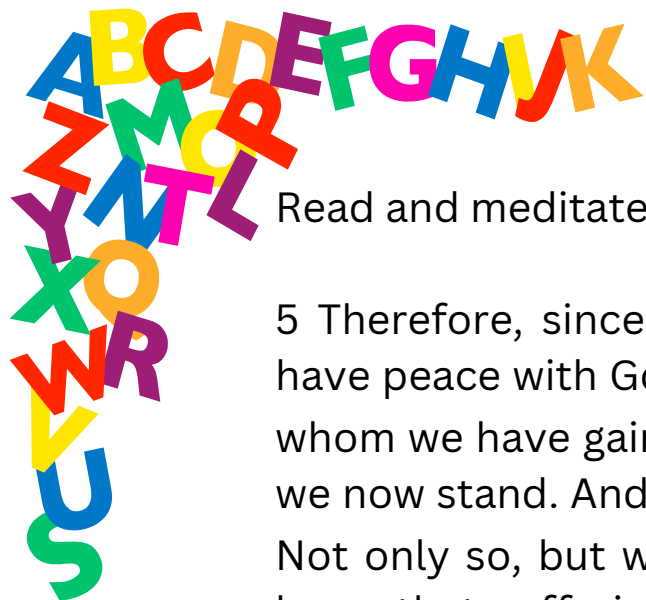




For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through 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. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:1-4)

This passage comes from Paul's letter to the church at Rome. It is considered to be his most in-depth theological treatise. As chapter 5 opens, Paul talks about terms like: justification, character, faith, peace, grace, glory, suffering, perseverance, and hope. In many ways, throughout the book, Paul ties these characteristics together as a part of the inner-workings of the way of Jesus.

We are justified not by putting our faith in Jesus but in Jesus' faithfulness to us, demonstrating the love of God. Hence, our peace is not from within us or our decision to follow Jesus; rather, it is bound in the access we gain by Jesus who positions all human beings with equal status in the love of God. So, when Paul speaks of boasting in verse 2, he is not suggesting arrogance on our part. Instead, he is celebrating God's provision of a different and better outlook on life. Jesus changes everything!

This includes how we look at suffering. Paul is not minimizing or glamorizing pain. Pain hurts and oftentimes the wounds are deep. Yet, we go through pain because we believe that the way of Jesus is best for us, others, and God. As we go through the hardships that come, we gain perseverance, which leads to the development of our character and ultimately to a greater hope. Our hope is not to one day get out of this broken world of pain and suffering. It is that while we are in it--serving God and caring for others--God is with us. His presence changes everything!

PRACTICE:

What does "hope" mean to you? How can you share it?

