

1. We are well into our study of Romans, so it is good to step back and reflect on the bigger picture. This letter to the Romans has one main theme 'The Righteousness of God'.

2. What we mean by that is what God considers right and how we can be right with God. The gospel we are reading about explains the righteousness of God in detail.

3. The letter falls into four sections of which the two central ones consider what the Good News is and the consequences in the life of the believer.

4. We are well into our study of the second section -our Good News which assesses our status before God as sinners in need of rescuing and then goes on to tell the Good News that God has replaced us having to, in some way or other, satisfy some set of laws or rituals or characteristics. Instead, God chooses to make us righteous by substituting Jesus to take our punishment and granting salvation as a free gift of grace to be received by faith.

5. The best summary I can offer is a selection of 10 verses I think you should know, memorise and

meditate on frequently. I have printed some copies of this list if you want one.

So to lead us into today's passage let read the first two:

6. Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,^[e] just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

7. Romans 3:22-24

²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

So we turn to page 1132 and today's reading
Romans 5:1-11

8. *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

9. *⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

10 *⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

11. The first thing to observe is the tense of the verbs. They are past tenses. They refer to things which have happened.

*Therefore, since **we have been** justified through faith, we **have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom **we have gained access** by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

If you have turned from your sins, repented of them and asked God to grant you salvation through the death of his Son, Jesus, then you have been justified by your faith, you have peace, you have obtained access to grace. These are not wishful thoughts or aspirations, they are certainties based on the promised of God. There is no way you can please God by your own efforts, Jesus has provided the way through his death for you to have it as a free gift to be received by faith. If you have put your faith in Jesus, you have salvation. There is no more trying to satisfy the law or the rituals or whatever, you have been justified, you have peace you have obtained grace. The Muslim has to answer questions when he dies, the Hindu hopes to be reincarnated to a higher life form, The Buddhist seeks to obtain Nirvana, and so on. But in Jesus there is nothing further you have to do to obtain

your salvation. When Jesus cried out “It has been finished” on the cross, he meant your salvation is fully atoned for, you have been justified, you have peace and you have obtained grace. So you can stand before God, grateful but no longer guilty, welcomed and not rejected, and so much more.

12. So what do we have?

12a. We have Peace with God.

Jesus said this to his disciples in John 14:27
“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” The world offers a fragile peace based on your feelings, your environment, your ambitions. If you are distressed or in difficult circumstances or frustrated you have no peace. Jesus offers peace on the basis of grace. Peace with God. The security that it is not how you feel or the circumstances you are in, or your ambitions but a security that NOTHING can extract you from your Father’s hand. Isaac Watts wrote a hymn that put it this way.

*Should all the hosts of death,
And powers of hell unknown,
Put their most dreadful forms
Of rage and mischief on,*

*I shall be safe, for Christ displays
Superior power, and guardian grace.*

Friday I had a practical lesson in this. Liz Creese is waiting for the upward call and has time to worry about her salvation. But she drives back the anxiety with the promises of God. Faith is not about tranquillity it is about hanging on to God's word and particularly his promises.

21b Stand by grace before God

A Christian has to stand in two ways. First before God the second in with God.

Here we stand before God. How?

*through whom we have gained access by faith into
this grace in which we now stand.*

Faith is the access code to heaven. There is no evidence of Peter checking you into heaven. The gates of the city of God are fixed open. The righteous may enter freely. The unrighteous cannot enter at all. That is because the unrighteous are not made of the stuff of heaven. Faith receives grace and God's grace enables you to not only enter heaven but to stand in the presence of God, not fearful because faith tells us you are loved and saved, and you are a child of God.

Thirdly

12c We rejoice in the hope

Here it is first described as a boast.

And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Here is a challenge, how often do you boast in the hope of the glory of God? So turn to someone near you and tell them that your hope of salvation is great – the best thing that is happening to you! Be careful though, that you boast in grace. You have not earned it, but you have received it by faith. You may prefer me to skip verses 3-4 but it would not be right to do so.

³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.

I know we don't like these bits of the Bible but they are essential. First they make sense of the why suffering for us. God allows suffering because suffering develops patience, character and hope. To take an example from athletics or sport in general. If you want to develop your skill or stamina or speed or concentration , you do it by pitting your strength against ever increasing demands. Faith is tested and hope is the product of suffering. And Paul goes on to say.

⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

This is a great verse and worth meditating on. You may be mocked for being a Christian but you have no need to be ashamed. God sees your suffering and is applauding your faith under fire.

The 'because' bit is quite interesting.
because God's love has been poured out into our heart's through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

We tend to think of the Holy Spirit as delivering power and guidance but here God's love is poured in through the Holy Spirit. When you open your heart to God, the Holy Spirit pours in God's love. You want to know the love of God, Ask to be immersed in his Holy Spirit. Reflect on the wonder of God's grace and allow the Holy Spirit to fill you up with God's love so that it comes out of your very being.

13. How?

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

14. Is that it then? No! in the words of the song.

We've only just begun...

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The best way to make sense of this is to realise that having received by grace justification, redemption, atonement, reconciliation, we can go forward to experience it all the more. If you have put your faith in Jesus then you have been saved from the wrath of God because through the death of Jesus you have been justified. When you were an enemy God

reached out to you and brought you into his family, you are reconciled, you are a friend of God, even more you are a child of God. So we boast in God. Second time this reading alone! How do we do that? Several ways. First by telling him how great he is whenever we meet with him. Secondly by meeting up together and praising him to one another. Thirdly by boasting about what God has done to our friends. The best worship we can bring is when we tell others the good news and tell what God has done for us.

I want to summarise all this with a plea.

15. Receive Grace. Open your heart to the love of God. Whether you are a Christian or not I appeal to you to revitalise your relationship with God. If you have never done so, invite Jesus to be your Saviour and Lord. If you are a Christian then breath in the Holy Spirit. Grasp the significance that you have peace with God. Realise afresh that you stand, by grace alone, guilt –free before Almighty God. Rejoice in God , rejoice in hope and rejoice in suffering, knowing that suffering increases your faith and hope. Boast in God, to one another, and to the people around you. Open your heart to receive the Holy Spirit and know the love of God poured into

your heart and overflowing to others. Receive Grace today and every day.