

Romans 5: War and Peace

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Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ - Romans 5:1

In Romans 5, Paul makes the case that our justification by faith gives us a peace with God. He then makes the case that Jesus reverses the damage done by Adam. Just as Adam introduced sin, and all who follow (obey) Adam are in sin, all who follow (obey) Jesus are saved.

Paul's message of peace is important because it is a matter of prophecy. On many occasions, the prophets of the Old Testament said that the Messiah would bring peace on earth (Isaiah 9:7, 66:12, Jeremiah 33:6, Zechariah 6:13). Many who believe in pre-millennialism teach that because men still fight today, the Messiah has not yet come in force. But what does Paul say? "We have peace". Why do we need peace with God? How are we at "war" with God? How does the blood of Christ lead to peace? How do I access the blood of Christ?

In Scripture, we have many enemies listed. Satan is an adversary (Matthew 13:39). Death is the final enemy to be defeated (1 Cor. 15:26). But Paul has clearly said in Romans 5:10 that if we are in sin, God is our enemy. Is there a greater enemy than God? Is any enemy more dangerous or powerful? When the prophets spoke of peace, is there a peace that is more important than the one between God and man? *"Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"* (James 4:4b).

Israel knew what it meant to have God as an enemy. God declared war on them for their sins in Isaiah 63:10. When that war was waged, Jeremiah described it (as the destruction brought by Babylon) in Lamentations 2:1-9. By God's nature He is in a condition of war with ALL things in sin.

So how can we have peace with an enemy who has no need of negotiation; who can destroy us without effort? As Paul says, our enemy also loved us, and sought to satisfy the divine wrath. In the ancient world, peace was reached by a total subjugation, NOT negotiation. God seeks to overcome us.

An excellent example of this is found in Numbers 25:1-13. There we read of how Phinehas saved Israel by striking down two of the most egregious offenders before God. When he did so, God offered him the "Covenant of Peace". This is one of the seven covenants of the Bible (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Phinehas, David and Christ). It is important because it is identified as a covenant of perpetual priesthood and atonement, the very thing Jesus would accomplish. The idea of satisfying God's wrath is the meaning of the word "propitiation", which we found in Romans 3:25-26. In Psalm 106:29-31, this story is recounted, with the conclusion being that what Phinehas did was reckoned to him as righteousness, and that it becomes something "for all generations", a clear reference to Christ.

Just as Phinehas made propitiation for Israel in presenting blood before God (propitiation), Jesus makes propitiation for us by presenting His blood before God. Just as Phinehas atoned for Israel's sin, Jesus atones for us.

Phinehas is called a man of peace. This might seem confusing at first, since Phinehas killed two people. Yet this work achieved a peace with God. As Phinehas was a peacemaker, so is Jesus. He is called the prince of peace who brings peace (Luke 2:14), but He also is called one who brings the sword (Matthew

10:34). The point is this: Jesus makes peace with God by slaying US! We are slain in a form when we are baptized into Christ; we die to our sins, and to our old man by the blood of Jesus. Jesus said that we can only be saved by being broken on Him (Matthew 21:44); this is the peace of prophecy brought by Christ. No terms of surrender; it is unconditional and total subjugation.