

## Jesus Quenches Our Thirst Romans 5:1-8

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St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

*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 boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. 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.*

*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 love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:1-8, NIV)*

In the name of Christ Jesus our Savior, dear friends:

News makes us thirsty. I'm not talking about needing a drink of water, but a thirst for something the news can't deliver. Last week's news has been dominated by war in the Middle East and the United States' involvement in it. We thirst for peace, but even if one war stops, another war will rise up. This particular war has the danger of spawning terrorist acts of hatred across our land. We thirst for peace and love, but all we hear about is unrest and hatred.

Some news we receive is more personal in nature: "You've got cancer." "Your car is totaled." "Your loved one is dying." We thirst for hope, and sometimes we get good news that raises our hopes, but the future is never certain.

For us who thirst this way, the apostle Paul has some very good news. He tells us, **Jesus Quenches our Thirst:** Our thirst for peace, our thirst for hope, and our thirst for love.

Even within our text, Paul delivers some bad news. "We were still powerless... We were still sinners." The bad news of the Bible is called God's law. God in his law tells us his requirements for us to enter heaven: Don't have any other gods, don't misuse his name, and so forth. But the law shows us our sin, how we miss the mark with these commands. We are absolutely powerless to please God and gain his favor. You and I both know it. We're told, "Don't keep gossiping, or listening to gossip," but we find it hard to stop. We're told, "Tell the truth," but we find ourselves fibbing or fudging the truth to get ourselves out of trouble. Instead of being godly, like God in holiness, we are ungodly. What Isaiah reported fits us: "There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked" (Isa. 48:22). That means us: Our ungodliness makes us wicked sinners, having no peace with God.

Now listen to Paul's good news: "We have peace with God!" How? "Since we have been justified through faith." In chapters 3 and 4 Paul went into detail about how we are justified—declared not guilty by God of sin. It comes "through faith," not by our works. It comes "through our Lord Jesus Christ." While we and the rest of the world had sinned, Jesus came, the Son of God, who lived a sinless life. He was then presented to God "as a sacrifice of atonement" (Ro. 3:25), making the payment for the world's sins, which we receive by faith in Christ—faith that attaches us to our Savior. Jesus died, and he "was raised to life for our justification;" God was satisfied with the payment and raised him to life (Ro. 4:25), declaring us justified, not guilty, forgiven.

Because we're justified, the result is peace—the greatest kind of peace, peace with God! With our sins forgiven, there is no longer any barrier of sin between us and God. Paul adds that through

Christ “we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” There’s no waiting period, no news that says, “Hostilities will end at a later date, and then you’ll have peace.” No, we stand in that grace, that undeserved gift of love, right now! All this is thanks to Christ, our Savior from sin. Yes, Jesus quenches our thirst for peace.

Being justified and having peace also means that we have something to boast about. “And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” Fans of the top-ranked basketball team boast that they’re going to win the tournament and gain the glory. In Christ we are confident that we will reach God’s glory in heaven.

But what about our present lives? What about all the suffering, the sorrow and the pain? And as Christians we suffer additional sorrows, persecution from Christ’s enemies, strong temptations from Satan, the thorns of our sinful flesh. How can we have such a confident hope?

Paul tells us we can glory or boast even “in our sufferings,” for they actually lead to a life of hope. You see, there’s a chain reaction that takes place. When a Christian has to deal with persecution, pain and sorrow, he or she learns to patiently endure. That’s called perseverance: “Suffering produces perseverance,” Paul writes. Perseverance, in turn, produces “character,” like one that’s been tested, tried, and found true. And having this tried-and-true character, we gain hope, the certainty of future glory to come in heaven.

God promises that “hope does not put us to shame.” We won’t be red-faced like the basketball fan who was so sure his team would win the tournament, only to lose the first game. When Judgment Day comes, we will be lifting up our hearts in eager anticipation. We will see Jesus, and because we’re justified, we know that he will take us to the glory of heaven. Yes, Jesus quenches our thirst for hope, the certainty of eternal life and glory to come.

We know this, Paul writes, “because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” For those thirsting for God’s love, Jesus quenches that too.

Paul uses one little phrase that epitomizes God’s love. “Christ died.” At just the right time, Christ died. He was the substitute, dying “while we were still powerless,” dying “for the ungodly.” God placed all our sins on him. That’s how God demonstrated his superlative love: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Let that soak in. Paul remarks how rare it would be for someone to die for a righteous person, though he grants that “for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.” VIPS like heads of state have bodyguards who are trained to take a bullet for the one they’re protecting. But for whom did Christ die? For us! For us who are powerless, ungodly sinners! What love God demonstrated here!

And God’s love, again, “has been poured out into our hearts,” quenching our thirsty souls. The Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts since we were baptized. As water is splashed or sprinkled on the head, the Holy Spirit is poured onto us. As the gospel of Jesus is spoken, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and gives us faith to believe. As communicants receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith and love in Christ. We hear and taste that love every Sunday at church.

Thirsty for God’s love? Do we feel crushed after all the bad news, especially the bad news about our sins? Come to the wells of God’s living Word, like the woman at the well in today’s gospel reading. Come, for Jesus quenches our thirst! Amen.