

## **Lesson Nine**

(5:1-11)

### **BLESSINGS BELONGING TO CHRISTIANS**

#### **AT PEACE WITH GOD**

1 Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand: and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Paul has argued decisively in previous chapters that all men are sinners and all are justified through faith in Jesus who stands central in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. It is logical to proceed, as Paul does, to the multiple blessings which belong to those who are justified. The word "justified" (*dikaïos*) did not carry the same meaning for Paul and his contemporaries as it does in modern day usage in American courts of law. In our legal system there are rulings such as justifiable homicide. Under this provision of law, the act for which one is being accused is said to be "right" and "justified" because of the circumstances in which the accused acted. The accused may have killed another man, but he may have done so wholly in self-protection. In the sight

of God, however, no sinful act is justifiable and there is no way a man can excuse, rationalize, or justify himself when he has sinned. Therefore, when Paul says, "having been justified" he means that God declares a man to be righteous although he has no defense whatsoever for his sin. On the basis of God's pronouncement that a person is just, the barrier of sin is removed and peace with God is attained. It is very difficult for finite man to grasp the fulness of such grace and the possibility of being at peace with God. This inability is illustrated in a story originally written by H. C. Wells. It is the story of "a man of affairs whose mind was so tensed and strained that he was in serious danger of a complete nervous and mental breakdown. His doctor told him that the only thing that could save him was to find peace that fellowship with God can give. 'What!,' he said, 'to think of that, up there, having fellowship with me! I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the milky way or shaking hands with the stars.' God, to him was the complete unfindable." But Paul says with assurance, "We have peace with God." "Peace" usually carries the idea of harmony, concord, security, safety, or prosperity. Thayer, however, provides a definition which he claims to be distinctly peculiar to Christianity: "the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatever sort that is." He adds that the word peace is "used of those who, assured of salvation, tranquilly await the return of Christ and the transformation of all things which will accompany that event." This state of peace is not dependent upon external circumstances. A man can be at peace with God when involved in intense action on a battlefield or when on a hospital bed his body is wracked with pain.

A contest was held among aspiring young artists. Each was to picture upon the canvas the theme of peace. Most of the pictures were of tranquil pastoral scenes: the meadow, placid stream, and cattle grazing lazily. The painting which won the prize, in contrast to the great majority of those entered in the contest, portrayed tremendous action. Water was hurtling over a precipice into the chasm below. The force of that cascading waterfall threw a spray high above the head of the falls and caused turbulence in the air. An oriole's nest, according to their custom of building, was painted at the very end of a tree limb which extended out over the chasm. There, wholly oblivious of all of nature's potentially destructive action of water, spray and air, a colorful black and orange oriole fed its young. For that family of birds it was a setting of perfect peace. One can be at peace with God when all external circumstances contradict that internal sense of harmony and well-being.

This unique Christian kind of peace is obtained "through our Lord Jesus Christ." The mediatorial work of Jesus is emphasized frequently

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in Pauline books. Ephesians 1:13-14 is a good example. Twelve times in those few verses prepositional phrases such as "in Christ," "in Him," "in the Beloved," and "through Jesus" are used to indicate that God's eternal plan which originated before the foundation of the world would be fulfilled in His Son. It is through Christ that we have access by faith into God's grace (v. 2). The word translated "access" (*proago*), literally means to "lead to or before, to present or introduce." Moulton and Milligan say that the word is used with reference to a ship being brought to a dock and secured there. If that ship-dock figure is valid, and followed to its conclusion then we would think of coming by faith in Christ to God where we anchor in the sea of God's grace, at peace in the "Haven of Rest." It is not surprising to have Christ pointed out as the peacemaker between God and man, for He is the "ruler of peace," (Isaiah 9:6; see also II Thessalonians 3:16). Before the birth of Jesus, Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Spirit, and he prophesied that Jesus would "guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). The angelic announcement when He was born included the pronouncement of "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14). It was the Messianic peace which was intended in the post-resurrection greetings of Christians and was included in the salutations of the inspired writings: "peace to you."

### FROM HOPE TO HOPE

3 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness; 4 and stedfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope: 5 and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.

From the close of verse two to the end of verse four there is a neat little circle of thought which begins and ends in hope. Christians "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (v. 2). God's glory has been partially revealed from time to time, but it is more likely that the reference here is to the ultimate revelation of God's glory at the end of time when we shall be set "before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Actually the word translated "rejoice" (vv. 2, 3), means "to boast." John Murray says, "It is exultant rejoicing and confident glorying" but in light of all that has been said in previous lessons about the absence of anything in man, or that man can do, which is a basis of salvation it should be noted again that the boasting and hope is grounded in "the glory of God" and not in the accomplishment of man. Hope remains steadfast and Christians rejoice even in the most difficult circumstances of life (v. 3). The Christian glories not only in the future

but also in present life circumstances (James 1:2-4; I Peter 4:12, 13). Christians or churches that are plagued with self-pity should remember the appeal of Hebrews 12:1-13 to Christians who had come out of Judaism and admittedly had suffered for it. But they had not yet suffered as had their Lord, and they were to count their problems to be the chastening of a loving heavenly Father. They were not to give up but to assist those whose hands were tied and whose knees were weak. Through all the tribulations they experienced they were to look to Christ as the example. He knew that suffering preceded joy.

Paul had been criticized as a sadist because he found joy in suffering and rejoiced because he bore in his body the marks of his commitment and service to Christ. Paul and all true Christians from his day to the present were in no sense sadists. They are realists! The first time I read Peter Marshall's illustration of Christian realism, it was indelibly impressed on my mind. The oyster does not ignore the grain of sand that enters its shell nor the stab of pain and bleeding which it causes. The oyster begins to deal with a very real situation in a positive way by depositing a substance to cover and isolate the offensive grain of sand. This combination of protective substance and grain of sand ultimately develops into a pearl. Christians ought to function like that. There is a pearl farm on an island close to Manila, where production of pearls is forced. We watched as one of the employees deftly employed a scalpel with all the care of a surgeon to open the oyster and place a bead in just the right place so it would not kill the oyster, but cause it to secrete its precious substance and produce a cultured pearl. Christians should never seek persecutions nor in any way force a situation of "tribulation" in his life. But inevitably such circumstances will arise. In such times the Christian would do well to be aware of the instruction of a beloved professor who said in the classroom, "The worst thing that can happen to a man may be the best thing that can happen to a man, if he does not let the worst get the best of him." As another has said, it is true that, "sore trial makes common Christians into uncommon saints and fits them for uncommon service." Whatever the circumstances of life, the Christian is to be "steadfast" (v. 4). There is a vast difference in being "steadfast" and "stuckfast." The oak tree and the oak post illustrate the difference. Some wag said that the words sung most enthusiastically by Christians are, "I shall not be moved," and most of them can't be moved. An old Scottish preacher is quoted as saying, "Peace is joy resting; joy is peace dancing." The Christian, like the gospel is active and dynamic; he is like his Lord "who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). So there is a sense in which we are anchored in God's grace and rest in the peace which He gives, but it is also very true that we sail the wide, rough seas of life and while we do so, we are to be faithful deck

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hands. Through it all, we are to be steadfast and to allow steadfastness to produce "approvedness" (v. 4). In defense of the King James Version's translation of *dokimos* as "experience" rather than approvedness, one might cite the classified section of a newspaper. Jobs are offered for which "experience" is necessary. Even if "experience" is not mentioned in the ad the applicant who has previous experience and a good record will probably be chosen for the job over inexperienced persons. So Paul is saying that when one is experienced, when he has stood the tests of life, then he is approved. With the knowledge that one has stood the test, hope is greatly increased. Thus Paul completes his compact circle of thought: hope, tribulations, steadfastness, approvedness, and a hope for which one never need apologize (v. 5). The hope possessed by a Christian is based in the love of God which can never disappoint man. As Lenski puts it, "This hope does not disgrace by being unfulfilled." Hope based in other things or persons may one day lead to disappointment, shame, hurt, and confusion, but as we sing, "There is no disappointment in Jesus." Imagine two people in heaven, one of which has been brought to faith and hope in Christ by the other. Upon arrival in heaven, the soul-winner turns to the one which he has influenced to accept Christ and apologizes saying, "I'm really sorry, fellow, I thought it would be so much better here. Forgive me for overstating the potential of our faith"? Christians have a hope in which there is not an iota of shame. God loves us and sent His Son to demonstrate that love. His love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit and heaven lies just ahead.

The "Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (v. 5) is very active in God's scheme of redemption:

1. Loves men, Romans 15:30
2. Convicts of sin, John 16:8 (such conviction is essential to repentance)
3. Leads one to obedience in baptism, 1 Corinthians 12:13 (McGarvey: "caused to be baptized into one body")
4. Effects adoption into God's family, Romans 8:15-17
5. Leads in the Christian life, Romans 8:14
6. Assists in extreme circumstances of prayer, Romans 8:26
7. Is grieved when Christians sin, Ephesians 4:30
8. Seals unto redemption, Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30
9. Agency of life, Romans 8:11; John 3:5
10. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," Romans 8:9

## THE FOUNDATION OF HOPE

6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for per-

adventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Verses 6-8 set forth the basis for the Christian's hope and glorying in God. First of all, Paul states the central fact of the Gospel that "Christ died for the ungodly." This statement is an interpretation of the four accounts of the life of our Lord by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Of what value is history, either sacred or secular, if there is no interpretation? Perhaps that is why some people have been bored with history and abhor the very thought of enrolling in a class in history. Without evaluation, historical facts become dry, academic dust. With interpretation and evaluation, however, those same facts become exciting and meaningful. This same principle applies to the biographical facts set forth in the Gospels. Jesus Christ, a Galilean Jew, was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Someone may respond, "So what! There were more than a thousand Jews a year, mostly of military age, who were being crucified by the Romans in that general era of time when Jesus Christ lived and died on a cross." But the Gospel is far more than the account of the life and death of just another Jew. It goes well beyond the oft repeated story of another good man who died for a good cause. This is the God-man who "died for the ungodly." "Christ died for us!" (v. 8). What could be more exciting than this central fact of history?

John Calvin made no distinction in meaning between the words "righteous" and "good" (v. 7). He would be perfectly willing that the words be used interchangeably allowing Paul to say, in effect, "It would be hard to find someone to die for a righteous man; well, maybe for a righteous man someone would die." Or the word "good" could replace the word "righteous" and the saying would be identical. The better way to understand this statement is to define the righteous one as being the legalist who coldly and methodically does all that the law requires of him but no more. The good man does all that the "righteous" man does, but he does so in warmth, with the milk of human kindness, and he goes far beyond to do more in love than that which is required. Christ is the supreme example of the latter kind of person. In love, He extended himself far beyond what anyone could expect and died for us "while we were yet sinners" (v. 8).

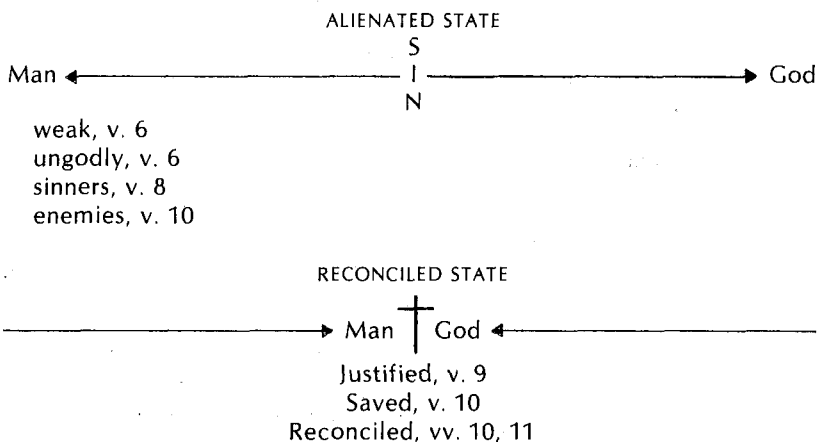
### MUCH MORE

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. 10 For if, while we were

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enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; 11 and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

It has been noted in these lessons that it is normal for Paul to reason from a general topic to a specific aspect or example of his theme. In verses 9-11, however, the apostle reverses usual procedure and argues from the lesser to the greater. It is very difficult to think of the death of Christ for the sinner as accomplishing less than the resurrected life of Christ gains for the saint. But that is just what Paul has said. "Much more" applies to what Christ does for Christians in their reconciled state which has been accomplished through His blood. Paul argues that if Christ died for us while we were alienated from God by sin, how *much more* will He do for us when we are in harmony and union with God. We rejoice in the reconciliation with God, not only because of the accomplished fact but because of the prospects of "much more" that shall be done for us in the reconciled state (v. 10).



If Christ had remained in the tomb, He could not have saved us. In this present life state He can intercede, hear, and answer prayer, raise us from the dead, transform us into His own likeness and give us eternal life (8:34). Note that He was raised for our justification (4:25), and we are saved by His life (5:10).

The following is a summary listing of the blessings which belong to the Christians and are found in this brief section of 5:1-11.

1. Peace with God, v. 1
2. Access to God's grace, v. 2
3. Rejoice in hope, v. 2
4. Rejoice in present day life situations (daily living), v. 3
5. Love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts, vv. 5, 8
6. Receive the Holy Spirit, v. 5
7. Saved by His blood from the wrath of God, v. 9
8. Reconciled to God through the death of His Son, vv. 10, 11
9. Saved by His life, v. 10
10. Joy in God, v. 11

### READER'S REVIEW:

1. Indicate the change from Paul's day to ours in the meaning of the word "justified."
2. Why is it difficult for men to conceive of being at peace with God?
3. How does Christian peace differ from the general view of peace among non-Christians?
4. Paul presents a circle of thought which begins with, and ends in the same Christian blessing. What is that blessing?
5. Explain the following: How can
  - a) tribulation develop steadfastness?
  - b) steadfastness produce approvedness?
  - c) approvedness generate hope?
6. What is the proper basis for man's boasting or glorying?
7. Explain the phrase, "hope has no shame" (v. 5).
8. List five ways in which the Holy Spirit is involved in God's scheme of redemption.
9. Of all the activities cited in this lesson which the Holy Spirit performs to assist man in salvation, how many are accomplished through the Word of God and how many without? Make two lists.
10. What is it that the author suggests to be the reason some people may be bored by history?
11. What is the major distinction between the death of Jesus for a good cause and the deaths of countless hundreds of others who also died for good causes?
12. Explain the possible difference in meaning between the words "righteous" and "good" as used in verse seven.
13. To what does the relative phrase "Much more" of verses 9 and 10 refer?
14. List from memory the blessings inherited by Christians to be found in 5:1-11.