

**SERIES: UNSHAKABLE FAITH  
PART 1: THE DIFFERENCE GOD MAKES**

God really can make a difference in our lives when we are listening to and obeying Him. He really does give us leadings and premonitions all the time. A while ago I heard this story. A high-school student told his mom that he felt like God was showing Him he was going to face a life-changing decision soon. The family was supposed to go to a football game together, but the son chose to stay home. That night some students from his school were in a car accident, and one student was killed.

At first, the son told Mom they were his friends. But later on he gave more details. He was actually with them. He was about to get in the car when it occurred to him this could be that life-changing decision. While he considered this, the driver got a phone call. The driver asked him if he would give up his seat. The one without a seatbelt. A friend had called asking for a ride, so he gave up the seat. It just so happens that person was the one who died.

The young man was quite shaken by what has happened, but is now more sober and serious about renewing his walk with God. All because He let God make a difference in his life.

We start a new series today entitled UNSHAKABLE HOPE. Paul in chapter 5 invites us to celebrate the marvelous benefits that have been given to those who place their trust and love in Jesus Christ and what He has done for them. Paul highlights two benefits particularly: "Peace with God" and "Hope." Please follow along as I read Romans 5:1-5 **"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord had done for us. 2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. 3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of**

character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”

I want us to look at this subject this morning (afternoon) **HOW TO ACCESS THE BENEFITS OF BEING MADE RIGHT IN GOD’S SIGHT.**

I. **Walk in the peace that God has for you in the here and now.** Romans 5:1

Once you understand that God loves you and He is on your side--that is why He sent Jesus Christ to free you from the penalty for your sins by presenting Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for your sin. You are made right Paul says in Romans 3:25 **“When you believe that Jesus sacrificed His life for you.”** When you put your trust in Jesus Christ you are placed into a right relationship with God. The first benefit of being justified by God of your sin is that you now have **PEACE WITH GOD.** God’s peace moves beyond peace as simply being the absence of hostility and war, but it has to do with a deep sense of personal well-being, knowing you’re accepted by God and that you’re loved, adored, valued and desired. There are gifts and benefits you can only receive as you place your trust and faith in Jesus Christ. God wants you to live your life out of a deep sense that you belong to Him. He is not angry, disinterested or put off by you regardless of what you have done or what has been done to you. You now have peace with God because He has restored you so that you’re reconciled with Him, which means you are His friend. Paul says in vv. 10-11 **“For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of His Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”** What makes peace with God so amazing is that God initiated to us to become His friends when we were His enemies (v. 10), weak (v. 6) and sinners (v. 8). Please get this, loved ones, regardless of what you have done or what has been done to you, no matter how awkward, alienated, alone you have felt, God

has restored your dignity, value and significance as you place your life in His hands. He absolutely loves you. I am seeing people's lives change as they tell me the worst things they have done and what have been done to them, and I simply respond to them the way I know Jesus responds to them. I don't react in shock, or disgust or with rejection, but I communicate that I am sorry that happened to them and want them to know that the love, forgiveness and passion of Jesus for them not only forgives them but puts them on a new journey and adventure with Him. Peace with God means you have a new purpose, identity, strength and joy. But you get to choose whether you will receive His peace and that you walk in it. This is the first benefit and difference that God desires to make in your life when you allow Him to make yourself right with Him. What a loving Savior. He calls you His friend in whom He smiles over every second of every day, and He takes great delight in you. How might your life change today if you choose to begin to walk this way in His love and purpose for your life? Colossians 1:20 says, **“And through Him God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.”**

## **II. Stand in the presence and sustaining love of God.**

The second benefit we experience from being made right by Jesus Christ and we have been reconciled to our Father God is that we now have unprecedented access in this place of undeserved privilege. In vs. 2a in the ESV it says, **“Through Jesus we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”** Because of what Jesus has done on our behalf the metaphor grace pictures a place where Jesus has ushered all who believe. As N.T. Wright states, **“A place characterized by the presence and sustaining love of God.”** The Word grace refers to a favorable position that God has given us so we can develop a relationship with Him. Standing in the place of grace goes beyond being made right with God and experiencing peace with God. Being made right with God, being justified with Him is not just the negative removal of a negative hostility, but it has a positive aspect which has to do with our friendship with God. To stand in the presence and sustaining love of God means you can go to God continually with your requests, problems

and failures, and He not only listens but will hear you and help you and relate to you. You not only walk in God's peace and stand in His presence and experience His love that forgives, heals and empowers you, but you can also. Romans 3:24 says, **"Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty of our sins."**

### **III. Joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.**

Romans 5:2b argues that the benefits of being made right in God's sight, being justified, includes walking in peace as opposed to feeling alienated, estranged and distant from God. He has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you. The 2<sup>nd</sup> benefit is that you get to stand and live in God's presence which is dominated by His eternal, unconditional, everlasting, sustaining love. Paul says we get to, with hope, look forward to sharing God's glory. The biblical word for hope is much different than the word for hope in our culture. When we say we hope for something it usually means we want something without the certainty that it will happen or that we will get what we want. But the Greek word Paul uses is the word Elpis; it means a conviction of Christian hope, which is not a hopeful wish, but it's a hope-filled certainty. The reason Paul lists this benefit third is because the more you experience your peace and access with the Father through your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the more you desire to see Jesus face to face and the more certain and thrilled you become about the prospect of seeing and experiencing God's glory. Because He calls us friends because of our relationship with Jesus we have this certainty that we will spend eternity with Him, and we get to share God's glory. What is God's glory? Glory is defined as the brilliance, majesty, power and all who God is. God's glory involves His eternal power and divine nature. The miracle of all Paul says the third benefit from being brought into friendship with God is that when Jesus Christ comes back for us we get to spend eternity with Him sharing in all of who He is. It is mind boggling, friends. The God and Creator of the universe wants and desires to live, love and relate with you for eternity. Only God can plan this out for us. This is the difference God makes.

#### **IV. Embrace the enduring joy that comes through pressure. Romans 5:3-5**

I love how realistic and honest the Bible is with us. These three benefits, walking in God's peace, standing in His presence of sustaining love and joyfully looking forward to sharing in God's glory, are the most incredible benefits you can ever imagine. But it is also true that our lives are stressful, fearful and complex and involve pain as well as pleasure. When life is going well we get to enjoy and savor these incredible benefits. Here is the question I want us to close with. When pressure, suffering and disaster come what difference does God's peace, access to His presence and the certainty of spending eternity with Him in His glory, might and power make to us right now?

Paul writes this in vv. 3-5 **“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”**

**The Bible says that God can use pressure to produce the following benefits in our lives.** The word Paul uses that some translations translate as problems, trials or suffering literally means pressure. When you surrender your life to Jesus Christ He can take all of your stress, pressure, problems, disasters, and traumas, and He uses these to develop three leading character traits, if you will let Him.

##### **A. The ability to actively overcome the problems of life. Romans 5:3b**

Paul uses the Gk word Hupomone which some translate as endurance, perseverance, fortitude and stick-to-itiveness. Pressure, disappointments and difficulties can be used by God, says Paul, when you see pressure as joy that will give you the ability to allow God's Word to produce fruit in you. Jesus says in Luke 8:15 **“As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with**

**patience.**” The key is to commit to having an honest and good heart which means that you put your trust in God and you depend on Him when the pressure comes because you know He is desiring to develop in you the endurance, perseverance, fortitude, stamina, and strength that will give you the ability to overcome the problems in life. God’s purpose for you is to overcome the problems in your life not be overcome by them. Keller writes, “Hupomone is a word that literally means ‘single-mindedness.’” Suffering makes us “focus”--it helps us focus on what is really important. It makes us remember what really is lasting, helps us to re-align priorities. It removes distractions. Loved ones, in a culture where so many of us are distracted with a spiritual ADD and ADHD, our attention span is very short and weak. God allows the problems in our lives to help us snapped out of our self centeredness and selfishness and become alert to what He says is most important. Fortitude, perseverance and stamina only come from facing our problems and asking God to help us face them and overcome them. Endurance is the ability to not passively hang on but actively overcome the problems and difficulties we face. When Beethoven was threatened with deafness, that most terrible of troubles for a musician, he said: “I will take life by the throat.” Church that is hupomone. Someone once said to a person who doesn’t flinch who was undergoing great strain and stress: “Stress and pressure really colors life, doesn’t it?” Back came the reply: “Yes! And I am determined that I will choose the color. Friends that is hupomone.

## **B. Develops a quality of confidence that can only come through experience.**

**The Bible tells us that endurance, the ability to actively overcome the problems of life, leads to developing strength of character. The Greek word is dokime. This is a word that really means “Testedness.”** It is a quality of confidence that comes from having been through an experience. It only comes from following through and doing your duty despite it all. Dokime is used of metal which has been passed through the fire so that everything base has been purged out of it. James 1:3 says, **“For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.” So let it grow.”** 1

Peter 1:6b-7 says, **“There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many difficulties for a little while. 7 These trials and difficulties will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.”**

It is only after one endures many difficulties, strength of character develops that was not present previously. Such tested character in turn generates hope.

**C. Results in hope which is a strong assurance in one’s peace, access to God and future glory.**

Hear me, loved ones, as I close this morning (afternoon). This is critical. The purpose of thlipsis, suffering, troubles, problems and pressures is to give you the ability to actively overcome the problems in your life. One of the ways that God gives you wisdom is to give you problems on a daily basis to solve. As you do successfully He will give you more. It is through this daily learning to actively overcome your problems that you develop a quality of confidence, stability and assurance that only comes through these experiences. Hey, and get this. This all leads to growth in hope which is a stronger assurance of and confidence in one’s peace, access to God, and future glory. Suffering removes from us rival sources of confidence and hope; other places we might look to for our sense that, deep down, we are OK, and that our future will be OK. Suffering drives us to the one place where we find real hope, real confidence and certainty: God.

**Communion: Mark 14:17-24 “In the evening Jesus arrived with the twelve disciples. 18 As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you eating with Me here will betray Me.’ 19 Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, ‘Am I the one?’ 20 He replied, ‘It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with Me. 21 For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays Him. It would be far better for that man if he**

had never been born!’ 22 As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘Take it, for this is My body.’ 23 And He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And He said to them, ‘This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and His people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.’”

Romans 3:23-25a “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. 24 Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin.” Romans 4:25 “Jesus was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.”