

## R.I.P.

2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. in Lent – 02/28/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Romans 5:1-11 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 1 **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

### **Introduction**

- ✘ Especially at the time of World War II, it was common for grave markers around the world to bear the initials “R.I.P”. These initials actually have a Latin origin, *requiescat in pace*, which is translated into English as “rest in peace”.
  - ➔ Whether death has come to the person violently in war or “peacefully” in one’s own bed, the hope and prayer is that he/she can now “rest in peace”.
- ✘ Today Paul starts our Epistle Reading out, talking about us having “peace with God” (v. 1). But he is clear that the peace he is talking about is not necessarily a peace that all people have.
  - ➔ His first word in verse one is, “Therefore...”. That means that we must understand the discussion he has just concluded, because it has established a fact that directly impacts and undergirds what he is now about to teach us.
  - ➔ What Paul just established in chapter four is that our spiritual father, Abraham, was “justified” – that is “proclaimed innocent” by God – not by his works, but by the free gift of faith. Abraham believed God was able to fulfill His promise to Abraham that future generations would also be justified by faith in the same promise of salvation through God’s Son and His sacrifice in our place.
- ✘ “Therefore”, Paul says, “since we have been justified by faith...”, like Abraham you see, then we can be assured of the following promised results of that justification that come to us directly from God.

### **I. No resting in peace for us!**

- ✘ But before we get to those resulting gifts folks, we need to know who and what we were and are by nature – before God justified us.
  - ➔ In verses 6, 8, and 10 Paul bluntly declares something that many people in the world find very offensive, so much so that they angrily rebel against and refuse to believe anything else that God might have to say to them.
- ✘ Back in chapter three Paul addresses this “offensive” truth about our nature and lays out the argument for why it must be accepted as God’s objective truth. In 3:10-12 Paul quotes a couple portions of the Psalms and says, “as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
  - ➔ I’m sure you noticed how all-inclusive Paul is there with this sad truth about us all. And so in verse six Paul begins with the forgone conclusion, that “while we were still weak...” and in verse eight that “while we were still sinners...” and again in verse ten that “while we were enemies...”.
  - ➔ That can be a pretty big blow to anyone’s self-esteem, can’t it? It’s not really the best way to start a conversation and try to make friends, “Hello sir/ma’am, everyone knows that you are a weak, sin-filled enemy, do you mind if I talk to you about Jesus”. No, we might not want to have that as the first line in our witnessing repertoire.

✘ But, the truth is the truth. Paul is right; we are all weak in living according to God's Commands, in standing up against temptation, and in our faith in general. And that means that yes, we are all sinners. We do not put God first in every matter of our lives. We selfishly assume that we are better than others. We gossip and cheat and hurt others with our words and actions. We think of ourselves first before we think about our neighbors...and well, we could go on and on.

➔ But worst of all, Paul says that we were "enemies"; enemies of God. "O, come on Pastor, I might not be perfect in all things, but an enemy of God, I don't think so". Well, every one of our sins and "imperfections" as we try to label and sugarcoat them, puts us at war with God. Even when we think that we're playing it safe and remaining neutral about controversial things we put ourselves at odds with Jesus who said in Matthew 12:30, "Whoever is not with Me is against Me."

✘ So, what does that mean? Well, it should be obvious, I think, that enemies of God are not going to be able to "rest in peace".

## II. "If while we were..." Christ...

✘ But...but! Paul concludes each one of his earlier sentences about us being weak, sin-filled enemies with the most remarkable declarations of God's undeserved love for us all.

➔ I'm going to let these statements speak for themselves; actually for God. Paul said in verse six, "...while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly". And in verse eight, "...God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us". And finally in verse 10, "...if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life".

✘ Oh friends in Christ, this is Good News on top of Good News on top of Good News. Just when it seems like there is no hope for any of us because we have messed things up so badly, look at what God has done.

➔ It's what this season of Lent is all about – Jesus came bursting into this world in human flesh, lived life perfectly without sin as none of us could do, and then, even when He had zero guilt on His account, He took your guilt, and your guilt, and your guilt, and my guilt and the guilt of all sinners ever to live upon Himself and just as Paul said, "He died for us"; in our place; instead of us!

➔ And He did it in one of the most horrific and gruesome ways known to mankind – after His skin was torn to ribbons by a lead-tipped whip, called a flagrum, and then was forced to carry a rough splintered crossbeam upon those wounds, He was finally nailed to the cross and crucified, to die by slow suffocation.

✘ The fact that Jesus has done all of this already for you and me, and has now been raised from death, means that our weakness; our sin; our enmity with God has been defeated, overcome and made right.

➔ It is done and nothing more needs to be done or can be done by any of us. That's God's promise that He has now declared you and me to be innocent; justified completely, just as Abraham was justified by His confident belief in the same life, death, and resurrection of the One who would come from his bloodline to save everyone else like you and me who now have the gift of faith.

## III. The assurance that we can R.I.P.

- ✘ So Paul starts our Reading today with this forgone conclusion saying, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith...” we now have the assurance of five results; five blessings; five things that are gifts from God for us; to comfort us in times of trouble and suffering.
  - Let’s run through them briefly: The first is in verse one, that “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In fact, all of these results are ours only because of, and through Jesus and His saving work.
    - To have peace with God is to have our relationship where we were separated from God because we were enemies who were at war against His will; to have that relationship fully repaired. In verse 10 Paul talks about it when He says that we “were reconciled to God by the death of His Son... (and) now...saved by His life”.
    - The second result in verse two is that we have “obtained access by faith into [God’s] grace in which we stand...”. Without God declaring us to be “innocent” it would be impossible for us to receive the grace of God. But now that He took the initiative and acted for us in Jesus, the door to His undeserved love has been thrown wide open. He wants us at His side, near Him and in His arms of grace today and for eternity.
    - The third result continues in verse two, “...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God”. Yes, we have hope; not the kind of hope we often talk about that is tainted by doubt, like “I sure hope that those dark clouds don’t mean a storm is coming”. No, this is the hope that Paul refers to in verse five that “does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit...”. So think about that. When did the Holy Spirit pour God’s love into your heart and mine? Yes, at your baptism, when you were marked and sealed by the sign of the cross “to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the Crucified” (LSB, pg. 268). This is the hope of certainty and confidence that gives us every reason to rejoice, because it all depends, not upon you or me, but only upon Jesus!
    - The fourth result of being justified by faith is in verses 3-4. It’s one that is a little hard to get a handle on at first. Paul says, “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (which we just finished talking about as the other reason to rejoice).
      - But rejoicing in our suffering – what’s up with that? Again it’s all about having our eyes on Jesus first. When you and I face suffering and trouble and grief of all kinds – I mean really deep-to-the-core suffering that Satan tries to use to make us give up our faith and turn away from Jesus; suffering in the face of disease and pain and hatred and abuse and despair and death, this is when the eyes of our faith, as with Abraham when he believed that God could do the impossible and give him and Sarah a son in their old age; this is when we believe that God not only can, but that He will see us through this time of great sorrow, and bring us to the victory of salvation and eternal life won in our place by Jesus alone!
      - You see, this not rejoicing “because” of our suffering, but “rejoicing in” our time of suffering, because Jesus is right here with us in the middle of it all. Paul says, this kind of faith-filled suffering is to die with Jesus and be raised with Jesus on the other side in victory! It builds our faith; our endurance; our character to the conclusion that we then have a rock-solid hope in Jesus as our Savior!
    - The fifth and final result of our justification by faith is found in verse nine. Paul says, “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by [Jesus’] blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.” The more I think about it, the more I see this as the ultimate display of God’s ultimate love for you and me. The fact that our weak, sin-filled enmity toward God absolutely deserves – deserves His eternal wrath to burn against us in all eternity in the fiery depths of hell is enough. But then to think that He loves you and me so much that He would

sacrifice His only Son for the likes us; that He would actually turn that wrath against His only Son on the cross, so that we are now spared of that wrath and actually receive instead the assurance of eternity in the beauty and glory and perfection of heaven – what more can that be than the ultimate expression of love!

## **Conclusion**

- ✘ Well, all five of those results are yours – all because in Christ Jesus you – we “have been justified by faith”. It means that our conflict, our war with God is over. And yes, He has given us the assurance that we can “rest in peace” already today ... and for eternity because of Jesus!
  - ➔ You know, those initials R.I.P., they can direct us not only to our “rest in peace”, but because of our Savior Jesus and His love and work for us, friends, they tell us as well today that we can “rejoice in peace”. To God be all the glory. Amen.