Romans 5:1-21 – PEACE

"I just cannot find any peace!"

I remember this line and the desperation and sadness in the voice of a successful businesswoman who expressed this sentiment over the phone.

She is – by far – not the only one.

Later in his letter, Paul will write that the kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy.

Today we will be looking at all three of these aspects.

Righteousness – right standing with God

Peace with God

Joy in the present and our lived experience

This morning we want to look at **objective fact** and **subjective experience**.

Facts and **feelings**.

Our established state before God and our lived reality.

Righteousness

In his letter so far (Romans 1-4), Paul has made more than clear that our condition – our standing before God - is not based on our own merit.

Paul is careful to say that both Jew and Gentile, religious and irreligious person, stand condemned before a righteous judge – when judged on their own merit.

Remember what he writes "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

"Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin" (Romans 3:9)

A couple of weeks ago we descended into the Valley of Sin, reflecting on the bad news of the human condition.

Last week we looked at the ways that Paul describes Jesus making us right with God – his offer of salvation to all who believe and have faith in Jesus.

This is always and only **by faith**. That phrase comes up again and again and again.

Paul uses three metaphors or word pictures to describe this that we thought about last week:

Redemption of slave, the paying of a ransom price – the marketplace

A sacrifice of atonement – the temple

A just judge cancelling our charge sheet – the law court

Paul now continues in summary:

5:1 "Therefore, since **we have been justified** through faith, we have peace with God"

That has been the whole argument of 1- 4

That is what Paul has been hammering away at.

We have been justified through faith in Jesus – trusting in him and placing our confidence in his death and resurrection.

He has redeemed us from slavery.

He has been sacrificed so that we could be at one with God.

He has dealt with our charge sheet and been a just judge…

This is an objective fact. It is settled.

We have been justified by faith. We have peace with God.

We are okay!

Paul speaks in the past tense.

This is a done deal.

We are loved and accepted by God.

This is the kind of **assurance** that **justification** brings.

We start our Christian life secure in the love of God.

This is our firm foundation. Bedrock beneath our feet.

If we follow Paul's argument, he says actually this deal was done when you were **at your worst**, not your best.

See how he describes us when we were justified – made right with God.

Was it our human agency – our power to pull ourself up by our bootlaces, our own effort…

No…. it was

5:6 "while we were still powerless"

Was it our morality. Our churchgoing. Our attempts to be a good person. Our human effort. Our good behaviour. Our own merits.

No … it was that

5:6 Christ died for the ungodly.

5:8 while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And now….now…. we have peace with God …. We have access to God (we have been atoned, made at-one with him). We stand in the grace of God.

"Therefore, since we have been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access **by faith** into this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:1-2)

This is our unshakable foundation.

It is an **objective fact**.

It is our condition before God when we become a Christian, accepting by faith what Jesus has done for us.

The reign of Caesar Augustus secured what became known as the *pax Romana*, or Roman peace.

However, this kind of peace was achieved through warfare - putting enemies to the sword. It was their blood on the altar.

In Romans 5, Paul deliberately contrasts the way of the Caesars with the way of Christ.

Peace has been achieved through the blood of Jesus.

Jesus' blood established a permanent peace treaty between God and us.

"In our frantic world, the idea of peace is appealing – a warm feeling of tranquillity. But to have this experience of peace, we first need to know that there is **foundational peace**. As with a marriage, the **subjective experience** flows from the **objective fact**….If we want to enjoy a life of inner peace, we first need to know that God's wrath has ended and we are right with our maker." (Andrew Ollerton)

In 1914, during the First World War, British and German troops were at war. On 23 December they were shelling each other in brutal trench warfare. But on 24 December a Christmas ceasefire was declared. Troops emerged from their dugouts and met in no-man's-land. They shared stories and cigarettes, sang carols and played football. Apparently, the Germans won on penalties!

The peace, sadly, did not last, and the conflict resumed on Boxing Day.

"It's easy for us to imagine that peace with God is also fragile. If we sin or slip up, the fun is over and God turns against us. But if we are "**in Christ**", God's love is a permanent state." (Andrew Ollerton)

Let's look at that condition for a moment.

Imagine two football teams lined up in the tunnel behind their captains.

One captain is Adam, the other captain is Jesus, who is called the second Adam. We line up behind the one or the other.

Paul considers that the entire human race is aligned behind one or other of these representatives.

Illustration of two books – Adam and Christ.

We are either "in Adam" or we are "in Christ".

The difference is not whether we are Jew or Gentile or whether we are good or bad – it is whether we line up behind Christ by faith or we remain part of the fallen human race represented by the first man, Adam.

Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person (Adam) did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person (Jesus) did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man (Adam) said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man (Jesus) said yes to God and put many in the right.

Romans 5:18-19 TM

Take this book "Adam". If the person is placed inside this book, they will be judged by that front cover.

However if I take the person out of this book and transfer them to another book entitled Jesus – they are now "in Christ". We are now judged by this front cover.

"This is what it means to be justified. Regardless of who we are or what we have done, we are transferred into Jesus Christ. We are "in Christ" and therefore God's love for us is as certain as his love for Jesus!" Andrew Ollerton

If we are "in Christ" God's love for us is **a permanent state**. Having been made right and welcomed into his family, God will no more turn against us than against his only begotten son, Jesus.

This is an objective permanent state.

So how does God feel when he looks at you? Not a frown of disappointment but a smile of joy. This is true whether we feel it or not, because it is not a mood based on our behaviour but a **formal declaration, signed in the blood of Jesus**. This is a solid foundation for living with peace.

Now we have full access to God and to his grace.

We stand in that grace.

But God's peace is not just an objective fact

God's peace is also a lived experience

Romans 5:12-21

If we are to enjoy a relationship with God, we need to be confident that he loves us and accepts us, past, present and future.

Imagine three friends walking along a narrow path, called:

Feelings – Faith – Facts

If **Facts** takes the lead, he can show **Faith** the way and **Feelings** will follow on behind.

But if **Faith** starts worrying how **Feelings** is doing and keeps looking anxiously to **Feelings**, **Faith** will start to wobble and fall off the path.

Faith must keep their eyes on **Facts**.

Paul outlines the objective facts:

We have been justified/made right with God (fact)

We have been reconciled to God (fact)

We have peace with God (fact)

We have access to God (fact)

We stand in the grace of God (fact)

God has demonstrated his love for us (fact)

Nothing can separate us from his love (fact)

We are "in Christ" (fact)

Our **Faith** will become more confident and assured as we keep our eyes on these **Facts**.

The dangerous alternative is that we live by feelings and experiences to such an extent that we are easily swayed by our thoughts and doubts.

If faith is not based on facts – the established truth of God's word – we will be especially vulnerable to despair when tough times hit.

In Romans 5 – Paul blends past-tense descriptions of the objective **facts** with present-tense references to our **lived experience** of the love of God.

He speaks of **JOY**! Three times he says we rejoice (boast in some versions)!

5:2 in our hope

5:3 in our sufferings

5:11 in God

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God

Whatever the present holds, our future is assured.

We have the hope that one day we will be glorified – we will see Jesus face to face. We will be in his presence. We will see the glory of God.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 Cor. 13:12

We experience God's love through suffering

"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4)

Paul considers how we can have peace even in the toughest of times. To be a Christian is not to avoid suffering, but to experience it differently: "we rejoice in our sufferings".

If we haven't grasped the unchanging truth of God's love, when something bad happens we start to question everything at a deeper level: What have I done wrong? Why is God angry? Doesn't he love me any more? These doubts can add a layer of depression onto already challenging circumstances.

But if we grasp the nature of God's unchanging love – I am justified in Christ, I have peace with God, I can access his grace at any time, he is for me not against me, nothing can separate me from his love – we keep our eyes on the facts.

Even in the storms we can remain hopeful.

In fact our hearts may "rejoice" or truly experience deep joy and peace because of the trials we find ourselves in.

we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope (Romans 5:3-4)

"When we respond to hardship by trusting God more deeply, it produces greater resilience and strength. If we learn to face testing times secure in God's love, we can become confident, all-weather Christians, unshaken by outer circumstances."

(Andrew Ollerton)

We experience God's love by the Holy Spirit

hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

This is an intimate experience of the love of God through the Holy Spirit.

For Paul the love of God is a historic event, an objective fact.

God has demonstrated his love for us in that while we were sinners Jesus died for us.

Nothing can separate us from this love.

The regular ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make this objective fact into a subjective reality.

The regular ministry of the Holy Spirit is to help us to know it and feel it for ourselves.

When the Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts, something comes alive, like a fire in a hearth.

Objective facts and lived reality.

Righteousness – Joy – Peace – this is the kingdom of God.

Let your kingdom come – let your will be done

Community group questions and discussion points:

Please feel free to pick up on one or two threads and focus on those – do not feel that you have to answer all the questions!

1. Peace with God: What has Jesus accomplished for us?

Read Romans 5:1–2.

Paul says that, because we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God and access to his grace.

What does it mean to be justified by faith?

How is peace with God different from simply feeling peaceful?

How might knowing that you are accepted by God change the way you approach him in prayer?

2. God's love is not based on our performance

Read Romans 5:6–8.

Paul reminds us that Christ died for us while we were still powerless, ungodly and sinners.

What do these verses teach us about the nature of God's love?

Why is it significant that Jesus died for us before we had done anything to earn his love?

Are there times when you feel you need to prove yourself to God? How might these verses challenge that way of thinking?

3. Is God's love secure or fragile?

Read Romans 5:1, 8–11.

The message emphasises that God's love for those who are in Christ is a permanent reality, not something that fluctuates with our behaviour or feelings.

What makes you feel secure or insecure in your relationship with God?

How should we respond when we sin, fail or feel that we have disappointed God?

What difference would it make to live each day believing that you are loved and accepted by God through Jesus?

4. Living by facts rather than feelings

Read Romans 5:1–5.

The message uses the picture of three friends walking along a path: Facts, Faith and Feelings. Faith must keep its eyes on the facts of God's Word rather than being led by changing feelings.

Why can it be dangerous to base our confidence in God primarily on how we feel?

Which truths in Romans 5 can help anchor your faith when you feel anxious, discouraged or distant from God?

What practical habits could help you keep your eyes on God's promises when your feelings tell you something different?

5. In Adam or in Christ: Where is our identity?

Read Romans 5:12–19.

Paul contrasts Adam, through whom sin and death entered the world, with Jesus Christ, through whom righteousness and life are offered.

What is the contrast between what Adam brought into the world and what Jesus brings?

What does it mean to be in Christ, and how does this change our standing before God?

In what ways might you still define yourself by your past mistakes, failures or achievements rather than by your identity in Christ?

6. Can we experience joy in suffering?

Read Romans 5:3–4.

Paul says that we can rejoice even in suffering because suffering can produce perseverance, character and hope.

How does Paul's perspective on suffering differ from the idea that following Jesus should mean an easy life?

Have you experienced a difficult season that helped develop your faith, perseverance or character? What did you learn?

How can we support someone who is suffering without minimising their pain, while helping them hold on to hope in God?

7. What is the relationship between suffering and hope?

Read Romans 5:3–5.

Paul explains that suffering can lead to perseverance, character and hope, and that this hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Why does Paul connect Christian hope with the experience of God's love?

How might being secure in God's love change the way you face an uncertain future?

What situation are you facing right now in which you need to trust God's love and develop perseverance?

8. How does the Holy Spirit help us experience God's love?

Read Romans 5:5.

The message explains that God's love is an objective fact demonstrated through Jesus' death, while the Holy Spirit helps us experience that love personally.

What is the difference between knowing intellectually that God loves you and experiencing that love in your heart?

In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit bringing comfort, assurance or renewed hope?

How could you make space in your daily life to become more aware of God's presence and love?

9. What does it mean to stand in grace?

Read Romans 5:1–2, 9–11.

Paul describes believers as having access to God's grace, being reconciled to him and rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ.

What does the picture of standing in grace mean to you?

How might this truth affect the way you respond to your weaknesses, temptations and mistakes?

How could a deeper assurance of God's grace change the way you relate to other people, particularly those who have let you down?

10. How can we live out God's peace this week?

Read Romans 5:1–5, 11.

The message concludes by bringing together righteousness, peace and joy as aspects of life in God's kingdom.

Which of these truths do you most need to grasp at the moment: that you are made right with God, secure in his love, able to access his grace, or able to find hope in suffering? Why?

What is one practical step you could take this week to live more confidently in God's peace?

Who could you encourage by sharing the hope and assurance found in Jesus?