

ROMANS

Part 10: “The Benefits of Justification”

Romans 5:1–11

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Sunday, March 27, 2022 (The Season of Lent)

Scripture Reading

“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. 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” (Rom 5:1–11).

Introduction

For centuries and across continents, there are certain things that Christians have always done when they come together and worship.

They have always sung. They have prayed. They have listened to the reading of Scripture and the proclamation of the gospel. They have observed baptisms and received the Lord’s Supper. And... they have taken time to confess their sins and rest in God’s pardoning grace.

So too, there is a moment in our service when we practice a double-movement of what is called a “Confession of Sin” and an “Assurance of Pardon.”

Sunday after Sunday, whether we have had a good week or a terrible week, we confess our sin. Confession is not a moment of self-condemnation, self-punishment, or self-degradation. No, it is a moment where we come into agreement with the truth of God; it is a moment in which we acknowledge a deep, cosmic need for salvation, the unbearable weight of our sin and shame, and the sheer impossibility of self-salvation. It is a moment

in which together we declare our need for the grace that is freely available to us in Christ alone!

But we do not end with confession. Once we confess our common need, the celebrant declares that we have been absolved and exonerated of all our sins and failures! In Christian worship, this moment is known as “The Assurance of Pardon.” We are declared to be forgiven in Christ.

And, at Redeemer, there is a verse that we repeat week after week for this assurance of pardon. It is a verse that we hope will be written on the tablet of your heart (Pr 3:3) and seared into the memory of your mind. And, it so happens, that verse is the very first verse of our Scripture reading today. It is the declarative announcement of Romans 5:1: *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

By the design of our worship service, we are intentionally reminded again and again, week after week, of the triumphant truth of justification.

The Christian doctrine of justification is the truth that all who have faith in Christ have been credited with his righteousness before God. Justification is the truth that—despite your failure, despite your pain, despite your past—you have been made righteous through faith in Christ. Paul has been showing us throughout the book of Romans that the righteousness of God cannot be earned by human effort. It can only be received by the empty hands of faith.

Justification is a crucial truth of the Christian gospel. In fact, Martin Luther once said that by this one doctrine, the church will either stand or fall.

But justification is not only theological central for the Christian’s mind. It is practically empowering for the Christian’s life as well. And in today’s passage of Scripture, we are going to witness several glorious truths that flow downhill from the reality of justification. They are what John Calvin once called Paul’s “amplifications”¹ of justification. They are what we will simply call *“The Benefits of Justification.”*

Those benefits of justification are *1.) The Joy of Eternal Hope, 2.) Fearlessness in Suffering, and 3.) Confidence in the Love of God.* For the rest of our time today we will unfold each of these benefits in order.

Exposition

1.) The Joy of Eternal Hope

Let’s again look back at the first and last verses of our reading today:

¹ John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2010), 187.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1)

“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom 5:11).

The words “peace” and “reconciliation” are not the same word but they refer to the same concept. Paul is declaring that which was once broken has now been mended. A relationship that was once defined by animosity has now been transformed into a relationship defined by love. Where there was once war now there is peace.

This truth of the reconciliation between God and man frames all that is Romans 5:1–11. And is not just the reconciliation between God and man Paul is talking about—it is the reconciliation between God and *us*! Paul wants us to feel the personal weight of these truths.

“We” are the ones who are at peace with God. “We” are the ones who have been justified. “We” are the ones who have received reconciliation. In the context of what we have seen thus far in this New Testament letter, this is a moment of profound relief. So much in Paul’s letter of the Romans has been building toward this resolution.

I’ve mentioned before that Romans is, by far, Paul’s most complex and multifaceted letter. It is like a symphony with multiple movements that each have their own feel and tone. The first movement had a lot of minor chords and violent bursts. It was all about our cosmic need for grace, the enmity we have with God, and the judgment that is due our sin and rebellion.

Then we have triumphant march, in which Paul thunderously declares the good news of Christ’s redemptive accomplishment and the supernatural power of faith.

But now, that good news turns toward *us*. We are at a moment in the symphony wherein that tension has resolved and the melody of peace with God begins to resound.

Through Christ, we have been reconciled with God in the present—and from this truth flows a joyous hope for the future. As the Apostle announces in the next verse: *“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” (Rom 5:2).*

The hope of the glory of God is a hope that points beyond time. It is a reference to eternity.

Scripture teaches us that we will all stand before God one day. We will stand before our Creator and give an account of our lives. To stand before the One who spoke the galaxies into existence is an awe-inspiring and, potentially, terrifying thought.

But for those who trust in the redemptive work of Christ, the thought of standing before our Lord should not evoke dread. Rather, it should provoke *hope*.

Why is that? Because we have been *justified*.

We no longer need to dread the Judge of the living and the dead because our verdict has already been rendered. In Christ, we have already been declared righteous.

That means no matter what we face now, our eternity is secure in Christ. No trial can defeat us. No suffering can consume us. Even death is deprived of its power.²

I was reminded of this truth recently as I stood next to one of my dear friends—one of the elders of this church—as his wife took her last breath.

His grief was deep and immense. His heart was filled with a godly sorrow. But what I also witnessed in that moment was unflinching hope in the gospel.

My friend loved (and still loves) his wife fiercely. But even in the searing pain of losing his spouse, he told me the joy of the Lord was his strength (Neh 8:10). He told me to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil 1:21). And because he knew his wife trusted in Jesus, he knew that death is not defeat and that he would see his bride again. He knew that those who are justified in Christ Jesus may rest in the joy of eternal hope.

That type of hope does not come from trusting the work of man. That hope comes from Christ alone.

2.) Fearlessness in Suffering

For the last several decades, Americans have lived in a historically unique time of relative comfort and peace. And largely due to those circumstances, we are especially susceptible to a sub-biblical theology of suffering.

We can imagine belief in Jesus like an insurance policy that insulates us from all pain. We think and are even taught by some pastors that if we believe these certain truths, then we are entitled to immutable blessings of this-worldly health and wealth.

This mindset has been called the prosperity gospel. But it is not the Christian gospel. It is the American idol of material prosperity cloaked in the veneer of Jesus's name.

The testimony of Scripture the experience of life exposes the utter the absurdity of the prosperity gospel. The cross of Christ, the martyrdom of the Apostles, and the persecution of the Church all show that sometimes suffering not only comes despite faithfulness to God but because of it.

It is true that God does desire to bless his people. It is true there are joyous blessings and evidences of grace we can and do experience here and now. But the Bible also

² Barth, *Romans*, 157.

teaches until Jesus returns we still live in a sin-fractured world, even those whom God loves endure suffering.

Thus, the gospel does not guarantee that God's people are to be exempted from suffering. Instead, we are promised he will never leave us or forsake us in the midst of our suffering. We are promised that we have a shepherd who will faithfully walk with us in the valley of the shadow of death. We are promised that while God is not the author of evil, he is sovereign and powerful enough to bend the power of evil toward our good and his glory.

In fact, in the New Testament there is a strong biblical tie between suffering and glory.³ The Apostle Peter teaches that fiery trials refine the preciousness of our faith and inflames our joy in future glory (1 Pet 1:6–8). Paul tells the Ephesians that one purpose of his own suffering is for the glory of those he serves (Eph 3:13). Later in Romans, he says when we suffer with Christ, we can draw comfort that we will also be glorified with Christ (Rom 8:17–18).

One of the most moving passages that shows the link between suffering and glory is in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul writes,

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:16–18).

That same link is in our reading today:

“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” (Rom 5:2–4).

Notice that in Romans 5 there is a redemptive chain reaction that is possible for those in Christ when they rejoice in the midst of suffering. Rejoicing produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope.

Rejoicing comes from the knowledge of what is ours because of Christ. Endurance is resilience, stamina, and the ability to persevere. Character is internal strength, integrity, and courage. Hope is the expectation of a better future.

Now it has to be said, suffering can lead us to live in a constant state of hyper-vigilance and fear. Suffering can convince us that life is chaos, that all that is good can be taken

³ See: Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, 167.

away, that evil is always waiting just around the corner, and that all stories end in tragedy. This is a hopeless type of suffering, and such suffering can be traumatizing.

But suffering can also be transformative. For those that walk with Christ in the midst of our pain, suffering can actually make us more resilient and relationally healthy. Suffering in Christ can produce humility, holiness, and hope.

I think an analogy can be drawn with the metaphor with resistance training and weight living. It is possible to lift so much weight that you tear muscles or ligaments. But if you lift alongside someone who knows what they are doing, you can lift weights in such a way that makes you stronger.

My friend Kyle Cato has been teaching me a lot about lifting weights recently. And at the end of the day, lifting weight is a way of producing a type of suffering. It produces a type of brokenness, soreness, and pain. But with intentionality, discipline, and understanding, we can know that this same brokenness, soreness, and pain are not without purpose. That which breaks down muscle also creates depth and endurance. It fosters strength and power that would not and could not be produced otherwise.

There is suffering in this world, even for people of faith. But there is also an undefeatable strength that is ours in Christ.

There a day coming when death will die and all tears will be wiped away. And no suffering, no matter how great, will stop that Day from coming.

We may not know the exact purpose of our specific suffering. But we know there is purpose. And that truth enables us to face the impossible with the fearless hope that flows from justifying faith.

3.) Confidence in the Love of God

As we have been talking about hope today, it is important to acknowledge not all hopes are realized. In fact, the book of Proverbs says, *“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life”* (Prov 13:12).

This shows us there are some hopes that can be deferred. Some hopes can disappoint us. There are some hopes that, when they are unfulfilled, put us to shame.

But the hope of the gospel is of a different category. It is not a conditional hope. It is not a hope that is dependent on our emotions or our circumstances.

Paul testifies that this *“...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”* (Rom 5:5).

The hope of the gospel is a hope that arises from faith. It is determined not by the will of man but by the will of God. Is rooted not in the actions of man but in the action of God.

The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts. That word translated as “has been poured” (ἐκκέχυται) implies a past action that has ongoing effect. It means to give with extravagance and full commitment.

Paul is saying the love of God is rich and super-abundant. It lacks nothing. That this love comes to us by the divine action of the Holy Spirit shows that sovereign power of God fuels this love. As the Spirit of God once hovered over the waters of chaos before creation, so too he hovers over our dead hearts and creates life where there is death; he pours forth love where there was hostility.

And that truth of our former hostility is what makes the love of God so astonishing. Here Paul writes some of the most wondrous words in the New Testament:

“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” (Rom 5:6–9).

It's possible, but exceedingly rare for someone to give their life for a good man. Think of the men who followed General Washington or Major Winters from Band of Brothers who were willing to give their lives in service to their leaders and their nation.

It is possible to willingly sacrifice one's life for someone that you love that is weak and vulnerable, like a mother giving her life for her child.

Such a sacrifices are powerful. They are moving, humbling, and even awe-inspiring. But none of those sacrifices atone for sin.

But Jesus's death does atone for our sin. He takes our penalty and dies on our behalf. And he did not die for us in our most worthy state—he did this in our most *unworthy* state!

We were not just ungodly. We were enemies. We were in active hostility to God. And yet in this place God has saved us and met us with his mercy.

I believe as Paul wrote the words of Romans 5 he was personally aware of the richness of God's mercy. He was acutely aware of the amazing grace that saved him.

In fact, Paul's life testifies to the reality of this amazing grace. After all, he was former pharisee of pharisees, a puritan of all puritans, who self-righteously hunted down Christians and wanted to destroy the Christian gospel.

Yet, it was in that place of active animosity that the grace of God breaks into Paul's life. It shocks, terrifies, and literally blinds Paul. And it changes him from the inside out.

The once zealous radical is now the emissary of grace. The Jewish cultural chauvinist is now the apostle to the gentiles.

Paul was not saved in his best moment. He was saved while going out of his way to persecute Christians.

Paul did not achieve saving faith—he encountered it. Jesus pursued him, saved him, reconciled him, and justified in the midst of hostility and rebellion.

And, so too, we were once in rebellion. We were once at hostility with God. But now Paul says, for those in Christ, *we* have peace with God.

Conclusion

We must be under no delusion about the seriousness sin and need. Romans has shown us who God is and who we are outside of Christ.

We must know the greatness of our sin. Yet, we must trust that God’s love is greater than our sin.

Why can God love us even when were his enemy by nature? Only because of Jesus.

There is the story in the Old Testament about a man named Mephibosheth. He was a member of the recently deposed dynasty of King Saul and the heir to the throne of a house that had fallen.

In the ancient world, that was a big deal. New kings were not known for their mercy. It was expected for them to kill any potential threat to power.

This was not good for Mephibosheth. To make matters worse, Mephibosheth was crippled and could not walk. He could not run. He could not fight. He was utterly helpless.

Yet, the new king was a man named David; a man after God’s own heart. The former King Saul, Mephibosheth’s grandfather, tried to hunt down and murder David. David had every reason to hold a grudge against all of the house of Saul.

But Mephibosheth’s father happened to be a man name Jonathan. Jonathan every reason to be David’s rival. But instead he was David’s faithful friend.

Jonathan knew David. He supported David. And he even seemed to know that he would die and that David would become king. But he asked that David would, for his sake, be kind to his son when Jonathan was gone.

So when Mephibosheth came before King David, he expected death. He was a member of a rival royal house. He had nothing to contribute. He was weak and vulnerable.

But for the sake of Jonathan, David had mercy on Mephibosheth. He welcomed him and favored him as if he were his own son. He provided for him. And he even welcomed him to a place at his own table.

So too, though we were once members of a rival kingdom, and though we are weak and have nothing to give, we have been accepted and granted mercy on behalf of another. We have been welcomed into the people of God. We have been given an inheritance in the family. We have been granted a seat at the table.

You need to know that if you have trusted in Christ, God does not barely tolerate you—he loves you!

Your need does not repel him—it compels him.

Your shame does not disgust him—it draws him to you.

In fact, it is in your weakness that his strength is perfected

We can have no peace if our justification is based on our works. We can have *perfect* peace when our justification is found in Christ and his perfect work!

And this truth cannot be understood and then responded to with casual indifference. It is a truth—that if you truly understand it—leads to rejoicing and worship.

As Paul concludes this passage:

“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” (Rom 5:10–11).

The word “rejoice” is the same word that is often translated elsewhere in Romans as “boasting” (καυχώμενοι). We have no boasting in our works. But we have every reason to boast in the work of Christ; every reason to be confident and joyful in the work of Christ.

We cannot reciprocate the love of God. But we can respond to it. We can come before the throne of God with bold faith. We can pray with hearts filled with hope. We can worship the God who has loved us when we don’t deserve love.

So, Redeemer Christian Church, may we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. May we endure in our trials and sufferings. May we marvel at the love of God revealed in Christ. And may we rest in all the benefits of our justification!

AMEN.

Discussion Starters for Gospel Communities

1. *Read Romans 5:1–11. This passage may sound very familiar to you. At Redeemer, we have Rom 5:1 proclaimed over us week after week after we confess our sins. Why is this verse so important to be proclaimed, memorized, and repeated?*
2. *Describe the progression of verses 3 through 4. How does this passage reveal a view of suffering that is counterintuitive for many Americans? Have you ever known suffering to produce rejoicing, endurance, character, and hope in your own heart?*
3. *We are often tempted to think that God loves us only when we have acted in a way that has merited his love. Why is it so important to remember that Christ died for us while we were his enemies (see: Rom 5:6–8)?*
4. *Notice how the love of God is something that is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Spend some time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to pour his love into your heart and the hearts of those you love.*