

These writings remind us of the importance of not assuming that doing all sorts of good works gets us to the front of the line when we reach the Pearly Gates. Paul tells us that righteousness comes not through good works, but through faith. Faith then leads to endurance, which leads to character, which leads to hope. This faith is a gift from God - we cannot earn it, but we can live into it, loving God with all our hearts and minds and souls, and loving our neighbors as Jesus loved us. I was struck, in rereading the above passage, by the word "peace." We have "peace with God" because of faith. Perhaps this is the greatest gift we are given - the opportunity to be at peace with our God and to be servants as his Son served us, without worries, fears, or reservations. Sometimes I feel that I'm in perpetual "rush" mode - doing this job or getting to that meeting or joining this fundraiser or visiting that person. Whatever I'm trying to do all too often lacks any sense of peace. So when I read Romans 5:1-2, I stop and let that wonderful silence that evokes the presence of God wash over me. And I find that where faith is strong so is, deep within me, God's peace. What a wonderful sense of gratitude this brings to me! Is this what grace is all about? Perhaps. This is my prayer: that we all can, through that peace that really does pass all human understanding, hear a small voice telling us, "Keep the faith, you good and loyal servant; for you are a beloved child of Mine."