



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## **A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic March 15, 2020**

by Garland F. Pierce

### **Shhhh!...We're Good!**

#### **Romans 5:1-11**

5:1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

5:2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

5:3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

5:4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

5:5 and 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.

5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

5:7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.

5:8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

5:9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.

5:10 For 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.

5:11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

He was a young father with young children. He was probably younger than he should have been when he had them. He had made some mistakes and some missteps along the way; but, he had changed and was trying to do the best he could to be a good father and provider. With limited resources, skills, and options, many days seemed only filled with struggle; but, he held on and he kept the faith. He had just gotten home from work and picked the kids up from the neighbor's. It had just gotten dark. Thankfully, the neighbor feed them and helped them with their homework. All he had to do was to get them ready for school the next day and then ready for bed.

As soon as they had gotten into the apartment, the shooting outside started. It seemed that this night would be another one of those nights when the rival gangs would use the apartment complex as their battlefield with the residents as potential casualties of war. The children screamed and began to cry when bullets came crashing through the living room window and glass showered the room. This young father grabbed them close to him and to the floor. As they cried, he said quietly but confidently, *"Shhhh...We're good!"* One questioned why the shooting seemed so regular. Another asked if they really would be alright. The smallest asked if help was on the way. To each, he quietly responded, *"Shhhh!...We're good!"* This young father's response was not one regarding morality. For certain his children possessed child-like innocence in some regard; but, they clearly had to grow up sooner than ideal because of some of the things they had witnessed and experienced. Nor was his response one of denial; he knew he was raising his children in a war zone. *"Shhhh!...We're good!"* was an affirmation of faith and of hope in an apparently hopeless situation.

We are hearing a lot of noise during this declared pandemic. It is coming at us like rapid fire—crashing through our normal routines, our daily habits and practices. Hoaxes and conspiracy theories abound; it is hard to separate fact from lies. It feels like all is at risk—our lives, our health, our financial well-being, our family, our churches, our communities, our world. Will we be alright? Is help, is an end to all this on the way? *"Shhh!...We're good!"*

The young community of Christ-followers no longer had to worry about Saul persecuting the church; but, that didn't mean that the church and individual Christians didn't still live with danger and uncertainty. Paul, formerly Saul, writes to the Christian community in Rome in the midst of this time of uncertainty to affirm that their salvation and their safety is in Christ. He says to them, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and 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. In the midst of the noise of a busy metropolis and competing theories, philosophies, and approaches and the violence and threats to well-being and survival, Paul says, *"Shhh!...We're good!"* His also is not a statement of morality for while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for US! Nor is his a denial of suffering; he seeks to find purpose in the midst of suffering. His is an affirmation of faith and hope; hope does not disappoint us. God's love has been poured and is being poured into our hearts and all over us. Uncertainty exists; potential threat to health and life and all that we have come to know, frankly still exists; but, in spite of all and beyond all—God's love and care is with us. God pulls us in close in times just like these—when we are asked to refrain from touching and hugging. *Shhhh!...take a moment to be quiet and still, blocking out the noise around you. Shhhh!...try to feel God's presence. Shhhh!...try to feel God's pulling you in close, saying, "Shhh!...We're good!"*

**TALK:** Reflect on and honestly name those fears and anxieties that you are feeling right now during this pandemic. After a period of naming these, quietly repeat 3 times, “Shhh!...We’re good!”

Read or recite the Apostle’s Creed, our Affirmation of Faith

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

**PRAY:** A Prayer for a Pandemic

by Cameron Bellm

May we who are merely inconvenienced  
Remember those whose lives are at stake.  
May we who have no risk factors  
Remember those most vulnerable.  
May we who have the luxury of working from home  
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.  
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close  
Remember those who have no options.  
May we who have to cancel our trips  
Remember those that have no safe place to go.  
May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market  
Remember those who have no margin at all.  
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
Remember those who have no home.  
As fear grips our country,  
Let us choose love.  
During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,  
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.  
Amen.

**ACT:** Take a few minutes and call someone or several persons who may live alone to check on them. Find out if they need anything and work to help them get the assistance they may need.

(Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.)

*The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.*