

## **Roman 5:1-21 – Justified by Faith in Jesus - Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

In our studies through the book of Romans, last week we were reminded that in Jesus we are reconciled to God. The word Paul used a lot in Romans 4 was justified.

A good way to think about that is to say that when recognise that we are a sinner, that we've disobeyed and ignored God's commands, and then we say sorry to God and put our faith in Jesus it is JUST AS IF I'D NEVER SINNED. When we are justified by faith in Jesus, remember we aren't forgiven because we are nice enough; we are saved by faith alone in Jesus alone; our sin is washed away – for good! The Bible says our sin is taken away as far as the east is from the west. Do you know how far that is? It can't be measured! It's too big! If you started driving a 1000 miles a day and did that for a 1000 years you'd never get there; nor in another 10,000 years after that.

The question is though: is that it? That's great, but is being a Christian just about us being forgiven and having a good conscience and nothing more? No! There's more good news and a lot of it is there in the passage we had read to us earlier. Here are 4 things that being justified by faith in Jesus brings us:

### **1: Peace With God**

First a question: Who is the mighty and only the true King of the world? (*God!*) That's right. So anyone who claims to be King instead of God is a rebel and the traitor against the one true King, as is anyone who ignores God and disobeys his commands.

Now do you think that God is happy for us to ignore him? Do you think God is happy for us to live in his world, taking and enjoying all the good things he gives us and yet ignoring him, our rightful King? Of course he isn't happy! In fact the Bible says that before we come to Jesus we are God's enemies. It's as if we are fighting against God; wanting to take his crown from his head and wear it ourselves.

But when we come to Jesus in repentance and faith, when we are justified, all that changes. We are no longer at war with God; we are at peace with God. We are now on the same side as the rightful king so we no longer need to fear God. Peace with God: when we are justified we are no longer enemies of God. That's number one. Here is number two:

Being justified by faith in Jesus brings us:

### **2: Access to God**

I heard a story that during the American Civil War a soldier for the Northern Army found out that his wife was very sick and so he asked if he could go home and take care of her. His commanding officer told him that might be possible as long as Abraham Lincoln said it was okay. But Abraham Lincoln was the President and lived in the White House in Washington DC.

His unit wasn't station too far away, so the man went to Washington DC and asked to see the president but no one would let him in. He tried day after day but still with no luck. And so after giving it one more try he broke down in tears in the park opposite the White House. A young man saw him crying, asked why and the soldier explained the situation.

"Come with me," said the young, and helping the soldier up, he led him towards the White House. They walked past the first line of guards, past the second and into the White House itself. Then without quite realising what was happening, the young man led the soldier straight into the Oval Office until they were standing in front of Abraham Lincoln.

"Dad," the young man said, "please listen to this soldier." The young man was the president's son.

When we are justified by faith in Jesus, God doesn't simply pardon us and then leave us out in the cold. He doesn't just forgive us and then forget us: he treats us as his children. We get the same access to God the Father as our big brother Jesus. That means we can talk to God whenever we like, and God will always listen. That means that all the promises that apply to God's people apply to us. And that means that we get to share in everything that God the Father has prepared for his Son, Jesus.

We don't just have peace with God; we have full access to our Heavenly Father. And that's not all: being justified by faith in Jesus also brings us:

### **3: An Eternal Future With God**

When you were a child, what do you want to be when you grew up? What are your ambitions? And now that you are an adult: What do you long for? A good job? A great car? A big house? Your own jet plane? What about an island of your own in the Caribbean with as many holidays there as you like? Health, wealth, happiness and a comfortable retirement? That would be nice wouldn't it! Wouldn't we all like that?

One guy had it all. He was one of the most handsome, well-educated, talented, rich and powerful men of his generation. His exploits were so great that stories about the battles he had one were told across the whole of Europe. His name was Charlemagne - or King Charles the great.

And when he died in the year 814 he was embalmed and sat on his royal throne with his royal crown on his head, dressed in all his Royal robes with all his riches surrounding him.

But do you know how much of all that stuff he took with him into the next life? Nothing! Charlemagne might have been buried with all his stuff – but he didn't enjoy any of it after he died.

Now I don't know whether Charlemagne knew that, but on his lap was a Bible. And when they opened up the tomb years later, one bony finger pointed to Matthew 16:26: *"What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul."*

You see some things do last forever. And the promise of the Bible is that when we are justified by faith in Jesus, we have an eternal future which is far more glorious than anything Charlemagne had on Earth. The Bible talks about a day when Jesus will come back and bring in a new and perfect creation where there is no more pain or sickness, no more sorrow or tears, no more loneliness, no more fear no more goodbyes and no death. It's a perfect kingdom where we will get to be with Jesus for ever!

And no matter what we do in life, no matter how successful or unsuccessful we are; no matter how educated or undereducated; no matter how many times we are in hospital or how healthy we are in life; one day this life will be over and God promises that those who trust Jesus will enjoy a glorious future. And that certainty gives us hope no matter what happens in this life.

Being justified by faith in Jesus gives us peace with God, access to our Heavenly Father, and eternal future with God and here's the last one:

### **4: A New Perspective on Our Present Sufferings**

Being a Christian, being justified by faith in Jesus, isn't just about pie in the sky when you die: it changes our lives now. And one of the most important ways it does that is by changing the way we view suffering.

Life is hard isn't it? All of us will have been sick at some point and many of us will have been in hospital. I guess we've all had huge arguments with friends or family and have lain awake worrying over things in the past or the future. I suspect too that all of us have known the pain of losing someone through death.

Life is hard – and God knows that because Jesus experienced it himself. He knew what it was to be hungry and thirsty, to be deserted by his friends, hated by people. He knew what it was to watch those he loved suffer and die and he knew what it was to feel pain and suffer himself, and on the cross he did that in ways that we can only imagine.

Yet Jesus didn't throw of his hands and say "I give up! Why is this happening to me? It's all pointless!" because Jesus had the right perspective and so must we.

In a few weeks time we will look at Romans chapter 8 and come across verse 28: *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who had been called according to his purpose."*

What does that mean? It means that for those who have been justified, for those who are Christians and who are trusting Jesus; there is always a purpose in our suffering and that nothing that happens to us is pointless or wasted because God will use everything for our good. Paul gives us a glimpse of that in verse 3. *"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."* Paul is hinting here at the truth that God uses our suffering for our good.

Here's just one way: Very often it's when we suffer that we discover what we are really trusting and hoping in: whether that is in ourselves, or in God. And if we are trusting in ourselves, or in someone or something else apart from God, then our suffering helps us to see that, to repent of that, and to draw closer to God which is our ultimate purpose in life. Sometimes we can learn those lessons in nice ways but sometimes we need to suffer to grow in faith. And as that verse on Charlemagne's lap reminds us, nothing is more important than our walk with God.

When we turn from our sin and rebellion, put our trust in Jesus and are justified by our faith in him we receive peace with God, access to the Father, the hope of future glory, and can even see a purpose in our present sufferings.

And all these great gifts God won for us while we were still his enemies. Look down at verse 8. *"But God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* And if God did all this for us when we were fighting against him, can you imagine the blessings and joy is and purpose and hope he has for us now that we have been reconciled to him? That's Paul's point in the next few verses, and we'd do well to ponder that fact.

This is a glorious passage, a stunning passage, packed full of fantastic truths and although we have only scratched the surface I hope it has encouraged you.

But if you don't know those blessings yet: if you know that right now you don't have peace with God and you have no access to the Father; if your hope of glory is only for this life and you can see no purpose and suffering at all, then your journey to those things needs to start with Jesus.

And if you're wondering how one man can accomplish all of this for you, and even make this great gift available to everyone who asks, then look down at verses 12 to 21.

You see according to the Bible, the story of the world is a story about two men: Adam and Jesus Christ. These two men act as representatives of the human race and all of us are joined to one or the other. And whoever's camp we are in, we get to share in their victories and their defeats become our defeats; their decisions become our decisions and the consequences of their actions fall on us.

Now our culture today is very individualistic and very often we think that we are truly independent, with each man or woman an island. But we know how this idea of representation works. At the outbreak of World War II it was the Prime Minister who declared war on Germany, and when he did, all of us were in a state of war, not just the Prime Minister. All real sports fans know this feeling too: when your team wins you share that victory and when they lose you feel the pain. Did you do any of the work? No! But they are your representatives and there is some way that you are joined with them.

In the same way, Bible says that when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, you and I sinned as well. And it's not just that after eating the forbidden fruit that sin infected all Adam's descendants and they make the same mistake, it's more than that. In the beginning Adam was the representative for the human race, so when he fell we fell, and we are just as guilty as he. Theologians have turned this idea original sin: the thought that each human being is sinful from birth, and however uncomfortable a thought, I think in practice we know that to be true. None of us need to teach our children how to be naughty; they do that all by themselves. That's why parents have to discipline their children and teach them what is right because by nature we are inclined towards wrongdoing.

And if you read through these verses you'll see that Adam's sin has some terrible consequences. In verse 12 we were told that Adam's sin brought death to humanity and in verse 18 we are told that it brings God's condemnation. You see Adam lived in a way which was contrary to God's law, both God's explicit law and the law written on his heart. He was self-centred, not God centred and by his works the whole human race stands guilty. You and I, in our natural state outside of Christ stand united with Adam and we share in his failures.

But there is another who can act as our representative: Jesus Christ. And just like Adam the effects of Jesus' life overflow to everyone who is joined to him through faith. But unlike Adam, the results are glorious. So verse 17, Jesus brings life and not death. And verse 16, Jesus brings justification and not condemnation. And he can do this because unlike Adam, who lived contrary to God's law, Jesus kept all of God's laws perfectly and instead of living a self-centred life he gave himself in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice so that through him God's grace may overflow to many, as it says in verse 15.

So the question I want to leave with you this morning is this: who is your representative? Are you still joined Adam; living for yourself, perhaps trying to be moral and good but ultimately ignoring God because if so you will face the same fate as Adam: death and God's eternal condemnation. But that does not need to be our fate if Jesus Christ left the glory of heaven to come to Earth to be our champion. He lived the perfect life we can never live that when he died on the cross in our place we might share the spoils of his victory: forgiveness, justification and eternal life.

As we approach the Lord's Table and share bread and wine together, physical reminders of Jesus' sacrificial death for us, why not grab hold of the offer Jesus makes so that the glorious marks of being justified through faith in Jesus: peace with God, for access to the father, the hope of eternal glory and even a purpose in the sufferings of this life, might be yours.