

THE FRUITS OF FAITH

Romans 5:1-21

Key Verse: 5:1

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

In the last passage we learned the nature of faith from Father Abraham. Like Father Abraham, we must believe that God justifies sinners through faith alone. As human beings, it is important for us to work hard. However, we cannot earn our way to God. We can only come to God by faith in Jesus. Moreover, like Father Abraham, we must believe the great promises of God; God wants each one of us to be a father of faith or a mother of prayer for the whole world. Finally, like Father Abraham, we must believe God who raises the dead. With this faith we must overcome the world and render glory to God.

In today's passage Paul develops his gospel message by explaining the fruits of being justified by faith. It is a wonderful new life with peace, joy and the love of God. But many do not really claim this new life by faith. So they remain bound by the thoughts and habits of their old life. This does not please God. God sacrificed his one and only Son Jesus Christ so that we may live a new life in him. May God help us to claim this new life by faith. Today let's learn about this fruitful new life we have in Christ. What are the fruits of faith?

First, we have peace with God (1).

Look at verse 1. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” We have peace with God as an immediate result of justification. Before having peace with God, we were God’s enemies. No one can hide from God. No one can defeat God. The enemies of God experience God’s wrath while on earth, and are doomed to eternal punishment thereafter. This is the real reason that people are anxious, restless, and fearful.

Still, most people do not realize what their real problem is. So they seek human solutions that fail. One nurse really wanted peace. So she saved money until she could afford an extended vacation. She felt good for a while. However, as soon as she got back home, she felt more tired than before. It is because she was not right with God. Some people take illegal drugs, drink excessively, or indulge in debauchery in the search for peace. But they do not taste peace. Instead they taste the restlessness and ever-increasing anxiety of those who are separated from God. However, when we accept Jesus in our hearts as our Savior, God justifies us to be right with God. We are no longer enemies of God. We are no longer under the wrath of God. We are no longer restless wanderers on the earth. We have peace with God. When we have peace with God our souls can truly rest.

One young lady grew up under the prayer of missionary parents. But she was rebellious toward the life of mission, thinking that she was missing “something.” She began to go here and there seeking “something,” not knowing what it was. However, after tasting many things in the world she realized that without God the contents of the world are heartbreak and misery. Through an Easter Bible Conference she came to Jesus and accepted the grace of forgiveness of sins. Then the peace of God came into her soul. She became truly happy. She began to use her

boundless energy to serve God. She decided to marry a man of God by faith. Jesus gives us peace with God through the forgiveness of sin.

When we have peace with God, we also have peace with others. There was a certain Samaritan woman. Because of her wayward lifestyle, she had made many enemies in her community. She might have spent her time hating them one by one and being hated by them. But one day she met Jesus by the well of Jacob. Jesus gave her living water welling up to eternal life in her soul. She was satisfied and found peace with God. Then she went back to her community and testified about the love of Jesus to everyone. She became a source of reconciliation with God for her entire community. True peace comes from Jesus. Let's come to Jesus for peace instead of seeking peace in the world.

Second, joy (2-5).

Look at verse 2b. "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Another fruit of faith is joy. Christian life is joyful. Some people think that to become a Christian means they will never experience any fun. But that is not true. Christian life is really joyful. This joy has its root in the hope of the glory of God. Here, "the hope of the glory of God" refers to the restoration of God's kingdom. But even more precisely, it refers to the complete transformation of each person into the image of Jesus. We will be like Jesus. We can fully glorify God as Jesus glorified God. This hope gives us real joy.

Shepherd Steve Stasinos was known as a powerful Bible speaker who glorified God through his Bible testimonies and messages. But after marriage, he was not sure who should support his family. So his shepherd encouraged him to decide to

fully support his family. It was not at all easy for him to take the cross of self-support and the cross of being a new fellowship leader. He struggled hard for the last 18 months, spending 70 hours a week working as an engineer and then doing God's work in the leftover time. At last God gave him victory. He has proved to have taken the cross of self-support. In addition, God is working greatly in his fellowship and we can see lives being changed. Shepherd Steve has inner joy of growing in the image of Jesus. Normal Christian life is characterized by deep and abiding joy.

Look at verse 3. "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance...." Although Paul has said the Christian life is full of peace and joy, it is not without sufferings. The "s" on the end of "sufferings" indicates that there is not just one suffering, but many sufferings, one after another, continuously, throughout our pilgrimage in this world. To people of the world, suffering is a terrible thing, to be avoided if at all possible. It is really ironic that people of the world expend so much energy and effort to avoid suffering. But to Christians, sufferings are not to be avoided. Sufferings are to be welcomed as ingredients for spiritual growth. Therefore, we rejoice in sufferings.

Why is it so? It is because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance means to continue to struggle in the midst of adversity, to the end, until it is overcome. Perseverance is highly valued in academics, business, athletics and so on. For example, the cyclist Lance Armstrong has become a most celebrated athlete recently. He overcame testicular cancer and persevered through the recovery period. He continued his cycling career and won five consecutive Tour de France competitions. Unlike Europeans, most Americans do not pay much

attention to cycling. But many Americans really admire Lance Armstrong, because people value perseverance. However, even though perseverance is so highly valued, there are not many people who really persevere. Most ordinary people give up when things are difficult. So they remain mediocre. But God does not allow his children to be like that. God gives his children sufferings and helps them to confront them and go through them to the end. God helps his children to go through sufferings one after another until they become strong. Finally, God's children become strong enough to overcome the world.

For example, there is Isaac in the Bible. As the only son of his parents, he could have been spoiled and weak. But God let him experience being offered as a sacrifice on the altar, sparing his life only at the last moment. Later, God allowed fierce Philistines to claim wells that Isaac had dug, driving him out from one fruitful place after another. Through all these sufferings, Isaac did not become weak. He persevered and became strong in his inner man until he overcame the world. This kind of victorious life gives us true joy.

Look at verse 4. "...perseverance, character; and character, hope." Character means that we grow in the image of Jesus Christ. As we persevere through one suffering after another, step by step, the image of Christ is formed in us. We come to have a Christian character. For example, there was Judah in the Old Testament. Because he was jealous of his younger brother Joseph, he committed the sin of selling him as a slave to Midianite traders to get rid of him. Afterward, his guilt and shame were unbearable and he went to live among Gentiles. He married a Gentile woman and had three godless sons. The Lord put the two older sons to death. Later, Judah's wife died. It was unbearable hardship for Judah, brought about because of his sin. But God used it to build his character. After tasting the pain of losing his

precious sons, he could surely understand his father Jacob and how much he had hurt his father by selling Joseph. He repented. When a crucial moment came, Judah offered his own life to save Benjamin. By God's divine discipline, he grew in the character of Christ. Through his line God sent the Savior Jesus. It is amazing that God helped Judah in such a way. And so God helps each of his children to form the character of Christ through sufferings.

As Christian character is formed in a person, he or she begins to grow in hope. This hope is to be fully restored in the image of Jesus and to inherit the kingdom of God. It is a living hope that fills our hearts with power and joy. Verse 5 says, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." This hope does not disappoint us. It is because our hope is in the kingdom of heaven that never perishes, spoils or fades away. Someday all the things of the world will disappear. But the glory of God in the kingdom of God lasts forever. Moreover, as we live in this world, God pours out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bridges the gap between the hope and reality. The Holy Spirit assures us that God's hope will be fully realized. This hope is a source of joy in any circumstance. So we rejoice in our sufferings. Amen. We rejoice in our sufferings.

Third, God's love for sinners (5-11).

God pours out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can feel the love of God when the Holy Spirit enters our hearts. We find great assurance and comfort in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 says that God pours out his love into our hearts. God does not just sprinkle our hearts with a few drops of his love and hold back the rest. God pours out his love into our

hearts like a gushing fountain to fill us and to make us overflow with his love until we can be a source of blessing for others. The love of God through the Holy Spirit is more real than the ground we walk on or the air we breathe. However, our assurance of God's love does not rest on spiritual experience. God demonstrated his love in history through Jesus Christ.

Look at verses 6-8. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." These verses tell us about God's love for sinners. It is divine; it is God's love. This love was expressed to us when we were powerless, ungodly sinners. In other words, there was nothing in us that merited this love. It was given unconditionally when we had no strength to reciprocate. God's love is beyond comparison to human love. Human beings love those who are attractive and beneficial, but feel burdened by the powerless. In rare cases someone may give his life for a good person. But God sacrificed Jesus, the holy Son of God, for us when we were powerless, ungodly sinners. Jesus' death on the cross demonstrates God's love for us. We must know that God's love is not like human love. God's love is unconditional and eternal. God never stops loving us. When we accept this love of God we can love ourselves and others. Whenever we remember the cross of Jesus we can renew God's love in our hearts and live in God's love.

Look at verses 9-10. "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" Simply

speaking, these verses teach us the assurance we have in God's complete salvation. God has already done the most difficult thing. While we were powerless, ungodly sinners God sacrificed Jesus for us. Thus, we have been reconciled to God. Christ, who rose from the dead, is living to save us. When we see where we were and where we are now, we can be sure that God will bring us safely to his kingdom. We need this assurance because our struggle is not always easy. Sometimes we groan over our unchanged elements. But we must not look at ourselves. We must look at God and what God has done. Then we can have absolute assurance of our salvation.

Look at verse 11. "Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." We are in the blessed state, having been reconciled to God. We can come to God freely, like a child going to his father when he needs encouragement and help. This living, personal relationship with God gives us all the more assurance and great joy as we continue our pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom.

Fourth, the importance of one man (12-14).

Through just one man, Adam, sin entered the world. Then sin spread to all men and brought death and destruction to the human race. In the same way, through one man, Jesus Christ, God's grace was poured out on mankind and brought eternal life to all who believe. God's way of working in history is through one man. When we realize this, each of us can find our value before God in his redemptive history.

Fifth, grace is greater than sin (15-21).

The power of sin is indeed great and fearsome. Just one man Adam sinned. But sin spread to all men. Sin made all men sick to the point of death. We cannot resist this power of sin with a strong will or a stubborn character. But there is something that is stronger than the power of sin. It is the grace of Jesus. Look at verses 20b-21.

“But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” When we are in the grace of Christ we have victory over sin. By this grace, we can claim the spiritual fruits of peace, joy and the love of God.

In this passage we learn that God wants us to live a glorious new life in Christ that is full of the spiritual fruits of peace, joy, and the love of God. God wants us to grow in the image of Christ until the full glory of God is restored in each of us. Let’s not remain in our old habits and ways of thinking. Let’s boldly live the new life God has given us by faith in Christ.