

PRAYER

Disclaimer: 2 Peter 3:15-16, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand"

Book of Romans hectic. Why my fave book? I wonder, and since my wife and I are one, I guess she wonders too. Since we have established biblically the hectic nature of the book, in the words of worship leaders across this country who sing offertory pieces, do not listen to the voice but the words.

Intro: Name. Christian, who by grace ALONE is abiding in Christ. Christianity a heritage I am very proud of, coz glad to say the Lord is my salvation. Name, Nathaniel, means gift from God.

Husband to my Nathaniel, my wife Vanessa.

Year started, send edifying men I could walk with as friends and basically a band of brothers. One of those brothers is Gideon. Grateful for your friendship and that you were crazy enough to have me do this. For that matter, all that goes wrong today will be your fault.

Earlier said, Romans packed with truth. Unpacking some of it here today. Hope and prayer: we shall leave here with a renewed and deeper sense of what our salvation really means.

So, **Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through 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."** You see a therefore, you have to find out what it is there for. I will give a brief recap of Romans 1-4 to get a better understanding on how we landed here.

Romans 1:17, "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith". However, there is a problem. People are sick. Their disease is called **SIN**, and sin has separated us from God, and set us straight on a collision course with a holy God and perfect Judge! The problem is non-discriminatory. All are guilty, Jew, Gentile. All of us, according to **Romans 3:9-12, "What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All**

have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

BUT, God in his righteousness, provides a solution. **Romans 3:21-24**, "**But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**"

Some interesting terms come through in our passage for the day.

1. **We have been justified through faith.** God is a perfect judge. He has indicted mankind for our sin, and must punish us as a righteous Judge. In order to be a righteous judge and at the same time be a justifier(declare us righteous), someone had to satisfy the punishment for sin, which is God's wrath. Satisfied by Jesus' death on the cross hence **Romans 4:25**, "**He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification**". Jesus' resurrection is proof of God's approval of the sacrifice made.

So God declares us guilt-free. However, he also calls us righteous. Why? Coz Christ's righteousness is placed on us aka imputed to us. We are righteous only because Christ is righteous. It has nothing to do with what we have done, coz there is absolutely nothing we can do. Because of this, there is no boasting whatsoever. **Romans 3:28**, "**For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.**"

So does faith save? No! Only faith in Christ saves. This faith is an implicit (unquestioning/unreserved) trust in the Lord to save you and a turning away from sin because the Lord you have now believed demands it.

VI: - The object of your faith is of eternal importance. Everything that matters is rooted in Christ and springs forth from Him. Therefore **ONLY** faith in Christ **ALONE** can deem us justified; declared free and righteous.

-Also, it is important to note that justification, this declaration of one as free, is a one-time thing that has continuing results (what we call sanctification; we stumble, we march on; we fall, we rise again. All this by the help of the Spirit.

Dying to self, saying NO to the flesh. Jesus puts it wonderfully in [Luke 9:23](#), **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me”**) This goes on till our dying day.

2. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ: A big truth to grasp esp. in the here and now. Discuss that in a bit. Paul in Colossians 1:21 talks about our alienated state and enmity with God coz of our sin. So we were hostile to God, on his bad side and in His bad books. Things looked bleak.

But next verse talks about a reconciliation by Christ’s sacrifice through his physical death. Coz of this, we now enjoy a state of harmony, tranquility, security and friendliness towards God.

Why important? Best news ever! Why? Our biggest zib is not lack of basic needs or money or a good job, in my case sometimes, kara chucking during a Man Utd game. Our biggest problem is **SIN**. Coz we have been justified and have peace with God, we have the one thing that really matters.

I submit to you that the things that really matter are those that go beyond the grave, and money, beauty, a good marriage, etc are not it. Why? We can have these and still miss the whole point. What truly matters is your standing with God.

Also important coz with this knowledge that you have everything that matters, you have a realization that you can rest no matter the circumstance. All humans are created with a desire/need for security/stability. Sadly, this place is anything but secure/stable.

It was not stable for me as a 14 year old boy expelled from school for my salvation, ridiculed by all and sundry for my faith, threatened with witchcraft so I could get back to my senses, eventually changing school and having to redo a class since God and His Son had made me stupid, struggling with a new environment, etc. But one thing was for sure, even though I did not know even the little theology I know now (Veritas oyee!), I knew Christ was my rock. If it meant the end of my education, I was ready to go with Christ. I was ready to live on the street if chased from home, because I knew Christ was there with me.

I was in bring it on mode! In my mind, this is what I believed carrying my cross and following Christ meant. I had decided to follow Christ, and like Ruth

following Naomi, I was going the whole nine yards. The conviction was that strong. In a very small way, looking back to that time, I get a little glimpse of what is in the hearts of those who get saved in the Muslim world and have to go through much worse.

Friends betray, jobs are lost, economies crash, abilities wane. **What it means is things will not go your way all the time. What it also means is that the most important thing will not change. You are secure in God forever.**

Love the hymn, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL. The 3rd stanza resonates a lot with me, **“My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”** Many times we forget, but we must constantly remind ourselves of this most glorious of truths! Whatever your lot, it is well with your soul because Christ has saved you! Doesn't mean you will not feel pain/loss/heartache. All it means is even in that, you have the most important thing.

Romans 8:18, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” 2 Corinthians 4:17, “For our light and temporary affliction is producing for us an eternal glory that far outweighs our troubles.”

3 We have gained access by faith to this grace in which we now stand: The language is amazing. We have gained this. It is not earned, but rather profited to us. Not so the OT people. **Lev. 16:2, “The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.”** This held special meaning for the Jews in the Roman church. What does this access look like?

- Blood bought. (**Matthew 27:50-51, “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”**) This was the veil that separated the Holy of Holies—the earthly dwelling place of God's presence—from the rest of the temple where men dwelt.

- An all-time access. **Hebrews 4:16**, “**Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**” The exhortation is to APPROACH anytime you have need.

So, how seriously do we take this access? How serious are we about our prayer lives? Anything bought by Christ’s shed blood is of eternal value. This is an honour and privilege we cannot take for granted. We have to utilize this access and seek to know God and His will through prayer!

The grace in which we now stand: just like we cannot save ourselves, we also cannot live the Christian life by the power of our wills or our resolve. If faith ALONE in Christ ALONE saves us, then it follows logic that a life deemed worthy of God can only be lived by GRACE ALONE through God’s Spirit (**Note the active involvement of God in our salvation walk. He justifies, He sanctifies us by His grace and power and like we shall see later, He glorifies us. This is only possible by God’s help**)

By God’s Spirit, we put to death the flesh and live holy before Him. Are you struggling to live right? The bad news is you cannot live right however much you try to, in your own power. The good news, though, is that by the Spirit you can live right before God. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a desire for righteousness and to enable you die daily and follow Christ. Those called by God are called to die, and this death is a daily one through crucifixion of the flesh. You stand in the grace of God and this means you are now able, with God’s help to walk worthy of God, so seek to live HOLY.

Titus 2:11-14 has very encouraging words to this end. Listen to these glorious truths, “**For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**”

Let your daily cry be for God, by His Spirit to change your heart, daily shattering those rocky parts of it and making them soft to heed his voice. As the Psalmist

cries out in Psalm 139:23-24, so must we. **“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”**

To live the Christian life, a change of heart is a prerequisite. Give your heart over to the Lord, walk humbly before Him and sit at His feet in order to learn, by His grace, to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and become a self-controlled, upright and godly man/woman of the Lord.

4 Rejoicing in the hope of God: Romans 8:29-30, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” The tense Paul uses is key. He writes this bit in past tense to stress the certainty of this hope. 100 years from now, none of us will be alive. We shall all be dead and gone. But if we are in Christ, for sure, without a shadow of doubt, we shall be in heaven with him.

Hope mentioned here is not the way we understand it, as a probability. This is not a probably thing. This is a CERTAINLY, verily verily kind of hope. For sure, Christ will come back. For sure, we shall be with Him forever. For sure, our dwelling place will be with Him in heaven. For sure, God will make ALL things new to an extent Adam also never knew existed – a billion times better than Eden ever was. Why? Because it took Christ to make it happen. And this hope is sure, because it has been secured by Christ. He is our blessed hope! As we read earlier, Verse 13 of Titus 2 talks about **the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.** This is the be all and end all of life. This is what we call arrival, and this is what we must ALL live for and look toward.

A true and wise Christian is a forward-looking Christian. Looking forward to the day when the Lord will come back, because this is the purpose for which mankind was made. All our missions, vocations, callings, gifting and what not and yes, even our great salvation. All these serve the ultimate purpose of making us ready for the day Christ will appear in glory to take us home, a home he purchased and is preparing for us!

In closing, we are justified and at peace with God and we have a blessed and sure hope. That is ENOUGH! Christ is ENOUGH! In the grand scheme of things, the Christian is REALLY, REALLY doing okay. Does not mean ignore your pain/loss/tragedy. Your pain may be for a season, it may be for the rest of your life. But that is not what counts. That is not stability. This is stability; that you have a guaranteed future that makes everything you are going through pale in comparison. Take hold of that truth, for the Lord is **YOUR** salvation! Hallelujah!

PRAYER: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! As part of your bride, the church, we cry out, together with the Holy Spirit and say come! Help us to understand this that You have done for us by your blood. You have justified us and given us so precious an access to the Father. Thank you for the blessed hope we have in Christ! As we wait for your coming, help us to live holy, looking forward to the day You will come and take us home to be with you forever! Amen!