

We finished Chapter 4 last time, with Paul teaching the Romans that being right with God for the Jew is not something that came with circumcision, and it does not come from their obedience with the Law. Righteousness, then and now for us today, comes through faith alone. We are all justified not by anything we do. We are justified by what God has done for us through Jesus death on the cross and resurrection. He has paid the full price for our sins. He is the "lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world".

So we begin with Ch. 5 today – lets read 5:1-11

Vs. 1 – Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul states that because our standing with God is not based on "us", but on what Jesus has done for us, we can finally have peace with God. God's love is not like human love, which rises and falls with the whims of our subjective judgement. Human love leaves us always wondering about our relationships because we judge subjectively. So we never have peace. But with God's love we can know we have peace with God because our status with him depends solely on what He has done for us, through His Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ is our certainty. God's love can never be taken from us.

Vs. 2 – Paul goes on to say these great words: "Through Him, we have obtained access to His grace in which we stand". WOW. We can approach God – through Jesus Christ alone. We can be with God for eternity because of His grace towards us. This grace is something in which we already stand and we can therefore "rejoice" in our hope of sharing in the glory of God. The Christian who understands his or her exalted status, a status of sheer grace, a status nobody can achieve by their own merits, leaves anyone who truly comprehends it, REJOICING! The Christian life is a joy filled because we realize the magnitude of our exalted status before God. If you and I do not live lives of joy, lives filled with thanksgiving, then shame on us! We are the redeemed sons and daughters of the Most High God. Do we get it? Do we understand our exalted status? This does not minimize the truth that in this life we all carry burdens, sadness and many challenges. Life is not easy, but as Paul says in Romans ch 8 "what can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord? If God is for us, who is against us? We will save this great chapter 8 until a bit later.

Vs. 3-5 – Paul says – "more than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that sufferings produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us." Paul sets the bar high. Paul is saying, yes we do suffer in this life, but in Christ we endure. And as we get through our times of suffering, we come to know we can endure, and it builds character and we come to know that Christian believers are always a people of hope. Why? Because Christ is always with us! He is within us – "Emmanuel" – God with us. He lives inside of us. And then Paul says something magnificent – He says – "hope doesn't disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". We would do well to remember 1 Peter 3:15 – when Peter tells us to "always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you". The people of God are a people of hope. This is so because we know how our story will end, my story and your story will end in glory. In Matthew 28:16-20 we read: "now the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, the close of the ages." The Great Commission. The reason St. Bede's and every church ought to be trying to grow. We live with hope because the love of God has been "poured into our hearts", through the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God.

Vs. 6-11 – The RSV Bible says this about these verses: "Christ in his death has borne the consequences of our sin, and thus reconciled us to God". In other words, the death of Jesus was on behalf of ungodly people. The amazing thing that Paul says in Vs. 7 – one will hardly die for a good man, but perhaps he will. Vs. 8 – "But God shows His love for all of us, because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". It is the cross where God show us the means by which God demonstrates and proves His love for us. Vs. 9 – And we are all now justified by His blood, and spared from God's wrath (God's wrath is a manifestation of His holiness). Vs. 10-11 – As enemies of God, by virtue of our sin, it took Jesus death

on the cross to make things right with God. And now since we are reconciled, we are also saved by His life and our salvation will never end. It is this new status of being made right with God , being justified by Him alone, that leads us to rejoice. For we have been reconciled to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

We will pick it up there next time.