

II. SALVATION—THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED (3:21–8:39)**A. Justification—declared righteous in Christ (3:21–5:21)**

1. The Divine Method (3:21–31)
2. The OT Illustration of Justification by Faith (4:1–25)

3. The Blessings of Being Justified (5:1–11)

a. We have peace with God (5:1).

5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

The word, “therefore,” in Romans 5:1 signals that a conclusion to what has preceded (Ro.3:21–4:25) will follow. Because we are justified by faith, we are no longer objects of God’s wrath but are placed in a position where we can receive the favor of God.

The first blessing we receive through Christ is peace with God. This blessing is expressed in a present tense verb (we have peace) showing that the state of peace with God is already ours.

Some people may feel at peace, others may not, but peace with God is much more than a feeling of tranquility of mind. Whether people realize it or not, there is a huge chasm between the sinner and God. Romans 5:10 tells us that we were enemies before we were reconciled to God. Romans 8:7 states, “the mind that is set on the flesh is *hostile* to God; it does not submit to God's law.” Isaiah 48:22 says, “There is no peace for the wicked.”

If a man commits a crime against the United States government and then flees to another country, he may feel at peace in his foreign refuge, but if he were to return to the U.S. the government would immediately take action against him. However, if it is declared that he has met the demands of the law, a cause for punishment would no longer exist in the eyes of the government; the man and the government would be at peace and, he will experience subjective peace as a result (Eph. 2:14, 17; Col. 1:20). So it is with the one who has been justified by God.

“Having been justified” is in the past tense (in Greek = aorist participle). Justification is not a process; it is something that happens instantaneously the moment we place our faith in Christ.

It is also interesting to note that Paul changes to the first person plural pronoun “we.” This change took place in 4:16 where he declared that Abraham is the father of *us all*. By using the first person plural Paul identifies himself with all who have been justified by faith in Christ. This association emphasizes the unity and common blessings that all believers share.

(See *How Long, O Lord* by Carson pp 78 ff. for a good discussion of Romans 5)

b. We have access to God’s grace (5:2a).

5:2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“We have access” means that “we have the freedom or the right to enter.” The word’s background may even suggest entrance into the presence of royalty (Schreiner, 254). Therefore, one would expect Paul to say we have access to God, but instead he says Christ gives us access to “this grace.” Grace describes the unconstrained manner in which God acts toward His creatures. “*This* grace” is the realm of grace that includes the specific grace that is bound to justification (see Ro. 3:24; 4:16ff; 5:17); God has justified us in Christ by faith apart from anything we have done or can do. However, as Piper says, “This [grace] is something more than justification, and something more than peace. This is the mighty sphere and influence and dominion of transforming, empowering, preserving grace” (Sermon on Ro. 5:1–2; cf. Ro. 5:21; 6:14; 14:4,5; also Moo, 301). Christ achieved access to this grace and that access continues today (as the perfect tense ἐσχῆκαμεν indicates).

Some say that “introduction” is a better translation than “access” since we do not enter by our own merits but by the work of another (Stott, 140). The NAS translates this verse as “we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace.” Whatever the nuance may be, we did not open the way or introduce ourselves into this state of being justified; instead, it was Christ who led us there. He is the mediator of our salvation; we only receive its benefits through Him. It is a tremendous privilege to be declared right with God and have a permanent place in His presence.

Furthermore, we *stand* in the grace we have received. To stand in grace means that the state of blessing that Christ introduces us to is not a precarious one. We stand in it. We will remain firm in it.

c. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (5:2b).

We also “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (cf. Ro. 8:18). More literally, “we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” We have joyful confidence in what lies ahead because our future is assured through Christ. Our confidence is in Him.

“Hope” is not simply the desire that something comes to pass or does not come to pass in the future, as in “I hope it doesn’t rain.” Rather, in the Bible, “hope” is the full assurance that what God has promised He will do. The “hope of eternal life” is the assurance that we will experience eternal life because God has promised it. In this case, Paul says that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“What is the glory of God? To put it simply, the glory of God is the likeness of God. God’s glory is what God *is* in character, in essential power, and in external appearance” (McClain, 126).

The glory of God has been a theme in this book. In Romans 1:23 Paul stated that people “exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” In Romans 3:23 he said, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In other words, those who have despised the glory of God are now promised that they will experience it.

Paul either meant:

(1) We rejoice because we will see God's own glory (In this case, the glory of God is the glory He possesses. [in Greek, a genitive of possession]). "This is simply to say that the theocentric interest of the believer is paramount in the hope which constitutes the completion of the redemptive process" (Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol 2, *Systematic Theology*, 314, 315).

(2) We rejoice because we know that God's glory will be reflected in us when we are completely conformed to the image of Christ (In this case, the glory of God is the glory He gives. [in Greek, a genitive of origin—it is glory that originates from God]; cf. Jn. 17:22).

In the first view, Paul represents "the eschatological finale of the believer's hope as hope of the manifestation of God's own glory" (Murray, *ibid*, cf. I Thess. 2:12; I Pet. 5:10). In the latter view, our glorification is what we will rejoice in since the reflection of His glory in us is what constitutes our glory. Although the majority view appears to be the second one, I believe that the first view has the benefit of adding less to the text; in either case, Paul is referring to the blessedness secured by the believer in sharing in the glory of God.

Believers are not only acquitted, they are placed in an entirely new situation both in the present (we have peace) and in the future (we hope in the glory of God).

We not only rejoice in the future, but also in the present. Since our relation to God has changed, our relation to all things has changed; we rejoice in the destiny and the road that leads to the destiny. Therefore, Paul continues the subject of rejoicing into verse 3.

d. We rejoice in our sufferings (5:3–8).

5:3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

When Paul tells us to rejoice in sufferings, he wants us to do more than endure; we are to be glad in the midst of trials for we know that they have purpose because they lead to hope (5:4). Hope is the second blessing the justified person receives (the first was peace—5:1).

All trials and suffering, though part of everyone's earthly existence, have a purpose in God's plan. For the unbeliever this life is all there is. Every joy that he can have must be experienced here, for he has no assurance of anything better. However, all too often he finds that his joy is marred or taken from him by sorrows and pain. The believer, however, can rejoice in tribulations for he knows that no matter how dark the night may be, morning will come. Trials in the life of an unbeliever often lead to depression, anxiety, bitterness, and resentment. Trials in the life of the true child of God develop perseverance and bring that person closer to God.

5:4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

Trials produce perseverance, and perseverance produces character. Character, in Greek, refers to the value of something through testing (Job 23:10). It was used of weighing coins to test their true value. In other words, perseverance produces a state where our salvation is proven to be true. Although God loves the newborn believer, those whose faith has been tested are precious in God's sight because their lives reveal the transforming power of the gospel.

Endurance reveals and develops Christ-like character and that, in turn, produces hope. That is, moral maturity gives the believer evidence that they are being transformed and assures them that God, who has begun a good work in them, will complete it in the future. Hope is the confident assurance that the future promises of God will never disappoint us or let us down.

The rest of this section shows why hope will never bring disappointment.

5:5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Though we are justified, we are far from being perfect. We are beset with sin, full of ignorance, and there is nothing in us that gives us the right to claim the blessing of God. And yet we have assurance (i.e. hope) that we will stand before God, will be admitted into His glory, and will become equal heirs with His Son. How can we know these things for sure? The answer is because our hope is grounded in the love of God which is poured out in our hearts. We are the recipients of God's love.

e. We have the assurance of God's love (5:6–8).

5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

5:7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If God's love is poured out upon us, we can be assured that we will not be disappointed. But how can we be assured that we are the objects of His love? The explanation appears in verse 6; *for* (*gar* - γάρ) Christ died for us. The death of Christ is presented everywhere in scripture as the highest expression of God's love (Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 3:16; 4:9, 10).

The fact that Jesus' death was "at the right time" means that it happened in the appointed season that God determined (cf. Gal. 4:4). The law had worked for centuries exposing man's weaknesses and lack of ability to live up to God's standards. We were proven to be ungodly by it. We were too weak spiritually to meet its stringent demands. But "when we were still without strength. . . Christ died." The timing of Jesus' death was perfect. It came at the time when the law had exhausted its usefulness and had accomplished all it was designed to do.

In sum, Christ loved us and gave Himself for us while we were helpless and ungodly. "Helpless" implies that we were weak, sickly, unable to impress, or make any contribution to our salvation. "Ungodly" means irreverent. We did not fear or respect God. We were godless. This was our condition when God loved us and gave His Son for us. At the time of our helplessness and greatest desperation, God sent His Son.

The greatness of God's love is expanded upon in verses 7 and 8.

Paul next speaks of love in our human experiences in order to contrast it to the magnitude of God's love for us. He refers to the righteous and the good in a classical sense, not a NT sense,

for He has already declared that none are righteous or good in God's eyes (Ro. 3:10, 12). The difference between a righteous person and a good one in verse 7 is that a righteous person is simply one who keeps the law, while a good person is characterized by love, benevolence, or kindness, for goodness always includes a beneficiary. The righteous person is respected, but the good person commands affection (Hodge, 137; Murray, 168). The point that Paul is making is that the death of Christ is unparalleled in human expressions of love. Examples of people giving up their lives for others are rare. In cases where it happens, it is usually on behalf of someone who is loved or for a friend. Dying for someone just because we respect them happens even less, if ever. Dying for our enemies is unheard of. Yet in God's eyes we are neither righteous, good, nor allies. We are enemies who, by our actions, express disdain for God (see above on 5:1). But it is "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro. 5:8).

A sinner is one who is morally corrupt, undeserving of love, and rightly the object of judgment. Yet it is in the place of (for, in behalf of ὑπὲρ - *hyper*) those who were corrupt and enemies that Christ died. The focus here is on the moral condition of those whom Jesus died for. This is what shows the love of Christ to be so amazing.

As Hodge says, "Christ died for us, the ungodly; and therein, as the apostle goes on to show, is the mysteriousness of divine love revealed. That God should love the good, the righteous, the pure, the godly, is what we can understand; but that the infinitely holy God should love the unholy and give us His Son for their redemption, is the wonder of all wonders" (Hodge, 136). In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I Jn. 4:10). "As the love of a mother for her child, with which God condescends to compare His love toward us, is not founded upon the attractive qualities of the child, but is often strongest when its object is least worthy, so God loves us when sinners. . . If He loved us because we loved Him, He would love us only as long as we love Him, and on that condition; and then our salvation would depend upon the consistency of our treacherous hearts" (Hodge, 136). But because His love was poured out upon us while we were yet sinners, we can be assured that His love will continue for us.

It is the love of God demonstrated toward us (His enemies—Ro. 5:10) that gives us the assurance that the hope and blessings of salvation are secure.