

INTRODUCTION

In my sermon I shared my experiences during my time away with the Lord the previous week as well as some insights He gave to me. I shared why I feel the need to get away annually for a week alone with Him and how I am striving for longevity in the ministry. I spoke of a fallen pastor of whose fall I became aware during my time away and how it served as a poignant reminder of my weakness and perpetual need for Jesus.

I was prepared to preach through Romans 5:1-2 when the Lord had me stop at verse one. One verse, packed with essential Christian doctrine! Let's dive in!

ROMANS 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says **since we have been justified by faith**. That's past tense. It's complete. It's already happened. The work of Jesus on the cross is finished and everyone who has faith in that work of Jesus has been justified. What God does for us in the act of justification is a one-time, for all time, declaration of our righteousness. It is "counted to us" as righteousness. (cf. 4:24)

Collin Kruse says, "Justification is a completed act and one that is the basis of other blessings experienced by believers in the present and that provides hope for the future." In the words of R.C. Sproul, "there are consequences to [our justification]." The first such consequence is that we have **peace with God**.

AT WAR WITH GOD

What is the natural state of the relationship between God and man? If you listen to culture, the natural state is we're all children of God, God loves us all. God is smiling upon humanity, and He is just itching for people to choose Him; like a boy at the junior high dance waiting for a girl, any girl, to dance with him.

That's all warm and fuzzy feeling. But what does the Bible say? The Bible consistently describes the relationship between fallen man and God as one of strife, enmity, & war. In our natural state, we are at war with God.

Romans 1-3 painfully makes clear that man, in his sinful state, does not seek after God. He does not desire God. He does not want to please God. Romans 8:7 says those in the flesh "are hostile to God."

Natural man does not run to God, he runs away from God. Like an escaped felon who evades the authorities at all costs, so he flees from God with all his might. Some blatantly admit their hostility toward God.

But most people's rebellion takes a more sinister tone; a self-congratulatory tone. They do not need God, they think, because they have already achieved virtue and goodness. God is for the weak, the feeble, the frail, the insecure. They, however, have life figured out. And they make war with God.

GOD AT WAR WITH US

It is not simply that sinners are at war with God. The Bible tells us that God is also at war with sinners. Romans 1 not only depicts man's attitude toward God, but also reveals God's wrath toward man. God's feelings toward treasonous sinners who exchange the truth of God for a lie and who worship His creation rather than Him as the Creator, is one of anger and wrath and vengeance.

That Great Awakening pastoral giant, Jonathan Edwards, is perhaps most famous for his sermon titled, “Sinners in the hands of an angry God.” Where did he get that harsh title? Was he some angry pastor who had a bad week?

I don’t think so, perhaps he was inspired by Hebrews 10:31, *“It is a fearful [terrifying, dreadful] thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD – AN EXERPT

Preached on July 8, 1741 by Jonathan Edwards @ Enfield’s Second Meetinghouse

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God’s vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God’s wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God’s hand

has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

...It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for “who knows the power of God’s anger?”

GOD IS NOT SWOONING OVER HUMANITY

God is not swooning over fallen man. He is waiting patiently, curbing His wrath until the proper time. Holding it back like the Hoover dam holds back Lake Mead. In an instant, at a time no one can predict, the dam will break, and His wrath will put to destruction every wayward soul that rebels against the King of the Universe.

And here we read that **we have peace with God**. The first consequence of our having been justified by faith in Christ is there is no more enmity between us and God.

We were condemned already Jesus said in John 3:18. But there is *now* no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We are no longer children of wrath as Paul says, “*you were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*” *Ephesians 2:3*; but we have been adopted into the family of God and invited to sit at His table as “*children of promise.*” *Galatians 4:28*

NEVER TO TURN AGAINST US AGAIN

The peace we have with God is a peace that He initiated without our volition, without our consent, & without our input. Therefore, we know that God will never go to war with you again, the bow of His wrath is never to be turned toward your heart again. Since our peace comes through Christ, there is no chance God will ever undo the peace between you.

When Jesus gathered His disciples in the upper room on the night He was betrayed He spoke to them the final words of instruction and encouragement before going to the cross. What He left them was not silver and gold, but peace. “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you...*” *John 14:27*

And on the cross the next day Jesus cried out, *“It is finished.”* *John 19:30* What is finished? The work of righteousness is finished. For all who believe in Jesus and His work on the cross, war with God is finished. The means of peace is finished. This is why Paul says we have peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ**. Specifically, through the cross, as Paul said in Colossians 1, *“...making peace by the blood of his cross.”* *Colossians 1:20*

We who were at one time living in rebellion against God have now been reconciled to him because of the blood of Christ. We have peace with God through Jesus.

ALL OR NONE

Notice Paul used the full title **the Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus is all of these or He is none of these. Jesus is His name. Christ and Lord are titles that tell us who He is – Lord and Christ.

Let’s step back for one second. Paul says **we have been justified by faith** and therefore have peace with God. I think we should want to know what Paul means by **faith**. We saw in the example of Abraham (4:18-22) that faith is being “fully convinced,” not merely intellectual assent. Justifying faith is believing who Jesus is and putting all our trust in Him.

We cannot create a version of Jesus to our liking and claim that we believe in Him. What does it mean that Jesus is **Christ**? I start here because that is the Jesus most people are comfortable with. He is Savior. He is Messiah. He is the way to God. His atoning death on the cross is how we are made righteous by God, by faith in Him.

To be certain He is that, but He is more. He is also **Lord**. He is the boss, the King, the master, the Head. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord on the day of judgment.

If you have not confessed Jesus is Lord here in this life leading to salvation, you will do so in the next and it will lead to eternal condemnation.

Paul, who wrote “we are justified by faith,” said in the same letter, *“...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”* *Romans 10:9-10*

Salvation is not a progression with the first step of believing in Jesus as Savior today and maybe 10 or 15 or 40 years later submitting to Him as Lord. No, we believe the Gospel by faith and are justified. Another way of saying that is we repent of sin and turn to Jesus in submission, fully convinced Jesus’ righteousness is everything we need for salvation.

BIBLICAL CONVERSION

When the Holy Spirit regenerates a person’s heart He takes someone who was dead in sin and makes them alive in Christ. As Paul said in Ephesians 2, *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...”* *Ephesians 2:4-5*

He reveals to us two things. First is that we are hopelessly lost and we need a rescuer, namely Jesus. Second, that we are no longer masters of our own lives, but Jesus is our new master. We who were once slaves to sin are now slaves to Christ. This is biblical conversion. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved brother and sister, why has the Lord laid it upon my hear this day to preach to you only one verse? Is it possible one of you may never hear another sermon again?

Like a spider hanging by a thread over a flame, once the hands releases there is no more hope. But today, my friends, today you may be saved. You may be spared. You may come to peace with God by faith in His Son. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your only hope.

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