

Peace with God

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Jonathan. With that passage open in front of us, I want to talk a bit this morning! And the point of Romans 5, 1 to 11 is rather than boasting about ourselves, we're meant to boast in God.

! Most of us know, parents say to their children that we should not boast really. And yet we're quite good at going on about ourselves quite a lot of the time, some of us, are we not? Maybe you don't do this blatantly. Look at me, look at what I've done, well done me, big badge. Maybe you don't do it like that. As teens and adults, I think we're a bit more subtle in our look at me conversation.

I'll just like to tell you what I've done. I like to mention who I know. Will you see how tired I am from my tough week? I want you to appreciate how I'm plodding through all my struggles.

Let me drop into conversation casually what my kids have achieved. Check out my stats. Look at my photos. I'm not going to be a bit of a bit of a yucky thing really, but beneath so much sometimes of my talk about me and my life, I'm kind of saying to you, can't you see how heroic I'm being? Well done me.

To which, if you're ever tempted to be like that, we should say, bleh, it's horrible. Because it is. Constantly going on about yourselves and bigging yourself up is boring. It's vulgar.

[1 : 46] It's kind of bleh. And yet, we are meant to be people who boast. In these verses that we've just read, Romans chapter 5, Paul is speaking to people who've put their faith in Jesus and he says, we boast. Just notice with me, look, end of verse 2, we boast in the hope of the glory of God. In verse 3, not only so, but we also, glory, we boast in our sufferings.

And then in verse 11, right at the end, not only is this so, but we also boast in God. We do boast. We're meant to be people who boast. Did you know this? That rather than a kind of curved in life, spent rattling on about me all the time, look at what I'm like, look at what I've done. We can be, we're meant to be. In fact, you come to Jesus Christ and you're saved to be someone who boasts. But you boast not in yourself, but God. That is, seeing what he has done for us through in history and grasping what he is doing in us right now. You and I are meant, we're designed, we're saved to take in how wonderful and good he is, our God. And with confidence in him and joy in our lives, you and I are meant to be people who boast and brag. In my heart, in my chat, in my life, not how great I am, but on our lips in our lives, how great is our God, how great he is. Romans 5 is absolutely tightly jam-packed full of God.

It's all about God. It's about what he's like, what he's done. It's about the blessing of belonging to him. And it's written in part to fuel our boasting.

[3 : 56] If you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian believer, I hope that over this month, these verses will open your eyes to the wonder of God and to what he offers you through Jesus.

And for all of us, whether we've read these verses many times or not, could it be that dwelling on and reveling in God's stunning love for us described here? Could it be that our God might make us boasters, good boasters, bigger boasters, in the God who's loved us and saved us?

This morning, what I want us to do is just look at the first two verses of chapter five and three wonderful truths, wonderful truths for Christian believers about our past, our present and our future that is meant to fuel our boasting. First, our past, good news.

Paul says to Christian believers, it's done. We have been declared right with God. I'm just looking down at the start of chapter five with me. I'm summing up chapters one to four of Romans. Verse one begins, therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have been justified.

What does that mean? The word justified is courtroom language. It's a legal term. It's a verdict announced and declared by a judge. So think of an accused person in the dock at Cambridge

Crown Court on East Road.

[5 : 43] As they stand there, all the circumstances have been laid bare, all the evidence presented, there's nothing more to say, and all eyes in the courtroom turn to the judge and the hammer comes down and in a loud voice he declares, this person is justified. It means they're not guilty.

They're acquitted. They're in the right. It's what justified means. You are in the right. There is no penalty to pay. You are free to go. And in the dock, the now justified person turns in relief, tension lifted, I'm saved, I'm safe, and they walk out of the court to freedom and the embrace of their family. The Bible says that you and I and all people will have our day in court. On the great final day, at the end of history, when we stand before the judgment throne of our holy God, the one we're made to love and serve. On that final day, on the judgment day, God will judge our secrets. Every moment of our lives will be laid bare before him and with perfect justice and no favouritism, he will declare his verdict on us. The question is, on that day, on that day in court, what will he say when he brings his hammer down? How will that day rightly be for people like us, who, in the Bible's language, have wickedly turned from God and refuse to love and serve him as we should?

Honestly, with that day in mind and knowing what God is like and what I'm like in my heart of hearts, what a day of terror that would be. I remember when I was 15 years old, 33 years ago, I remember standing in Mr Godfrey's office at Kings Hill School, guilty and waiting for him to speak. It absolutely seared into me.

I'll tell you what happened. At the start of the school day, we'd be milling around outside, because you have to stay outside in the morning, and then the bell had rung for registration, which is what happened at our school, but it looked as though the caretaker had forgotten to unlock the main door. As if you can picture it, we're all there outside. It's a big metal door with glass windows, and we were stuck outside. We were meant to go in. It wasn't our fault. A couple of the year seven lads rattled the door a bit, but it wouldn't budge. And so in that moment, I stepped forward. I was 15 years old. I was one of the big lads. And in that little moment, 33 years ago, some bad Chris Lowe traits bubbled up within me, which I've still got in me today. I was impatient. I was frustrated with what I thought was stupidity, that idiot caretaker. And secondly, I had a chance to show off in front of a captive audience of year sevens. And so I pushed my way to the front, out of the way, little boys, and I grabbed the door handle with two hands, and I gave it the biggest yank I absolutely could with all my strength. And the door sprang open. I'm the man, I thought, and we all bundled in. Except in my self-centred idiot showing off, I basically bust the door. I bust the lock mechanism. And as this school door was opened and shut again and again, the lock bolt just got mangled.

[9 : 19] The door got mangled. It was £400 worth of damage. It was my fault. And there were about 30 year seven witnesses. And partway through the day, I got called to the deputy head's office. And I absolutely knew what was coming. Honestly, I remember shaking as I stood before him. And he looked me full in the face, Mr. Godfrey. I'd done wrong. He knew it all. I had absolutely no excuse and no defence. I knew I'd be found guilty. And I knew I had to pay. Oh, mate, that is genuinely a powerful memory seared into me.

And I mention that because on the future day of judgment, when we stand before our maker and our just judge, he will see and know our sins against him, and we'll have no excuses and no defence.

And he'd be utterly right in that moment to bring down his hammer and say guilty, condemned for all eternity, and pour out his righteous anger on us. It's terrifying. Except, well, look at this.

Romans 5 verse 1. We have been justified. It's almost unbelievable, this. It's inconceivable. That speaking to people who have simply placed their trust in Jesus Christ, Paul says that stunningly, the verdict of the final day has already been given.

[11 : 07] And despite how you and I live, despite how many doors we mangle, and despite what we fully deserve on that final day, our God, this verse says, has already declared that we are justified.

We are acquitted. We have been counted not guilty before him. There is no penalty to pay. There's no condemnation to face. And there is nothing to fear, either now or on that day. We have been declared right with God.

You say, how on earth could that be? How can we be declared right with God on that final day of judgment, when we're in the wrong with him so obviously? And the wonderful gospel answer is, in Romans 5 verse 1, we've been justified through faith. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. That in his grace, the Lord God, our maker and judge, took all your door-breaking sins

and all your guilt and everything in you that deserves his condemnation, he has taken it from you and placed it all on Jesus Christ. Such that when Christ died on the cross, he died for us and in our place.

He stood in the dock for us. He was counted guilty for us. He was condemned for us. And as the Lord Jesus Christ died, God's just condemning anger, which should rightly fall on us on that future day, was poured out instead on him. And all of that in God's stunning kindness. So that now today, with our sin and our guilt taken and dealt with by Jesus, God's condemning judgment already endured by our Saviour, God can rightly and justly say to people like you and to people like me, I have declared you right with him. Because Christ has died for you, God's hammer can come down and his verdict already be given.

And we have been justified. It's done. I don't know if you've heard that a million times or you hear it for the first time. It's a wonderful truth. I mean, with that day coming in front of us, what amazing grace that God would declare us right with him and pay at the price of his son.

[14:04] Like for your life today, for sure there's no boasting in ourselves here. There's no, I'll stand before him on that day and say, well done me, will you congratulate me, Lord? No, no, no, no. I'm there because Christ has died.

And as you and I think forward to that future day, which is coming, just what a relief. I can breathe now. I'll be safe.

I think of a guy I know who said to me a while back, he doesn't live in Orchard Park, he lives elsewhere, he said to me with all honesty, there is no hope for me, Chris. But because of the way I've lived, because of the evil I've done, on that day I will be sent to hell, he said to me.

I said to him, that's not true. You can be put right with God, despite what you deserve. Desperately long for that man in his 50s to believe in Jesus and find the relief that can pour into a person's life. And that said, there's many Christians, are there not? People who call themselves Christians, who basically live in fear of the judgment day. Worried about what God will make of you.

[15:23] Or uncover about you. Which is just exhausting. And it drives you to hide away what you're like. Or desperately try harder.

Or cower before God. But life doesn't need to be like that. There does no longer need to be that kind of tension in us.

What will he say? What will it be like when I stand before him? Because it's done. It's done. As sure as something that's happened in the past, because it has.

On that day, the Lord God will say, you're right with me. You are right with me. And all of that because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Point one.

In the past, it's done. We can be, we have been, declared right with God. Which means secondly now, just moving on through these verses, right now, we have peace with God.

[16:25] I'm still in verse one. Look at this. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's not talking here about a vague, inner sense of kind of mystical calm. I feel at peace with God. We're chilled and relaxed, I'm sure of it. Peace with God means that the state of war has ended between us.

I'm not sure Christians talk this way much. Maybe it feels a bit uncomfortable and personal. But before we'd been declared right with God, we really were his enemies. Seeing our rebellion against him, our sins, he was rightly angry and at war with us.

And we could not come close to him. You could not. But now, truth number two, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God.

Not long for peace in the Middle East, in Sudan. Imagine what that feels like when hostility is ended. Paul is saying here that between us and the Lord God, the war is over.

[17:44] The God who made you is no longer hostile to you. You can now come close to him without fear. You can actually be a friend of the living God.

Think of it like this. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Elvis Presley, King of rock and roll in the 20th century, he lived in Memphis, Tennessee. He lived on an estate called Graceland.

That was his estate, his place. It's a lovely name. That is, you come through the gates from outside and you're welcomed into his place, a place of grace and unconditional kindness.

Paul's saying here, having peace with God, you now get access to him. You've been allowed, you've been brought through a gate, if you like, from an outside place of sin and anger and war and death.

[18 : 52] You've been brought through and into a new place. The living God has brought us close to him, to the place where grace rules.

And a Christian believer can say, this is my life now. It's where I stand. It's where I belong. In Graceland with my God.

Because we have peace with him. A genuine restored relationship with our God. At Cambridge Crown Court, if you can think back to that, when the judge declares you're justified, you turn in relief and you walk out of the court and you embrace your family and you hope you will never, ever see the judge again.

When God, your loving maker and just judge, declares you're justified, he then steps towards you, his arms wide open, and he says, come to me, my friend.

Right now, we have peace with the living God through our Lord Jesus Christ. how important that is, we should say. And basic to the Christian life and so good.

[20 : 07] And when you have peace with God, it just means so very simply that we do not need to worry about how things are going with him on a day-to-day basis.

As though my relationship with him depends on my ongoing performance. It's like that in all sorts of other relationships, at work, at school, sometimes in a marriage.

How that if I slip up and get something wrong, he'll push me away. Which is so stressful and fragile. You feel so unsafe and unstable. But it is not like that for those who have peace with the living God. We have peace with him. We have gained access to him. We stand under his grace for good. We are safe and restored with our God.

Three truths this morning about our past, our present and our future. In the past, you put your faith in Jesus, you have been declared right with God.

[21 : 14] In the present, right now, we have peace with our maker. And then finally, what about the future? Well, last thing to say from these verses, in the future, there is glory to come.

There's glory that awaits us. And Paul says at the end of verse 2, we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

We boast. hope here. It's not a vague wish that I really hope that things turn out okay, fingers crossed, in the future with God, but who knows.

No, no, hope means something certain for us in the future. We have been justified. We have peace with God. And our future hope is the glory of God, says Paul here.

which means what? In the beginning, you and I were made as creatures to shine with the glory of God.

[22 : 16] He created us to live in his image. He created us to live blazingly pure and holy, good lives in our characters, to be like him. But by ourselves, Romans says, we've sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Our lives, by themselves, an ugly tangle of self-seeking and unholy behaviour. There is a man whose life always displayed God's glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose kindness and zeal and sheer holiness shone out of him.

And the Bible says here that the certain future of every Christian is to share in the glory of God. That is, you and I will one day be made fully like Jesus Christ in our characters.

We'll be conformed to the image of God's Son, Romans will say. On a future day, not even a spot of self-boasting or sin or hurt in us.

Because we will perfectly share in and reflect God's glory as we're made to be everything God wants us to be. That is our future.

[23 : 36] It's our hope on the day Jesus Christ returns and it's certain. I wonder if you can imagine that for your future. can you project forward and imagine, well imagine you yourself, not some kind of robot or us all made the same, but you, with your outgoingness or shyness, with your smartness or scruffiness, with your character that makes you you, but utterly holy and without sin.

you don't envy, you're not bitter, you think purely, you love others constantly. As a human being you're whole and beautiful and Christ-like all the way through, you're all you're made to be as you gaze on God in all his glory.

That is our future hope and it's certain. It's guaranteed. And Paul says here this is something to boast in.

This is something to rattle on about. Very straightforwardly this morning for us. Romans 5 and verses 1 and 2 and three wonderful truths for Christian believers to build our lives on.

What do you think about your past, your present, your future? In the past it's done. We have been declared right with God. Stunning grace. Right now we have peace with God, safe and secure, a restored relationship and there is certain glory to come.

[25 : 19] None of that comes because you're wonderful. All of it springs from God's initiative and God's love and all of it is God's work for us and in us through Jesus Christ.

and it's a complete life changer to us as we simply reach out in faith to Jesus. Once his enemies, once facing his condemnation but now because of the Lord Jesus Christ you are justified, you're restored, you're a friend of God, you live in grace land, you have nothing to fear from the judgment and you have a perfect Christ-like future in the presence of the one who loves you.

What should we do this week? Who should we talk about? How about some boasting? not how great I am but in my heart and in my chat and in my life, a heart full of all that God has done and is doing and will do in my heart and my chat and my life, how great is our God?

How great is he? We boast not in ourselves but in the God who has done all things for us. Let me lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray together. Almighty God and Father, we praise and thank you this morning for your grace and love towards us in Christ Jesus.

[27 : 08] We thank you for his work on the cross for us which means that we are justified. We praise you that now we can have peace with you.

We praise you that on the day of judgment despite what we are like we have nothing to fear. Thank you that on that day you will say to us justified, you're welcome and on that day we'll be changed and transformed into the likeness of your son.

Father, our past is done, our present is changed, our future is secure, all of it from you. Please would you today and over these coming weeks please turn us out from ourselves as we reflect on all your good love towards us.

make us those who boast. Make us those who boast in you we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.