



#4 “What are the benefits of life with God?”

To consider two of the benefits of life with God: peace and hope (Romans 5:1-11).

“Romans” is a letter in the latter half of the Bible. It is believed to have been written around 60’s AD, by the Apostle Paul, to the young church in Rome (hence the name). Paul wanted to encourage the church by explaining the “gospel” to them. The key sentence of the letter is this: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...” [Romans 1:16]**¹

The word “gospel” just means good news. The good news is to do with salvation – with being saved from God’s anger at humanity. It’s a solution that God himself provides in the sacrifice of his son Jesus (see session 1 on Romans 1:18-32, and session 2 on Romans 3:21-26). It’s a solution that requires trusting God’s promise that Jesus’ death is enough to pay for our wrongdoing (see session 3 on Romans 4:18-25).

“Therefore since we have been justified through faith...” (Romans 5:1) Paul goes on to spell out some of the benefits of this relationship.

Romans 5:1-11

1Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10For 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! 11Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

“Peace with God is a state of affairs, rather than a state of mind”

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Q1. Is peace with God a state of affairs?

Q2. Should peace be a state of mind?

Besides peace with God, the next benefit that Paul seems to focus on is 'hope' – he mentions it 3 times in 4 verses.

Tim Keller, author of the New York Times bestseller called "Reason for God" (2008) writes in another book called "The Prodigal God"²:

"At the end of history the whole earth has become the Garden of God again. Death and decay and suffering are gone. The nations are no longer at war. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain – for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Jesus, unlike the founder of any other major faith, holds out **hope** for ordinary human life. Our future is not an ethereal, impersonal form of consciousness. **We will not float through the air, but rather will eat, embrace, sing, laugh and dance in the kingdom of God, in degrees of power, glory and joy that we can't at present imagine."**

Q3. What do you think 'hope' is?

Writer and Christian theologian C.S. Lewis made these observations after the death of his wife³:

² Tim Keller, "The Prodigal God", 2008, p104..

³ C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (1961)

“How far have I got? Just as far, I think, as a widower of another sort who would stop, leaning on his spade, and say in answer to our inquiry, 'Thank'ee. Mustn't grumble. I do miss her something dreadful. But they say these things are sent to try us.' We have come to the same point; he with his spade, and I, who am not now much good at digging, with my own instrument. But of course one must take 'sent to try us' the right way. **God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't.** In this trial he makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.”

Q4. Why doesn't suffering *kill* hope?

Q5. How does someone who trusts Jesus know that God loves them?

Q6. How does someone who trusts Jesus know that God won't change his mind about them in the future?

Written by Caroline Spencer of City Bible Forum. 2012.

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