

# Peace with God

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Hugh G. Mackay

[ 0 : 00 ] We turn now for a little to the epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 5, and the first verse. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's something that Paul himself had been seeking for, pursuing with all his might.

And it had eluded him until that day that Jesus met him on the Damascus road, and then he discovered the secret for himself. The epistle to the Romans is not a dry pamphlet on systematic theology.

Doctrinal it certainly is. And systematic it certainly is. But dry, definitely not.

Definitely not dry. It is written out of our deep personal experience. Paul had sought for peace.

[ 1 : 24 ] We all seek for peace. We want to have peace in our hearts. We know that we know that life is miserable. We make life miserable for ourselves and everybody else, and we haven't got peace in our hearts.

And Paul sought earnestly for peace by keeping the law of God to the very best of his ability. And he kept it as only a Pharisee could. But what he discovered was this.

That the law is a naturally powerless thing, except to condemn a man to death. And so in this epistle, first of all, he tries to persuade both Jew and Gentile.

Of the truth of that thing. The powerlessness of the law, except to condemn. That takes you down to the 20th verse of the 3rd chapter.

And then from verse 21 to the end of that chapter, Paul speaks God's way. God's way to being found righteous with God.

[ 2 : 40 ] God's way to being found.

Section or subsection of the epistle. He begins the 5th chapter with these words. Therefore, being justified by faith.

We have peace with God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. We must remind ourselves that this state of peace with God is not our natural state.

Not only are we alienated from God, but God is angry with us.

And just the anger. There are those who tell us that God loves everyone so much that there's nothing to do but for us to come and say we're sorry for our sins and everything.

[ 4 : 19 ] Everything that we've done wrong is a thing of the past. It's just ignored by God. Now God could not in justice deal with men in that way.

Treat sinners of no account. God, we're told, is angry with sinners. Every day there is such a thing as the wrath of God.

Our God, we're told, is a consuming fire. But at the same time, it's true that God wants to make peace. And God found and God put into execution the only way by which peace could be made between God and man.

And so, here, we have first of all, for the strength and comfort of the believer, the fact of peace.

We have peace. He doesn't say we feel peace. A feeling of peace is very desirable.

[ 5 : 30 ] But desirable only if it's based on fact. We can have a peace which is deceptive. They have healed, says Jeremiah, the heart of the daughter of my people, likely, saying peace.

When there is no peace. And sadly say there are many people in the world today who are enjoying a deceptive peace. A peace that is born of wishful thinking. It can be very largely just a matter of temperament.

But are those who have, naturally, a carefree attitude. The attitude that something will always turn up. It's all going to come out all right in the end.

And if they really were honest with themselves, they would acknowledge that they had no, they had no surer foundation for their feelings of peace than that.

Or again, feelings of peace can arise from ignorance. Can arise from infidelity.

[ 6 : 39 ] They just don't believe in spiritual things. They don't believe in the hereafter. They don't believe in anything they can't see with their eyes or sense with their other senses.

And so there's nothing very much to worry about. There isn't any hereafter anyway. And provided we're all right for this life, well, that's all that matters. Like that rich farmer that Jesus told about, who had well-stocked barns, and said to himself, Soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years. Ake thine ease. Eat, drink, and be med. Jesus said to that man, thou fool. And that's what he says to all who are going on in blissful ignorance of the hereafter.

Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of me. Or again, there's another kind of ignorance.

There are those who believe, or at least profess to believe, that there is a hereafter.

That they think they have no reason for fear. After all, they have tried to be as good as they can, and they expect God to make allowances for their failure.

[ 8 : 02 ] Like that man called Ignorance from Banyan Pictures in the Pilgrim's Progress. The poor sad man who came right up to the river and even got a boat across the river, and was turned back even from there.

Well, that's the sort of peace that the Apostle Paul could never know.

He was by nature too serious a man for that. That sort of peace is one which infers no conception of the holiness of God.

No conception of the seriousness of sin. And Paul was never without a conception of the holiness of God. He had a very real sense of sin.

And to him it was an amazing thing. An amazing thing. How sinful man could ever, ever enjoy peace.

[ 9 : 10 ] He had lived as upright a life as anyone could outwardly. But he began to realize, even before Jesus met him on the Damascus Road, evidently, that God looked deeper than the surface God saw into the heart.

And then, Paul discovered that he could find this peace. And he discovered how he could find it. He discovered that what he could never win, what he could never purchase, was actually his. His by a gift.

That that gift had already been bought for him. That was his for the taking. There are those, as we try to say, who have a feeling of peace, who do not really have this peace.

And on the other hand, there are those who do have this peace, who never attain to the feeling of peace. And they go sadly, and in mourning, and in fear all their days.

[ 10 : 27 ] Mind you, that isn't such a, that isn't such a dangerous attitude as the other. And yet it's not the ideal. It's not the ideal attitude. Paul was a man, Paul was a man, not indeed, not untroubled by a sense of personal unworthiness.

Not untroubled by a sense of his own failures, as we can see in the seventh chapter of this epistle. And yet, knowing that his state depended not upon himself, but wholly upon what was already done on his behalf, he still has, he still is able to say with confidence, we have peace with God.

We have peace with God. What does the possession of this peace mean?

Let's just for a moment look at it in one or two ways. He is a man whose conscience has been enlightened by the Spirit of God.

He sees himself as a sinner. He sees himself as a man under sentence of death. He that believes in him is, not he that believes not, is condemned already.

[ 12 : 06 ] already. A man under sentence of death, and only the fatal moment is drawing nearer, and then suddenly there comes a message of reprieve.

Not just of reprieve, a message of complete discharge. He can go out free. He can go out into society with all his, all his past blotted out.

And always says to himself, it's too good to be true. He doesn't feel like it. He knows he deserves to die.

His sins rise up before him. But he discovers that they've all been accounted for. Another has died in his place, and he is accepted, accepted by God, as though he had not sinned at all.

For here is a man who has, through careless, through his carelessness, and improvidence, got himself deeper and deeper into death, until the death has piled up to such a mountainous height

that there's no hope whatsoever of repaying it.

[ 13 : 23 ] And then one day, a rich friend pays all that debt for him. He's a free man. He's no longer a stain on his character.

He can't forget that, he can't forget his folly in allowing the debt to pile up to such an extent. He feels ashamed of himself as he thinks of the generosity and self-sacrifice of that friend, but still the fact remains, the debt is paid.

And you and I should never forget, should never forget the debt through which we have been raised. We should never forget the price at which we have been set free, the price at which our peace has been bought for us.

It's peace through the blood of the cross, but nevertheless let us thankfully believe and remember that we have peace with God. Or to take another, slightly different illustration, here is a country which has been at war.

the war comes to an end and a peace treaty is signed. Now, although the peace treaty has been signed, there may still not be an appearance of peace.

[ 14 : 47 ] There may be a lot of discontent and skirmishing here and there, but still the fact remains, the treaty has been signed and that's irrevocable.

It's true that inner peace, peace in the heart, ought to follow peace with God. But that peace may often elude us.

And elude us because of our own fault. There are discordant elements in the human heart. The old nature reasserts itself.

The old nature doesn't like, the old nature in us doesn't like the terms of this peace. The unconditional surrender required. And such may be the strength of that old nature that we may perhaps sometimes feel we have been deluded after all, but whatever we feel.

If we have placed our trust in Jesus Christ, the objective peace abides. The peace treaty has been signed. There is a covenant ordered in all things and sure.

[ 16 : 08 ] Or take a land like the United States of America where during last century slavery was abolished. Now you can imagine a slave in some out-of-the-way corner and his master, his master tries to keep him in ignorance of what has happened.

He still tries to maintain his old authority, his old cruel authority over his slave. And the slave may not realize his peace and Satan may try to deceive us and try to assert his old authority over us and to persuade us that this peace is all a delusion.

But it's not. The fact remains we have peace with God. We have peace with God. Let us possess our possessions.

Secondly, our text reminds us of the condition of this peace. Justified by faith.

Peace comes from being justified, accepted by God. God. And that peace is made real to us when that acceptance is accepted by us.

[ 17 : 41 ] There is an indispensable condition on our side. The peace has been made on God's side. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

God has taken the initiative. The God whom we offended. The God who alone has the right to forgive us. The God who alone has the right to declare peace between himself and us has done so. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. But this peace is ours only if we believe and thankfully and wholeheartedly accept it.

Being justified by faith. Now what does faith mean? In the shorter catechism we the answer to the question what is faith in Jesus Christ is this.

It's a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel.

[ 19 : 07 ] Him alone for salvation. There must be no trust. Absolutely no trust in any other means of salvation.

Christ. It must be Christ and Christ alone. You know if you are ill and you go to a doctor and the doctor discovers that you are ignoring a good deal of what he tells you and you are going around a whole lot of other doctors and getting different prescriptions from them.

The first doctor is not likely to have very much more to do with. A human doctor if you trust him demands and rightly demands that you trust him completely.

But infinitely more Jesus Christ has the right to demand our implicit and complete trust in him. in the previous chapter you may remember in the fourth chapter where Paul is illustrating from the Old

Testament this idea of faith he takes the example of Abraham.

Now what was the essence of Abraham's faith? Well just this that he took God at his word. But in a situation humanly impossible he believed God.

[ 20 : 44 ] He considered not his own body now dead when he was about a hundred years old neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb he staggered not at the promise of God's unbelief but was strong in faith giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.

That was Abraham's faith. He considered not this or that or the other thing and his different things in each individual case different things that you and I may consider for example the evil of our past life or the number of years that we have lived in alienation from God never so many things we may consider Abraham considered nothing except this that what God had said God was able to perform and God would perform now God has said he that believeth on the son hath life all who believe receive remission of sin by him all who believe are justified from all things by which you could not be justified by the law of Moses Abraham took God at his word and Abraham secondly gave implicit obedience to

God's direction he was a man of God who set God always before him wherever he went justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ that leads us to the center of things the author of our peace the Lord Jesus Christ he is our peace there is a name I love to hear I love to sing its work it sounds like music in the ear the sweetest name on earth it tells me of a savior love who died to set me free it tells me of the precious blood the sinner's perfect plea and so for a moment here we conclude let us dwell upon this name because

Paul wasn't a man who used words like and every part of this name is pregnant with meaning let us take first the most generally known the name Jesus now it was a very well known name in our Lord's own time it was a common Jewish name we know there was a Joshua under the Old Testament actually there were five or six Joshuas mentioned under the Old Testament and Joshua is just rather I should say Jesus is just a Greek rendering of the Old Testament word Joshua and from other Jewish writers we discover that this name was a very common name a very common name amongst the

Jews it was then the human name of the Saviour it's the name that emphasizes that Jesus Christ became man that he was a true man looked upon by the vast majority of his time as an ordinary man looked upon indeed at first by everybody as just an ordinary man born in an ordinary Jewish home a poor Jewish home living living his life as one of the people and there were many who never saw more to it than that and yet even his contemporaries were compelled to recognize that he was no ordinary man when he came out into the open and began his ministry his fame very quickly spread abroad through the length and breadth of the country people were talking about him everywhere this worker of miracles this man who gave healing to the sick gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf yes and even on three occasions gave life to the dead even when he was here on earth there was one thing evident and that is that nobody could be neutral about

[ 25 : 55 ] Jesus they were either ardently devoted or viciously antagonistic but not neutral three times in the gospel according to John we read there was a division among the people because of him even during even even even during his earthly life there were those who recognized him Peter said thou art the Christ the son of the living God and after he left the world people couldn't forget him his enemies would have liked to have forgotten and blotted him out as surely as his body had been buried in Joseph's grave but instead of being able to forget him they found that he was more in evidence than ever and the line of demarcation between his followers and others became clearer than ever there were those who proclaimed him worldwide as the hope of the world there were those who denounced him as a blasphemer and

Paul himself at one stage would have called him a blasphemer but now to Paul he became the Lord Jesus Christ the name Jesus then reminds us that he is God very God of very God and yet at the same time true man born of our bone and flesh of our flesh willingly making himself subject to the ills that flesh is heir to tried in all points like as we are yet without sin taking the sin of the world upon him and dying for sin upon the cross it reminds us too that he is the new testament Joshua Joshua led the people into the promised land but as we're reminded in the epistle to the Hebrews Joshua didn't give them rest it had to look forward that had to look forward to another day

Jesus has triumphantly conquered the power of darkness and through him we have rest through him we have peace and then there's the name Christ and of course the name Christ means the

anointed the anointed priest it also speaks of an anointed prophet an anointed king but let us fix our minds for the moment upon this one office of Christ as priest the Jewish people evidently obviously looked forward to the coming of the king the messianic king the descendant of David well of course Jesus did fulfill that requirement he was by he was according to the flesh of the seed of David but they seem to have forgotten such passages as the 53rd chapter of Isaiah or such psalms as the 22nd psalm that if they only had eyes to see depicted in such detail and with such clarity the sufferings of the Messiah and the purpose of their sufferings and the glorious outcome of their suffering and Paul in his early days shared that shared that short sightedness of his race but then the day came when Jesus met him and when he saw everything clearly and the very crucifixion of Jesus once anathema to him glowed with a glorious meaning he was wounded for our transgressions he was bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed as our priest he offered himself as a sacrifice he took our place we read it it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his bread that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to

God and so he suffered temptation not only in the wilderness but all through his earthly life he suffered misunderstandings even on the part of those naturally nearest and dearest to him he suffered mockery he suffered rejection he suffered condemnation and remember he stood condemned he stood condemned not just at the bar of Pontius Pilate but at the bar of God himself not for anything that he had done but because he had willingly become surety for us because he had willingly taken our place he was condemned to the death that you and I should have undergone and we know how he suffered that sentence to the fool there was no reprieve for him until on the cross he cried my

[ 32 : 13 ] God my God why hast thou forsaken me it's surely not too much to say that he suffered the pain of hell itself at that moment because what is hell but an utter forsakenness of God but because of that he is a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God but finally there's the word Lord he is the Lord Jesus Christ he is exalted to the right hand of God a prince and a savior he assumed after his death and rising again the place which had been his from all eternity he is eternally co-equal with the father and there can be only one relationship between the believer and him and that is the relationship of a servant to his

Lord I can never understand those Christian people who say that it's possible for a person to know Christ as savior and yet not to know him as Lord I just cannot understand how anybody that has any conception of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf should be able to do anything else but to acknowledge him as rightfully Lord over our whole lives oh our lives may not always look like it and we fall pathetically short but surely deep down in all our hearts we recognize that that is his rightful place well I'm quite sure Paul couldn't understand that attitude anyway he delights to call himself the bond slave of Jesus Christ he's willing to spend and be spent for him he is his to live or to die for him his desire is he says that

Christ may be glorified in my body whether by life or by death he is Lord he is Lord because of what he is the eternal son of God but we recognize him as Lord also when we remember what he has done for us surely then we say with the psalmist what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness to me and what is the answer the answer the answer is first and foremost I will take I will take what he is offering thankfully and without question without unbelief I will take and as in a few moments we take a cup into our hands may we see the symbolism of it and may we thankfully reply I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord let us pray oh Lord we render thanks to thee and you for Jesus Christ and for all who by faith are resting in him and we pray thee oh God that we may recognize our unity with all thy people who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ their Lord and ours give us a deeper sense of love the one to the other and to all thy people everywhere and to thou we pray thee advance thy kingdom this day remember thy servants who are laboring unto the uttermost parts of the earth seeking to spread abroad the knowledge of the name of

Jesus Christ thou knowest the many difficulties that they are facing thou knowest the persecution that many of them are facing but we pray that they may be strong and they may know that their labor is not in vain in the Lord and bless we pray this congregation here on this communion Sabbath and would remember the children who we expect to join with us in a little while and grant that as they see the action of the communion service that their hearts may be touched and that some of them may or indeed all of them may wish themselves amongst thy people they may see

the good of thy chosen and rejoice in their joy we pray thee for our land we pray thee for those in authority over us to thou grant them wisdom that they may see that they may see the folly of trusting to mere human wisdom and may they make thy law the rule of their own lives and the rule of their government so that we may be governed wisely and in thy fear and now do thou continue with us and direct us as we continue in this service and accept of us in

[ 38 : 23 ] Christ Amen