Psa. 34:2.

Conclusion

May I sum up the apostle's words in these ways. In the first place, he has reminded us of our safety in the fact of our justification (cf. v. 1) and reconciliation (v. 10). Peace, access, and hope are ours.

In the second place, he moved on to our certainty. The problem of faith is no problem. He gave us faith when we hated Him, will He not maintain it now that we love Him and are His friends by His reconciliation of us? See the words that he will write in a moment in 8:35-39.

Finally, he urges us on to enjoyment. We shall be saved boasting! What a glorious future! Safety, certainty, and enjoyment are written here in the Bible. Are they written in our hearts?

Footnotes

¹Liithi, p. 60.

²A lengthy discussion of this textual problem could be given, but for our purposes it is not necessary. Cranfield prefers the reading *echomen*, which should be rendered "we have" {cf. I, 257}. He admits the other reading has better attestation, but decides on the basis of internal evidence.

³Ibid. , I, 261.

⁴Ibid. , I, 265.

⁵Sanday and Headlam, p. 119.

⁶Thomas , p. 152 .

⁷cf. Hodge, p. 140. He supplies the verb to be, *esmen*, but the resulting force is similar to the indicative sense.