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## THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION

Romans 5:1-2

By

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Romans Lesson 25

## The Blessings of Justification Romans 5:1-2

If you were to ask many Christians what words they associate with “doctrine,” you would probably hear, “boring,” or “irrelevant.” We tend to be pragmatists who view the doctrines of the Bible as something that interests theologians or seminary students, strange breed that they are. But we want something practical. We want to know how to deal with the problems we face every day. So we tend to skip the doctrine and move on to the how-to’s.

The apostle Paul would be baffled by that approach. He would view it as building a house without a foundation. In all of his letters, he first sets forth the doctrine and then draws the practical applications from it. In Romans, he spends 11 chapters laying the doctrinal foundation before he gets really practical. But even within the first 11 chapters, he can’t resist drawing out the practical implications of the doctrines that he sets forth. So in chapter 5, he gives us some wonderful blessings that flow from the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he has laid down in 3:19-4:25.

Some scholars argue for a major break between chapters 4 & 5, so that chapters 5-8 form a unit that sets forth the hope and assurance of believers. Others understand chapter 5 as concluding the section that began at 3:19, dealing with justification by faith. Still others make the break at 5:12. I would not be dogmatic, but I am comfortable viewing chapter 5 as the conclusion of the earlier section dealing with salvation, with chapter 6 beginning to deal with sanctification. But however you outline it, the themes of hope and assurance certainly are prominent in chapters 5-8.

In 5:1-11, the word “exult” occurs three times: Paul exults in the hope of glory (5:2); he exults in his tribulations (5:3); and he exults in God (5:11). The theme of reconciliation with God (5:10-11) ties back in to the opening theme of peace with God (5:1). So we could view the entire section as “exulting in the blessings of justification.” Today we can only look at 5:1-2, where Paul sets forth three blessings that come from justification:

Justification by faith gives us peace with God, access to His grace, and the joyous confidence that we will share His glory.

1. Justification by faith gives us peace with God.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1). Before we go farther, I should mention that there is a textual variant consisting of a single letter in the Greek text which would make the verse read, “let us have peace with God.” It is an unusual situation in that the strongest manuscripts support “let us,” but almost all scholars argue on the basis of the flow of thought that Paul wrote, “we have peace with God.” There are no other exhortations in 5:1-11. Rather, Paul sets forth the wonderful blessings that flow from the fact of our justification. So it is almost certain that Paul wrote, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, *we have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1).

Peace with God is the most wonderful gift that anyone can possess! This does not refer to the *feeling* of inner peace, but rather to the objective *fact* of peace. People may feel at peace with God when in fact they are in danger of His judgment (Jer. 6:14). Genuine peace with God means that we are truly reconciled with Him. We are no longer enemies with God, but friends with Him. We do not need to fear His judgment.

Because of the universality of sin, the human race is by nature at war against God. Many may feel at peace because they do not comprehend God’s absolute holiness or their own sinfulness. But because of sin, the wrath of God abides on all who do not believe in and obey Jesus Christ (John 3:36). As Paul wrote (Rom. 1:18), “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

This means that unless people come to peace with God on His terms, when they die they will face His eternal judgment. They may be the world’s greatest philanthropists, who have given millions to help the poor. But philanthropy will not atone for their many sins. They may be the nicest, most loving people you could know. But all the niceness and love that anyone can show will not atone for the many sins that we all commit. They may be fastidious

about their religious duties, but the most religious people in the world cannot gain an entrance to heaven by their religious observance. None of these things gain genuine peace with God. So, how do we get it?

A. To have peace with God, you must be justified by faith.

If you do not know what it means to be justified by faith, please go back to the previous seven messages from Romans 3:21-4:25, where we covered this in depth. It means that God declares an ungodly person to be righteous based on that person's trusting Christ's death as the payment for his or her sins. It is not something that we earn or deserve. It is a gift of grace alone (4:5).

Paul's statement implies that we can *know for certain* that we have been justified by faith and that we now are at peace with God. If we're justified by adding our good works to what Christ did on the cross, we can never know that we've done enough. When have you done enough penance to be justified? When have you served enough or given enough money to the church? When have you been good enough? The system of works keeps everyone uncertain about whether they are saved or not and it keeps them dependent on the church. But Paul implies here that we can know that we are justified by faith alone. We trust in Christ's death on our behalf to pay for our sins. As a consequence, we do not need to fear God's judgment. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). But note:

B. To have peace with God, you must have the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Mediator.

"We have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (5:1). This means that peace with God is not due to any merits or efforts on our part, but rather through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. Douglas Moo observes (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], p. 300):

That all God has for us is to be found "in" or "through" Jesus Christ our Lord is a persistent motif in Rom. 5-8: peace with God comes "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1); our boasting in God is "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:11); grace reigns through righteousness, resulting in eternal life "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5:21); the gift of God bringing eternal

life is “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23); thanks for deliverance are due to God “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25); the love of God, from which nothing can ever separate the believer is “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39). When we consider that these phrases occur in only one other verse in Romans (15:30), and that every chapter in this part of the letter concludes on this note, a very definite focus on this matter is evident here.

The full title, “our Lord Jesus Christ,” looks at all that He is for us. First, He is *our Lord*, which focuses on His deity and His sovereign authority. We are His subjects or slaves. When you become a Christian, there is no option to believe in Jesus as your Savior, but to wait before you submit to Him as your Lord. He is both Savior and Lord, which means that you begin the Christian life by submitting all of yourself that you are aware of to all of Christ that you know. As you grow in Him, you learn more of who He is and what He commands and you see more areas in your life that you need to submit to Him, including your thought life. Jesus is the only rightful Lord of everything.

As *Jesus*, He is fully human. He took on human flesh in the incarnation, yet apart from sin. He lived in perfect dependence on the Father, in perfect obedience to His will. He went to the cross to atone for our sins (Rom. 3:24-26).

As *Christ*, Jesus is God’s Anointed One, the promised Messiah (“Christ” is Greek and “Messiah” is Hebrew for “Anointed One”). As such, Jesus is God’s appointed prophet, priest, and king. As God’s anointed prophet, Jesus spoke the very words of God to us (John 8:16-17). As God’s high priest, Jesus offered Himself once for all to atone for our sins. Now He lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:24-28). As God’s anointed king, Jesus is the rightful Sovereign over our lives. He is coming again to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to tread the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (Rev. 19:15).

This means that the only way to have peace with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way of salvation (Acts 4:12).

2. Justification by faith gives us access to our standing in the riches of God's grace.

Paul continues (5:2), "Through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand." Some early manuscripts omit "by faith," but the context makes it clear that we receive all of God's benefits through faith in Christ. Two things:

A. Our access to God comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Through whom" refers to Christ. "Introduction" may point to our initial introduction into the sphere of God's grace. The word is used in extra-biblical Greek for introducing someone to royalty (William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans* [Westminster Press], rev. ed., p. 73). Other New Testament authors use the verb to refer to bringing someone into another person's presence (Matt. 18:24; Luke 9:41; 1 Pet. 3:18). So it could refer to our initial introduction to God's grace when we first believed.

Or it may refer to our ongoing access to the treasures of grace. Paul is the only author to use the noun and both of the other times, he uses it to refer to ongoing access. In Ephesians 2:18, he says, "for through Him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have our access in one Spirit to God the Father." In Ephesians 3:12 he adds, "in whom [Christ Jesus our Lord] we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." I lean towards this idea here. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we can come again and again into the presence of Almighty God to receive grace for every need!

This means that we do not need another way of access to God. Jesus is the only way (John 14:6). We do not need to pray to Mary or the saints or to go through a priest. Rather, we come directly to the Father in the name of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. That gains us access, any time and anywhere.

The late Donald Grey Barnhouse (*Epistle to the Romans* [Bible Study Hour], Part 19, p. 1007) told a story about Abraham Lincoln that illustrates this point. A Southern soldier who had been freed from a prison camp because he was too wounded to return to active duty was seeking access to the President to intercede for his brother in a prison camp who was the sole support of their mother. But the White House guards would not let him in to talk to President Lincoln. He had no access.

One day the President's young son, Tad Lincoln, was walking near the White House and saw the wounded veteran crying as he sat on a bench. The boy went up and asked him what the matter was. The soldier explained that he wanted to get in to see Mr. Lincoln to tell him about his brother, but the guards would not let him in. The President's son took the man by the hand, led him past the guards, who all saluted, and brought the man into the presence of his father.

Barnhouse says that the story may be apocryphal, but it illustrates what the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, has done for us. We were desolate and alone, wounded by our sin. We had no way to come into God's holy presence. On the cross, Jesus tore the veil into the holy of holies. When we come in faith to Him, He clothes us with His righteousness. Now He takes us by the hand and leads us again and again, at any time we have need, into the presence of His Father. What a wonderful blessing to have access to God!

B. Our access to God puts us in permanent standing in the riches of God's grace.

Paul pictures God's grace as a realm in which we stand. The verb tense of "have obtained" and "in which we stand" implies past action with ongoing results. In other words, we have gained entrance and now have ongoing standing in this realm of God's grace. "Stand" implies a place of solid footing, or a place where we belong by right—not in ourselves, but by our union with Jesus Christ, the rightful heir.

In Ephesians 2:7, Paul says that in the ages to come God will "show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In Ephesians 3:8 he describes it as "the unfathomable riches of Christ." It will take all eternity for God to show us the various treasure rooms, loaded with all of the blessings that come to us by free grace through Jesus Christ! It's as if we've been given unlimited blank checks to the bank account of a billionaire like Bill Gates and told, "Use it any time you have a need."

Either you relate to God by trying to earn His favor by keeping the Law, which only brings His wrath when you disobey (4:15); or by receiving His undeserved favor through all that Christ did for you on the cross. It's a no-brainer, isn't it? When you trust in

Christ, He becomes your way of access into the presence of God, who now relates to you as a loving Father. Some of you may have had angry fathers who seemed to be against you and who always said “no.” But listen to how Paul describes the riches of God’s grace in which we stand (8:31b-35a):

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Again, the way to gain access to permanent standing in God’s grace is by being justified by faith alone in Christ alone. Justification by faith gives us peace with God and access to the surpassing riches of His grace. Finally,

3. Justification by faith gives us the joyous confidence that we will share His glory.

Paul concludes these two packed verses (5:2), “and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” Note two things:

A. Sharing in God’s glory is our certain future.

Hope in the New Testament is not something uncertain, as when we say, “I hope it doesn’t snow tomorrow.” Rather, it is absolutely certain because it is based on the sure promises of God, who never fails. But we hope for it because we have not yet received the promise (8:24-25). It’s as if when you were a kid your dad promised, “For your birthday, I’ll give you a new bike.” You know that your dad does not lie or tease you on something like this. You know that he has plenty of money to keep his promise. It’s just that your birthday is still a month away. The bike is yours and it’s certain, but you don’t yet have it; so you hope for it.

What does Paul mean when he says that we hope in the glory of God? It means in part that he eagerly looked forward to *seeing the glory of God*. God’s glory is the radiant splendor of His being. It is the visible manifestation of all of His perfect attributes. It was what Moses asked to see, but God told Him that He would show him

His back, because no man could see God's face and live (Exod. 33:18-23). But in heaven, we will see God (Matt. 5:8). It will be the most beautiful, stupendous sight that we've ever seen!

Paul also means that he hopes to see *the glory of Christ*. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus asked that His disciples might see His glory (John 17:24). Peter, James, and John got a glimpse of Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; 2 Pet. 1:16-18). John saw it again in Revelation (1:13-17). Paul was blinded by the heavenly vision on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:3-6). He saw it again when he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-6). But in heaven, we will see the glory of the risen Lamb who was slain (Rev. 7:9-17).

But beyond seeing the glory of the Father and the glory of our Lord Jesus, we are promised that we also will *share in His glory!* We lost that glory as a race when Adam sinned (Rom. 3:23), but when we see Jesus, we will be fully conformed to His image, free from all sin and from every shortcoming (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2). And thus we will be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17). It's our certain future! But this isn't just a truth to grasp with our intellects.

B. The confidence of sharing in God's glory causes us joyous exultation right now.

"We exult in hope of the glory of God." "Exult" is a favorite word with Paul that means literally, to boast or glory in. It contains the idea both of confidence and joy, so that it can be rendered, "we are joyfully confident of" (Moo, *ibid.*, pp. 301-302). While it's wrong to boast in man, it's right to boast in God, because it brings Him the glory He deserves (1 Cor. 1:31; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:3).

But—and I admit that I fall far short here—to exult in hope of the glory of God is not just an intellectual truth to affirm. It's also an emotional response that we should have even, as verse 3 shows, in the face of trials (see, also, 1 Pet. 4:13). In my case, as perhaps you will admit for yourself, I just don't spend enough time meditating on the hope of seeing and sharing in the glory of God.

Dr. Barnhouse (*ibid.*, Part 20, pp. 1037-1038) illustrated the joys of heaven by picturing a soldier in a cold foxhole, eating K-rations. He has to stay there day and night to hold his unit's position against the enemy. Then one night he hears a voice call out his

name and serial number. It's another soldier telling him, "I have orders to replace you. You are to go out on the next Red Cross flight. An order has come for you to go home. You have to go back to your mother's house. They're going to give you a hot shower and clean clothes. You have to go home and eat your mother's Southern fried chicken with mashed potatoes and gravy, with apple pie and ice cream for dessert." And the soldier replies, "Oh! You don't mean that I'm going to have to leave this nice fox-hole and give up my K-rations, do you?"

Barnhouse says, "We smile at the absurdity of the idea, and yet there are some believers, perhaps some of you ... who are unwilling to leave your foxhole in this life to go to the Heavenly home to sit down at the banquet table of our God and to fellowship with Him in [the] joys of Heaven ...."

### Conclusion

So to conclude, I ask you three questions:

- Have you been justified by faith so that you enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Do you frequently utilize your access to God and the riches of His grace through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Do you exult in your certain future of sharing God's glory?

These are just a few of the blessings of being justified by faith in Jesus Christ!

### Application Questions

1. If peace with God is not primarily a feeling, but a fact, how can you know if you've got it?
2. Why does justification by works (even in part) completely undermine the possibility of assurance of salvation?
3. Some argue that if God's grace is completely undeserved, it will lead to licentious living. How would you refute this?
4. How can a Christian who does not exult in the hope of God's glory grow in this area? Why should we?

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