

Access Code

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Unashamed - A Study of Romans

Justification by faith does more than change our verdict; it gives us peace with God, access into grace, and the hope of sharing in His glory. Because grace is now the place where we stand, even suffering cannot shut us out. God uses it to produce endurance, character, and a hope that will never put us to shame because His love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

- The other day I had to go by an ATM and it asked me for my PIN.
 - I punched in the 4 digits without really even thinking about it.
 - But in the process, I fat-fingered the keypad.
 - It said I had the wrong PIN, but on the second attempt, I was able to access my account.
 - When I finished, it occurred to me how shockingly easy an ATM PIN is. Just four digits.
 - Only 10,000 possible numbers.
 - I'm honestly surprised that we're still using 4-digit PIN's.
 - How are we not already at retina scans, finger-print readers, complex passwords, or "scan the code with your mobile device."
 - Those things have kind of become the norm for our digital life.
- Just think about passwords now.
 - Long gone are the days that you can use "PASSWORD" as your password.
 - Now they have to be a combination of letters, numbers, capital & lower case, and at least 5 different special characters, and three Greek letters

- We have so many different passwords, we have to have an entire app, guarded by a password, just to keep our passwords straight.
- And don't you love the newest trick in the security toolkit? They send you a code that you have to put in.
 - How many of you have had to text your spouse the following at some point last week?
 - "Hey, send me that code you just got texted."
- Of course, my favorite is the CAPTCHA.
 - I know...the one on the church's member site is obnoxious when you try to make meal reservations.
 - You may not know what it's called, but you'll know what I'm talking about when you see it.
 - That dumb grid with little bitty pictures in it and you have to find all the pictures that are relevant.
 - Find all the squares with a bicycle, or a bridge, or a bus.
 - Don't you dare get it wrong - because it'll only get harder when it recycles and asks you to do it again.
 - That's called a CAPTCHA.
 - I looked up what it stands for:
 - Completely Automated Public Turing Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.
 - It's called the Turing Test because a guy named Alan Turing came up with the concept all the way back in 1950.
- All of these things are put in place to make sure that we are the only people who can access our accounts and other secure digital resources.
 - Even still, none of them are foolproof.
 - Last month, Heather's FB and Instagram get hacked.

- She had all the security things in place, but the hackers were still able to get through all of that and mess with her account.
- Kind of makes you realize in the world of the digital, we may only be operating with a very thin veil of security.
- Every one of those systems — PINs, passwords, two-factor codes, CAPTCHAs — is designed to answer one question: do you have access?
 - And we've seen this morning that access, even when we do everything right, is never guaranteed.
 - You can have the passwords.
 - You can have the security features turned on.
 - And you can still get hacked.
- If our access to a Facebook account is that fragile, what about our access to God?
 - Turn with me to Romans chapter 5. Paul is about to tell us that we have a different kind of access — one he calls "access into this grace in which we stand."
 - And I'll go ahead and give you the spoiler — this access is secured by a power far greater than any password you can imagine.
 - Let's read verses 1 through 5.

Scripture Reading

Romans 5:1–5 ESV

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- Paul writes one word to open chapter 5 that tells you everything about what's about to happen: "Therefore."
 - "Therefore" is Paul looking back before he looks forward.
 - So what exactly is he looking back at?
- For four chapters, Paul has built a case — and as we know, it hasn't been a comfortable one.
 - He told us no one is without excuse.
 - He told us God gives people over to what they've chosen.
 - He told us every mouth is stopped, every one of us guilty, with nothing to say in our own defense.
 - And then, right in the middle of that verdict, he showed us Abraham — a man declared righteous not because of what he did, but because of what he believed.
 - Justified by faith, apart from works.
 - That's the argument. That's where we've been.
- "Therefore" means: given all of that — given the verdict, given the righteousness we could never earn, given a faith that was credited to us as if it were our own — here's what it means for you, practically, today.
- Chapter 5 is where the doctrine becomes the experience.
 - This is where Paul stops proving justification and starts unpacking what it *gives* you.
 - And what it gives you, verses 1 through 5 tell us, comes in four parts: peace, grace, hope, and love.

- Four things you now have access to, because you've been justified by faith.
- Let's start with the first one. Access to peace.

Access to Peace (v. 1)

- "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"
- Sadly our most relevant concept for the notion of peace is the cessation of hostilities between two or more warring tribes or nations.
 - Most of this decade has been consumed with violence in eastern Europe and Israel.
 - Most of this year has been consumed with violence in the larger middle east.
- The reality is this: For centuries, the world has not passed through a single year without armed conflict somewhere.
 - Peace in one place has coexisted with war in another.
 - We know what it means for fighting to stop temporarily.
 - But humanity has never succeeded in establishing lasting peace throughout the world.
 - We certainly want those current conflicts to end, and future ones never to start, but when Paul is talking about peace here, he isn't thinking about war or the absence thereof.
- Instead Paul is addressing a conflict deeper than the wars between nations: the hostility between sinful humanity and its Creator.
- Consider:

Colossians 1:21 ESV

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

James 4:4 ESV

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Psalm 2:1–2 ESV

¹ Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,

- There are no neutral parties in this conflict.
- But something significant is happening here in [Romans 5](#).
 - Paul says that because we have been justified by faith, peace now enters our vocabulary as well.
 - We have peace with God through Christ.
- This is not just a temporary ceasefire waiting on one of the parties to blink
 - Instead, Paul is announcing a radically changed relationship.
 - Through Christ, those who stood condemned have been justified; those who were enemies have been reconciled.
- Paul’s words are wonderfully definite: “We have peace with God.”
 - Peace describes our standing before God.
 - Through Jesus Christ, the relationship has changed.
 - God receives us as people he has justified and reconciled to himself.
- That peace came at a cost.
 - Jesus bore our sins and satisfied the righteous judgment against them.
 - His finished work establishes the peace we now possess.
- That is why Paul begins with “since.”

- He builds on something already accomplished: “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.”
- Think about what that means when you approach God.
- You come before the One who has reconciled you to himself.
- You can confess your sin honestly, bring your burdens openly, and ask for help confidently.
- Christ has secured your welcome.
- That peace remains yours through grief, uncertainty, and suffering.
 - Even if your life doesn’t feel very peaceful, you can rest knowing that you have peace because of Christ.
 - Your feelings can’t undo the reality of your peace.
- Here's what that peace actually means when the alarm goes off tomorrow.
 - It means you don't have to spend today auditioning for God's approval. You already have it.
 - You can walk into a hard conversation at work without wondering if today's the day God finally gives up on you.
 - You can get the diagnosis, or the phone call you've been dreading, and know that whatever else is uncertain, your standing with God isn't one of the uncertain things.
 - You can put your kids in the car, drop them at school, sit in traffic, answer emails, fold the laundry — do the entirely unremarkable business of a Monday — as someone who is not at war with God.
 - Not on probation. Not hoping he's in a good mood today.
 - That's the difference between a truce and peace.
 - A truce means you're just hoping the other side doesn't strike first.
 - Peace means the fighting is actually over — permanently, not provisionally.

- And as remarkable as the gift of peace may be, that's just the beginning of what we have access to because of our justification.
- We also have access to grace.

Access to Grace (v. 2a)

- "Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand"
- First of all, this is where Paul uses the word access.
 - That's a beautiful word that is worth underlining.
 - That word isn't just about a door unlocking, an ATM machine giving you control, or logging into a website.
 - The word Paul uses shows up three times in the New Testament and every time it is talking about our access to something about the divine.

Ephesians 2:18 ESV

¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 3:11–12 ESV

¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

- The sense of the word is that it points to our access to a superior.
 - If the Secret Service knocked on your door and gave you a phone and said, any time you need the president, you call him on this phone and he will answer.
 - You would be blown away by that level of access...but that is what this word means.
 - So all of these gifts that we have access to are gifts from God because we have been justified.

- And they're all unlocked by faith.
- You don't have access to peace or grace because you earned it or worked for it.
- You have access because God has granted it.
- But faith is the key. It isn't a stretch at all to say that faith is the ONLY key.
- What does it mean to say that we have access to grace?
- The key to understanding it is in the phrase immediately after grace — it is grace in which we stand.
- We know that grace is God's unmerited favor toward us.
 - We can't earn grace. Grace is given.
 - But grace is also something "in which we stand."
 - Have you ever had a relationship with someone, like an employer or a supervisor or a coach or a teacher, and you didn't know what your status was going to be on any given day?
 - Sometimes they had a pleasant disposition to you.
 - Sometimes they seemed like they couldn't stand the ground on which you walked.
 - When it was good, it was great. When it was bad, it was awful.
 - That's the exact opposite of what Paul is saying here.
- We stand in grace.
 - Paul describes a standing already established that continues into the present.
 - Through Christ, we have entered grace, and here we stand.
 - If you are born again, you never have to wonder what your standing is with God.
 - You stand in grace.

- Through Jesus Christ, your standing before God is established in his gracious favor.
- That doesn't mean that your life is going to be sunshine and lollypops all the time.
 - That doesn't mean that you're going to get everything perfect all the time.
 - But it does mean this...you're never going to approach God as an enemy, and you're never going to find that God has changed his disposition of grace toward you.
 - That doesn't mean you can abuse this grace in which you stand - and Paul will deal with this very issue later on in chapter 6.
- God's grace shapes the way he deals with us.
 - His favor includes his patience, his provision, his correction, and his work of making us more like Christ.
 - When he corrects us, he does so as a Father caring for children he loves.
- Think about what that means on the day you fail.
 - You can bring your sin honestly before God.
 - You can confess it, receive his forgiveness, and respond to his correction.
 - Your standing in grace gives you confidence to come into his presence.
- And that becomes especially important in the next part of this passage.
 - Paul is about to talk about suffering.
 - Before he describes what suffering produces, he establishes where the suffering believer stands.
- We stand in grace.

- In light of all that we've gone through headed into chapter 5, what a treasure it is to know that our standing before God is grace.
 - And notice the way this is building.
 - Our hostility toward God is settled and our standing before God is secured.
 - Which means we have hope - even on the tough days.

Access to Hope (vv. 2b-4)

- The first part is easy - We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
 - If you don't stand in grace and you have hostility toward God, the glory of God will condemn you.
 - But if you are in Christ, one day you're going to dwell in the glory of God.
 - You are headed toward a destination and I don't think human words can sufficiently paint the picture of what that is going to be like.
 - The best we've got is that we rejoice in that future glory!
- The second part is harder.
 - Paul says we should also rejoice in our sufferings.
 - Suddenly, Paul is reminding us of what hope is.
 - It isn't wishful thinking.
 - There's no doubt that hope is a gift from God, but Paul tells us that hope is something that is cultivated over time, through a process.
- What does that process look like?
- It begins with suffering.
 - We don't like suffering — but that doesn't negate the fact that we should rejoice in suffering.
 - You don't have to like things to rejoice in things.

- When I finished my first marathon, I was in tears as I crossed the finish line. It was the hardest physical thing I've ever done.
- It was self-imposed suffering - at the same time I rejoiced in the outcome.
- We spend a fair amount of time in this life trying to avoid suffering — but it is just a matter of time before it finds us.
- We have health problems or we experience the loss of a loved one.
 - We're not masochists who are looking for trouble for the fun of it.
 - We're humans who live in a corrupt and fallen world.
- But suffering does have an aim. Paul says it produces endurance.
- The only way through suffering is through it.
 - One day at a time...sometimes one hour at a time.
 - Endurance means continuing to trust God under the weight of what you are carrying.
 - Sometimes, that trust means just getting out of bed in the morning.
 - Sometimes it looks like praying through tears.
 - Sometimes it looks like showing up to worship with a heart so heavy that someone else has to do the singing for you.
- Through that endurance, Paul says, God produces character.
 - The word carries the idea of something tested and proven.
 - Pressure has revealed its genuineness.
- As we walk with God through suffering, faith is exercised.
 - We learn to bring our weakness to him.
 - We discover his sustaining grace in circumstances we would have preferred to avoid.
- Over time, we have a history with God.

- We can look back and say, “His grace sustained me there.”
- He gave me strength for that day.
- He provided help through those people.
- He carried me through that season.
- And proven character produces hope.
 - Notice where the process takes us.
 - We began with hope in verse 2, and we arrive at hope again in verse 4.
 - The hope we possessed at the beginning has been strengthened through the journey.
 - Our confidence grows because we have experienced the faithfulness of the God who holds our future.
- That helps us understand why we can rejoice in suffering.
 - We know that God is at work within it.
 - Your most painful season lies within the reach of his grace.
- Some of you are in the middle of that process right now.
 - The suffering is immediate, and the outcome is still difficult to see.
 - Paul gives you somewhere to stand while you wait.
 - You stand in grace.
 - You are headed toward glory.
 - And God is faithfully at work along the way.
- How do we know? Because we have...

Access to Love (v. 5)

- Paul tells us why this hope is trustworthy:
 - “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

- Think about that expression: “poured into our hearts.”
 - That word “poured” is another one worthy of an underline.
 - When something is poured out, there is a sense of generosity and abundance.
 - If I’m pouring something out, I’m not holding anything back.
 - In [Revelation 16](#), the judgments contained in the bowls are “poured out.”
 - But here, we’re not talking about judgment, we’re talking about love.
 - He has poured out his love for us.
 - It’s not something he only gave us a little of, just a taste to make sure we liked it.
 - No, he poured it into our hearts.
 - But he did so with a particular mechanism.
 - Through the Holy Spirit.
- All of this we’ve been talking about is not just stuff that you’re supposed to manufacture.
 - As God gives the Holy Spirit, we are given the means to recognize these gifts.
 - In particular, the Spirit enables us to recognize God’s love for us and receive it personally.
 - It is one thing to say, “God loves his people.”
 - It is a deeply personal thing to say, “Through Jesus Christ, God loves me.”
- That matters enormously in suffering.
 - Pain reaches beyond the body or the circumstances.
 - It raises questions about our relationship with God.

- Does he see me? Does he care?
- What does this season mean for the way he regards me?
- Paul has already told us where we stand: in grace.
 - Now he tells us what God has poured into our hearts: his love.
 - The Spirit who has been given to us bears witness to the love of the God who has welcomed us.
 - As we hear his Word, pray, worship, and receive the care of his people, the Spirit works to deepen our grasp of that love.
- Next week, Paul will point us directly to the cross as its great demonstration. Here, he emphasizes the Spirit bringing that love into our personal experience.
 - The God who has secured our future also gives himself to us in the present.
 - Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us
- The guarantee behind everything above — not something you maintain, something given and poured out.

Access to Assurance (v. 5)

- Paul says this hope will never put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
 - That last phrase matters: the Holy Spirit has already been given to us.
 - Earlier, Paul pointed us toward the glory of God.
 - That is our future.
 - Now he points us toward the Spirit of God dwelling within us.
 - That is our present.
- And the two belong together.

- In [Ephesians 1](#), Paul calls the Holy Spirit the guarantee of our inheritance.
 - The word carries the idea of a down payment.
 - A down payment places something of real value into the present as a commitment to complete what has been promised.
 - It is the first installment of what is still to come.
- Think about what God has given us as his pledge: his own Spirit.
 - The God who promises us a future in his glory has already come to dwell within us.
 - Through the Spirit, we begin to experience the life, love, and fellowship with God that will one day reach their fullness.
 - We have the Spirit now. We will share in God's glory then.
- That gives us assurance as we move through everything between those two moments.
 - When suffering comes, the Spirit is with us.
 - As endurance develops, the Spirit sustains us.
 - As character is formed, the Spirit works within us.
 - And as we look toward glory, his presence assures us that God will complete what he has begun.
- The strength of that assurance rests in the One making the promise.
 - God has pledged himself to the future he has prepared for his people.
 - Through Jesus Christ, we have peace with God.
 - We stand in grace.
 - We rejoice in hope.
 - His love has been poured into our hearts.

- And God has given us his Spirit as the down payment on everything still to come.
- The access code is faith: trusting Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification.
- But maybe as I've walked through this passage, you've realized you don't have any of this.
 - You don't have peace with God — you've got a truce at best, and some days not even that.
 - You don't stand in grace; you're not sure where you stand at all.
 - Hope feels like wishful thinking, not something being built.
 - And love poured into your heart sounds like something other people have found, not something you've experienced.
 - Here's the good news: everything Paul describes in these five verses is available to you.
 - Not because you've earned access — nobody earns this — but because Jesus Christ already paid for it.
 - He lived the life you couldn't live. H
 - e died the death you deserved.
 - He rose again, and because he did, God can justify sinners without compromising his own justice.
 - That's what makes peace possible.
 - That's what opens access to grace.
 - That's the ground hope stands on.
- The access code was never going to be something you crack on your own
 - Not through good behavior, not through religious effort, not through cleaning yourself up first.
 - The only way in is faith: trusting Christ instead of trusting yourself.

- If that's you this morning, if you've never turned from your sin and trusted Christ to save you, I want to invite you to do that today.
- Not to walk an aisle for the sake of walking it, but because you're ready to stop trying to earn what can only be received.
- And if you're sitting there unsure which category you're in — unsure if you've really trusted Christ or just grown up around church — I'd love to talk with you about that too.
- That uncertainty is worth resolving, not ignoring.
- But listen, if you belong to him, you can face the coming week from this settled position:
 - You stand in grace.
 - God's Spirit lives in you.
 - And your future rests in the faithfulness of God.