

JUSTIFICATION

*"Being justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1*
There is a word in this text which ought to be very precious in the eyes of everyone. That word is *"peace."*

During the last century, there have been many wars, the horrors of which have left deep marks on the history of many countries. However just and necessary, war brings tremendous evils. Many lives have been taken, many hearts have been broken by crushing loss. We have learned by bitter experience, what a blessed thing is peace!

I desire, however, to call the attention of all who hear this sermon to the best of all peace—which is peace with God. I would gladly speak to you of a peace which this world can neither give nor take away—a peace which depends on no earthly governments, and needs no physical weapons, either to win it or preserve it—a peace which is freely offered by the King of kings, and is within the reach of all who are willing to receive it.

There is such a thing as "peace with God." It may be felt and known. My heart's desire and prayer is that you may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

There are four things which I wish to bring before you, in order to bring light on the whole subject.

1. Let me show you the greatest **privilege** of a true Christian, *"he has peace with God."*
2. Let me show you the **fountain, or source**, from which that privilege flows, *"he is justified."*
3. Let me show you the **rock** from which that fountain springs, *"Jesus Christ."*
4. Let me show you the **hand** by which the privilege is made our own, *"faith."*

Upon each of these four points I have something to say. May the Holy Spirit make the whole subject peace-giving to some souls!

1. First of all, let me show the greatest privilege of a true Christian—he has peace with God.

When the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he used five words which the wisest heathen could never have used. There have been heathen men who were people of mighty minds, and of great intelligence. On many subjects they saw more clearly than most people in the present day. But not one of them could have said as the apostle did, "I have peace with God." (Rom 5:1.)

When Paul used these words, he spoke not for himself only—but for all true Christians. Some of them no doubt have a greater awareness of this privilege than others. All of them find an evil principle within, warring against their spiritual welfare day by day. All of them find their adversary, the devil, waging an endless battle with their souls. All of them find that they must endure the hostility of the world. But all notwithstanding, to a greater or less extent, "have peace with God."

This peace with God is a calm, intelligent sense of friendship with the Lord of heaven and earth. He who has it, feels as if there was no barrier and separation between himself and his holy Maker. He can think of himself as under the eye of an all-seeing God, and yet, not feel

afraid. He can believe that this all-seeing God sees him, and yet is not displeased.

Such a person can see *death* waiting for him, and yet not be greatly afraid. He can close his eyes on all he has on earth—launch forth into a world unknown, and take up his abode in the silent grave—and yet feel peace.

Such a person can look forward to the *resurrection* and the judgment, and yet not be greatly afraid. He can see with his mind's eye the great white throne—the assembled world—the open books—the listening angels—the Judge Himself—and yet feel peace.

Such a person can think of *eternity*, and yet not be greatly afraid. He can imagine a never-ending existence in the presence of God and of the Lamb, a continual communion—and yet feel peace.

I know of no happiness compared to that which this peace affords. A calm sea after a storm, a blue sky after a black thunder cloud—health after sickness—light after darkness—rest after work—all are beautiful and pleasant things. But none of them can give more than a weak idea of the comfort which those enjoy who have been brought into the state of peace with God. It is "a peace which passes all understanding." (Phil. 4:7.)

It is *the lack* of this very peace which makes many people unhappy. Thousands have everything that is thought able to give pleasure, and yet are never satisfied. Their hearts are always aching. There is a constant sense of emptiness within. Why? They have no peace with God.

It is *the desire* of this peace which makes many do much in an idolatrous religion. Hundreds subdue their bodies, and wear out their own flesh in the service of some wretched image which their own hands had made. And why? Because they hunger after peace with God.

It is *the possession* of this very peace on which the value of your religion depends. Without it there may be services and sacraments—and yet no good done to your soul. The question that should try all is the state of your conscience. Is it at peace? *Have you peace with God?*

If you have, you are truly *rich*. You have treasure which you will not lose when you die and leave the world. You will have it and enjoy it to all eternity. Silver and gold you may have none. The praise of man you may never enjoy. But you have that which is far better than either, if you have the peace of God.

If you don't have this peace with God, you are truly *poor*. You have nothing which will last—nothing which you can take with you when your turn comes to die. Your body may be carried to the grave with pomp and ceremony. A solemn service may be read over your coffin. A marble monument may be put up in your honour. But after all it will be but a beggar's funeral, if you die without peace with God.

2. Let me show you, in the next place, the FOUNTAIN from which true peace is drawn. *That fountain is justification.*

The peace of the true Christian is not a vague, dreamy feeling, without basis or foundation. He builds on solid ground. He has peace with God, because he is justified. Without justification it is impossible to have real peace with God. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between us and God, and must be taken away. Guilt lies heavy on our heart, and must be removed. Unforgiven sin will destroy peace. The true Christian knows this well. His peace arises from a knowledge that **his sins are forgiven**.

However many, and however great, his sins are cleansed away, pardoned, and wiped out. They are remembered by God no more. Though they may have been like scarlet, they are become white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they are as wool. And so he has

peace.

He is **counted righteous in God's sight**. The Father sees no spot in him, and considers him innocent. He is clothed in a robe of perfect righteousness, and may sit down by the side of a holy God without feeling ashamed. The holy law of God, which searches the thoughts and intents of our hearts, cannot condemn him. The devil, "the accuser", can lay nothing to his charge. And so he has peace.

Oh yes, he is still a weak, erring, flawed *sinner!* None knows that better than he does himself. But even so, he is considered complete, perfect, and faultless by God, because he is justified! All his debts are paid, settled, and cancelled forever. The punishment he deserves has endured by Another on his behalf.

Do you know anything of all this? Are you pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God? Can you draw near to Him with boldness, and say, "You are my Father and my Friend, and I am Your reconciled child"? You will never taste true peace until you are *justified!* A peace of conscience not built on justification, is a hollow, deceptive, dangerous dream. From such a false peace may the Lord deliver you!

There is a day quickly coming when all who are *not justified* will despair. The trumpet of God will dissolve the false peace which now reassures many people. The day of judgment will convince thousands of people too late, that a few beautiful ideas about "God's love and mercy," does not reconcile you to your Maker, and deliver your guilty soul from hell. No hope, no peace, shall prove solid in that solemn day but the hope of the justified.

Rest not, until you know and feel that you are justified. There can be no heaven without peace with God—and no peace with God without justification.

3. Let me show you, in the third place, the ROCK from which justification and peace with God flow. That rock is Christ.

The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. It is not earned by his prayers, his repentance, or his good works. All these are completely unable to justify him. Tried by the perfect standard of God's law the very best Christian will be found wanting. Peace built on any such foundation is utterly worthless. Anyone who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

Richard Hooker wrote, "The best things we do have something in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?"

Before others our works may evidence the reality of our Christianity. But before God we cannot be justified by anything that we can do—it will be always defective, always imperfect, always short-coming, always far below the mark, so long as we live. It is not by works of our own that we may have peace and be justified.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon which he enjoys? How can we understand a Holy God dealing with a sinful person as if he was innocent, and counting him righteous despite his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because "Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3) Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. "He is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14)

Christ has ***stood in the place*** of the true Christian.

He *suffered for sins*, the "just for the unjust." (1 Peter 3:18) He endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head.

He *paid the debt* the Christian owed, by His own blood. (1 Peter 1:18 & 19) God is a just God, and will not require our debts to be paid twice.

Christ *obeyed the law* of God perfectly. The devil, the Prince of this world, could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling the law He brought an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. (Romans 10:4)

Christ, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful for his salvation. This is the true Christian's justification—hence his peace. In himself there is nothing but sin—but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require.

Who can explain the blessedness of the exchange which takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him—and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been considered a sinner for his sake—and now he is considered innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake though there was no fault in Him—and now he is forgiven for Christ's sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and short-comings. (2 Corinthians 5:21) Here is wisdom indeed! A person can feel that he is a sinner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who could have imagined such a thing?

Jesus, the Son of God, came down to a world of sinners, who neither desired Him before He came, nor honoured Him when He appeared. Yet He became obedient to the death of the cross, that we might have a door opened to life everlasting.

This may well be called a "love that passes knowledge!" (Ephesians 3:19) In no way could free grace ever have shone so brightly as in the way of *justification by Christ*.

Nothing but Christ can satisfy our conscience, which whispers, "*There must be a price paid for my soul—or no peace.*" "*I must have some righteousness to fit me for heaven—or no peace.*" At once the Gospel meets us with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for our redemption. Christ has given Himself for us. His name is called the Lord our righteousness.

This is the one true way of peace—justification by Christ. Hold fast this truth, and be not deceived by anything you may hear about other ways to peace.

I know you have heard of Jesus and are acquainted with the story of His life and death. But what practical use do you make of Him? What communication has there been between your soul and Him?

Peace, bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it—is this peace your own? Oh, rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to my question.

4. Let me show you, in the last place, *the HAND by which the privilege of peace is received—faith.*

I ask your special attention to this part of our subject. There is hardly any point in Christianity so important as the means by which Christ, justification, and peace, become the property of one's soul. Let us try to lay hold firmly on the truth.

There is but one thing needful in order to be justified by Christ's blood, and have peace with

God. That one thing is to believe on Him. This is the distinct mark of a true Christian. He believes on the Lord Jesus for his salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31) "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish—but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Without this faith it is impossible to be saved. A man may be moral, friendly, good-natured, and respectable. But if he does not believe on Christ, he has no pardon, no justification, no title to heaven. "He who believes not, is condemned already. He who believes not the Son shall not see life—but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:19 and 36)

Nothing else at all is needed for a man's justification, except this faith. Repentance, holiness, love, humility, prayerfulness—will always be seen in a justified person. But they do not in the smallest degree justify him in the sight of God. Nothing joins a man to Christ—nothing justifies—but simple faith. "To him who works not—but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5) "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28.)

Having this faith, a man is immediately completely justified. His sins are at once removed. The very hour that he believes he is considered by God entirely pardoned, forgiven, and a righteous man. His justification is not a future privilege, to be obtained after a long time and great effort. It is an immediate present possession. Jesus says, "He who believes on Me *has* everlasting life." (John 6:47) Paul says, "By Him all who believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39)

I hardly need to say that it is of the utmost importance to have a clear understanding about ***the nature of true SAVING FAITH***. It is constantly spoken of as the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament Christians. They are called "believers." In the Gospel of John alone, "believing" is mentioned eighty or ninety times. And yet there is hardly any subject about which so many mistakes are made. And there is no subject about which mistakes are so harmful to the soul. The darkness of many a sincere person may be traced to confused thinking about faith. Let us try to get a clear idea of its real nature.

True saving faith is not the possession of everybody. The opinion that all who are called Christians are, as a matter of course, believers, is a most destructive error. A person may be baptized, and yet have "no part or lot" in Christ. The visible Church contains unbelievers as well as believers. "All people have not faith." (2 Thessalonians 3:2.)

True saving faith is not a mere matter of feeling. A person may have many good feelings and desires in his mind towards Christ, and yet they may all prove temporary and short-lived. Many are like the stony-ground hearers, and "receive the word with joy." (Matthew 8:19) Many will say under momentary excitement, "I will follow You wherever You go," and yet return to the world.

True saving faith is not a simple agreement of the mind to the fact that Christ died for sinners. This is not any better than the faith of devils. They know who Jesus is. "They believe," and they do more, "they tremble." (James 2:19.)

True saving faith is an act of the whole inner man. It is an act of the mind, heart, and will, all united and combined. It is an act of the soul, in which—seeing his own guilt, danger, and hopelessness—and seeing at the same time Christ offering to save him—a person flees to Christ—receives Christ as his only hope, and becomes willingly dependant on Him for salvation.

True faith has nothing at all of worth about it, and in the truest sense cannot be called "a work." It is but taking hold of the Saviour's hand, leaning on His arm, and receiving His medicine. It brings with it nothing *to* Christ, except your sinful soul. It *gives* nothing, *contributes* nothing, *pays* nothing, *performs* nothing. It only receives, takes, accepts, grasps, and embraces the glorious gift of justification which Christ bestows, and by renewed daily faith

enjoys that gift.

Of all Christian graces, faith is the most important. Of all, it is the simplest, but of all it is the most difficult to make people understand correctly. Some who have no faith are very sure that they are believers. Others, who have real faith, can never be persuaded that they are believers at all. But nearly every mistake about faith may be traced up to the root of natural pride. We are tempted to persist in sticking to the idea that we must pay something of our own in order to be saved. As to a faith which consists in receiving only, and paying nothing at all, it seems as if many cannot understand it.

Saving faith is the ***hand*** of the soul. The sinner is like a drowning man at the point of sinking. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ holding out help to him. He grasps it and is saved. This is faith.

Saving faith is the ***eye*** of the soul. The sinner is like the Israelite bitten by the fiery snakes in the wilderness, and at the point of death. The Lord Jesus Christ is offered to him as the brazen serpent, set up for his cure. He looks and is healed. This is faith.

Saving faith is the ***mouth*** of the soul. The sinner is starving for lack of food, and sick of a severe disease. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before him as the bread of life, and the universal medicine. He receives it, and is made well and strong. This is faith.

Saving faith is the ***foot*** of the soul. The sinner is pursued by a deadly enemy, and is in fear of being overtaken. The Lord Jesus Christ is put before him as a strong tower, a hiding place, and a refuge. He runs into it and is safe. This is faith.

No other doctrine is so ***beautifully simple*** as justification by faith. It is not a dark mysterious truth. It places eternal life within the reach of the most unlearned; and the poorest in the land.

No other doctrine is so ***glorifying to God***. It honours all His attributes: His justice, mercy, and holiness. It gives the whole credit of the sinner's salvation to the Saviour He has appointed. It honours the Son, and so honours the Father who sent Him.

No other doctrine is so ***designed to put man in his right place***. It shows him his own sinfulness, and weakness, and inability to save his soul by his own works. It leaves him without excuse if he is not saved. It offers to him peace and pardon "without money and without price."

No other doctrine is so ***comforting to a broken hearted and repentant sinner***. It brings to him glad tidings. It shows him that there is hope even for him. It tells him, that although he is a great sinner, there is ready for him a great Saviour; and although he cannot justify himself, God can and will justify him for the sake of Christ.

No other doctrine is so ***satisfying to a true Christian***. It supplies him with a solid ground of comfort—the finished work of Christ. If anything was left for the Christian to do, where would his comfort be? He would never know that he had done enough, and was really safe. But the doctrine that Christ did it all, and that we only have to believe and receive peace, meets every fear.

No other doctrine is so ***sanctifying***. It draws people by the strongest of all cords—the cord of love. It makes them feel in thankfulness bound to love much, since much has been forgiven. The free grace of Christ will produce far greater effects on people's lives than the sternest commands of law.

No other doctrine is so ***strengthening to those who share the gospel***. It enables them to come to the most sinful of people, and say, "There is a door of hope even for you!" It enables them to feel, "While life lasts there are no incurable cases among the souls under my charge."

No other doctrine ***wears so well***. It suits people when they first begin, like the Philippian jailer, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" It suits them when they fight in the forefront of the battle. Like the apostle Paul, they say, "The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of

God." (Gal. 2:20.) It suits them when they die, as it did Stephen when he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59.) Truly this doctrine must be of God.

Have you this faith? Do you know anything of child-like confidence in Jesus? Do you know what it is to rest your soul's hopes completely on Christ? Oh, remember that where there is no **faith**, there is no justification. Where there is no **justification**, there can be no peace with God. Where there is no **peace with God**, there is no **heaven!** And what then? There remains nothing but hell.

These are not mere theoretical subjects. They lie at the very roots of Christianity. They are bound up with life eternal.

1. Let me, then, for one thing, request each of you to put *a direct QUESTION* to yourself.

Have you peace with God? You know there is such a thing. You know where it is to be found. But do you possess it yourself? Is it yet your own? Oh, deal honestly with yourself, and do not avoid my question! *Have you peace with God?*

I do not ask whether you think it an excellent thing, and hope to obtain it at some future time before you die. I want to know about your state now. Today, *Have you peace with God?*

Do not allow any public events to make you put off thinking about your own spiritual welfare. The wars and problems of nations will never cease. But after all, a hundred years from now these very things will seem of little importance to you. The question I am asking will seem a thousand times more important. You may possibly be saying then, too late, "*Oh, that I had thought more about peace with God!*"

May the question ring in your ears, and never leave you until you can give it a satisfactory answer! May the Spirit of God so apply it to your heart that you may be able to say boldly, before you die, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

2. In the next place, let me offer *a solemn WARNING* to everyone who knows that he does not have peace with God.

You have not peace with God! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your *danger!* You and God are not friends. The wrath of God abides on you. God is angry with you every day. Your ways, your words, your thoughts, your actions, are a continual offence to Him. They are all unpardoned and unforgiven. They cover you from head to foot. They provoke Him every day to cut you off. **There is but a step between you and hell.**

You have not peace with God! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your *foolishness!* There sits at the right hand of God a mighty Saviour who is able and willing to give you peace, and you do not seek Him. For ten, twenty, thirty, perhaps forty years He has called to you, and you have refused His love. He has cried, "Come to Me," and you have replied, "I will not." He has said, "My ways are ways of pleasantness," and you have said, "I like my own sinful ways far better."

And after all, for what have you refused Christ? For worldly riches, which cannot heal a broken heart; for worldly business, which you must one day leave; for worldly pleasures, which do not really satisfy; for these things, and such as these, you have refused Christ! Is this wisdom? Is this kindness to your soul?

I beg you to consider your ways. I grieve to think how you are utterly unprepared to meet God. Seek Christ, that you may have peace within and a present help in trouble! Become acquainted with Him who is a brother born for adversity, and the Prince of peace—a friend who

never fails nor forsakes.

3. Let me, in the next place, offer *a loving APPEAL* to all who want peace and know not where to find it.

You want peace! Then seek it without delay from Him who alone is able to give it—Christ Jesus the Lord. Go to Him in humble prayer, and ask Him to fulfil His own promises and look graciously on your soul. Tell Him you have read His compassionate invitations, and ask Him to give you rest.

Seek Christ Himself, and *do not stop short of personal dealings with Him*. Open your whole heart to Him. You must keep nothing back from Him. Christ alone can satisfy the soul.

Seek Christ, and do not *wait for anything*. Wait not until you feel you have repented enough. Wait not until your knowledge is increased. Wait not until you have been sufficiently humbled because of your sins. Wait not until you have no tangle of doubts and darkness and unbelief in your heart. Seek Christ just as you are. You will never be better by keeping away from Him. "*It is impossible that people should believe in Christ too soon.*" It is not humility—but pride and ignorance that makes so many anxious souls hang back from closing with Jesus. They forget that the more sick a man is, the more need he has of the physician. The more bad a man feels his heart, the more readily and speedily ought he to flee to Christ.

4. Let me, in the next place, offer *some ENCOURAGEMENT* to those who have good reason to hope they have peace with God—but are troubled by doubts and fears.

You have doubts and fears! But what do you expect? Your soul is within a body full of weakness, passions, and infirmities. You live in a world that lies in wickedness, a world in which the great majority do not love Christ. You are constantly liable to the temptations of the devil. That busy enemy, if he cannot shut you out of heaven, will try hard to make your journey uncomfortable. Surely all these things ought to be considered.

I say to every believer, that so far from being surprised that you have doubts and fears; I would question the reality of your peace if you had no inward conflict. There is seldom life in the heart when all is still and quiet. A true Christian may be known by his *warfare* as well as by his peace. These very doubts and fears which now distress you are tokens of good. They satisfy me that you have really got something which you are afraid to lose.

Beware that you do not help Satan by becoming an unjust accuser of yourself, and an unbeliever in the reality of God's work of grace. I advise you to pray for more knowledge of your own heart, of the fullness of Jesus, and of the devices of the devil. Let doubts and fears drive you to the throne of grace, stir you up to more prayer, send you more frequently to Christ. But do not let doubts and fears rob you of your peace. You are a sinner saved by grace. And you must not be surprised to find daily proof that you really are a sinner so long as you live.

5. Let me, in the last place, offer some *counsel* to all who have peace with God, and desire to keep up a lively sense of it.

It must never be forgotten that a believer's sense of his own justification and acceptance with God has many degrees and variations. At one time it may be bright and clear; at another dull and dim. At one time it may be high and full, like the flood tide; at another low, like the ebb. **Our justification is a fixed, changeless, immovable thing. But our sense of justification is inclined to many changes.**

What then are the best means of protecting in a believer's heart that lively sense of justification which is so precious to the soul that knows it? I offer a few hints to believers.

(1) To keep up a lively sense of peace, there must be constant *looking to Jesus*. We must keep our eyes on Christ.

(2) There must be constant *communion with Jesus*. We must use Him daily as our soul's Physician, and High Priest. There must be daily communication, daily confession, and daily forgiveness.

(3) There must be constant *watchfulness* against the enemies of your soul. He who would have peace must be always prepared for war.

(4) There must be constant *following after holiness* in every area of life—in our tempers, in our tongues, at home or abroad. A small speck on the lens of a telescope is enough to prevent our seeing distant objects clearly. A little dust will soon make a watch go incorrectly.

(5) There must be a constant *effort made after humility*. Pride goes before a fall. Self-confidence is often the cause of laziness, of hurried Bible-reading, and sleepy prayers. Peter first said he would never forsake his Lord, though all others did—then he slept when he should have prayed—then he denied Him three times, and only found wisdom after bitter weeping.

(6) There must be constant *boldness in confessing our Lord* before people. Those who honour Christ, Christ will honour with much of His company. When the disciples forsook our Lord they were wretched and miserable. When they confessed Him before the council, they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

(7) There must be constant *diligence about means of grace*. Here are the ways in which Jesus loves to walk. No disciple must expect to see much of his Master, if he does not delight in public worship, Bible-reading, and private prayer.

(8) Lastly, there must be constant *jealousy over our own souls*, and frequent self-examination. We must be careful to distinguish between justification and sanctification.

I lay these hints before all believers. I might easily add to them. But I am sure they are among the most important things to be attended to by true Christian believers, if they desire to keep up a lively sense of their own justification and acceptance with God.

I conclude by expressing my heart's desire and prayer that you all may know what it is to have the peace of God which passes all understanding.

If you never had "peace" yet, may it be recorded in the book of God that this year you sought peace in Christ and found it!

If you have tasted "peace" already—may your sense of peace mightily increase!