



## The Wonderful Works of God

### Romans 5:1-5

This section of Paul's letter is an appetizer to the main meal of the truths he explains in chapter eight. It is an entrée explaining the wonderful works of God in the life of a believer. These wonderful works are entirely dependent upon regeneration. When God saves his people, he unites them to Christ by the giving of the presence of God, the Holy Spirit. This gracious relationship with God changes everything about a man or woman since they possess an abundance of benefits. These gracious benefits serve the Christian for life, and in this sense, assist them through their earthly trials.

#### 1. Justification by Faith through Christ (Vs. 1a)

The great doctrine of justification by faith undergirds the argument for Paul's following statements in this section (Vs. 1b-5).

- **Δικαιωθέντες** (Greek) is rightly translated either "we have been justified" or "we have been declared righteous." Paul uses this word justification to describe that irrevocable declaration applied to us upon salvation. It is merited by Christ on the cross and imputed to us when Christ saves us. It is because of our justification by faith in (or through the faithfulness of) Jesus Christ that we receive the subsequent benefits that Paul explains. Justification is always for the elect: past, present, or future. It is not a fictional reality. This truth is laid out in Paul's previous line of argumentation (2:9-12; 3:21-25a; 4:1-5, 10-11). He shows that the means of justification is faith in Christ. If we seek righteousness by works of the law, we gain nothing. Faith is abolished and peace is unattainable.
- "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love (WCF.XI.II., *Of Justification*)<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Peace Through Christ (Vs. 1b)

As a result of our justification, Christians have peace with God. Some manuscripts, instead of saying "we have peace with God" say, "let us have peace with God." The latter is unlikely given the consistency of original grammar and Paul's logic, but it would still be true even if the latter is original. God is at peace with his children, *and* his children must live daily in that peace as they think about God. Christians are no longer enemies of God because the wrath of God, formerly against us, was received by Christ's death, who was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). In Christ God has made peace with us.

- "Everything is finished. There is nothing left for us to do. We can with our whole soul and for all time rest in the perfect work of redemption which Christ has achieved. We may accept in faith the fact that God has laid aside his wrath and that in Christ he is a reconciled God and Father for guilty and unholy sinners."<sup>2</sup>

#### 2. Grace through Christ (Vs. 2a)

Christians live in the presence of God's grace through the work of Christ on their behalf.

- Scripture speaks of grace in two ways: 1) God's unmerited and non-salvific favor that commonly extends to all of God's fallen creation which restrains evil and ordains humans to flourish in various ways. 2) God's unmerited and salvific special favor toward God's elect which was accomplished in the work of Christ Jesus.
- God's special grace is in view in this passage. This use of the word grace emphasizes less of God's attitude of favor toward believers to save them from their sins and more of God's favor in his current, daily mercies upon which we live each day. Paul means that the gospel ought to "strike deep roots" into our hearts. We stand in God's favor each day because the Lord has

<sup>1</sup> Supporting texts: Jn 3:18, 36; Rom 3:28; 5:1; Jas 2:17, 22, 26; Gal 5:6

<sup>2</sup> Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Glenside: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 340.

chosen to not enact cosmic justice on us who are now his children [Albeit, God will justly discipline believers because he purposes their maturation in the faith as his children (Hebrews 12:5-7)]

**3. Rejoicing through Christ (Vv. 2b-4)** – The basis on Christian piety resides in our right relationship with Christ. One of the foremost Christian responses to their relationship with God is to rejoice. Scripture not only commands that believers are to rejoice but also that rejoicing is the overflow of the abiding presence of God.

• **We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Vs 2b)**

- The reformed slogan *solī Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone) is principally not about a program for how Christians can glorify God. The glory of God is first and foremost about God himself and how he reveals his glory to his creation, his image-bearers, and his church. “God needs no one and no thing to make him glorious. He himself is the origin and author of his glory.”<sup>3</sup>
- God manifests his glory through his creative works and in his divine presence throughout the Old Testament. All pales in comparison to the ultimate manifestation of his glory in the Incarnate Son of God (God with us), now ascended to glory as the author, founder, and perfecter of our faith (Acts 3:15; Hebrews 12:2).
- Christian hope is the fruit of God’s presence with his people. It is there alone that Christian faith and hope are no longer necessary because faith and hope will be changed to sight. Christians rejoice (boast) in hope because they know they will one day see the fullness of God’s glory when they finally behold and look upon the glory of Christ himself.
- “The hope of the glory of God has shone upon us through the gospel, which testifies that we shall be participators of the Divine nature; for when we shall see God face to face, we shall be like him. (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2)”<sup>4</sup>

• **We rejoice in our sufferings (Vv. 3-4)**

- The Old Testament saints in their cries of desperation relied upon shadows and types that pointed to Christ and produced endurance, character, and hope. New Testament saints rely upon the substance of Christ revealed.
- Paul anticipates the argument that Christianity is so troubled by calamity, pain, and frustration that it’s hardly worth considering. It is the consolation of Christ in our every situation that warrants joy, endurance, hope, and character. Unlike the world, we know that our situations are dispensed by the hand of our wise, good, and indulgent Father. We have reasons for our tribulations that belong to the God who is known to us.
- As we advance through adversities in this life, our hope does not dwindle, but our hope is the grounds for assuring us of our belonging to God and our right standing before him. There is no ground for shame where hope is present.

**4. The Holy Spirit through Christ (Vs. 5)**

“The whole life of the Christian is a walking in the Spirit. He binds all the believers into one body and builds them up into one temple, a dwelling place of God. He guarantees the heavenly inheritance, and will one day effect their resurrection and glorification.”<sup>5</sup>

- God has promised to always be present with us. All those, who by grace through faith, trust in Christ, have God the Spirit. In the language of the prophets Ezekiel and Joel, God the Spirit has been poured out on his people (Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). It is a pouring that happens at conversion and continues for the rest of our lives. The endurance, character, and hope are the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through us which testify to the love of God. There is no greater argument than when the faithful are convinced they are loved by God.
- Paul makes it clear that this is not an act of our own but rather God’s passive work that “has been” done to us. You believe, by faith, because God loves you. He will never not love his children.

<sup>3</sup> David VanDrunen, *God’s Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015) 35.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries Vol XIX, Acts 14-28, Romans 1-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009) 189.

<sup>5</sup> Bavinck, *Wonderful Works*, 383-384.