

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: The Peace of Christ, Romans 5:1-5

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INTRODUCTION: I don't know how many of you in here this morning have ever heard of the book, which became a movie, *Forrest Gump*. It was a book written around 1986. Forrest Gump was a man who stumbled into the military and touched history in several different points. From this movie, you may remember Lieutenant Dan. Lieutenant Dan is a cripple, bound to a wheelchair after getting his legs amputated because of a war wound in Vietnam. And, he is angry and yells at Forrest Gump for saving his life. Lieutenant Dan believed his destiny was to die as a soldier on the field, and he felt he didn't live up to this destiny. He struggles in life and turns to alcoholism.

At a New Year's party, Lieutenant Dan asked Forrest Gump if he had found Jesus. Forrest, being not so bright, says, "I didn't know I was supposed to be looking for him, sir." At the end of the movie and in the book, we see Forrest Gump buys a shrimp boat, and he hires Lieutenant Dan as his first mate, as he had promised him. After some time together, Lieutenant Dan finally confesses to Forrest, "Forrest, I never thanked you for saving my life," and then he dives into the ocean. If you remember, Forrest Gump says, "I think Lieutenant Dan made his peace with God."

You see, Lieutenant Dan was lost in more ways than he was found. He thought he missed his destiny of being a war hero. He was angry he was still alive. That's an interesting concept—angry he was still alive. But, in the end, he was thankful Forrest Gump had saved his life, and he had a joy out there on that shrimp boat.

Lt Dan finally had peace. I want to ask a greater question: Have you made peace with God? There's only one way to make peace with God, and that's on his terms. It's not on our terms.

So far, in our study of Romans, we have covered humanity's need for salvation. We are sinners, but we also read about God's plan to make us right with him through faith in Jesus. And, we explored this faith—what it's not. This salvation that comes

through Christ is not by works or because of prior privilege. And, we learned about Abraham's example—that Abraham had hope even when there was no hope, his faith was unwavering, and he based his faith on God's promises.

Chapter 4 closes with verse 25—

SCRIPTURE: Chapter 4, verse 25: *He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

EXPLANATION: I want to review this definition of justification. Justification is how we can stand before God through Jesus. We first stand guilty, but then God justifies us. And, when he justifies us, we are not guilty anymore. We are made right with him. We can stand before him, face to face. Someone described justification this week for me in very understandable terms. It's as if you never sinned. It puts a whole new spin on forgiveness, doesn't it? It's not like when someone holds a grudge. When people hold grudges, they tend to be short with us or never speak to us again. They're still holding onto that grudge. But, justification is treating us as if nothing wrong had ever happened between us. We are justified. We are treated by God as if we never sinned because of the blood of Christ.

Now, in Chapter 5, Paul moves to what this justification...this act of God calling us righteous... gives us in our relationship to God.

We have peace with God through Jesus. I want to talk about this peace with God this morning. There are two main points to my message today:

1. Peace with God comes on his terms.
2. Peace with God comes with substantial benefits.

First, PEACE WITH GOD COMES ON HIS TERMS.

Folks, I believe if you will let these two points soak in it will change your life. Even if you are already a strong Christian and have been saved since 6 or 7-years-old, if you will let these two points sink in, it will give you a new perspective. Have you made peace with God?

ILLUSTRATION: It's a loaded question because it is a yes or no question. I am amazed how politicians interviewed on television cannot give a yes or no answer. I was reading a book that talked about how to answer a question without saying "yes" or "no." It's rather interesting when a politician or an official can give a solid yes or no. But, for the most part, people don't like to give yes or no answers because they're afraid it might work them into a corner.

Have you ever heard someone say, "God and I have it worked out?" Do you remember the old song "Me and Jesus Got Our Own Thing Going?" It is not a possible statement because it is not possible to work a deal with God. God has no deals. God's reaching down to sinful people is his gift for us. And, the way he reaches down to sinful people is through Jesus. The way we reach up to God is through Jesus. Let's look in Romans, Chapter 5.

Did you know the world is at war with God? Did you know sin is at war with God? In wars of our world, peace happens when the losing country accepts the terms of the winning country of the war. And, in our case, we, as sinners, are at war with God, and the only way we can have peace is by accepting God's terms because we will not win a war with God.

SCRIPTURE: Verse 1 says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."*

ILLUSTRATION: From this address, I can get to my home several ways. I normally ride in my car, but I can go other ways as well. I've ridden in two other people's cars when I needed a ride. One time, I walked out and realized I didn't have a car here, and everyone was gone. So, I took an Uber home. I have yet to ride a bicycle, and I have yet to walk the distance, but those are additional ways. I could if I was able.

But, if I were to go to the moon, there is only one way to get there—on a rocket. There is no other way. I believe we've all accepted that fact.

APPLICATION: But, many people do not accept the fact there is only way to get to God—through Jesus. To get to God, we don't think in terms of vehicles to get us there, but people think in terms of the spiritual.

Other religions have their opinions and beliefs as to how to get to God (Buddhism: meditation and idol worship; Islam: the Five Pillars i.e. a pilgrimage, prayer, fasting, giving, and jihad; Hinduism, multiple pathways of devotion; Judaism: sacrifice and religion). Even apart from religious titles or under the guise of the Church, people are tempted to reach God apart from Christ—by just reading the Bible enough, going to church, finding him in nature or yoga, trying to be a kind enough or nice enough person.

ILLUSTRATION: I talked to a man who was on his death-bed once. He was a relative of one of our church members who was concerned about his soul. The family asked me to go see him in the hospital. I went to see him. And, in the final moments of his life, he wanted to know if he could fish in heaven. That's what he wanted to know. His life was about fishing. In his mind, heaven was casting a pole yet once again in the water. I don't recall what I told him. I was grieved that was his view of heaven and his idea of salvation was just in a boat, fishing. I don't think any of us are going to think about fishing in heaven. I don't think any of us are going to think about golf.

What we're going to be doing in heaven is learning more about God's grace, and what that looks like, I don't know. But, all of us have this desire for the spiritual.

APPLICATION: Students of the Bible will quickly learn the only way to God is through Jesus. There are no other options. The questions I have are these: Why won't people accept this truth? What did Jesus ever do for us except die for our sins?

Peace must come at God's terms. As we read in Romans 3:22, *Righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.* And, now in Romans 5:1, we read, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And, notice, this is only through Jesus Christ... "*our Lord...*" which in the Greek, *kýrios* is "a person exercising *absolute ownership rights.*" In other words, Jesus must have the absolute ownership rights to our life.

So, we have that peace with God comes on God's terms. Have you accepted God's terms, or are you trying to work out a deal with God?

ILLUSTRATION: I haven't kept up with the president lately, but when he was running for office, in the first few months of his administration, he was big on saying he was the deal maker. Well, I got news for the president and anyone who thinks he can make a deal with God: You'll lose because there are no deals with God. It comes on his terms.

So to be at peace with God, you've got to accept his terms.

Second, PEACE WITH GOD COMES WITH SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS.

I think the word "substantial" isn't strong enough, and the word "benefits" isn't strong enough. But, on human terms in English, that's about as strong as we can make it.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-5 *¹Therefore, 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.*

1. The first benefit Paul mentions is access. Verse 2 says we have "gained access" into grace by faith. The Greek meaning of these two words means "coming forward." It is an "approach." It is used two other times in the New Testament, in Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 3.

As in Romans, each time the word is used, it has to do with an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus. So, the first benefit Paul mentions here is access.

EXPLANATION: Without God, extending himself, through Jesus, there is no approach. Jesus made a way for us to approach him. He didn't come on a huge, white horse, as an unapproachable king. No, he came as a baby, later as a humble man, riding on a donkey. And, ultimately he came as a dying, suffering sacrifice on the cross, taking on all the sins of the world. We have access to God in Jesus Christ.

2. The second advantage of peace with God, Paul mentions, is our hope of the glory of God. We not only have access to God in this life, but we have hope in God's glory throughout all eternity. I've been to many funerals, and I will say, there is a big difference between those who grieve with hope and those who have no hope. Death and suffering are very real, but we have hope because God promises new life, beyond death.

ILLUSTRATION: Yesterday, I spoke at a funeral of a friend of mine who passed away. She was a Christian, and at her funeral, there were both tears and laughter. The laughter came from memories people shared about her life. I said, "The tears means she was loved. The laughter means she was cherished." And, then I read the scripture that tells us we grieve but not as those who have no hope. I heard a preacher say one time, "Would you still want Jesus as your savior if there was no eternal life." And, I thought, *Well, that's part of the whole package*. It's eternal life. It's hope in Christ.

3. The third advantage Paul mentions is our perspective in present times.

SCRIPTURE: Verse 3: *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings...*

EXPLANATION: This verb here—to "glory" in our sufferings is counter-cultural. How can one glory in their sufferings? We must know something else that is greater than our suffering. We know something else that makes our suffering nothing in comparison. We know something that gives purpose even to our suffering.

- There is an obvious progression here: Suffering produces perseverance. This translates as "endurance, steadfastness, patience." Challenges in life are unavoidable, but as believers face one challenge, they can better deal with future challenges.

ILLUSTRATION: This past week, I talked with a woman who had a tragedy in her family many years ago. And, she said, "After that tragedy, I've been able to face everything in life because I will never face any tragedy worse than the tragedy I experienced then."

APPLICATION: Have you ever seen this to be true? Have you ever known a fiery trial was a little more bearable because you already went through something, which prepared you to know how to handle it. The first time it happens to us, we're shaking, and we don't know what to do. We're afraid. The second time, we've got it. The third or fourth time, we already know the pattern, and we know life will go on after we pass it. But, how does that happen? It happens because we have the first trial early on.

So suffering produces perseverance.

- Now we have—this perseverance produces character (v. 4). The Greek word for character, *dokime*, originally meant “tested” or “approved.” It was used a lot in marketplaces of the day, as coins were either “approved” or “disqualified.” In Christ, when we suffer, we can be “approved.” Like a coin tested to be genuine and heavy enough, suffering acts as a scale to produce a weighty character.
 - Then, we have that character produces hope. It is a full circle, as the scripture started with our boasting in the hope of the glory of God. We started with hope, and in the end of all our suffering, we have hope.
4. Most importantly, Paul writes about the most substantial benefit of peace with God—love—the final result. This hope does not disappoint. It does not put us to shame. Everything apart from Christ will bring shame. But, shame is an emotion we are not created to feel. It came after the fall. Adam and Eve realized they were naked and felt ashamed of themselves.
- But, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit of Christ, God gives us love. And, this love never brings shame. It brings truth and glory. How is this?

SCRIPTURE: Verse 5: *God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us...*

APPLICATION: When you have peace with God, on his terms, you will experience the love of Christ all of your life into eternity. God promises the Holy

Spirit to those who ask...*Ask and you will receive. Repent and believe*, as the scripture says.

CONCLUSION: When you read Romans Chapter 5, verses 1-5, and let it sink in, you wonder why anyone would not want to be a part of this. God is calling you. He does expect you to respond to him. I do believe in the free-will of man. I do believe God makes a way. He has a gift, and it is ours for the taking through repentance and belief.

Folks, I saw an old tract from the 1800s, and it was made like a voting paper ballot from the 1800s. It said, "God has voted for you. Satan has voted for you. Tie vote. You have to break the vote."

Satan does not want you to respond to the tug God's Spirit. The Bible tells us not to quench the Holy Spirit, so that means it is possible to quench the Holy Spirit. Satan is tugging at you. He does not want you to respond. But, God leaves it up to you. And, he wants you to respond. What is God calling you to this morning? Is he calling you to faith and repentance? Is he calling you to something else?

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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