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ZWTF

Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

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ROMANS Part 37

Chapter 5:1-2

Being, then, justified by faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God.

The most important word in the above Scripture passage is, surprisingly, the word “then.” The word “then” ties us back to what went before, namely, “justification,” that is, being right in God’s eyes. Faith is the channel by which we believe God’s favorable opinion of us. God’s favorable opinion of us is, in turn, the channel by which we may be having peace toward God. Peace toward God means that we can look God in the eye without flinching or cowering. We can do this only by realizing that our sins no longer stand against us.

Why the “may” in the phrase, “may be having peace”? It is because so few people tap into this. Not many people know that such peace with God exists, and the ones who do know it are afraid to use it. Peace is available to us 24/7. All we have to do is, by faith, believe that God likes us no matter what. This is the importance of the word, “then.” What Paul now says about peace in chapter five depends upon us grasping and applying what he taught us in chapters three and four. Unless we grasp the truth of justification in the end of chapters three and four, we will never know the peace advertised at the beginning of chapter five.

There can be no true peace apart from a knowledge of our justification.

So many people read Romans forgetting what went before. This is why I like the “thens” of Romans. Paul is simply and subtly reminding us that blessings are built upon one another. (The truth of justification in chapters three and four is, in fact, built on the knowledge of the sovereignty of God taught in chapter one.) Peace is built on knowing that God likes you. If you forget that, then shipwreck awaits you in Romans, especially when you get to chapter eleven—where Paul talks about nations being lopped off of the root of Israel—and in chapter twelve when Paul exhorts us to walk worthily. Yes, even distant chapters like eleven and twelve are built on the foundation of early-laid truths, namely that God is in control and He likes you. If you forget that, you’ll founder not only in Romans, but in life.

This is the “rooted and grounded” Paul speaks of in Ephesians 3:17. Let’s go there. From Ephesians 3:16-19—

... that He may be giving you, in accord with the riches of His glory, to be made staunch with power, through His spirit, in the human within, Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, having been rooted and grounded in love, should be strong to grasp, together with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ as well which transcends knowledge—that you may be completed for the entire complement of God.



What kind of power are we looking for? Power to move mountains, heal the sick, and raise the dead? This is not the sort of power provided by Paul’s gospel. The highest forms of spiritual power in these days of grace enable us to grasp grace, to grasp the love of Christ, and

to grasp God's greatness. Against this trilogy of spiritual marvels, no physical marvel can stand. It's so hard to believe that Jesus and God love you no matter what, however, that Paul prays for staunchness of power "in the human within," to be strong to gasp this strange, never-before-heard truth: *God and Christ love you apart from your behavior* (2 Timothy 1:9).

As humans can barely conceive of a God Who loves them when they're good let alone wicked, this kind of love would tend to transcend human knowledge. How can humans understand such transcendent grace? This is where the power comes in. The power to believe comes to us from God, through the channel of faith. It comes by the spirit making us think new, daring thoughts.

ON TO COMPLETION

The next step is being "completed for the entire complement of God." After our bodies are changed, we have big-time work to do among the celestials. When we are at last joined to our Head, we will, with Him, reconcile the universe to God (Ephesians 1:10). Paul wants us thinking about this now. But how can we think about



THINK.

something as great as this when we're groveling through life, heads down, wondering if God loves us? How can our thoughts soar to such heights if we're still vexed by our sins? (I'm not saying, "get rid of your sins"; who can become sinless? I'm saying that you should stop being vexed by the bad things you now do. "Freedom from sin" does not mean ceasing to sin, but rather ceasing from feeling condemned by it.) How can our thoughts

be engaged heavenward when we're fretting over earth-bound failures? You can either kick the dirt wondering if your sins can still screw up God's plans for your life, or you can read Romans 1-8 and believe what God says about you. Honestly, folks. Worrying about sin is a baby worry. We ought to be past this. Yet how few of us are. Now you grasp the importance of Romans. Romans lays the foundation of being right in God's eyes. Not until we realize by faith (not sight) how right we are can we finally be at peace. And not until we are finally at peace can we possess the mental and spiritual wherewithal to grasp the high-calling in Christ Jesus that reconciles the universe to God. Do you see how everything begins with being settled and firm concerning God's opinion of you? It's the beginning of everything.

DINNER WITH THE JUDGE

Now back to Romans. It takes a judge to justify you. In a courtroom, it is the judge who pronounces you "not guilty." In the courtroom of God, you have been pronounced, "not guilty." (Be strong to grasp this, I implore you.) Picture a judge in a courtroom looking over and smiling at you, then giving you the thumbs-up. Got it? Good.

Now you're ready for the next step.

"Being, then, justified, we may be having peace."

All fear of the judge is now gone. All worry is ceased. This is the foundation, the beginning, of all other blessings. Now you are able to entertain the formerly unimaginable, namely, becoming friends with the judge. Now that we are cleared of wrongdoing, we can work on realizing a deeper relationship with the official on the bench than we ever thought possible.

Just because a judge pronounces you "not guilty," does not mean he picks you up after court and takes you to dinner. It doesn't mean he asks you to join his bowling league. But look at this: In Romans, chapter five, we are moving out of the realm of justification and into the realm of conciliation, that is, of having a peace with God based on friendship. *Friendship with God? Whoever heard of such a thing?* A judicial decision is cold; friendship is warm and comforting—like a cup of coffee. In how many courtroom scenes does the acquitted run up to the judge and hug him? I have never witnessed such a scene, not even in the movies. But this is our reality with God and Christ. We move past the favorable judicial pronouncement and into a loving relationship.

ALL-ACCESS PASS

“Whom we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand.”

Access to the judge? Whoever heard of such a thing? What acquitted person calls the judge whenever he feels like it to ask his opinion on a matter. What formerly accused criminal drops by the judge’s house to see how his family is getting along? It doesn’t happen. But with God and Christ, this is *just* what happens. God and Christ give us the key to Their home. They invite us to join them on the sofa to watch the Super Bowl. This is what is meant by “have the access also.” We have access to God and



Christ. They are “on call” to us, anytime. This is nearly unfathomable, especially to people who, in days past, were locked out of God’s favor. We were those “once far off” (Ephesians 2:13), “alienated from the citizenship of Israel, guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Yet now, we have “become near by the blood of Christ, for He is our Peace” (Ephesians 2:13-14).

“He is our Peace.” Peace is personified! This peace is not just a happy feeling, it is a Person. It is a Person Who loves us very much.

Follow the steps again: 1) we believe by faith what God thinks and says of us, 2) this knowledge that our sins no longer stand against us gives us peace, 3) with confidence and joy in this peace, we can then enter into an easy access to our divine Benefactors. Because of the era in which we live, it is hard for us to appreciate such privileges. How few of us enter into it. With Paul, I pray for our boldness to enter into it.

“WHAT’S MINE IS YOURS”

When people invite me to their house and tell me to “make yourself at home,” I do it. They may regret telling me this. The first thing I do is open their fridge and cupboards and check for snacks. I don’t ask to use the bathroom—I just use it. I am currently staying at a house next to my sister’s in Canton, Ohio; the lady—a friend of my sister’s—is gone for the week. She left a note saying, “What is mine, is yours.” I take her at her word. I have already raided her candy bowl in the kitchen. She has fewer York Peppermint Patties than she used to.

God and Christ invite us to do this. What is Theirs, is ours. Can you believe it? That is why Paul prays that we become staunch to grasp it. Why are we so shy about it? We don’t trust God and Christ. We don’t really believe Them. What they are saying is too fantastic. Oh, that we may be strong in faith to grasp the truth of what is said of us, and of what we are invited to partake.

Finally, **“and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God.”**

Just when you don’t think it can get any better here in the first few statements of Romans chapter five, it does. Not only are we righteous in God’s eyes; not only does this bring us peace; not only does this peace give us access with confidence into God’s living room and candy bowl, but now we have so much glory to look forward to that, if we could grasp the height and breadth and depth of it, we would sing like Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail. Brethren, I am not saying that I, myself, have fully laid hold of this treasure. There are so many worldly thoughts clamoring for attention that these things of consequence seem sometimes dim. But certainly I am stretching forth to grasp what is true. It is true, whether I grasp it or not.

Since it’s true, I might as well grasp it. Why not run my hands through the treasure chest?

For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is grave, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is agreeable, whatever is renowned—if there is any virtue, and if any applause, be taking these into account. What you learned also, and accepted and heard and perceived in me, these be putting into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.

—Philippians 4:8-9

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