

All Roads Lead Here: The Security Blanket
By Jason Huff
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Psalm 61; 1 John 5:18-20; Romans 5:1-5

Friends, our final Scripture reading today comes from Romans 5:1-5. May God add His blessing to the reading of His Holy Word. “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 rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

The security blanket. Linus from *Peanuts* has the world’s most famous security blanket. It does far more than keep him calm; Linus uses it as everything from a scarf to a hat to a bullwhip. I did a little hunting to find out where the term “security blanket” comes from. It came about in the 1920s when they sold “security blanket clips” to put in a baby’s crib. You put a blanket over the crib to keep them from falling out, and the clips kept the blanket in place. “Security blanket” was also a military term in WWII. It was all the procedures meant to keep classified military information secret. But now, a security blanket is anything we have – a stuffed animal or something sentimental – that helps us feel safe.

Today’s passage is our security blanket. This is one of the most comforting passages in Romans and perhaps in the New Testament. We’re going to spend two weeks going through it. And we’re going to spend today just talking about the first sentence. But that sentence is powerful, and it’s my prayer that we’ll find real reassurance in its truths today.

Our sentence starts with this: “therefore, since we have been justified through faith.” The “therefore, since” means everything else in the next few verses hinges on what comes next. This is the key: “we have been justified through faith.” The last several weeks, we’ve talked about justification at length. Justification is where God declares that believers in Jesus are not guilty of our sins against Him. In fact, God sees as having the righteousness of Jesus Himself. Through His perfect life and death, Jesus justifies everyone who believes and trusts in Him through faith.

What’s so important is not the terminology – we know from earlier in Romans that justification happens through faith in the risen Jesus. But what matters is the tense. *We have been* justified. That’s hugely important. Though we will be justified on Judgment Day, we have *already* been justified by God. It’s done, finished, complete. If you want something to write in your notes, here’s the first biggie: *Christians are already justified by their faith in Jesus.*

What does that matter? Past tense, present tense, future tense, what’s the big deal? It’s a done deal. Believers can know they are saved because our justification is already complete. You have already been made right in God’s sight. If you trust in Jesus, if you have faith in Him that is shown by your actions, you aren’t waiting for your justification. The moment you truly believed, you were justified. It isn’t that God will count you righteous at some future point. God has already credited Jesus’ righteousness to your account, so your debt is paid.

We wait for a lot of things to happen. Those of us who were *Star Wars* fans waited 16 years between films at one point and 10 years at another point. We weren't sure there would ever be any more. And sometimes, we wait and nothing happens. This week, somebody in Vietnam hacked my Ebay account and tried to have \$1,800 of precision equipment sent to someone in California. Because we caught the hack before they were sent, that guy is going to be waiting a long, long time for his calipers.

Sometimes things don't happen because we've done something wrong, like the Ebay fraud guy. And sometimes things don't happen because of circumstances beyond our control. And a lot of us worry about our salvation because we're not to the end of our journey yet. What if we really mess up? What if we do something terrible? What if something awful happens to us and we begin to doubt? Can we ever be assured of salvation?

Paul says we can be because we *have been* justified. He doesn't want us to worry about it. He wants us to grab hold of the truth of our salvation and live it out. He doesn't want us worrying about doing good deeds out of the fear that we might not see heaven otherwise. He wants us doing good deeds because we're so happy we're saved, we've justified, we're declared right in God's eyes!

Because fear isn't a great motivator. The fear of getting paddled kept me from doing a lot of things when I was a kid, but it didn't make me love my parents more. But when I knew my parents loved and respected me, I was much more willing. I was still a kid; I still needed that mix of fear and love, because like every child, we want to do our own thing rather than what our parents tell us. But how much better it is when we respond to God because we know He loves us and wants what's best for us! How much better it is that we do what God asks because we already know that God has justified us in His sight and we want to say "thank you!"

Everything else we'll talk about for the next two weeks flows out of this thought. If you know you have been justified before God, the rest of this is true. If you don't know that – if you aren't sure you are actually right with God because you've never entrusted Him with your life and come to faith in Jesus Christ His Son – do it today, and the rest of this passage's blessings will belong to you as well.

So here's what comes next: "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is not run-of-the-mill peace, not just contentment or joy or happiness. This is not peace that comes *from* God, from knowing Him. This is peace *with* God.

So here's our second point: *when we believe, our war with God is over*. When we look at history, peace is the gap between wars. History is the story of conflict. Peace is not our natural state of affairs. I thought about it this way – there are a few people here who were youngsters during WWII. But just as soon as we were done mopping up that conflict, we got involved in Korea, and then Vietnam. Then there was the Cold War with Russia, which I remember as a kid. Then we saw our country involved in the Gulf War, the Iraq War, war in Afghanistan, and the ongoing war on terrorism. It seems like we are always embroiled in some conflict somewhere. And those are just the public wars the United States has fought.

There have been all sorts of wars in the middle east, war in Syria, war in the Ukraine, war in Sudan, wars against Israel, wars in South America. War is constant. Somewhere around the world, there is a war going on. World history almost makes war look inevitable. If history tells us anything, it's that human beings are by nature in conflict.

Our warlike nature in the physical realm reflects our warlike nature in the spiritual realm, too. The Bible is primarily a historical record of God's interaction with our world. It records the record of our war with God and God's war with us. Our ancestors Adam and Eve started the war by disobeying the one rule God gave them – they believed the lie that they could be like God, that they could rule over Him rather than the other way around. Ever since that time, humanity has tried to get the upper hand, disobeying God at every opportunity and fighting for dominance over Him rather than enjoying our rightful place and purpose as His creation.

But each war has two sides. God is at war with us as well. What we often don't like about the Bible are the declarations of woe – that God judges both Israel and Israel's enemies alike for their wickedness and rebellion. And Jesus continues those declarations of woe! He declares woe on the hypocritical Pharisees. He declares woe on Jerusalem when that great city ignored His message of salvation. God did not start the war – we did. But God will see it through to its end and judge appropriately everyone who does not turn to Him.

The modern world doesn't like this side of God and Scripture at all. There used to be songs like "Onward Christian Soldiers" – songs about fighting a spiritual battle. Those hymns are hard to find now. But even more, we hear it in the way that people describe God. Sometimes these are honest Christians who haven't been taught well; sometimes it's just people who don't really know the truth. We hear things like, "The God I know only loves. The God I know would never have wrath. The Jesus I know wouldn't ever condemn you or what you do. Everyone on earth is a child of God." It's a free country. You can believe whatever you want. But that is not the God of Scripture, and that's the only God we've got.

But here's the great and awesome and powerful news. Since we have been justified by faith, since God sees us as righteous, wearing the righteousness of Christ, the war is over. The battle is done. We are no longer on the wrong side. We are no longer traitors and spies and turncoats. We are on the heavenly side of the battle. We are no longer at enmity with God. Ephesians 2 explains that Jesus' blood shed on the cross put an end to hostilities for all believers.

Friends, we not only have peace *from* God – peace that can get us through the darkest times – but we have peace *with* God. Sometimes we sin, and we fall badly, and we wonder if God has His warheads pointed back at us. And the answer is no. Since your justification is done, He's not going to go back on His promises. The difference is, if you've been saved, you know you are on the Lord's side now. You know that what you've done displeases Him. You want to get rid of that sin from your life because you want to please God. You won't want to hide from God like Adam and Eve did, pretending they could somehow get away from Him. You want to deal with that sin so you can know the pleasure of the Lord again.

The situation of Adam and Eve moves us back to our final point, the final fantastic thing we learn today. Here's the last part of the sentence – “through [Jesus], we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” That's the third and final blessing we're going to talk about today: *Jesus grants us entry into the presence of the Father and His grace upon us.*

Everywhere you go, there are signs saying, “No entrance.” Every restaurant has a sign saying “Employees Only.” You drive down I75 and what do you hit? A portion that's closed for repair. No entrance. When you buy a ticket to a concert, you only get to go into the venue; you've only bought a seat. You don't get to visit with the band or go in their dressing rooms. The only way you can do that is with a VIP All-Access Pass. If you *can* get one of those, which is really rare, you pass astronomical amounts for them! A lot of places are just off limits. We lock our doors at night, right? That's just one more way of saying, “You can't come in here.”

Through a huge chunk of history, that's the way it was with God. We first run into a “no entry” sign at the Garden of Eden. Once Adam and Eve had sinned, paradise was off limits. A flaming sword was placed in the entryway, and the cherubim were sent to stand guard. Adam and Eve had no access to their former home. They also didn't have access to God, who once walked with them in the garden.

Throughout the Old Testament, direct access to God is extremely limited. Only Moses out of all the Israelites could approach God, and then with great caution and humility. When people approached God nonchalantly, if even the priests touched the Ark of the Covenant or made sacrifices they weren't authorized to make, there were severe consequences. And the symbol of the lack of direct access to God was the place called the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies was in the tabernacle, the mobile sanctuary where the Israelites worshipped for hundreds of years. The Holy of Holies was incorporated later into the temple. The Holy of Holies was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The men of Israel worshipped right outside the Holy of Holies, but the Holy of Holies itself was off limits. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, in order to make a sacrifice to cover the people. Legend had it that the high priest had a rope bound around his ankle so that if he died while he was in the Holy of Holies, others could pull him out. The Holy of Holies was marked off by a huge, deep, thick curtain. You couldn't see through it, you couldn't hack through it. It represented the impenetrability of God's space. **You couldn't go in.**

When Jesus died, when He laid down His life for us on the cross, suddenly, everything changed. On that day, access to the Father was finally granted because we could be made right with Him through the blood of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each tell us that the temple veil was torn in two. Nobody could go into the temple and do that, not even with a sword. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their gospels for different audiences – Matthew for Jews familiar with the Old Testament, Luke for newcomers outside of Israel. But all three mention that specific detail. The part of the temple where God said He would reside among His people, where no one could go under penalty of death, is now out in the open. Through Jesus, God in His great love for us gave us something beyond measure we didn't deserve – He gave us access to Himself.

The book of Hebrews talks a lot about the Holy of Holies, the priestly rituals, and how Jesus fulfilled everything necessary to stop the cycle of rituals and sacrifices. And in Hebrews 4, we're told that since we have a great high priest in Jesus who has taken away our sins, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. We now stand in God's grace. Our entire reason for confidence, our whole reason for joy, our reason to rejoice in hope, is because God's grace has been poured out on us, and in that grace we stand. We do not stand on our own righteousness, our own goodness, our own ability or strength. We stand in Christ alone.

Sometimes you might think, "I'm so little, so small, so insignificant, so unworthy. How can I pray to the God of the universe and expect Him to hear me or do anything for me?" Sometimes we're unwilling to pray, especially in public, because we're afraid we don't have the right words. Our prayer life at home may be just for the things we think we can't handle. But God says, bring everything to me. Bring your whole self to me. Bring all you've got – all your hurts, all your worries, all your pain, all your sorrows, all your sins, all your shame, all your hopes and dreams. God wants to hear from you. Approach the throne of grace with confidence.

God is in the process of making you like His Son, but He already sees you as your very best you. He's the one handing out the VIP passes, and if He's given you faith in Jesus, you've got the all-access tour. The worst thing you can do is not to take advantage of it. Can you imagine having backstage passes to see someone like Billy Joel or U2 or Paul McCartney? Can you imagine forgetting about the concert and losing out on that experience, not to mention the thousands of dollars it would cost? Then don't miss out on your opportunity to approach God and to know Him and to recognize His love for you and to see Him answer your prayers.

Friends, we have a security blanket in our Lord Jesus Christ far better than anything Linus could imagine in his wildest dreams. We need not fear anything. We have the Lord. 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. Live into this truth. Live like you believe this truth through and through. And you will have joy.