

# Living by Faith in a Hostile World

## Part 2: Peace with God: The Foundation for Endurance

*Romans 5:1–8, 12–15 | Matthew 9:35–10:8*

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### I. THE WAR GOES ON

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On the morning of August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. Three days later, a second fell on Nagasaki. The Empire of Japan was broken. The outcome of the war in the Pacific was no longer in any serious doubt.

And yet men kept dying.

In the weeks between the bombs and the formal end of hostilities, soldiers on both sides continued to fight. Skirmishes. Ambushes. Artillery exchanges on islands where no one had yet received the word. The facts on the ground had changed decisively. But facts on the ground are not the same as a declaration. Until someone with the authority to speak stood up and spoke, the fighting went on.

That moment came on September 2, 1945. Tokyo Bay. The deck of the USS Missouri, a battleship anchored in the shadow of Mount Fuji. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, stepped to the microphone. Representatives of the Japanese government signed the Instrument of Surrender. MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz signed for the Allied powers. The whole ceremony lasted twenty-three minutes. And when it was finished, MacArthur spoke five words into the microphone: “These proceedings are closed.”

The war was over. Not because the military situation had just changed. It had been effectively decided for weeks. It was over because someone with full authority had spoken the word. The declaration made the peace real in a way that mere facts could not.

Life in a hostile world brings real pressure. We feel it every week. The pushback at work or in social gatherings when our convictions show. The eye-roll at the family dinner table. The steady contempt of a culture that has decided Christian faith is, at best, a quaint private hobby. And underneath all of that external pressure, there is an internal one: the anxious sense that we need to hold the line, keep up the effort, earn some measure of peace before we can rest in it.

Where do we find real peace? Not the absence of conflict. Not the temporary relief when circumstances improve. But real peace: the kind that holds when the pressure does not let up?

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## II. WE ARE STILL FIGHTING

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The apostle Paul opens Romans 5 with a word that we tend to read past too quickly:

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

Read the verb tense. We have peace with God. Present tense. Declared status. Not “we will have peace with God once we have endured enough,” and not “we may have peace with God if we maintain our faith under pressure.” We have it. The declaration has already been made.

But Paul is clear about why this declaration was necessary. He writes:

*“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6–8*

Weak. Sinners. Enemies. These are not the words of a people who earned their peace. These are the words of a people who were on the wrong side of the conflict entirely, and for whom the peace was made without their participation.

And here is where the law presses hardest: we live as though the declaration has not yet been made. We are still fighting for what has already been given. We feel closer to God when our spiritual performance is up, and farther from God when it is down, which means that somewhere in the operating system of our faith, we are treating peace with God as a variable, something that rises and falls with our effort. We are soldiers still exchanging fire in a theater where the war has been decided. We are not enduring from peace. We are fighting toward it. And that is not faith. That is a different religion entirely.

Paul reaches back further to show why this matters so much. He goes all the way to Adam:

*“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man,  
and death through sin, and so death spread to all men  
because all sinned—”*  
*Romans 5:12*

The hostility between humanity and God is not a problem we created, but it is one we have inherited and compounded. The gap between us and our Creator is not something that spiritual effort will close. It required someone to come from outside the conflict, with the authority to end it.

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### **III. THE PROCEEDINGS ARE CLOSED**

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MacArthur did not send a telegram. He did not issue a written communiqué through a subordinate. He came in person, in uniform, with the full weight of his authority, and he spoke. And what he spoke was not a hope or an aspiration. It was a declaration. “These proceedings are closed.” Five words, and the war was over.

The Son of God did not send a message. He came in person, in flesh, born of the Virgin Mary, and he walked into the full hostility of the conflict between God and humanity. He did not come to encourage you to fight harder. He came to do what no human being could do: to live the obedience that Adam forfeited, to bear in his own body the full weight of

God's just judgment against sin, and to rise from the dead as the Father's declaration that the judgment has been satisfied and the hostility resolved.

Paul makes the comparison explicit:

*“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”*  
*Romans 5:18–19*

Christ's obedience where Adam failed. Christ's death absorbing the wages of sin. Christ raised on the third day. The empty tomb is the Father's five words: these proceedings are closed.

And now the risen Christ, ascended to the right hand of the Father, reigning over all things, speaks that declaration to you through means he has appointed. The preacher opens his mouth and says: I forgive you all your sins. That is not a human word dressed up in religious clothing. That is the voice of the one who has the authority to speak it, declaring over you what was accomplished at Calvary and confirmed at the empty tomb. The water of your baptism sealed it. The bread and wine of this table deliver it again: the body given for you, the blood shed for you. Peace with God. Declared. Signed. Sealed.

Paul adds something that might seem, at first, almost strange. He says:

*“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”**Romans 5:3–5*

This is not a call to enjoy suffering. It is a statement about what suffering cannot do to you. It cannot touch your standing with God. It cannot undo the declaration. What it does, in the life of someone whose peace is secure, is prove what is already true. The soldier who has heard the

declaration and laid down his weapon can endure the long journey home. The hardship of the road does not put the peace in doubt. It reveals that the peace is real, because you are still standing at the end of it.

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#### **IV. Now Go**

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When MacArthur spoke those five words, the men on the deck of the Missouri did not suddenly feel different. The Pacific was still the Pacific. The long miles home were still ahead of them. But everything had changed, because the word had been spoken by the one with authority to speak it. They were not going home to fight for peace. They were going home in it.

This is the picture Matthew gives us of the disciples in the harvest field. Jesus has been moving through all the towns and villages, teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and affliction. And when he sees the crowds, Matthew tells us:

*“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”*  
*Matthew 9:36*

Harassed and helpless. Still in the middle of the conflict. Still without the declaration. So Jesus turns to his disciples:

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*  
*Matthew 9:37–38*

He does not send them to fight for their own peace while they are out there. He sends them from the place of peace into the place of need. They carry the word that ends the war. They go as people for whom the proceedings are already closed, into a world full of people who have not yet heard it.

This is what it means to live by faith in a hostile world. The hostility is real. The pushback is real. The hardship and the suffering and the cultural

contempt are real. Jesus does not promise his disciples that none of this will come. He promises something better: that their standing with God does not depend on how the world receives them.

Because you have peace with God, you can endure what this week brings without losing hope. Not because you are strong. Not because you have finally achieved the right level of spiritual discipline. But because the declaration has been made over you, in water and word and bread and wine, by the one who has the authority to make it. Christ was delivered over to death for your trespasses. He was raised for your justification. These proceedings are closed.

Now go. The harvest is plentiful. Pray for the harvest. Live for the harvest. Bear witness to souls ready for the harvest. Amen.

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