

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we<sup>[a]</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we<sup>[b]</sup> boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we<sup>[c]</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:1-8 NIV

In the classic movie "E.T.", there is this humorous exchange, between Eliot, the young boy who finds E.T. and his older brother Greg:

*Eliot: "He's a man from outer space and we're taking him to his spaceship"*

*Greg: Well, can't he just beam up?*

*Eliot: This is REALITY, Greg.*

Sometimes that's how life is for us. We are confronted with a variety of things both inside and from without, and we hear the good words or ideals of the faith answering us. Yet when someone does give the easy faith answer, we want to answer them with Eliot's line to Greg; "This is REALITY".

Paul in Romans in fact has given us the essential message of faith and living at this point in Romans. It is well documented that we are in relationship to God by faith alone in Jesus Christ; nobody being able to measure up to God's right standard. Abraham's example clinches the argument.

In the abstract it makes sense and looks good. But unfortunately life is not lived in the abstract. This is REALITY, Paul! Peace???

Paul says, yes REALITY. You can even have this peace when things aren't peaceful.

That "peace" is the peace we have with God through Christ.

We are not God's enemy but God's child. Nothing can separate us from his love. You may be dealing with some sort of enemy on this earth. But God? Never!!!

The deduction from this too is that God is our loving Parent, and friend who we can not only know is on our side when things aren't peaceful, but one we can go to with our sighs, complaints, and "battle wounds" for help.

All of that is evidenced by the hard work of Jesus in his suffering death, and victorious resurrection. He even did this when we were the least peaceful with God. “When we were yet sinners....”

The truth is of these words are evidenced when we are not peaceful, but when REALITY touches our lives. Faith hope and trust comes when we persist when things aren't peaceful.

Our faith journey can relate to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's when after being a terrible Nazi Concentration camp, he struggled with himself, on whether he was truly a heroic or a coward:

*Who am I? This or the other?  
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?  
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
And before myself a contemptible woebegone  
Weakling?  
Or is something within me still like a beaten  
Army  
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?  
Who am I? They mock me these lonely questions of mine  
Who ever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!*

May the strength that we have as God's children by faith in Christ be our rock no matter how the reality of our situations bears down on our lives.

Pr. John Van Haneghan