



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG113: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season
PEACE: Love's Security

Romans 5:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

25 October 2015 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Do you find it easy to say sorry and make peace with those you fall out with?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Are you confident that you live under God's favour or are you fearful of his judgement?

2: It could be said that of the world's religions the Christian enjoys the lowest level of confidence in his salvation. When the doctors tell him he is about to meet his God, he prays for a miracle! Why? Do we actually believe he is there?

3: Truthfully, at the present time what hopes do you have for the future? Do they include what Paul has in mind here?

This is the good news and at the heart of Paul's message. Jesus didn't die for us because we were good or even a bit nice, we were horrible, we were sinners and that one little word covers every conceivable ugly depraved act humankind can commit. We were not nice. Even the best of us were not good enough. John Newton in his famous song *Amazing Grace* expresses his own surprise that God could save a "wretch like me." Jesus died for our sins when we could not have been any worse.

The Peace of God

Up to now Paul has concentrated on what God has already done for us and the peace we now have with God but there is more for us to look forward to which gives us another kind of peace this time we have peace of mind for the future. He looks to an event in the future when there will be a day of reckoning which Paul calls God's wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed. A day will come when all our lives will be examined, all our secrets will be revealed, every action, word and thought will come under scrutiny for God's judgement and that surely is enough to scare even the bravest soul.

But the Christian has a wonderful hope based securely on what God has done in Jesus on our behalf and the righteous verdict issued to us in the present when we accept Christ as our Saviour, will be reaffirmed in the future on the elected day. Paul tells us that we will be saved from the wrath of God, he will not condemn us, we will be saved through Christ's life, (v 10). Jesus died and was raised to life again and we share in his resurrection in this life and even more so on the last day when God's wrath will be revealed. We will stand alongside Jesus, justified, cloaked in his own righteousness forgiven, accepted and loved by God.

The peace we now can rest in is based entirely on God's love for us and what he did through Jesus. He's already done the hard bit, he has already endured the pain, the betrayal, the rejection, the cross and that was when we were sinners, now that we have accepted Christ and have peace with God and we are generally trying to live in a manner that pleases him (some of the time), he is not then going to withdraw his favour and abandon us even when we mess up at times, he made his peace with us by the blood of his Son, he is not going to give up and abandon us now, we can be sure about this, Paul says "*How much more having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so...*" (10-11) "*Not only is this so...*" in other words, **this is a fact!** He will not abandon us, having been reconciled to Him we will stay reconciled to Him, nothing will ever "*be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Romans 8:39

Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice!

Surely we have cause to celebrate and rejoice, we should be the most positive, joyful thankful people on the planet, because of what Jesus has done for us we have peace with God, things are right between us and God both now and in the future.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

None of us want to suffer and nothing causes us to question God's intentions more than when we or those we love suffer, but it is inevitable that we all will face pain in some way, it is part of life. Even the Queen with all her privileges is not exempt from suffering.

In 1992 she gave a speech to mark her 40th anniversary of her Accession and she referred to recent events as part of an *"annus horribillus."* Her horrible year saw the Prince of Wales separate from Diana, and her revealing biography by Andrew Morton was published. The Princess Royal got a divorce and the Duke of York's freshly estranged wife, Sarah, graced the tabloids topless. Unsurprisingly the popularity of the royal family, plummeted and to cap it all Windsor Castle almost burned down. We may or may not have had sympathy with the royals but over the years one could not question the Queen's steadfast faith in Christ. Her Christmas broadcasts demonstrate the intensity of her faith. She reminds Christians that the feast marks *"the birth of Our Saviour", the "Prince of Peace" who is "our source of light and life in both good times and bad"* and in her 2002 Christmas day speech she said this, *"Like others of you who draw inspiration from your own faith, I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel."*

Although we would do all we can to avoid suffering Paul is saying that good things can come out of them if we allow God to work in us. *"All things work together for good."* Romans 8:28. He says that suffering produces perseverance, or patience, - we say that someone is long suffering when they are patient in spite of troubles, which shows strength of character, sufferings also develops hope. Hope in a God who will accompany us in this life and greet us in the next. Hope is such a wonderful thing and Paul mentions it several times in this passage alone. It's strange that hope, unlike peace is not one of the fruit of the Spirit because where would we be without hope.

Faith can be hard to maintain and there may be times when faith escapes us but hope is that small flickering light within us that will not go out completely, the light at the end of the tunnel, and when faith has all but died and can no longer be relied upon to get us through, hope is still there deep within us never disappointing us because of the love God poured into our hearts and the gift of his Holy Spirit placed there by Himself and who tells us that in the end all will be well because of Jesus, who at exactly the right time, when we were lost, helpless and without hope, died for us and in our place.

God's Love

Most parents would say that they would be prepared to give their lives for their children and there have been many reported incidences where a pregnant woman suffering from cancer has refused treatment in order to protect the life of her helpless unborn child and then subsequently died herself leaving the new born without a mother, but alive. She has sacrificed her life for that of her child, incredibly sad, but we can understand the choice she made out of love. What we are unlikely to do however is to give our lives for someone we don't know especially someone that we would consider undeserving, we would never do that, yet this is what God did out of love for us in Jesus. Jesus is God's love in action. His word speaks of his love but it is Jesus, hanging on a cross, dirty, beaten, suffering in agony, crying and feeling abandoned who shows us God's love, the cross is a picture of God's love for us. *"While we were still sinners Christ died for us,"* (v8.)

How can we ever doubt that God is good and that we are loved when he went to such lengths to prove his love for us. We were helpless, powerless to help ourselves so God Himself rescued us. While we rebelled against him, against his laws, his commands and his interference in our lives, he still loved us, while we denied him, ignored him, and worshipped other gods, he still loved us and when we turned against him and said we had no need of him he still loved us. *"While we were still sinners Christ died for us."*

4: What does this passage say to you personally about God's love for you? How should you respond?

5: Has Paul helped address any fears you may have about God's wrath and the day of reckoning?

6: Discuss whether you think your/our worship reflects the fact that in the light of this message we should be the most joyful, positive people on the planet.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG113: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season **PEACE: Love's Security**

Romans 5:1-11

Home Group Sermon Notes

25 October 2015 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

At Easter this year in the state of California Governor Jerry Brown granted pardons to 83 people. One of them, a man called Eddy Zheng had committed crimes of robbery and kidnapping and spent 19 yrs in prison, after his pardon he is quoted as saying, *"It doesn't change the fact that I committed my crimes. It doesn't change that I hurt my victims, my community, my family and myself,"* but he did say that he considers the Easter Sunday announcement a new beginning in his life. He had committed and been convicted of his crimes but the Governor's act of clemency had forgiven him, restored his civil rights and offered him a future.

Without Christ in our lives we have no future, there is no hope, our sins condemn us and we can never be free. It is only when we believe and trust in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead that we are granted a pardon and although we can never disassociate ourselves from the things we have done in our lives before we believed in Christ, the sins we commit will not be erased from our, or others memories, by God's grace through Jesus Christ we can be forgiven and made right with God. In our passage today we are thinking about the peace we have with God through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

United in Christ

If there is one word that sums up the message of Romans it would be justified, which means to be declared righteous at the moment of our salvation when we accept Christ as our Saviour, but what does it mean to be justified? Well, it means that we are made righteous in the sight of God, but what does righteous mean? According to the dictionary it means that we are good, moral, ethical and upstanding, blameless, guiltless reputable and decent, noble trustworthy and godly, in fact we are squeaky clean! Justification does not *make* us righteous, rather it *pronounces* us righteous. Our righteousness comes from placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice covers our sin allowing God to see us as perfect and unblemished. As believers we are united *in* Christ, and when God looks at us, although he sees us and who we are, he sees that we have Christ's own righteousness cloaked over us and that meets his demands for perfection and He declares us righteous. This brings about a huge change in our relationship with God. We go from living under his judgement because of our sins to living under His eternal favour.

Peace with God

We receive this great gift when we trust that Jesus paid the price for our sins when he took them to the cross and died in our place. His death frees us and instead of punishment, we receive forgiveness. Jesus has made it possible for us to be at peace with God. Peace means that a broken relationship has been restored and it's what happens when two people who haven't been speaking, once again become friends and the enmity that once filled that relationship is replaced by joy, a positive change has taken place in the relationship between two people who once were enemies.

For the Christian there is no longer any enmity between God and ourselves. We no longer stand accused. We may have fallen out with family or friends or be at war with our neighbour, but for the believer the good news is that we are on good terms with God, he is at peace with us through the saving work Jesus Christ. This is not to be confused with the peace *of* God, a feeling of stillness in the midst of troubles and vitally important but peace *with* God has to come before we can experience the peace *of* God and its not something that *we* can make happen.

We cannot *"make our peace with God,"* as the phrase goes, e.g. the dying man was asked if he had made his peace with God. We do not make peace, Jesus made it for us 2000 years ago when he died on the cross and signed the most important peace treaty in history, the reconciliation to end all reconciliations, God and the believer are at peace. Paul says *"we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."* (v2) *"In which we now stand"* is in the present tense. We are not in favour some days and not others, we don't fall in and out of grace, we *stand* in grace, it is a permanent state of acceptance and friendship with God and nothing can separate us from Him now.

Peace of course is a fruit of the Spirit and something every human being longs for and in places all over the world, strives for, - life without conflict. Peace with God may give us an inner peace and tranquility from knowing that our sins are forgiven, but its worth reminding ourselves that we cannot trust and rely on our feelings regarding this, or in fact anything where faith is concerned, we cannot go by how we feel. For example, if you were to name someone whose faith you admired many of you may say Mother Teresa. She truly showed the world what it meant to follow Christ and serve him and others. Faith and the presence of Christ shone out of her. When she was first called by God to serve she experienced a profound sense of God's presence yet throughout her life Mother Teresa knew a deep sense of longing for Him and overwhelming periods of doubt. People were attracted to the peace and joy that radiated out of her yet she herself wrote of her sense of darkness and loneliness. In a letter to her spiritual director she said, *"The place of God in my soul is blank. There is no God in me. When the pain of longing is so great I just long and long for God and then it is that I feel He does not want me. He is not there."* She attributed his absence to her sinfulness at first but came to believe that her painful experience was an essential part of living out her mission and she became a witness to hope having built her life on pure faith.

In the midst of pain and doubt Mother Teresa remained faithful. Her feelings and emotions told her one thing, her faith told her another, so we should not concern ourselves over peaceful feelings or the lack of them, emotions deceive, trust rather in the peace that Christ has won for us between ourselves and God and the access we now have to him. Access that we so rarely consider or that we take for granted. For instance think of someone you would really love to meet but had very little hope of doing so, maybe some celebrity or head of state, how many barriers are in the way of you getting a meeting with them, and then if you did, how long would you get with them, and would they really be interested in you, you would just be part of their schedule for the day. How much more wonderful to know that you have free access to the Living God, no appointments are necessary, no time limits are imposed, no dress code required, you can walk up to him at any time of day or night and he is thrilled to accept you, as one who has a right to be there, standing in grace—not on the basis of your works, not claiming any merit save the merit of Jesus Christ.

Our Hope

So Paul urges us to celebrate and to rejoice in the hope that we have, the certain hope of one day seeing God Himself in all his glory and in the meantime we hold a hope within us, however small and tenuous it may be that he is changing us into the image he intended for us, the very image of God Himself. We are even to celebrate in our suffering, (v3). Although Paul is not saying we should celebrate our sufferings but celebrate *in* them, there is a difference.