

Reconciled to God

Rashan?" came a voice behind him.

Rashan turned around in the drugstore to see it was Kalina, a statuesque woman he knew who was 37 years old.

"I haven't seen you in so long. Where did you move to?"

Rashan had moved out of his old neighborhood 12 years earlier. Kalina had always liked Rashan more than he did her, but the two were never a couple. She knew the old Rashan—the hurting, wounded, and fearful Rashan. He was drowning then. He did whatever to fit in and to feel better. Those were times that Rashan did not like to recall, and he used to wonder if he would ever know a sense of freedom.

Rashan and Kalina eventually paid for their purchases and met again on the drugstore's parking lot. It was there that Rashan addressed Kalina's repeated comments of, "You seem so different."

Finally, he told her, "As trite as it might sound, I found the Lord.

"And I wish I had done it sooner, Kal," he continued. "Really. The Lord has been so good to me. He showed His great love for me by dying on the Cross. He has given me freedom from sin and myself. He is my everything. And one of the best things is, I now have peace with God."

1. *What two sides of the Christian life might we experience?*

2. *Why do we sometimes feel contradictions as believers?*

3. *What does life with Jesus offer to help us reconcile questions about our spiritual life?*

Faith and Peace

Romans 5:1-5, KJV

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:1-5, NIV

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 boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Paul states that believers have been “justified through faith” (vs. 1). Saving faith happens when people realize that their sinfulness has alienated them from God, and there is no human cure for this spiritual condition. Left to itself, the sinned-stained soul will want less and less to do with God, and eventually abandon all desire for reconciliation with Him. But penitent souls who desire to be made right with God ask Him to be merciful and trust Jesus to save them from the consequences of their sin.

Paul then described all the wonderful things in store for the person who has experienced justification through faith. First and foremost, we have peace with God because of His grace in our lives. In addition, our suffering suddenly has a purpose; no longer does the pain we experience in this life seem gratuitous. According to Paul, our suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope.

Perseverance enables us to endure the trials of life. Character is who we're becoming because of our suffering, which we now understand has a purpose. We are becoming more like Jesus. And then, out of this character development comes the hope that will never disappoint, because it's secured by the promises of God.

The one who empowers this is the Holy Spirit, who fills every believer to accomplish God's will. Because of the Spirit's presence, God's love spills into our relationships, calling people's attention to Jesus' compassion and mercy.

4. *What is the result of saving faith in the heart of the new believer?*

5. *Why does suffering have meaning for those who are in Christ?*

Perfect Timing

Romans 5:6-8, KJV

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8, NIV

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 person, though for a good person 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.

Paul called attention to God's perfect timing in people's lives—when they realize their powerlessness over the sins in their hearts, seeing no hope in sight for their own deliverance. It was at this perfect time that Jesus died for those who were ungodly.

Many Jews felt that as long as the temple was standing, they were fine with God. But the salvation they needed was first and foremost spiritual, and Jesus died to give

them that salvation.

Today, when someone wants to express his or her loyalty to someone, that person might say something like “I’d take a bullet for you.” This is what Paul meant when he said that for a righteous person, one might dare to die.

Imagine the person who was in danger was belligerent, indifferent to the plights of others, and selfish. Not many people would line up to take a bullet for that person.

However, Jesus was willing to die for someone like that because he could see the wonderful things the Spirit of God could do in that person’s heart, transforming him or her into someone beautiful in character and spirit—if that person would experience saving faith and trust in Jesus. That saving faith would be impossible to experience unless Jesus had atoned for sins by sacrificing Himself on the Cross.

6. *What does it mean to be spiritually powerless?*

7. *What is amazing about Jesus’ willingness to die for those who (at the time) had no interest in salvation?*

How Much More

Romans 5:9-11, KJV

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Romans 5:9-11, NIV

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while 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 boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reconciliation after betrayal is difficult. There is so much hurt, it's hard to think about even going down that path. Forgiveness does not mean that reconciliation automatically follows. The person who has been forgiven may be insisting the behavior was justified—worse, fully deserved by the person who was hurt. If the behavior was criminal, the offender needs to be held accountable by the court system.

In the spiritual sense, when a person refuses to accept God's grace, the consequences of their behavior means facing God's wrath and eternal separation from Him.

From a human standpoint, reconciliation demands that our enemies come to terms with the damage they have caused—and take full responsibility for their actions. Even if their attempts to make amends fall short, they can ask for mercy—which should be given by the believer who has forgiven him or her.

This acknowledgement of sin is what happens when a person expresses repentance over what he or she has done and looks to God to be merciful. Once this happens, they are reconciled with Him and enjoy the Lord's compassion.

The result of reconciliation with God through the death of His Son is eternal life, and freedom from sin. We demonstrate this in the compassion we show to others—even those who may not be willing to reciprocate. For the sake of the Gospel, we endure hardship with the hopes that the Spirit of God will give them a sense of receptivity to the Gospel, so that they might experience saving faith.

This is the reason behind our boasting in the grace of God, that those who are far from Him and experiencing spiritual distress can be assured that we will be conduits of God's grace to them, no matter how badly they may have treated us in the past.

8. *What does it mean to be reconciled with God?*

9. *What is the only God-honoring thing to boast about in regard to our salvation?*

Peace with God

God's promise of hope and eternal life with Him can be ours when we understand it is possible to be fully reconciled with God. The first step for any kind of reconciliation is to recognize we have done wrong. This includes accepting that we are sinners in need of God's mercy and asking for forgiveness. When we trust Jesus in faith that He will save us from God's wrath, we receive salvation and are justified—made right in God's sight. Reconciliation and peace with God are made possible through Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross.

Paul wrote that Jesus came "when the set time had fully come" (Gal. 4:4). God orchestrated that time in history for Jesus and the Gospel message of peace with God. Even though people were focused on political deliverance, rather than spiritual deliverance, Jesus died for the righteous and the unrighteous alike. His gift of forgiveness came at the great price of Jesus' innocent trial and crucifixion. He experienced separation from God for us (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), that we might have eternal life. Jesus died in our place to bring us back to God.

We are powerless to save ourselves, and we receive the gift of faith only from God. We step out in faith when we sincerely repent and accept God's mercy. From that place of trust and rest in God's grace, we naturally tell others about the gift of reconciliation and peace with God that is available also for them. The Holy Spirit working in us helps us to offer compassion and grace to others in hope they also will experience saving faith and eternal life with God.

10. *Why was Jesus' sacrifice so costly?*

11. *How have you experienced reconciliation with God?*

12. *How and why does saving faith lead us to show compassion and grace to others?*

Resting in Right Relationship

Not only do we receive God's grace and forgiveness that lead to reconciliation, we then rest in our right standing with God. We do not try to climb up to Him, so to speak, with good works, so we will be "more" reconciled. He did the work on the Cross, and we can thank Him for what He did and are humbled by what that reconciliation cost.

► *What is your response to the great things God has done through Jesus' sacrifice? One response would be to write your own hymn or poem of praise for God's gift of reconciliation with Him. Start it here.*

KEY VERSE

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. —Romans 5:1, KJV

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. —Romans 5:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of May 20 through May 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Joel 2:28-32—Call on God and Be Saved.
- Tues.** Romans 9:14-16, 25-33—Striving on the Basis of Faith.
- Wed.** Romans 11:1-4, 17-27—All Israel Will Be Saved.
- Thurs.** Deuteronomy 30:11-20—God's Word Is Very Near.
- Fri.** Mark 5:35-43—Do Not Fear, Only Believe.
- Sat.** Isaiah 52—A Beautiful Announcement of Salvation.
- Sun.** Romans 10:1-17—Confession and Belief Lead to Salvation.