

What you already have may be more than you realize

Romans 5:1

June 12, 2005

Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am an idealist. I have been an idealist for as long as I can remember. I don't know if it's part of my genetic inheritance or something that was planted in me by the way my parents raised me or just something that has seemed right to me from the very beginning.

An idealist is one who believes in the ideal, who longs for the ideal, who is not really satisfied with anything less than the ideal. Pretty good is not good enough. If you're going to do something, don't just do it well, do it ... well, do it perfectly! Why not? And when you do it, if it's not there yet, do it again! Do it better! Keep striving for the ideal!

As an idealist, I am continually measuring everything against the ideal -- myself, my character, my job performance, my personal relationships; the church, our Christian witness, our Christian unity, our relationships with each other; our nation, our national character, our national witness, our relationships as a nation with other nations. And as an idealist, you can imagine what happens ... I spend much of my life rather unhappy because I and our church and our nation fall short of the ideal.

Some of you are idealists, too. But even if you are not, even if you are an easy-going, laid-back realist, I know that you still dream! I know that you too are filled with hunger and thirst for something more, something more than what the world offers you at face value. I know you too long for peace, real peace, lasting peace -- for the world and for your soul. I know you too want to know something of God, to know that God is good, to know that God does love ... you.

Would you be here at all if there was not something of the idealist in you? We come to church searching for the Big things: for meaning with a capital "M" ... for Truth, for Purpose, for Relationship. We may not find those things here, or at least not entirely, but we are here because we are looking for them, we are here because we are longing for them. We long for peace, we long for acceptance, we long for affirmation, we long for love, we long for God's love.

And many of us, maybe most of us, spend much of our lives rather unhappy, because reality falls well short of what we long for. We stay because we want to keep trying, we stay because the desire still burns strong within us, we stay knowing that we aren't there yet and may never get there, but we don't know anything else to do but to keep trying ...

This morning I want to tell you something very important. Something I have learned from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Something I believe, even if I do not yet believe it, if you know what I mean. Do you know what I mean? Do you know how it is to believe something absolutely and yet not be able to let that belief filter down through your body and mind and spirit and transform the ways you think and act and feel?

Anyway, I have something very important to tell you! Something I believe. Something I pray you will believe. What you already have may be more than you realize! What you already have may be more than you realize ...

Now that we have been put right with God through faith ...

Have been put right with God! Present perfect tense! -- indicating an action begun in the past and brought to completion in the present! It's been done! You are right with God! You are right with God ...

How? Through faith. Through your faith, through your readiness to entrust yourself to God's grace and mercy, through your readiness to receive God's gift to you in Jesus.

How have you been put right with God? *By faith!* Because you believe. Not because your belief has changed your life sufficiently to warrant God's OK. Not because you have purged all doubt from your mind. Not because you have finally tamed your conflicted heart. Not because you do the right thing all the time or even want to do the right thing all the time.

How have you been put right with God? *By faith!* Because you believe.

We measure ourselves against the ideal. We think we fall short -- in the strength of our faith, in the completeness of our virtue. We think: *Someday I may be there, I'll just keep trying ... Someday, maybe, I will be right with God.*

You have been put right with God, through faith. When you believe, when you utter a simple, *Yes*, when Jesus asks, *Do you trust me?* ... you are right with God -- period! Never place a period where God has placed a comma ... How true! How true! But the reverse is equally true. Never place a comma where God has placed a period!

Now that we have been put right with God through faith ... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have peace with God. We long for peace, real peace, lasting peace, for the world and for our souls. We long for peace, we long for acceptance, we long for affirmation, we long for love, we long for God's love. Friends, we have it!

We have peace with God! There is no enmity between God and ourselves. There is no tension, no striving, no uncertainty, no verdict hanging in the balance.

We have peace with God! We don't need to seek it. We need merely to enjoy it ... and live it. We need merely to rest ourselves in it, to rest ourselves in the peace that passes all understanding.

Does that mean that all doubt and struggle and confusion and disappointment and grief disappear? No, it does not. But it does mean that in the midst of doubt and struggle and confusion and disappointment and grief, we have peace. In the midst of doubt and struggle and confusion and disappointment and grief, we sleep, we rest, we hope, we celebrate, we give thanks ... because we have peace with God.

Do you believe it? *Now that you have been put right with God through faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* You have peace with God. What else could you possibly need?