

SO I'M JUSTIFIED; WHAT NOW?

Romans 5:1–11

Recently I shared that Cathy's younger brother and his wife have adopted four children. The two oldest were adopted from Russia when they were 12 and 10. They were orphans living with an older sister. Every day was a fight to survive; to find food and to get enough money to pay the next month's rent. The boys were hard, made tough by living and surviving on the streets.

By adopting them, Kevin and Christy saved those boys out of their desperate situation. But adoption was not the end of their deliverance; adoption was the gateway to a whole new life. A life of love, security, three meals a day, education, sports, friends, church, health care, career opportunities, cars, a chance to have a family of their own. Adoption was the beginning point, not the end point. Adoption was the first step of their salvation; adoption opened the way into a new life.

Since chapter one of Romans we have been focused on justification. When a sinner trusts in the blood of Jesus to pay the penalty of their sins, God declares that sinner righteous. But like adoption, justification is not the end of God's saving us; it's just the beginning. Justification opens the way to a whole new life.

In Romans 5:1-5 the Apostle Paul celebrates six benefits that come to us as a result of justification.

THE BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION NOW (5:1-5)

Beginning in chapter one, the Apostle Paul makes clear we are all presently under God's wrath because we fail to worship Him as our Creator as revealed in what He has made. Second, we are all under God's future wrath. He will judge us at the Great White Throne Judgment for our failure to live up to His standard of perfect righteousness. We are all guilty. There are no good works we can do to earn a right standing before God. We are doomed.

God, in His love and mercy, sent Jesus, the second person of the Deity, to take on our humanity. Jesus perfectly worshiped God as Creator and perfectly fulfilled God's standard of righteousness. He was faithful to fulfill God's plan and allowed Himself to be crucified. On the cross He bore all our sin in His body. We were under the sentence of death, but He died in our place. Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins - past, present and future.

There are no good works we can do to earn a right standing before God. But if we want to be right with God; if we want a relationship with God; the one thing we must do is put all our faith in Jesus and His death, burial and resurrection. When we trust in Jesus, His blood is applied to our lives. Every one of our sins is paid in full. God declares us righteous. We are justified. In God's courtroom we stand guiltless, innocent, righteous. This is our legal standing before God for all eternity.

This can seem academic, theoretical, but justification is absolutely necessary.

But justification is not the end of the story. Justification is the beginning. Justification is the gateway into a new life. Justification is the first of many blessings God gives us in Christ.

In Romans 5:1-5, Paul reveals six benefits of justification we experience in the here and now.

Romans 5:1–5 *ESV*

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. Not only that, but 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.

The first benefit of justification is peace with God.

PEACE WITH GOD

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The war is over.

God is at peace with you.

Before you were justified you were God's enemy under His wrath. Now, through the blood of Christ, you are not just God's friend, but His son, His daughter. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to continually remind you that you are God's child (Romans 8:16).

Not only is God at peace with you, but as His beloved child He gives you unlimited access to Himself.

ACCESS TO GOD'S GRACE

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand....

In God's courtroom you stand *righteous*. In God's throne room you stand *avored*. We have an open invitation to come to God any time, day or night. The door will never be shut. No appointments. No receptionists. No waiting room. Just turn your heart and mind heavenward. Your heavenly Father welcomes you with open arms and says, "I love you. I'm so glad you came. I'm here for you. What do you need?"

As we will see later in chapter 5, *grace* is not just a state of being or an idea. *Grace* is God's action in your life to accomplish in your life what you cannot do for yourself.

We have a direct connection to God to receive from Him what we need to live the Christian life, what we need to serve Him.

For now, we relate to God by faith. But one day, our faith will be sight. Having been justified, our destiny is to one day be with God in His glorious presence.

HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Before we were justified we were *continually following short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). We continually failed to live up to the righteous standard required to stand in God's glorious presence. Even while we were in that continual cycle, God declared us righteous when we put our faith in Jesus. Now, because of the blood of Jesus, we do meet the righteous standard required to stand in God's glorious presence. That is our destiny. One day we will be with God in heaven. We will see His glory.

The glory of God is our hope because we have not yet received it. Our enemies dismiss our hope as wishful thinking; as just a coping mechanism to get through life. But there are things we experience in the here and now that are concrete proofs we are part of something very real.

One proof comes through suffering. A fourth benefit of justification is that we now have reason to rejoice in our sufferings.

REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS

Not only that, but 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.

The Christian life is full of suffering. The term *suffering* includes persecution for being a Christian. It also includes suffering in general such as sickness, financial loss, natural disasters, broken relationships, mental and emotional suffering. Why do we rejoice in our sufferings? We certainly don't enjoy the pain.

But we rejoice in the affect. By turning to God in the midst of our suffering we experience His grace to endure and not give up. By persisting in doing what is right and good and loving in the midst of our suffering our character is transformed. We learn self-control and self-discipline. We grow in patience. We grow in empathy and compassion for others who are suffering. We grow in faith as we experience God's grace getting us through. We gain clarity about what's important and what's not.

Rather than being destroyed by our suffering we are transformed. The changes in our character can only be explained as supernatural. Proof that our hope of seeing Him is not wishful thinking.

A second proof that our hope in being with God is legitimate is our present experience of His love for us. The fifth benefit of justification is knowing how much God loves us.

HEARTS FILLED WITH GOD'S LOVE

...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.

I trust you are experiencing a deep sense of God's love for you.

This sense of God's love in the here and now is a foretaste of the overwhelming, all-consuming experience of His love when we are with Him in glory.

God's love is conveyed to us through the person of the Holy Spirit Who comes to live within us the moment we are justified.

The sixth benefit of justification is the Holy Spirit living in us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVING IN US

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

You are not alone.

The third person of the Deity, the Holy Spirit, lives in you 24-7-365. He is a person just like the Father and the Son. He is not a feeling though He has feelings and can affect our feelings. He is not a force though He is omnipotent. As we will discover, the Holy Spirit is the key to our ongoing salvation.

Peace with God, unlimited access to God and His grace, the hope of the glory of God, rejoicing in our sufferings, hearts filled with God's love and the Holy Spirit living in us - these are blessings that come with being justified. But these blessings are not ends in themselves; they are means to accomplish the second phase of our salvation.

The first phase of our salvation is to be delivered from the *penalty* of our sin - eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. The blood of Jesus Christ has delivered us; He suffered separation from God on the cross on our behalf. We have been delivered from the Great White Throne Judgment where God's wrath will be poured out against in judgment upon the unrighteous.

Through faith in Jesus, we have been delivered from God's future wrath.

But we still need to be delivered from God's present wrath....

THE GOAL OF JUSTIFICATION NOW (5:6-11)

In order to understand this paragraph we need to review what we learned about God's wrath in chapters one and two. The Apostle Paul reveals there are two forms of God's wrath. In chapter two verse five Paul writes:

Romans 2:5 ESV

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

And in chapter two verses fifteen and sixteen:

Romans 2:15–16 *ESV*

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

God's future wrath is the Great White Throne Judgment. At the Great White Throne Judgment God will judge the unrighteous.

We have been delivered from this wrath. Having been declared righteous, we have been saved from God's future wrath. As Paul says in 5:1-2 having been justified we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Having been justified, our destiny is heaven.

In chapter one, verse eighteen, Paul speaks of another form of God's wrath; God's present wrath that is continuing to be poured out on every generation of the unrighteous.

Romans 1:18 *ESV*

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

How is God expressing His wrath upon the unrighteous?

Romans 1:24 *ESV*

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

Romans 1:26 *ESV*

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;

Romans 1:28 *ESV*

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

The present form of God's wrath here on earth is that He gives every human being over to sin - to natural lusts, unnatural lusts and to a debased mind and its evil consequences. Before we were justified, that was us. We were under God's present wrath. We were given over to sin. Our hearts, minds, feelings and bodies were formed in that context of being giving over to sin. We developed sinful habits of thought. We developed sinful habits of attitude. We developed sinful habits in our bodies. We developed sinful habits in the way we speak. We developed sinful habits in the way we relate to others. On and on the list goes. Who we are was shaped when we were under God's wrath and given over to sin.

The moment we trust in Christ, God declares us righteous. Our legal standing before God is forever changed. But the second after we're justified, we still have the same character we had before we were justified. However, having been justified, we now have the potential to become radically different people.

That is the goal of justification - our transformation.

That is the message of verses 6-11; justification now opens the way for the second aspect of our salvation - deliverance from the sin to which we were given over when we were under God's present wrath.

As we read, take special note of the verb tenses - past, present and future.

Romans 5:6–11 *ESV*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much

more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The goal of justification now is to deliver us from slavery to the sin to which we were given over when we were under God's present wrath.

When we were declared righteous we were delivered from God's future wrath - the Great White Throne Judgment. Having been justified we have the potential to be delivered from the practice and patterns of sin that shaped our lives when we were under God's present wrath and given over to sin. Now, having access to God we call on His grace. By God's grace and power we endure suffering and our characters are changed for the better. Through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us our minds are renewed, our values are redefined, our energies are redirected. We have the potential to become like Christ.

John Doe was forty years old when he trusted in Christ. He was under God's wrath and given over to lust and a debased mind for forty years. Every aspect of John's being, his will, his mind, his feelings, his body and his relationships were all shaped by the lust and debased thinking to which he was given over. When John trusted in Jesus, the blood of Jesus was applied to John's account, the penalty for all his sin was paid in full. God declared John "righteous". John's standing before God was forever changed. He is righteous before God. But John's character, the moment after he was justified, was the same character it was before he was justified.

John needs to be saved from the sinful patterns and practices that dominated his life when he was under God's present wrath given over to sin.

And now, having been justified, with unlimited access to God's grace, with the Holy Spirit living in him, John has the potential to be saved from that old life.

When John was under God's wrath and given over to lust, he was fully given over to sexual immorality and slept with every woman he could. After being justified and beginning to study God's Word, John discovered that sexual immorality was sin. Further, he discovered that God created sexual intimacy to be shared between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. John repented of his old understanding of sexuality and embraced God's design for his sexuality. John abstained from sexual relationships. By God's grace, a few years later, John met and married a godly lady to whom he has been sexually faithful for many years.

John's story is the story of being saved by Jesus from the present wrath of God and the sin to which John had been given over.

The Gospel is far more than "believe in Jesus so you go to heaven when you die".

The Gospel is the good news that the *death* of Jesus has the power to save you from God's future wrath of the Lake of Fire. The Gospel is the good news that the *life* of Jesus has the power to save you from God's present wrath and your former life when you were given over to sin. Having been justified the way is now open for you to be set free from the sinful thoughts and deeds that have plagued your life and relationships. Having been justified the way is open for you to become a truly good person -a person like Jesus!

QUESTION: In what ways have you seen God change your character through suffering?

NEXT WEEK: Romans 5:12-21