



# #4 “What are the benefits of life with God?”

*To consider two of the benefits of life with God: peace and hope (Romans 5:1-11).*

“Romans” is a letter in the latter half of the Bible. It is believed to have been written around 60’s AD, by the Apostle Paul, to the young church in Rome (hence the name). Paul wanted to encourage the church by explaining the “gospel” to them. The key sentence of the letter is this: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...” [Romans 1:16]**<sup>1</sup>

The word “gospel” just means good news. The good news is to do with salvation – with being saved from God’s anger at humanity. It’s a solution that God himself provides in the sacrifice of his son Jesus (see session 1 on Romans 1:18-32, and session 2 on Romans 3:21-26). It’s a solution that requires trusting God’s promise that Jesus’ death is enough to pay for our wrongdoing (see session 3 on Romans 4:18-25).

“Therefore since we have been justified through faith...” (Romans 5:1) Paul goes on to spell out some of the benefits of this relationship.

## **Romans 5:1-11**

**1Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**

**6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**9Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

“Peace with God is a state of affairs, rather than a state of mind”

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Q1. Is peace with God a state of affairs?

• Paul writes ‘Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God’ (Romans 5:1). The ‘therefore’ is significant, and we should be asking, what is the therefore there for! The proceeding chapters in Paul’s letter have been about God’s anger at humanity for their wickedness (see session 1 on Romans 1:18-25), and God’s solution in the sacrifice of his son Jesus, which satisfies both his anger and his love (see session 2 on Romans 3:21-26). So ‘peace’ in this context therefore would be an absence of hostility – that whoever trusts Jesus is no longer the object of God’s anger. This is a state of affairs, rather than a state of mind!

Q2. Should peace be a state of mind?

• Not necessarily! Paul goes on to tell us that the Christian life is actually a battle and a struggle. In this case an absence of a feeling of peace is an expected part of life! However the reality that those who trust Jesus have peace with God – in terms of a state of affairs - will remain unchanged. In this case, the person needs to trust in God’s promise regarding the state of affairs, rather than their feelings.

Besides peace with God, the next benefit that Paul seems to focus on is ‘hope’ – he mentions it 3 times in 4 verses.

Tim Keller, author of the New York Times bestseller called “Reason for God” (2008) writes in another book called “The Prodigal God”<sup>2</sup>:

“At the end of history the whole earth has become the Garden of God again. Death and decay and suffering are gone. The nations are no longer at war. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain – for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Jesus, unlike the founder of any other major faith, holds out **hope** for ordinary human life. Our future is not an ethereal, impersonal form of consciousness. **We will not float through the air, but rather will eat, embrace, sing, laugh and dance in the kingdom of God, in degrees of power, glory and joy that we can’t at present imagine.**”

Q3. What do you think ‘hope’ is?

• Paul writes ‘We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God’ (Romans 5:2). It seems to be a mainly future oriented thing – when the world as we know it is transformed. There is no more death and sorrow and pain, and God lives with his people (wiping every tear from their eyes is an intimate act). Relationships have been transformed. It is where God’s people will live completely fulfilled lives on a scale they can’t presently imagine.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller, “The Prodigal God”, 2008, p104..

Writer and Christian theologian C.S. Lewis made these observations after the death of his wife<sup>3</sup>:

“How far have I got? Just as far, I think, as a widower of another sort who would stop, leaning on his spade, and say in answer to our inquiry, 'Thank'ee. Mustn't grumble. I do miss her something dreadful. But they say these things are sent to try us.' We have come to the same point; he with his spade, and I, who am not now much good at digging, with my own instrument. But of course one must take 'sent to try us' the right way. **God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't.** In this trial he makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.”

Q4. Why doesn't suffering *kill* hope?

- *At one level that's what you would expect: that suffering kills hope. However in Romans 3:5, Paul says that suffering strengthens hope. He argues by means of chain of cause and effect. Suffering produces the opportunity and the need for endurance, which in turn, produces character (the original word here describes the 'provenness' of a character that has stood up under examination) – and finally, a character thus proven will have stronger confidence in the future.*
- *What C.S. Lewis adds is that it helps to understand the primary beneficiary of this strengthening exercise: those who trust Jesus. God hasn't sent things to try his people so that they will fail. He does it so that they will grow in their trust in his promises.*

Q5. How does someone who trusts Jesus know that God loves them?

- *According to Paul, there are 2 things that could be constituted as proof of God's love:*
  1. *'God has poured out his love into our hearts' (Romans 5:5). This is a subjective thing. Does Paul mean that the person will experience intense feelings of love for God all the time? The answer is: not necessarily! For example, anyone in a healthy romantic relationship can know objectively that their partner loves them, even in an argument!*
  2. *'Christ died for the ungodly' (Romans 5:6). This is objective proof. God put Jesus forward as a sacrifice when no human being deserved it. Even the greatest imaginable human love, Paul suggests, would only, under very unusual circumstances, prompt the giving of one's life for someone else, and even then, it would only be for the very best of humanity. So how much greater is God's love that Christ died while humanity were his enemies.*

Q6. How does someone who trusts Jesus know that God won't change his mind about them in the future?

- *What God has done in the past proves that he will not change his mind in the future. If God sacrificed his son when humanity did not deserve it (Romans 5:6-8,10) then those who trust Jesus can be confident that they will be saved on the day that God's anger is revealed*

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<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (1961)

*(Romans 5:9). Salvation is ultimately a future thing, but those who trust in Jesus can be confident about the future because God took the initiative and did the hard work of reconciling his enemies, and only has the comparatively easy job left!*

Written by Caroline Spencer of City Bible Forum. 2012.

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