

“And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us... (Romans 5: 3 - 4)

But wait, there's more! You see we can boast about more than the hope of glory. We can boast about living the glory. So we boast in our suffering...wait, what? Suffering? Who in their right mind would boast about suffering, or endurance for that matter, or character, or hope. We want to boast about accomplishments. We want to boast about success, about the things that make us proud, and valuable. Right? Suffering, who ever wants to boast about that, rather we want to complain when we suffer and make sure everyone is aware at how unfair life is and continues to be. We don't want to endure suffering, we don't want to suffer at all.

This is one reason I love St. Paul. His letters, have captured the real truth about life. It sucks. Knowing Jesus doesn't make it suck less, knowing Jesus makes it endurable. The great secret of Christianity is not that life becomes idilic and peaceful and calm. Paul tells us the truth, it's going to continue to be harsh and hard and hazardous. Knowing Jesus and the good news means that we will not only endure the hardships of life, but also the hardships of death. The good news is that death has lost it's sting, not that death has ceased to be a reality. The hope we have at being able to share the glory, is that we can help others, as we ourselves have done, to endure the hurt of life and death and life again. The glory we share is the glory of the resurrection. That glory is ours now because of faith. Faith in Jesus.

“...and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

(Romans 5: 5)

It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that does all this. The hope, the love, the life, the living, all this comes from the Holy Spirit, which is a gift. Faith is the justifying gift of the Spirit.

“Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”

(Romans 5: 18 - 19)

Can we trust this word of grace? Can we trust the power of God's love in a world that sees power in violence, wealth, prestige, or inequality? How do we go about convincing ourselves that the glory we share with God is of more value than the power of this world? Perhaps a song will help us begin:

**I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.**

**I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.**

**I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory to
tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

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An Oasis Of Nurture And Grace In The Name

Of Jesus Christ For All People

For Whom Christ Died

A 21st Century Approach to:
The Letter of Paul to the Romans
By: Rev. David L. Stoner



PEACE

What would it be like to be at peace with God in this world and the next? Our American idea about death, the grave and heaven, is that when we die, Jesus rescues us from the grave and teleports us straight to heaven where God judges us and we find out if we've been good enough to stay in heaven, or bad enough and we get kicked out. The key to this view of life and death, is death. We wait to die to find out if we have peace with God.

St. Paul's letter to the Romans is not an American view of eternity. Rather Paul looks at death from the eyes of one who's already experienced the dying and now simply enjoys the living. It's not that if we're good we have peace with God in the next life. It's more that Jesus was so good that he gave us peace with God, today. Now that is a gift, but what do we do with it?

For Whom Christ Died #5

“Peace With God Is Nothing To Be Sneezed At”

Romans 5: 1

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

In the Intelligence Community there is a saying that they live by - “Trust But Verify”. All that means is that you trust the source from where the information comes from, only if you can independently verify that same information. This is not only true for the “SPY” game, but also for journalism.

When it comes to the Word of God, we must all be spies or journalist. We read it, but then want to verify the truth independent of God. Our trust of God is subject only within our experience of the world.

Since our world is at war, we assume that God is equally at war with the world.

Since we are battered and bruised by sin, we assume God is the batterer and bruiser.

Since we have seen first hand the negative effects of sin and hate it, we assume God hates sin and indeed the sinner.

With-in this world’s context how can we begin to think that peace with God is possible?

What if the statement is true? What if God, through God’s Word, tells us we are at peace? Does that change how we deal with God and each other? Does that mean that rather than waiting to die to find out if we have peace or war, we get busy living in God’s peace and telling the world that peace is not only possible, but at hand?

“...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” (Rom 5: 1b - 2)

So which part of this is so hard to believe? Is it hard to believe that God can grant us peace through grace, or is it that it costs us so little, “we are justified by faith.”? Once again it is too simple. Once again the cost to us is too cheap. Once again we begin to turn faith into a work. If all it takes is faith, then some how faith must make me special. So I’ll boast in my faith.

No, Paul won’t let us get away even with that. Paul will only let us boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. How many of us have had the opportunity to hope to share God’s glory? How many of us would see that our only boast could be in hoping to have the opportunity to share God’s glory and grace through faith alone? What does it mean to share glory of God? Does it mean we share in the glory of resurrection? Yes! Eternal Life? Yes! The light and life of Jesus? Yes! After we die? Yes, BUT also right here and right now.

What good does the glory of God do to the world after death? I mean yea, for the one who dies it’s pretty good, but this sharing of the glory of God through faith alone, is for those of us who are still alive. If the Word of God is trying to convince us that peace is at hand today, then who or what has made such a convincing argument that peace only occurs after death and only for those who are good?

But now lets ask the tougher question. What does it mean to boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God? And how do we exercise that boast now? In other words what does sharing the glory of God look like if it’s not in the resurrection after death? I can think of three ways this can effect the world we live in today. First is individually. Second is through the community. and third is universally.

Individually, we share in the glory of God by truly living as a child of the creator who loves us. We live as children who know their Divine Parent loves them and has cared for their every need.

Community, for these children of God who know they share God’s glory, is a community that reflects the love of God and makes that love a focus for all.

Universally, this love and glory are not offered to the deserving few, but to all, without reservation.

I won’t tell you that this utopia we’ve just created is possible, but it also is not impossible. We’re not talking about a place where there is no sin. We are talking about a place where sin is forgiven.

We’re not talking about a place where hate can’t exist. Rather we’re talking about a place where love conquers hate and gives relationships a second, third and seventy times seven chances.

We’re not talking about a place where everyone is the same, believes the same, and worships the same, but it is conceivable to let God’s glory be the boast, not our made up human institutions.

