

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 46

[Worship]

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*



Consider: Kari Jo Verhulst

[Think & Pray...]

Paul's letter to the Romans is a pastoral intervention written to a church in crisis. The Roman house churches were struggling to live as one body amidst tremendous diversity. In theory, male and female, slaves and masters, Jew and Gentile had become a new family—a household of equals reborn in the spirit of the resurrected Jesus. But in reality, the marks of social identity were so deeply internalized that in the face of political, religious, and economic conflict they were dying a much slower death.

Paul sets out to remind and exhort them about how Jesus has changed the means and parameters of entering into God's covenant. The covenant now extends to Jew and Gentile through faith. The "righteousness" or "justice" of God (*dikaio syne* in Greek) "revealed through faith for faith" (Romans 1:17) is the state in which God has put all things right. This justifying activity of God, testified to in "the law and the prophets," has become available through Jesus.

As Krister Stendahl notes, the question for which Paul answers "we are justified by faith" was not "How can I be sure of God's grace?" but "How can the Gentiles be children of God?" The Roman Christians are not struggling with depictions of hell, or their inability to make things right with each other or with God. Rather, they are trying to negotiate life together in the face of still-present conflicting identities.

Paul's emphasis on the authority and the capacity of God to extend his covenant is underscored in 3:26. What the NRSV translates "[God] justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" can also be translated "faith of Jesus." The "faith of Jesus" is that into which we enter and participate, not something we possess.

[The Scripture]

Matthew 7.21-29

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' 23 Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.' 24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!" 28 Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.