

Devotion: June 9, 2020

Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Back in the day, let's say a half a century ago, there was a best selling self-help book called "I'm OK You're OK". That book was supposed to teach everyone how to live in peace in a non-judgmental world where butterflies were free and all of us could live in the age of Aquarius.

How did that turn out?

It turns out we are not okay.

But we don't need to search Holy Scripture to know this. Many of us are aware that we individually and collectively have piles of moral garbage that we don't want to others to see.

Fortunately, God doesn't require that we be OK or not OK. The gospel message tells us that God sent his Son *not to condemn us, but to save us* (John 3:16-17). And although, in the Old Testament Psalm 24 says that only those with clean hands and pure hearts can stand before the Lord (v. 4), the point is that God cleans our hands and purifies our hearts so that we can stand before him.

That's what Paul tells us in our text: "*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*" He's the servant upon whom, Isaiah said, "*the iniquity of us all*" — our moral garbage — is laid, and he carries it away. And Paul concludes: "*But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*".

I think God should write another book and title it. "*I'm OK I made you OK*"

OK?

Let me offer this beautiful prayer by the late Rachel Held Evans:

God, go with us. Help us to be an honor to the church. Give us the grace to follow Christ's word, to be clear in our task and careful in our speech. Give us open hands and joyful hearts. Let Christ be on our lips. May our lives reflect a love of truth and compassion. Let no one come to us and go away sad. May we offer hope to the poor, and solace to the disheartened. Let us so walk before God's people, that those who follow us might come into his kingdom. Let us sow living seeds, words that are quick with life, that faith may be the harvest in people's hearts. Amen.