



PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH FAITH

Ephesians 5:1-11 Graeme Odgers

Introduction:

Anzac Day has evolved into a Special National Day of remembrance for many Australian families. The past and present service of men and women touches Grandparents, Uncles, Aunts, brothers, sisters and children, right across the breadth of this great country.

My grandfather's brother on my mother's side died in 1917, at age 25, on the fields in France after a German shell impacted right near where they were extending trenches. His name was Leslie Shoemark and he was well respected in the area of Lake Bathurst, just south-east of Goulburn.

When Pop's second son was born, he was given the name George Leslie Shoemark to honour Leslie; he was my Uncle George. Years later Uncle George served in the Second World War and was on the Kokoda Trail in PNG. Throughout the remainder of his life he suffered from malaria and tropical disease. Later, on my grandmother's side, a second cousin of mine was given the name Leslie Croker in memory of Pop's brother.

My father served in the 9th Battalion in North Borneo as a signalman. He was not physically injured, but had his moments of sadness, not wanting to talk much about that time in his life.

Like hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens, who gather at memorials in cities, suburbs and towns across Australia, we too remember all those that did not come home and those that did come home, ... but were never the same again. We remember their sacrifice in the name of peace.

Over the last century many service men and women have committed themselves to the pursuit of peace. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice in giving up their lives, others returned from conflict changed and burdened by the horror of war. Unfortunately, not all of

our service men and women were able to leave the conflict on the battle lines but brought it back with them.

Military conflicts have been engaged to bring about peace, though they may have achieved their aims in dismantling powers of evil, they have not achieved a lasting world peace. The result of war has been the spreading of pain and suffering to many families across the globe. Even today families mourn for their loved ones, service men and women suffer from bodily injuries and many remain burdened by wounds that cannot be seen; unfortunately this is often an unspoken outcome from the horror of war.

So if you are able, let us stand and observe a minute of silent reflection for those who have served and their families.

What then of peace? What do we mean when we use this word? The Cambridge Dictionary gives a couple of definitions:

- freedom from war and violence.
- the state of *not being* interrupted or annoyed by worry, problems, noise, or unwanted actions.

From these definitions 'peace' is linked to war – physical war and internal personal war. Peace is a struggle and by ourselves, difficult to achieve. Soldiers group together in war, but how does a single person find peace?

Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 9:6: *“And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*. Christ is the Prince of Peace, the provider of peace. I don't think it's a coincidence that Anzac Day and Easter are so close together. Because where Anzac Day reminds us of an earthly attempt for peace, Easter shows us that through God's grace to us, Christ is the true connection to peace.

Today's passage from Romans is titled - **Peace with God through Faith**

1. Peace and a standing of grace

Paul takes us on a journey in this passage as he describes a different form of peace.

Rom 1:18 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*

This shows us that by not obeying the Law of God man is placed under God's wrath. Across the ages and in today's world man doesn't even recognise their wickedness because they have turned away from the truth of God.

Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*

Being conscious of sin can lead to all kinds of mental anguish, definitely not towards peace. The peace we would think of here is the peace given by Jesus, it's a peace in our soul, our heart and mind. For the believer a change has taken place.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ...*

Can you see the point here? Paul's wording is carefully phrased.

- First we have been justified, made righteous through faith,
- We no longer continue to wage war against God as believers,
- We are at peace with God, through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are no longer battling against God.

Rom 5:2 *... through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

It is through Jesus we gain access to God's grace and we can stand firm, assured, that we are at peace with God. As people of God, the battle against sin is not over, because as humans we are tempted in many ways in society today. Just as wars last a long time the battle against sin is one that the evil one does not want to stop. Focusing on Jesus helps us win these battles as we are permanently brought into God's grace, and we can be at peace with God, and we can boast in the hope of the Glory of God – His magnificence, infinite majestic nature of perfection.

2. The promise of glory

Walking in God's grace helps us to cope with suffering or those difficult issues we face in life (KJV Tribulations). The next verses give reason to this aspect of life

Rom 5:3,4 *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Because of God's grace Paul tells us, all believers can glory in tribulations (suffering or stress) because we have the knowledge that this produces perseverance as we grow in Christ. This develops our Christian character, and from this stems our hope through Christ. Spurgeon wrote of tribulation -

“Tribulation worketh impatience, and impatience misses the fruit of experience, and sours into hopelessness. Ask many who have buried a dear child, or have lost their wealth, or have suffered pain of body, and they will tell you that the natural result of affliction is to produce irritation against providence, rebellion against God, questioning, unbelief, petulance, and all sorts of evils. But what a wonderful alteration takes place when the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit!”

When your heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit it is possible to glory in suffering by praising God for being with you in that suffering. We can persevere each day as God works in our life through the Holy Spirit.

3. Evidence for hope

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

The hope that suffering and tribulation builds in us, is not a hope that will disappoint. We are assured of this because God has proven He wants to complete His work in us - the proof being as Paul writes *the love of God . . . poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

We probably have the deepest experience of God's love being poured out for us when we first become Christians, especially if it brings a major change in a person's life. But through God's grace He has provided this through the Holy Spirit.

Through fellowship and quiet time reading God's Word you will also experience *the love of God . . . poured out in our hearts* - to have a deep inner awareness of God's love for you at a personal level.

4. A description of God's love towards us

Rom 5:6-8 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

These verses describe the greatness of God's love. It is love given to the undeserving, to those **without strength**, to the **ungodly**, to **sinners**, those **battling against God**. This emphasizes the fact that the reasons for God's love are found *in Him*, not in us.

5. Salvation from God's wrath

Rom 5:9-11 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

This is the amazing and glorious news that by accepting Christ as our saviour we have been reconciled to God through the Son's blood. No longer are we under God's wrath, so we can boast of God's grace to us through Christ sacrifice. John 15:13 says *No one shows greater love than when he lays down his life for his friends.*

For Christians, ANZAC day has greater significance because we can also relate it back to Jesus as the sacrifice for us - one who lived a perfect life, took on the sins of the entire world, died a horrific death on the cross and rose again after death - all so we could be free from God's wrath, at peace with God and redeemed through His Son Jesus.