

Blessings of Justification

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[0 : 00] Reading from the beginning, Romans 5, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul in this chapter is dealing with the great theme of justification, and in fact, the first half of this chapter really deals with the blessings of justification.

It has been said of Romans that it's a book of logic. It's a book of therefore, and quite often you will find that, that Paul, as he works through the different themes, he will say, because of this or therefore as a result of that, and that's what we have here at the beginning.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And it's very important for us to know these things, because we live in a world that is full of turmoil, a world that's incredibly uncertain, a world where we increasingly feel vulnerable and unsure really about anything.

[1 : 43] And so that is why it is very important that as Christians, we are built upon the foundation that the Word of God assures us that we have. That our ideas of who God is and what God has done for us are ideas that are founded in God's Word.

And when these truths seep into our hearts and they become foundational to our lives, it gives us a real strength, a real sense of identity, a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, a sense of knowing, a sense of assurance, things that are absolutely essential and vital in our journey through this world.

And that is why being a Christian is a very enriching experience, because quite often we take for granted what we have. We become used to being Christians.

And sometimes we forget what it was like before, particularly if you've been following for quite a while. You sometimes forget of just what it was like before, because you didn't have these things that you now take for granted.

This sense of belonging, this sense of identity, this sense of knowing why you're here, this sense of knowing where you're going.

[3 : 06] There are so many people, they would give anything to know and to have these things undergirding them and to be part and partial of their lives. But through Jesus Christ, these are things that come to us, these are things that are part and partial of who we are.

And so Paul tells us here that being justified by faith, we have several blessings. And the first he mentions is that we have peace with God.

Now that's an amazing blessing in and of itself. Before we were converted, we didn't have peace with God. We may have felt reasonably peaceful in this world.

There might have been times when we felt pretty good about ourselves. We might have felt, we might have been very fortunate. And God may have blessed us even out with being a Christian, with peace within our home, peace in our work, peace in our community.

There might have been many great temporal blessings. But we never had peace with God, whatever we thought or however we felt.

[4 : 17] Because peace with God can only come in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Because outside Christ, we are at enmity with God.

We are on the run from God. We are rebels with God. But the moment we are born again, the moment we're regenerated, the moment we are justified, that changes.

We are no longer enemies. The enmity is gone. The rebellion is gone. And God, and you, and me, we have become one.

We are justified. We have been set free. And because of that, we immediately, God is now at peace with us. And we can put a price on that.

We also have, not only are we at peace with God, but we also experience the peace of God. Two different things. But they are inseparably bound.

[5 : 18] We have peace with God because he is no longer against us. We are no longer under the wrath of God. It's an awful thought to be under the wrath of God.

But that, of course, is where we are by nature. Because it's very clear. The Bible makes it very clear. You see, the law works wrath.

And God's wrath has been, we're told that in Romans 1, God's wrath has been already revealed from heaven. And God's wrath hangs over everybody until Christ deals with it.

Once we're born again, the wrath of God is removed from us. And so, it's a wonderful thing. The non-Christian doesn't have that.

And that is why, irrespective of how many blessings, temporal blessings, a non-Christian has, they do not have peace with God and they do not have the peace of God.

[6 : 20] It is only in and through the Lord Jesus Christ that we can receive these things. And then we're told, in verse 2, not only do we have the peace of God and the peace with God, but we have obtained access by faith into this grace.

So we now have access to God. And again, that's quite an amazing thing. When you think about it, in the old times, even the Jew didn't, wasn't allowed into the most holy place.

In fact, the high priest was only allowed once a year into the Holy of Holies. and there were different barriers and curtains. Remember, there was a curtain that separated so that the high priest could only go in behind that curtain once a year.

So there was a separation for the Jew by the veil, but there was also a separation for the Gentiles. They could only get so far.

There was a wall of separation for the Gentiles. They could only go so far within the temple. They were excluded even further out. The Jew could get quite a bit of access, but there was a place reserved only for the Gentiles.

[7 : 41] They weren't allowed. But in Jesus Christ, all that has been demolished. The veil was, in a wonderful way, literally ripped in two.

Remember when Jesus died on the cross, there were various phenomena that occurred. One of them was that the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. That's one something that God did.

And for the first time ever, that place was opened up. People could see, but it was symbolic of the fact that now there was free access through what Jesus Christ had done.

And Paul talks about how the wall of separation is broken for Jew and Gentile. So today, anywhere, anytime, you and I can go to God anywhere, with anything, about anything, day or night.

Imagine if we could only come to God at particular times. Imagine if we were still so dependent upon the old symbolic way of the soul-sacrificial system, and day by day we'd be having to make our way to the temple and sacrifices made and offerings made.

[8 : 57] But there was this once and for all sacrifice, which all the old sacrifices pointed to, the sacrifice of Jesus. And in and through that, today, tonight, at any time, you and I can go to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

We can go audibly, and we can go privately, we can go whisper to Him, but we can come to Him with anything. In fact, we're asked to come with everything, in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known unto God. So we have this amazing privilege. And then we have the great hope. It tells us again in verse 2, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Isn't that wonderful? Because of what God has done for us in the past, we have peace with God. Because of what God is doing for us in the present, we have access to God with and about anything.

And because of what God has done for us, our future is assured. We have glory. We have the hope of glory. You know, tonight, I don't know how it might be with you.

[10 : 16] You might be going through difficult things that nobody else knows about. And you might be down with your situation and the providence that you're going through.

And sometimes you can lose sight just of what you have. Ask the Lord to restore your vision, to see what's ahead. Remember that Christ in you hope of glory.

It won't be long. But that's where we're going. And that's, there's this hope built within us. And as we've often said, the Christian hope is an assurance.

It's not a, I hope so. I hope that it'll work out like that. I'm hoping if everything comes together that that's how it'll be. That's not Christian. Christian hope is Jesus.

Christian hope is as sure as Jesus Christ. So when we are found in Jesus and trusting in Jesus, then that hope is real.

[11 : 19] This hope that we have of glory. And when you see these things, wouldn't the world tonight love to have peace and hope?

Wouldn't they love to have the freedom and the love that the Christian has? Well, it's available to them. Just as there was a day when we didn't have it. But it was available to us and by God's grace we came to receive it.

Then we see in verses 3 and 4 that the blessings continue. And we see that God is in the process of developing character within us.

Character building is important. I suppose the day we live in that you could, I suppose we could develop our characters and our personalities and whatever.

I suppose there's no end of books and manuals and online of different ways. People might have all kinds of anxieties or worries about certain things and they might say, you know, I've got to face up to my work.

[12 : 28] I've got to see what I can do about this. And loads of people, that's why there's so many self-help manuals and self-help books and people trying to develop personalities and help themselves to get on in life.

All these kind of things. So at one level we recognize that character building is essential and Jesus Christ knows that and he wants to develop us in the Christian faith to become strong characters in Jesus Christ.

You see, when God saves us, he doesn't just say, you know, I want to save you and you're going to be going to glory and would say, hallelujah, that's great, and then leave us.

He doesn't do that. He saves us and he says, right, I'm going to change you. It might be, it's going to take time, but day by day and week by week and month by month and year by year, I am going to work within you.

Some of the time you'll forget that that's what I'm doing in you, but it is what I'm doing. Every day, my great purpose for you is to conform you to the image of my son, Jesus Christ.

[13 : 46] And that's happening. It's happening in your life, day in, day out. God is at work changing you. And so we read through the, in the Bible, that all these things, these trials and the suffering, the different things that we go through, that God is using these things.

That's what we read. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings. Now, we don't rejoice in suffering at one level. Because when we suffer for whatever reason, we so often ask, oh, I wish that could be taken away.

We often will say, oh, Lord, can you take this away from me? Can you change the circumstances, Lord? That's what we would want. But God is saying, you know, I have a purpose in this.

It's not something you particularly want. And that's where faith comes into the equation, because faith says, I want to rejoice in this because I know God's at work.

This is painful to me, but I know, because God has told me so, that through this he is working in me. And what is he working?

[14 : 58] Well, it tells us he's producing endurance. That is the ability to keep going and going and going and going. And all the time Satan is saying, hey, give up.

Your own heart is saying, hey, pack it in. There are voices all around, and you're looking around, and you're saying, you know this, see these people who aren't Christians, it's a lot easier for them.

I'm having it hard. And there are all these whispering voices, and yet you're keeping going, you're keeping going, you're keeping going. Why? Because God is working in you. And he's keeping going, and he's producing this endurance, this keeping going.

And Jesus tells us, those who endure to the end, the same shall be saved. But as this endurance is developing within you, it is developing character.

That's essential. There's a lot of people who think that the Christian is somebody who is soft in the head and soft in the body. People think that Christians are people who can't cope with life, and they kind of cop out of it.

[16 : 11] Well, at one level, there's an element of truth there, because when we become a Christian, we become Christians by casting ourselves upon the Lord, we realize that we cannot, we cannot go through life on our own, that we need him.

At one level, what they say is true. But at another level, it takes incredible character to be a Christian in this world, because we live in enemy territory.

We live in an environment that is hostile to Christ. We've got to remember that they put to death our master. this world that we live in couldn't bear Jesus Christ.

And they couldn't wait, they planned, and from them, almost from the very beginning, he began his public ministry, they were out to get him. It only took three years of public ministry till they had nailed him on the cross.

That's how much the world hates Jesus Christ. And just as they hate Christ, they are at enmity, they hate his people. And of course, there's all the forces of darkness at work.

[17 : 18] So it's tough being a Christian. And that's why the Lord knows that our character has to be developed and strengthened, because it's not an easy route we're taking.

And so we're told here, this is part of the blessing. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

you see, as the character is built, this character depends more and more upon the Lord, and the more we depend upon the Lord, and the more we see the Lord, the greater our hope is.

And then finally we see, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Isn't that wonderful? God's love has been poured, poured into our affections, poured into our will, poured into our understanding, so that we are changed by God's love, so that now we love him.

[18 : 29] There was a day we didn't. We love him, and we love all that belongs to him. Now people will say to you, how do you love God?

How do you love someone you have never seen? Well, none of us have actually seen God. We see by faith. But the thing is, because God's love is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, we know whom having not seen.

We love. That's it. We haven't seen him, except by faith, but we love him because the Holy Spirit has poured, not just put a little dribble, but poured his love into our heart.

Now I'm sure if you're like me, you often lament your lack of love for the Lord, and you say, I wish I could love the Lord more. But you know, I think that's an evidence of that love.

love. Because we want, we want, if there is love, that love is never satisfied with the level of love.

[19 : 44] We want to love more. And the very fact that you want to love more is an evidence that you're already loving. love. And the Holy Spirit is the one.

And isn't that beautiful how it's put? That because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Wow, what a gift. The Holy Spirit has been given to us. the third person of the Godhead has come to reside, not just given at the moment when we're born again, but given forever.

The Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your heart, in my heart, forever. And the Holy Spirit continues to manifest Christ to us.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. He reveals the things of Christ to us. And the Holy Spirit assures us that we belong. And the Holy Spirit assures us of what lies ahead.

[20 : 55] That is why as a Christian that you know, even although there are things you can't explain, you know. It's real. It's there. Because God, through his Spirit, has poured this into your heart.

And what you do know, the hope that has been given you is such that you know that like the Queen of Sheba, when she actually saw Solomon, and when Solomon opened up to her all his kingdom, and all his wealth, and all his riches, and when he answered all her questions, it was almost too much for her.

And she said, the half has not been told. And so it will be when we get to glory. And when we see all the riches and the splendor, and when we discover more and more of the wisdom and the greatness of God, we'll say the half was not told.

And that's a hope that is burning within our hearts tonight. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks again for your word. And we give thanks for being able to come under it in its reading and its singing and in its preaching.

And we pray, Lord, that you will answer the prayers that were offered tonight by our brethren, prayers offered publicly, and all the many prayers that were offered privately and silently.

[22 : 21] Lord, may you do and answer beyond our asking or our even thinking. take us to our home safely, we pray. Part us with your blessing in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 122. This is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 122. And we'll sing from the middle of verse 4 to the end.

It's on page 416. Psalm 122, middle of verse 4. To Israel's testimony there to God's name thanks to pay.

For thrones of judgment, even the thrones of David's house there stay. Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and felicity. Let them that love thee and thy peace have still prosperity.

Therefore I wish that peace may still within thy walls remain. And ever may thy palaces prosperity retain. Now for my friends and brethren's sakes, peace be in thee, I'll say.

[23 : 27] And for the house of God, our Lord, I'll seek thy good all way. Middle of verse 4 to the end. to Israel's testimony there to God's name lands to pay.

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He is part of the Christ of vielleicht jings him and that he watin got at honors. And we have peace and felicity.

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And for the hands of God our Lord I'll seek thy good always.

Amen. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.