

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

### ***Peace with God***

Paul used the phrase, “*peace with God*” (Romans 5:1) because not only does He wipe away all sin, but He also builds a peaceful relationship between Himself and those whom He justifies. God is not angry with us. He is at peace with us! In other words, His idea of a good time is not pouncing on us to see how much damage He can inflict. Peace has been established. We are His children. Yes, He will chasten us when we sin, but He does so in love (read Hebrews 12:4-11). Therefore, when we repent as a believer, we are not restoring our relationship, but our fellowship with the Father. The relationship established through justification is eternal, incapable of being severed by sin.

Possessing “*peace with God*” (Romans 5:1) is quite different from possessing the peace of God. “*Peace with God*” was established for all eternity when He “*justified*” us subsequent to our exercising “*faith*” while depraved. The “*peace*” of God, on the other hand, is a “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:22) and must be received on a moment-by-moment basis. Isaiah was right when he wrote, “*The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee*” (Isaiah 26:3). God’s “*peace*” is ever present among those who spend more time being a friend to God than a friend to others.

“*Peace with God*” was made available “*through*” a Person, “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1). Yes, Jesus gives every individual the opportunity to live in “*peace with*” the Godhead. However, for this “*peace*” to become a reality repentance and faith must first be exercised by the depraved.

### ***Ample Grace for Trials***

We need to know as much as possible about “*grace*,” for through Jesus Christ “*...we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...*” (v.2). This “*introduction... into...grace*” results in justification and everything this wonderful act encompasses. We must not think for a moment, however, that this initial measure of grace will perpetually sustain us. We need new grace, daily grace, as we trust Christ to keep the trials of life in check.

The great news is that grace is available for any situation. However, believers do have the option of either accepting or rejecting this grace. Those who reject it experience defeat, while those who accept it soar like “*eagles*” (Isaiah 40:31). Yes, it is God’s grace that causes Him to justify (save) the depraved who repent and believe. It is also His grace that empowers the believer for service. Paul understood this truth as well as anyone according to 2Corinthians 12:9-10, 2Corinthians 4:7-12, 1Corinthians 15:10, and 2Timothy 2:1. For the purpose of understanding the context of these powerful passages, let’s consider for a moment the trials that Paul encountered as he carried the gospel to the Gentiles by examining 2Corinthians 11-12 and 2Corinthians 4. This input should be particularly encouraging since the believability of a statement is determined by the integrity and character of the person issuing the statement. Paul’s lifestyle backed up everything he taught regarding the value of grace in the midst of adversity. Note that the Scripture references are posted to the left with commentary to their right:

2Corinthians 11:1-6 Although having been inundated with the “*simplicity*” of the gospel through Paul’s message, the believers at Corinth were being led astray by false teachers. Apparently, Paul was “*unskilled in speech,*” but he was not unskilled “*in knowledge.*” In fact, he considered himself “*not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.*” The words, “*the most eminent apostles,*” may very well point to the “*false apostles*” addressed in verse 13. If not, they point to the disciples who traveled with Jesus for the duration of His public ministry (Acts 1:21-22)—of which Paul was not a part. Paul’s attitude confirms that he was secure in his apostleship, even when perceived as inadequately trained. Unlike the eleven, he was basically taught (after his conversion) one-on-one with the Savior, an honor about which he “boasted” in Galatians 1:15-24. Thus, seminary training does not equal preparation. Some of the deepest thinkers I have known gained their insights from sitting alone with Jesus. The most educated men of Jesus’ day failed to recognize His Messiahship. Don’t misunderstand. If I were younger I would probably attend seminary and major in Hebrew and Greek. However, seminary is not a prerequisite for proper Biblical understanding—although many people might disagree. Having to validate himself to those whom he freely served must have been excruciatingly painful to this man of God.

2Corinthians 11:7-13 Paul refused financial support from the Corinthian church, in fact, all the churches “*in the regions of Achaia.*” He allowed gifts from churches elsewhere to provide for his physical needs while in Corinth. His response was partially due to the false teachers’ financial demands on the Corinthian believers. Paul demonstrated much wisdom here, realizing that he could not be accused of improper motives while offering “*the gospel...without charge.*” His heart was pure, unlike those distorting the teachings of Christ. Can you imagine the depths of Paul’s concern for these believers?

2Corinthians 11:14-15 The false teachers in Corinth greatly disturbed Paul, for they were disguising “*themselves as servants of righteousness.*” Yet the people received their lies and deception as absolute truth. Nothing concerns a teacher more than watching those he has instructed follow individuals deficient in understanding. Paul endured considerable heartache in this area as he carried the gospel to the Gentiles. We will experience the same.

2Corinthians 11:16-33 Paul discusses his qualifications as a teacher of the gospel. One cannot study these verses without concluding that God’s grace in Paul’s life was amazingly adequate. Most of us, when comparing our trials with his, must blush with embarrassment. Paul’s heart was deeply grieved over the abuse the church was encountering through false teachers (v.20). However, his heart had to leap with joy as he reviewed God’s grace in his life through his many sufferings (verses 21-33). We, like Paul, will pay a price as we carry truth to an ill-informed world. The price, however, never supersedes His grace.

2Corinthians 12:1-10 Paul continues listing his qualifications as an apostle by mentioning the “*visions and revelations*” received “*of the Lord*” (v.1). Paul was blessed in that he had received a vision of “*the third heaven*” (v.2). He “*was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak*” (v.4).

Could this extraordinary event have occurred when Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19)? To prevent Paul “*from exalting*” himself, he “*was given...a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet*” him (2Corinthians 12:7). After entreating “*the Lord three times*” for deliverance (v.8), the Lord “*said*” to him, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness*” (v.9). Paul accepted this “*grace,*” realizing that when he was “*weak*” he was “*strong*” (vv.9-10).

2Corinthians 12:11-13 Paul mentions “*the signs and wonders and miracles*” performed through him to further validate his ministry. Can we even begin to imagine Paul’s pain as he addressed those who were once deeply committed to his teaching but had been led astray by false teachers? This scenario is the absolute worst for any defender of the truth.

2Corinthians 12:14-18 That Paul sought the people rather than their material possessions is again emphasized. Considering all he had done for these believers, astonishingly he was required to mention this subject? Truly, ministry is not for the faint hearted.

2Corinthians 12:19-21 The apostle’s burden for the church is again expressed.

Using this input as our backdrop, let’s now consider Paul’s words in 2Corinthians 4. You will be encouraged by his response to the trying circumstances recorded in 2Corinthians 11 and 12, for 2Corinthians 4 was written after his experiences described in those two chapters.

2Corinthians 4:1 With all that Paul had suffered, he did not “*lose heart.*” He “*received*” God’s “*mercy.*” God’s “*mercy*” will sustain the believer, regardless of the degree of pain and heartache.

2Corinthians 4:2 That Paul had stood for “*truth*” explains why victory superseded his pain. After all, life is a matter of perspective. Viewing agonizing circumstances through the prism of God’s heart is the only hope for the troubled soul.

2Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul knew that Satan, “*the god of this world,...blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ....*” The apostle understood that Satan blinds “*the minds of the*” unredeemed. Consequently, those who perceive God as the cause of all things must be incorrect. Under such an arrangement God would cause Satan to blind “*the minds*” of the unredeemed, making Satan God’s ally. Should this be the case, God would be totally unjust in judging Satan for his evil deeds. These verses also dispel the falsehood that the depraved are incapable of comprehending absolute truth, and in turn, exercising personal repentance and faith. Why would Satan need to blind the depraved (the lost) if the depraved are incapable of understanding truth? Paul preached the gospel to many individuals who rejected his message, for He perceived all mankind as capable of choosing Christ prior to spiritual regeneration. Yes, Paul believed that Satan is real, even possessing the power to blind the depraved in an attempt to prevent them from believing. The apostle did not view our enemy as a wimpy being with horns, carrying a pitchfork. He was the source of Paul’s

difficulties, trials, and sufferings; and the apostle despised him. Yet, the reality of Satan was frequently a hard sell to those who opposed Paul's message. Amazing!

2Corinthians 4:5 When Paul preached, he preached "*Christ Jesus as Lord*"—not himself. Paul was not only a bond-servant of Christ, but a bond-servant of the believers at Corinth. No pride here, for Paul served those whom he taught rather than requiring himself to be served. What humility! Thus, he could speak with such remarkable authority.

2Corinthians 4:6 Once the depraved see their need for a Savior, God's "*light*" shines in their "*hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" This truth is verified by 2Corinthians 3:16: "*but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*" Man "*turns*" (in his depravity), at which time "*the veil is taken away*" through God's "*light*" penetrating his heart—never the other way around! However, a popular yet incorrect teaching of our day suggests that God's light shines in the heart prior to man turning from sin. Certainly, God "*draws*" man to himself (John 6:44; 12:32), but this "*drawing*" by no means forces man to believe. What Paul expresses here is that God's "*glory,*" God's "*light,*" Who is "*Jesus Christ,*" enters into man once man chooses to repent and believe while depraved. This truth carried Paul through every trial, as verified by 2Corinthians 4:7.

2Corinthians 4:7 The "*treasure*" that Paul mentions is God's "*glory,*" Jesus being that "*glory*" according to John 1:14. This "*treasure*" lived inside Paul's "*earthen*" vessel, his body. Therefore, Jesus' indwelling presence empowered him rather than Paul empowering himself. He wrote: "*...that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.*" Because Jesus' presence and power sustained him through an abundance of excruciating circumstances, he could view them as positive experiences used to God's glory.

2Corinthians 4:8-9 As a result of Jesus' indwelling presence, Paul was "*...afflicted...but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.*" The "*perseverance*" (Romans 5:3-4) he displayed was a remarkable testimony to God's grace!

2Corinthians 4:10-15 Paul perceived his pain, not as a detriment, but as an opportunity to have Jesus' "*life...manifested in*" his "*body.*" Can we even begin to imagine the degree to which Satan feared this man of God?

2Corinthians 4:16-17 Paul viewed his "*inner man*" as "*being renewed day by day*" through the power of Christ's indwelling presence. His adversity, therefore, as severe as it was in the flesh, was perceived as "*momentary, light affliction*" through the eyes of the Spirit. After all, it was "*...producing...an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.*" His pain also allowed him to see the unseen. Yes, an amazing adventure awaits those who make pain their friend!

Paul exulted (rejoiced) "*in hope of the glory of God*" (Romans 5:2). He also exulted (rejoiced) "*in...tribulations*" (Romans 5:3). Paul viewed all suffering as his ally; pain

had become his friend. How else could he have survived the many hardships described in 2Corinthians 11 and 12? He regarded God as sovereign and working everything “*for good*” (Romans 8:28). That is how he made it. That is how he finished the race!

Most of us do not possess the maturity to view life from Paul’s perspective, for we have not yet learned to “...*look...at the things which...are not seen...*” (2Corinthians 4:18). Without Paul’s perspective, we normally draw our conclusions from that which is visible. In fact, most of us attempt to rectify negative circumstances through our own strength. However, the Lord allows the same negative circumstances to arise until we have learned to trust Him in the midst of our various trials. Only then do we pass the class—be it in the area of finance, a sinful habit, loneliness, a difficult relationship, or whatever. Through an increased understanding of God’s capabilities, we learn to rest in His provision, sovereignty, and grace—the by-product of which is a perseverance explained only in terms of Christ.

What, then, is perseverance? Perseverance is the ability to remain encouraged when things look thoroughly hopeless, trusting our heavenly Father when most people are dropping out of the race. Yes, we persevere through accepting His grace for every challenge of life. Perseverance, characterized in this manner is a necessity to possess.

If we hold fast in “*tribulation,*” allowing God to produce “*perseverance,*” “*proven character*” will result. Isn’t it wonderful to hang out with people who have had their character tried and proven? I believe that everyone seeks to know at least one person of that sort—and that God is looking for that individual as well (2Chronicles 16:9). As I think of those who possess “*proven character,*” I realize that none of them arrived at that place void of hardship. We all suffer in some form or other, and it certainly is not enjoyable. When we allow our trials to choke and stifle us, they seem virtually unbearable. However, no matter how difficult they become knowing that God is using them for good encourages us to yield to His grace to see us through. And yes, He will see us through!

We need to take a moment to address God’s character, for if we fail to understand Who He is we may hinder the work He desires to accomplish in and through us. In fact, when adversity comes our way, we may attempt to fix the problems ourselves, or worse yet, perceive Him as the cause of it all. The statement: “When we don’t understand His hand, we can trust His heart” is so very accurate. Viewing our trials through the lens of His character is essential for abundant living. The deeper we know Him, therefore, the more we will trust Him in the heat of the battle.

After “*proven character*” comes “*hope*” (v.4). “*Hope*” is the ability to look positively at the future regardless of the present circumstance. Those who possess hope in Christ will never, ever be disappointed (v.5). The Object of their hope will ensure that.

“...*Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (v.5). “*The Holy Spirit...was given to us*” at the point of justification, subsequent to our exercising repentance and faith while depraved—a one-time shot that never needs repeating. Furthermore, this “*love*” is continually accessible.

To “...*be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22) is different, occurring repetitively as we walk in fellowship with God. When we are “*filled with the Spirit,*” the love of God—along with His peace, joy, patience, and all the rest—is manifested to those around us regardless of what comes our way.

God always uses tribulation for our good. However, only through knowing His heart do we comprehend the value of this truth. Romans 5:6-11 will supply additional insight into Who God is and what He has done for man.