

X. The Benefits of Justification

February 2/3/4, 2016

Romans 5:1-11

Aim: To consider the manifold benefits of our past justification in our present life.

A. The Introduction to This Passage (Romans 5:1-11)

1. The Organization of Romans 5-8

Four main arguments combine to show that Paul intends a transition in the letter at 5:1. First, the opening phrase of the chapter, ‘having been justified by faith,’ summarizes the argument of 1:18-4:25 while preparing the way for a new topic that will build on it. Second, a shift in style at 5:1 is noticeable. 1:18-4:25 has a polemical tone – Paul is plainly *arguing* against a (mainly) Jewish viewpoint, sometimes addressing his opponent directly in the second person singular. But with 5:1, the first person plural begins to dominate, Paul including fellow Christians with him in a more ‘confessional’ style: ‘we have peace,’ ‘we rejoice,’ ‘Christ died for us,’ ‘we are now justified.’ A third indication that a shift in focus occurs at 5:1 is the relative frequency of certain key words in chapters 5-8 in comparison with 1:18-4:25. Particularly striking is the contrast between the 33 occurrences of ‘faith’ and ‘believe’ in 1:18-4:25 and the three uses in chapters 5-8 (and two of the latter refer back to the argument in 1:18-4:25). On the opposite side, ‘life’ and ‘to live,’ used only twice in the first section occur 24 times in chapters 5-8.

The fourth and most important argument for connecting chapter 5 more closely with what follows than with what proceeds is that it provides a more convincing reading of what Paul is teaching in this part of the letter than any alternative is able to give. As several scholars have noticed, key words found in 5:1-11 recur again in 8:18-39, such as: ‘justify,’ ‘glory,’ ‘peace,’ ‘hope,’ ‘tribulation,’ ‘save,’ and ‘endurance.’ Both 5:1-11 and 8:18-39 affirm, against the threat of tribulation and suffering, the certainty of the Christian’s final salvation because of God’s love, the work of Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This theme, the ‘hope of sharing in God’s glory’ (cp. 5:2 and 8:18, 30), ‘brackets’ all of chapters 5-8. Assurance of glory, is then, the overarching theme in this second major section of Romans. The verdict of justification, which Jews relegated to the day of judgment, has, Paul proclaims, already been rendered over the person who believes in Jesus. But can that verdict, ‘hidden’ to the senses, guarantee that one will be delivered from God’s wrath when it is poured out in the judgment? Yes, affirms Paul. Nothing can stand in its way: not death (5:12-21), not sin (chapter 6), not the law (chapter 7) – nothing! (chapter 8). What God has begun, having justified and reconciled us, He will bring to a triumphant conclusion, and save us from wrath.

At the risk of oversimplifying a complex section and obscuring many other significant connections, we may view the *main development* of chapters 5-8 as a chiasm:

- A. 5:1-11 – assurance of future glory
- B. 5:12-21 – basis for this assurance in the work of Christ
- C. 6:1-23 – the problem of sin
- C’. 7:1-25 – the problem of the law
- B’. 8:1-17 – ground of assurance in the work of Christ, mediated by the Spirit
- A’. 8:18-39 – assurance of future glory

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In chapters 5-8, then, Paul invites the Christian to join with him in joyful thanksgiving for what the gospel provides – a new life given to God’s service in this life and a certain, glorious hope for the life to come. At the same time Paul is continuing his defense of the gospel. His opponents (probably Jewish, mainly) attacked his message as proclaiming no more than a legal fiction – a ‘declaration’ of a relationship that cannot be proved and which effects no change – and requires no change! – in this life and which offers no security for the day of judgment. Quite the contrary, Paul affirms, the person who has experience the gospel as the justifying activity of God (cp. 1:17) is assured of finding that gospel to be truly ‘God’s power for salvation’ (cp. 1:16) – power for dedicated Christian service in this life and for deliverance from all the forces of evil and of judgment in the next.

Having discussed justification (1:18-4:25), Paul now turns his attention to sanctification (5:1-17). In 5:1-11, he will talk about the peace we have with God as a result of justification. In 5:12-21, in a sort of parenthetical section, he will explain the origin of sin. Then, for the remainder of this section (6:1-8:17), he will deal with the sad reality that, even after being eternally justified and forgiven by God, we continue to see all too much sin in our lives.

2. The Overview of Romans 5:1-11

a) *Moo*

In this paragraph, Paul invites us to join with him in celebrating the marvelous benefits conferred upon the justified believer. Paul highlights two blessings in particular: ‘peace with God’ (or reconciliation) and hope. The former theme occurs at the beginning (vv. 1-2a) and end (v. 11) of the paragraph while the latter is the focus of vv. 2b-10. Paul proclaims that Christians are not only ‘justified’ – ‘acquitted’ in a legal sense – but placed into an entirely new situation, both in the present (‘reconciliation’) and in the future (‘sharing the glory of God’). Nevertheless, of these two topics, it is ‘hope’ that comes to dominate the paragraph – in v. 10, for instance, Paul argues from reconciliation to hope. Moreover, it is the topic of ‘hope’ and ‘glory’ that Paul elaborates on in 5:12-21 and 8:14-39, while reconciliation is mentioned without further attention or description.

In chapters 3 and 4 of Romans, Paul establishes unequivocally that salvation comes only on the basis of God’s grace working through man’s faith. Man’s only part in becoming saved is to receive forgiveness and reconciliation freely in faith from God’s gracious hand. The person who trusts in anything else, including obedience to God’s own law, cannot be saved. In Romans 3-4, Paul’s arguments are specifically directed to Jews (e.g., 3:1, 9, 29; 4:1, 13), and it seems likely they continue to be his primary audience in chapter 5. As he often does in this epistle, the great apostle anticipates the typical arguments that would be raised against his inspired teaching, many of which arguments he doubtless had already encountered during his ministry. The questions and objections Paul now addresses pertain to how salvation is maintained. ‘If a person is saved only through his faith, apart from any good works he may achieve, does that mean he can henceforth live just as he pleases because his right relationship with God is eternally secure? Or is salvation preserved by one’s good works?’ If the preservation of salvation depends on what believers themselves do or do not do, their salvation is only as secure as their faithfulness, which provides no security at all. According to that view, believers must protect by their own human power what Christ began by His divine power.

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b) MacArthur

It is of great importance for Christians to be aware of the security they *now have and forever will have* in Christ, a security that does not depend on their own sinful and futile efforts but on the ‘surpassing greatness of His power toward us’ and on ‘the strength of His might.’ That truth is the cornerstone of the feeling of assurance. Our hope is not in ourselves but in our great God, who, even ‘if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself’ (2 Tim. 2:13). In developing his argument in the book of Romans against the destructive notion that believers must live in uncertainty about the completion of their salvation, Paul presents six ‘links’ in the chain of truth that binds a true believer eternally to his Savior and Lord, completely apart from any effort or merit on the believer’s part. Those links are: the believer’s peace with God (v. 1), his standing in grace (v. 2a), his hope of glory (vv. 2b-5a), his possession of divine love (vv. 5b-8), his certainty of deliverance (vv. 9-10), and his joy in the Lord (v. 11).

c) Hughes

This exultant section in Romans is the inevitable step for once hopelessly lost sinners who received through faith the righteousness of God and now stand justified before Him. The true believer was once under wrath, but then was saved by faith, and now, as chapter 5 so powerfully maintains, he exults with great joy. This passage is remarkable for several reasons. With its exalted language, it is hymn-like. There is also its air of confidence. Paul does not argue his case as he did in the preceding chapters. He simply states the facts in a marvelous chain of confident assertions. Our passage is also personal, as Paul switches to the first person plural—this is his experience along with all true believers. Lastly, the passage is remarkable because the joy of these verses is contagious. Every Christian can deepen his or her optimism and capacity for joy by understanding the benefits of justification as they are given by Paul in Romans 5:1-11.

d) Barnett

Few pages of Paul’s writings so eloquently set out the blessings of Christian belief as this. Through Christ, the believer is now justified, reconciled, and at peace with God, given a gracious standing in the presence of God and assured of salvation for the Last Day. The radical teaching of the Apostle Paul is that God’s verdict ‘righteous’ can be revealed ‘now’ before the End while this present age ‘still’ continues. That verdict, moreover, does not and cannot depend on self-effort or works, but only on Christ and whether or not one belongs to Him. If one does, indeed, belong to Him, he is deemed righteous ‘now,’ even though he is ‘still’ ungodly. The Day of Judgment has been brought forward into the present and God’s verdict is known, and that verdict is good to those who believe. As a result of God’s saving activity in Christ that secures their ultimate futures, Paul and his fellow believers ‘boast,’ that is, ‘exult in,’ their sure hope of sharing God’s glory and even of the sufferings that strengthen that hope (vv. 2 and 3). Furthermore, they ‘exult in’ God Himself (v. 11).

B. The Blessings in This Passage (Romans 5:1-11)

1. Peace (Romans 5:1)

a) *We Have Been Justified (5:1a)*

¹*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith...*

The opening phrase of Romans 5 is transitional. ‘Therefore, having been justified by faith’ not only sums up the central teaching of Romans 1-4, but, dependent as it is on the first person plural

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verb following, presents it as a blessing experienced by the readers of the letter. Paul presents this declaration of justification as a past act, a perspective that is maintained throughout chapters 5-8. While justification brings to the believer a new and permanent status, justification itself is a one-for-all act by which God acquits the sinner. But what is the exact nature of this new status? What are its implications for our present lives and for the future? It is these questions that Paul takes up in this section, and in chapters 5-8 as a whole.

The term ‘therefore’ connects Paul’s present argument with what he has already said, especially in chapters 3 and 4. The verb translated ‘we have’ is in the present tense, indicating something that is already possessed. Many of a believer’s blessings must await his resurrection and glorification, but ‘peace with God’ is established the moment he places his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great truth of the ‘therefore’ is that we can be justified now, contrary to what the Roman Catholic Church claims. Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ do not have a prolonged wait for their justification. The moment they believe in Jesus and put their trust in Him, God declares them just, once and for all. ‘Having been justified’ refers to an action in the past, to something that has been accomplished. The work of Christ is finished. Justification is a past action. We receive it the moment we believed.

‘Therefore being justified by faith [in the past], we have [in the present] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek makes this past tense very plain. Based upon Christ’s finished work on the cross about 2000 years ago, and based upon the past specific moment in space and time when we individually accepted Christ as our Savior, we find ourselves in a certain situation in the present – ‘we have peace with God.’

b) We Have Peace (5:1b)

...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first consequence of having been justified by faith is that ‘we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Peace comes through our peace agent, the peacemaker, the Prince of Peace. He is the medium, the means, through which this peace comes to us.

Before we were Christians, we had not even the faintest chance for real peace because we were far from God. God had given us up to the destructive effects of our own sins and the sins of others (1:24, 26, 28). This resulted in profound alienation not only from God but from our fellow human beings, and also a constant tendency toward more depravity. To top it off, we stood under the ultimate wrath and judgment of God. No amount of personal bootstrap improvement could help us. However, as Colossians 1:20 tells us, when we believed, God gave us peace with Himself through the blood of the cross. The objective fact of that peace makes possible the inner subjective experience of peace with God. Whereas previously it was utterly impossible to experience true inner peace because God was not a peace with us, it is now ours because the Prince of Peace reigns in our hearts. So as Paul begins this great chapter on exulting and boasting in God, he begins by stating the ground of the peace that God’s children experience. At the very root of our joy is the peace of God.

The central motif of the gospel in the New Testament is reconciliation. What is a necessary condition for reconciliation to take place? The most important—and necessary—ingredient for reconciliation is estrangement. Where there is no estrangement, there is no need for reconciliation. The New Testament repeatedly describes the ministry of Jesus as a work of

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mediation, because the God-Man came into a hostile world estranged from God. The work of Christ is that of mediator to bring the estranged parties together. He is the Prince of Peace, who came to end the warfare that is so real. The Scriptures tell us that not only are we at war with God, but God is at war with us. The imagery of God in the Old Testament is the soldier whose bow is bent. His chariots come to trample out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. The book of Romans begins with Paul giving a lengthy exposition of the reality of the wrath of God, anger that is directed against sinful people, who refuse to honor Him as God. We need reconciliation. We need to end the estrangement, and what brings it is the good news of the gospel, the good news that publishes peace and says they war is over. Being justified, we have peace with God, and God has taken the initiative to bring about that peace. We did not surrender and sue for peace; God conquered us, and in His gracious mercy He enabled us to be reconciled to Him through the work of His Son. When God enters into a peace treaty with His people, it is a permanent peace. He may be displeased with us, and we may grieve Him, but once we have peace with God through the work of Jesus Christ, that peace is ours forever.

Because God has declared us to be ‘right’ with Him, ‘we have peace with God,’ or as he will say shortly, ‘we have been reconciled to God ... we have received reconciliation’ (vv. 10, 11). Prior to God’s justification of us we were His enemies (v. 10) and a ‘state of war’ existed between God and us. Is it not true that in our unregenerate state we distrust and resent God? But now there is peace, not a passive peace, a mere absence of conflict, but positive, harmonious, and loving relationships with God that He Himself has initiated ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Because we have ‘peace *with* God’ we also begin to know the inner ‘peace *of* God that passes all understanding’ (Phil. 4:7). There is also an objective ‘peace’ that is ours ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ The prophets promised the blessing of ‘peace with God’ or His *shalom* as a picture of the End-Time (cp. Is. 9:7; Micah 5:2, 4-5).

‘Peace’ is a word that must be understood according to its use in the LXX, where it translates the wide-ranging Hebrew word *shalom*. As a result, the word ‘peace’ moves beyond the largely negative signification of the word in secular Greek – ‘peace’ as the cessation or absence of hostilities – to a more positive nuance – the well-being, prosperity, or salvation of the godly person. These are often expressly treated as the gifts of God, as in the well-known benediction of Numbers 6:26. ‘Peace with God’ for Paul does not mean an inner sense of well-being, or ‘feeling at peace’ (what we might call the ‘peace *of* God’ – cp. Phil. 4:7), but the outward situation of being in a relationship of peace *with* God. While the word is not used again in this paragraph, the language of ‘reconciliation’ in vv. 10-11 picks up this concept. ‘Peace’ or ‘reconciliation’ with God, then ‘frames’ this paragraph.

The ‘peace’ that Paul is speaking about here is not subjective but objective. It is not a feeling but a fact. Apart from salvation through Jesus Christ, every human being is at enmity with God, spiritually at war with Him (see v. 10; cp. 8:7), regardless of what his feelings about God may be. In the same way, the person who is justified by faith in Christ is a peace with God, regardless of how he may feel about it at any given moment. Through his trust in Jesus Christ, a sinner’s war with God is ended for all eternity.

The first and most important aspect of this peace with God is not the peace in our own hearts, but the fact that God is at peace with us. On the basis of Christ’s finished work, He is at peace with us. Because God is at peace with us, because He has declared us justified, because we have returned to the purpose of our creation, we can in the present have a relationship with God and can have true peace in our own hearts.

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‘Peace with God’ comes through, and only through, ‘our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Since peace with God, or reconciliation, is one way of viewing the new relationship into which we have been put by God’s justifying act in Christ, it can no more be achieved apart from Christ than can justification itself.

Although the peace of which Paul is speaking in this passage is the objective peace of being reconciled to God, awareness of that objective truth gives the believer a deep and wonderful subjective peace as well. The peace that a believer has in the knowledge that he is secure forever in Christ not only strengthens his faith but strengthens his service. The knowledge that we are eternally at peace with God prepares us to wage effective spiritual warfare in Christ’s behalf and in His power.

2. Access (Romans 5:2a)

²*Through him we have also obtained access...*

The second consequence or benefit is another we should never take lightly: we have access to the Father. The entire history of the Old Testament after the Fall is a story of how access to God is limited or cut off, starting with God putting an angel by the garden of Eden with a flaming sword. The significance of that loss of access to God is reiterated through the Old Testament Scriptures (e.g., Mount Sinai, the Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies). We see the same picture over and over again, the picture of now access. However, on the day when Christ was the curse on the cross, there was an earthquake, and in that earthquake the veil of the temple was ripped like tissue paper (Mt. 27:51). When He rose from the dead, He entered into the heavenly sanctuary into the heavenly Holy of Holies, where He gives us access.

When we come together for worship on Sundays, we no longer come to that mountain that was shaking with thunder and lightning and hidden in the clouds (Heb. 12:22-24). We come to the presence of God. We have access to His presence. There is no more veil. The angel’s sword of flame has been doused with the blood of Christ, and God welcomes us into His presence. There is no greater human experience than to have an overwhelming sense of being in the presence of God.

Our justification is not just about forgiveness or the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. It is not just about escaping the judgment of divine wrath, though it includes all that. In our justification we have peace that passes all human understanding. While once we were barred admittance into the immediate presence of God now we are called to enter into his presence boldly. However, there is a difference between boldness and arrogance; we are never to enter into the presence of God arrogantly.

Prosagōgē (‘introduction’ or ‘access’) is used only three times in the New Testament, and in each instance it is used of the believer’s access to God through Jesus Christ (see also Eph. 2:18; 3:12). For Jews, the idea of having direct access, or ‘introduction,’ to God was unthinkable, because to see God face-to-face was to die (cp. Ex. 19:19-21). But Christ’s death ended that. Through His atoning sacrifice, He made God the Father accessible to any person, Jew or Gentile, who trusts in that sacrifice (cp. Heb. 4:16).

‘Access’ (*prosagōgē*) was an ‘audience’ with a king, a right of entry into the presence of a monarch. We might think therefore that Paul is suggesting ‘access’ to God as Father ‘through Jesus Christ.’ This, indeed, is true but it may not be his point here. More likely the apostle means that ‘through Christ’ we are now ‘under grace’ and not ‘under Law’ (6:14). We must

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constantly remind ourselves that we are not under Law but under grace as beloved children of our dear heavenly Father (6:24; 8:15-16).

3. Grace (Romans 5:2b)

... by faith into this grace in which we stand...

Paul has stressed at key points in his argument that everything the believer has comes by grace (3:24; 4:16). Grace describes the free, unconstrained manner in which God acts towards His creatures (see also 11:5-6). Later in chapter 5, Paul will use ‘grace’ to denote the act of God in Christ (vv. 15, 17). Here, however, grace is used with a slightly different nuance, denoting not the manner in which God acts, or the gift that God gives, but the ‘state’ or ‘realm’ into which God’s redeeming work transfers the believer. It is the realm in which ‘grace reigns’ (5:21), a realm that is set in contrast to the realm or domain of the law (6:14, 15). While this state of grace includes our justification as a key element, the notion goes beyond justification to all that is conveyed to us by God in Christ.

Grace is God’s riches to us. Grace is the unsought, undeserved, and unconditional love of God. Grace is God pursuing us until He found us and persevering with us ever afterwards. For Paul, grace and peace always go together. Even Paul’s greeting in the opening verses of Romans shows this: ‘Grace to you and peace...’ (1:7). To stand in grace is to stand also in peace.

On the basis of our faith in Him, Jesus Christ brings believers ‘into this grace in which we stand.’ *Histēmi* (‘stand’) here carries the idea of permanence, of standing firm and immovable. Although faith is necessary for salvation, it is of God’s ‘grace,’ not the believer’s faith, that has the power to save and to keep saved. We are not saved by divine grace and then preserved by human effort. That would be a mockery of God’s grace, meaning that what God begins in us He is either unwilling or unable to preserve and complete (cp. Phil. 1:6). Believers will often fall into sin, but their sin is not more powerful than God’s grace. They are the very sins for which Jesus paid the penalty. If no sin a person commits before salvation is too great for Christ’s atoning death to cover, surely no sin he commits after salvation is too great to be covered. Standing in grace, we are in the sphere of constant forgiveness.

Faith and grace are inseparably related. The most unmerited favor that any creature, any sinner, can experience is the grace of being allowed into the presence of God.

4. Hope (5:2c-5a)

Since every aspect of it is solely the work of God, salvation cannot possibly be lost. And the end of that marvelous divine work is the ultimate glorification of every believer in Jesus Christ. As the apostle has already established, salvation is anchored in the *past* because Christ has made peace with God for all those who trust in Him (5:1). It is anchored in the *present* because by Christ’s continual intercession (Heb. 7:25), every believer now stands securely in God’s grace (v. 2a). Next he proclaims that salvation is also anchored in the *future*, because God gives every one of His children the unchangeable promise that one day they will be clothed with the glory of His own Son.

a) Hope of Glory (5:2c)

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

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The next consequence or benefit of justification that Paul mentions in the beginning of chapter 5 is the ‘hope of the glory of God.’ The word ‘hope,’ *elpis* in the Greek, is one of the richest terms we find anywhere in the New Testament. It is the gift that God gives to every person justified by faith. It is a hope that radically differs from our normal understanding of hope. The typical use of the word *hope* expresses the desire that certain things will come to pass, but we have no assurance that they will. Not so with the biblical concept of hope. The Bible describes hope with a metaphor: hope is the anchor of our souls. Our souls are not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. It is a hope that carries with it God’s assurance; it is a hope that cannot fail. In one sense our faith looks backward so that we put our trust in what Christ has done for us. In another sense our hope looks forward with the same assurance to what He will do when He completes His work of redemption in us, a work that cannot fail. Hope is merely faith looking forward.

Paul’s word ‘hope’ (*elpis*) is both the act of hoping and its content. It is quite different from our word ‘wish,’ which is merely our ‘desire’ with no certainty of fulfillment. ‘Hope,’ however, is directed towards God’s promise and is certain even though its realization lies in the future. Thus, Paul will assure us in verse 6 that ‘hope does not disappoint’ or ‘make us ashamed.’ When God makes ‘hope’ reality it will exceed all our expectations, beyond our wildest dreams.

Included in that panoply of blessings is hope. As Paul in vv. 1-2a looks at the present situation of the Christian in light of the past, he now begins to contemplate that situation in light of the future. This is the note that will dominate this paragraph, and ‘we boast in the hope of the glory of God’ is the key assertion in the passage. The word ‘boast’ suggests here confidence and joy: perhaps we could render it ‘we are joyfully confident of.’ As in 3:23, ‘the glory of God’ is that state of ‘God-like-ness’ which has been lost because of sin, and which will be restored in the last day to every Christian (cp. 8:17, 17, 21, 30). A joyful confidence in this prospect, overcoming our (proper) frustration at our present failure to be all that God would want us to be, should be the mark of every believer.

The translation of ‘rejoice’ does not quite get it; the meaning is more than simply ‘rejoicing.’ The actual word Paul used is not the normal word for joy or rejoicing; it is the word more often translated ‘boasting.’ In both the Greek and Latin texts we see a play on words: we ‘glory now in glory.’ We have a sense of celebration and ecstasy beyond normal levels of joy, and the target of our joy is the hope directed toward the manifestation of the glory of God.

The word ‘glory’ comes from the Greek noun *doxa*. From it, we get the word *doxology*. Paul is saying that once we are justified, one of the things that delights us and causes joy to fill our souls is to contemplate who God is. Our greatest delight is in His character and glory. The word for *glory* in the Old Testament is *kabod*. In the original Semitic language, the word meant ‘weightiness’ or ‘heaviness.’ When we speak about the glory of God, we speak about one whose very being is not light or insignificant; it is substantive and heavy. There is a link in the original languages between the weightiness or dignity of God and His august nature. God’s glory is tied to His dignity or gravity. The purpose of worship is to ascribe glory to God, to honor and rever Him, to adore Him in the excellence of His being.

The effect of grace and peace together is to produce an exultant approach to life: ‘And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ Christians look forward to the day when they will fully behold the outward shining of God’s inward being. This is what all of us long for. Someday we will not only behold His glory but will be glorified in Him. Everything that now keeps us from being

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what God wants us to be will be gone forever! The word ‘rejoice’ (*kaukaomai*) means to boast in the sense of jubilation—exultant rejoicing—to shout about it! We used to fall short of the glory of God (3:23), but now we boast in it!

Kauchaomai (‘exult’) denotes jubilation and rejoicing. The Christian has no reason to fear the future and every reason to rejoice in it, because he has the divinely-secured ‘hope’ that his ultimate destiny is to share the very ‘glory of God.’ Because our human understanding is so imperfect, it is impossible for us to comprehend the wonder and magnitude of ‘the glory of God.’ Nevertheless, we have the Lord’s own assurance that one day we not only will behold his divine glory but will partake of it. The glory of His own divine holiness and majestic perfection will radiate in us and through us for all eternity.

‘Boast’ (*kauchaomai*) can have an ugly or an exalted meaning, depending on its object. Here, because it is directed to the hope of the glory of God, it is exalted and means ‘exult in.’ Most likely, Paul is contrasting the doubtful Jewish practice of ‘boasting’ in one’s ‘works’ (cp. 3:27). ‘Being justified by faith,’ however, we ‘exult’ in the prospect of God’s glorious future for His children.

b) *Hope Through Suffering (5:3-4)*

(1) Rejoice in Suffering (5:3a)

³*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings...*

It is probably to head off criticism of his teaching that Paul introduces the ‘problem’ of suffering. For (particularly) Jewish objectors would be likely to question Paul sharply about his affirmation that the Christian is enjoying ‘peace with God’ when that same Christian is facing illness, persecution, and difficulties of all kinds. Indeed, Christians themselves, then as today, were surely wondering about the reality of these blessings in the face of suffering. Characteristically, Paul takes an offensive posture. Not only do sufferings not overthrow the reality of these blessings, but they are themselves occasions for joyful boasting! The believer should boast ‘not only’ in the hope of the glory of God, ‘but also’ in afflictions. This means not merely that we are to exult ‘in the midst of’ afflictions, but that we are to exult ‘in’ the afflictions themselves: that is, to view them as a basis for further confidence in our redeemed status.

In addition to exulting in our certain hope of the glory of God, ‘we also exult in our tribulations.’ This is because they contribute to a present blessing and ultimate glory. *Thlipsis* (‘tribulations’) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olive in a press to order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice. The ‘tribulations’ of which Paul is speaking are not the troubles that are common to all mankind but the troubles that Christians suffer for the sake of their Lord.

Paul often uses the word ‘afflictions’ (*thlipsis*, meaning ‘downward pressure’ upon oneself) for sufferings arising from Christian confession and ministry (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:3-11). It is not that Paul is a masochist enjoying pain for its own sake.

There is nothing more unnatural than to enjoy afflictions or tribulation. Tribulation is something we desperately seek to avoid. However, once we have been justified, we have a whole new perspective on tribulations. We no longer see suffering as an exercise in futility, something that takes away our hope. Once we have the anchor on our soul, it holds when tribulation comes. Paul was not a masochist. He is not saying that tribulation is a joyful, pleasant, pleasurable

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experience. Rather, he is saying that because we have been justified, even the tribulations and afflictions we experience can be an occasion for joy. Because God has redeemed us, we are able to rejoice no matter what life brings.

It seems quite natural to exult in something that is positive. But the rejoicing that comes next (vv. 3-4) is supernatural by anyone's standards. As believers, we see our sufferings as potential for positive growth.

(2) The Fruit of Suffering (5:3b-4)

...knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...

The reason why the believer can 'rejoice in afflictions' is that he or she 'knows' that affliction 'produces endurance,' and endurance, in turn, a 'tested character,' and a tested character, in turn, hope (cp. 1 Pe. 1:6b-7; James 1:2-4). As in James 1:3, the first virtue in the list is 'endurance,' a word that denotes the spiritual fortitude that bears up under, and is, indeed, made even stronger by, suffering. It suggests that 'stick-to-itiveness' which is required if the word of God is to produce fruit in us (Lk.8:15) and that long-distance, marathoner's endurance which will enable us to run the race set before us right to the finish line (Heb. 12:1). 'Endurance,' in turn, will, if our attitude is right, produce a 'tested character.' As a result of this tested character, finally, the Christian who responds to sufferings with the proper attitude will find, at the end of the line, that hope has been strengthened. Sufferings, rather than threatening or weakening our hope, as we might expect to be the case, will, instead, increase our certainty in that hope. Hope, like a muscle, will not be strong if it goes unused.

Christians not only should rejoice in tribulations because those hardships are evidence of faithful living which is blessed and rewarded, but also because of the spiritual benefits they produce. *Hupomonē* ('perseverance') is often translated 'patience.' It also carries the idea of endurance the ability to continue working in the face of strong opposition and great obstacles. Perseverance, in turn produces 'proven character.' The Greek term (*dokimē*) translated 'proven character' simply means 'proof,' which in the present context obviously refers to Christian 'character.' The term was used of testing precious metals such as silver and gold to demonstrate their purity. When Christians experience tribulations that demand perseverance, that perseverance, in turn, produces in them proven spiritual character. Just as a metalsmith uses intense heat to melt silver and gold in order to cleanse them of physical impurities, so does God use tribulations to cleanse His children of spiritual impurities. Coming full circle, as it were, Paul says that godly hope produces godly hope.

Verses 3-4 tell us that tribulation often becomes God's means to bring us to maturity. Look at the process. 'Suffering produces endurance.' The Greek word literally means 'to abide under or stay under pressure.' We naturally want to escape pressure, but tribulation forces us to stay under it—and ultimately this produces endurance or stability. Next, 'endurance produces character.' The word here derives from a group of words that have to do with the refining of metals, dross being burned away. Paul is speaking of sterling character—character without impurities. This refined, pure character tends to confirm and strengthen our hope in the glory of God. As we experiencing this incredible exultation—this triumphant jubilation? (cp. 2 Cor. 12:9). We exult in suffering because it is the path to spiritual maturity and glory.

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Tribulation puts muscle on our souls. Tribulation makes it possible for the people of God to persevere rather than to give up. Tribulation produces perseverance; ‘and perseverance, character.’ An easy life does nothing to produce character. Character is forged in the crucible of pain. Character is built when we have no alternative but to persevere in tribulation. Those who come out on the other side are those in whose souls God has built character. The result of character is ‘hope’—there it is again. Authentically joyful people are those who know where their hope is. They have been through the crucible. They have been through afflictions, persecution, and rejection from their friends. They have been through pain. They have identified with the humiliation of Christ. They have been crucified with Christ and raised in His resurrection and now participate in His exultation. That is the hope that Christian character produces.

‘Afflictions’ are not an end in themselves, for they nurture something further, namely, ‘patience.’ This word *hupomonē*, which literally means ‘remaining under,’ suggests the necessity of submitting to circumstances that we cannot change. As active people who automatically seek to ‘fix’ things, this ‘patience’ does not come easily! Yet like ‘afflictions,’ the experience of learning ‘patience’ also nurtures something else, ‘tested-ness’ (*dokimē*). This is a favorite word of Paul’s from the world of the blacksmith where it was used for the hammering of the red hot horse-shoe or plow, shaping and testing it on the anvil. This ‘shaping and testing’ engenders ‘hope,’ that is, hope of ‘the glory of God.’

c) Hope Doesn’t Disappoint (5:5a)

...⁵and hope does not put us to shame...

Christian need not fear that the judgment will ‘put them to shame,’ in the sense that the foundation on which they have built their lives and hope for eternal blessing should prove inadequate.

Our ‘hope of the glory of God’ (v. 2) is increased and strengthened by our heavenly Father through the process of tribulation, perseverance, and proven character, the end product of which is ‘hope’ that ‘does not disappoint.’ The more a believer pursues holiness, the more he is persecuted and troubled and the greater will be his hope as he is sustained through it all by God’s powerful grace.

The hope that we have from God will never disappoint. It will never embarrass us. We will never have to be ashamed for putting our confidence and trust in Christ. If you put your trust in anything else but Christ you are destined for disappointment and embarrassment. Hope in Christ is the only hope that never shames us.

This ‘hope maketh not ashamed’ takes us all the way back to our theme verses, where Paul says that he is ‘not ashamed of the gospel of Christ’ (1:16). There, as we noted, Paul is saying that he is not ashamed of the gospel as a belief system that he then lays out. He is not ashamed of it amid the Greek intellectual world or amid Rome’s imperial might. Here in 5:5, however, he is saying that he is not disappointed in the past nor in the present tribulation. He is proud of the gospel because of the great hope it has given him; it is a hope that has not disappointed him, and therefore a hope of which he need never be ashamed.

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5. Love (Romans 5:5b-8)

a) *God's Love Poured Out (5:5b)*

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

It is a beautiful thing to experience God's peace and grace to the extent that we exult in tribulations as well as in the hope of glory. But how do we know this joy will not someday dissolve into delusion or that it is not a pipe dream now? The answer is, these great benefits are grounded in God's unbounded love. God's love has been 'poured into our hearts.' The idea in the Greek is that God's love has been and continues to be poured out within our hearts. This is a picture of unstinting lavishness. Our hearts have been filled to overflowing with divine affection. The agent of this is the Holy Spirit, who personally represents God's love in our hearts.

Paul is not talking about our love for God; he is talking about God's love for us. The love of God is a love that the Holy Spirit sheds abroad. God's love for the justified is no mere feeling; neither are the gifts that God gives us or the benefits that He pours upon us. It is God's affection that God puts inside of us His love for us. That is what fuels our hope and gives us confidence that we will not be ashamed. It is what enables us to persevere and endure tribulations and afflictions. The love God pours out is no small portion; it is an outpouring of divine love, lavished upon us. He pours His love for us into our souls to such a degree that even if the rest of the world hates us we can know that He loves us and has given us hope that we will never be ashamed. It is one of the works of the Holy Spirit.

The confidence we have for the day of judgment is not based only on our intellectual recognition of the fact of God's love, or even only on the demonstration of God's love on the cross (although that is important; cp. vv. 6-8), but also on the inner, subjective certainty that God does love us. This is the point Paul is making by affirming that God's love has been 'poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.' The verb 'pour out' connotes an abundant, 'extravagant,' effusion. Paul uses this same verb to depict the 'pouring out' of God's Spirit (Titus 3:6; cp. Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 2:28-32). Paul is asserting two things at once: that God's love has been poured into our hearts in the past, and that this love is now within us. And this love is conveyed to our sensations by the Holy Spirit, who resides in every believer.

Nor has God left us only with words of promise, adequate though they are. He has poured and continues to pour (*ekkechutai*) His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that He gave us. Two meanings are intended by this: our sense of God's love for us (replacing the previous slave's fear of God), and our love for God, our dear Father. God's declaration of His 'righteousness,' following upon our faith in Christ, is objective. But it is matched by the subjective inner reality of His Spirit now present within us. God's 'righteousness' and God's 'Spirit' go together, two sides of the one coin, as it were. Both come from the gospel and both anticipate the Last Day.

When a person receives salvation through Jesus Christ, he enters a spiritual love relationship with God that lasts through all eternity. The 'love of God' does not here refer to our love for God but to His love for us. The most overwhelming truth of the gospel is that God loved sinful, fallen, rebellious mankind, so much 'that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life' (Jn. 3:16). As if that were not enough, God even graciously imparts His love to us. God takes His indescribable and undeserved love and pours it

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out within the hearts of those who believe, through His own Holy Spirit who He gives to them. Taking the truth of eternal security out of the objective area of the mind, Paul now reveals that, in Christ, we are also given subjective evidence of permanent salvation, evidence that God Himself implants within our deepest being. ‘Poured out’ refers to lavish outpouring to the point of overflowing. Our heavenly Father does not proffer His love in measured drops but in immeasurable torrents. The very fact that God gives His Holy Spirit to indwell believers is itself a marvelous testimony to His love for us, because He would hardly indwell those whom He did not love.

Our present state of not being ashamed or disappointed is based upon two past objective facts: the fact that Christ died for us; the fact that the Holy Spirit has come to live within us. Christ has died. The price for our sins is paid. And now God Himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit, indwells us. These two things are not just subjective ideas, they are objectively true. Both realities are the work of God, not the result or goal of our own efforts.

b) God’s Love Demonstrated (5:6-8)

After showing us the benefits that accompany justification—peace with God, access to God’s presence, and hope—Paul turns his attention to the atonement of Christ. Verses 6-8 form a single argument that demonstrates the abundant and absolute nature of God’s love for us. Paul describes us here with four words: ‘weak’ (v. 6), ‘ungodly’ (v. 6), ‘sinners’ (v. 8), and ‘enemies’ (v. 10). In so doing he tells us that God’s love was totally unmotivated by anything in us. Because this love is unmerited and is not dependent upon us, it will never change. We are lavished with a love that lies in God alone. God’s love is the permanent possession of the child of God.

The brightness of God’s love is set against the darkness of human sin now sketched in vv. 6-8. This is demonstrated in four statements, the first and fourth of which declare that Christ died for us as ungodly/sinners.

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

⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—

though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(1) The Definition of Divine Love (5:6)

⁶*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Paul makes clear the point he especially wants to convey here by characterizing the human beings Christ died for as both ‘godless’ and ‘weak.’ ‘Godless’ is a strong pejorative term in Paul (cp. Rom. 4:5); ‘weak’ is not always as negative, but here designates that ‘total incapacity for good’ which is characteristic of the unredeemed. Paul thereby stresses that God’s love came to us when we were utterly helpless. Paul never thinks of God’s love for us apart from the cross, and he never thinks of Christ’s dying for us apart from the Father’s giving of the Son (cp. 3:25).

Knowing that his readers would want to know more about the quality and character of the divine love that filled them, Paul reminds them of the greatest manifestation of God’s love in all history. While men were utterly ‘helpless’ to bring themselves to God, He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, notwithstanding the fact that we were ‘ungodly’ and completely

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unworthy of His love. When we were powerless to escape from our sin, powerless to escape death, powerless to resist Satan, and powerless to please Him in any way, God amazingly sent His Son to die on our behalf.

Humankind is as fatally flawed now as when Paul wrote to the Romans. Three times Paul writes, ‘still’ – ‘still feeble ... still godless ... still sinners.’ ‘Feeble’ means morally debilitated, ‘godless’ means literally just that (God-less, without God), and ‘sinner’ means to be way wide of the moral mark set by God’s commandments. These are the marks of Adam and his race. God did not await the moral improvement of Adam’s race before acting for its salvation. Indeed, God knew that no such renovation was in prospect or possible. Nonetheless, this intervention was ‘at the right time.’ Not all moments in time are the same. Some are infused with meaning. This was God’s ‘right time.’ At that ‘right time,’ God showed His matchless love for the ‘feeble,’ the ‘godless,’ and the ‘sinners.’ Here the infinitely worthy One has died for the infinitely unworthy ones who deserve only the just judgment of God.

At this point Paul discusses the *when* of our atonement, the point in history at which the redemption of the people of God was accomplished. Paul speaks of the *when* of this accomplishment in two ways. The first is with respect to us. At what point in our personal history did Christ offer Himself on the cross? Paul tells us first that Christ offered Himself ‘when we were still without strength.’ The strength that Paul has in view is clearly spiritual strength. We have no strength in and of ourselves to effect our salvation. God did not wait for us to exercise our wills, incline ourselves to Him, repent of our sins, or get ourselves in such a state that it would be appropriate to provide an atonement for us. No, while we were still in this state, a state of spiritual death – dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) – Christ died. That is the *when* with respect to our human condition.

Paul also describes the historical *when*. It did not happen outside of space and time. Christ came in the fullness of time. He was born on the exact date and in the exact place that the Father had decreed. Throughout the whole Old Testament, God was ripening history for the moment that Christ would come. He came ‘in due time.’

Whenever Paul mentions the death of Christ, he speaks of its purpose. There is a reason Christ came in due time. Christ’s death was not simply to demonstrate the love of God or to display some kind of moral influence to the universe, but to die ‘for the ungodly.’ Did Christ die for all the ungodly? No, Christ did not die for all the ungodly. The Bible does not teach that everybody goes to heaven. The Bible does not teach that Christ died to make salvation possible. Christ died for His sheep. He laid down His life for them, and when He did, there was never a doubt in heaven that all for whom He died had their sins covered and will spend eternity in heaven (cp. Jn. 6:39). He died for those whom the Father had given Him.

The idea of limited atonement deals with the question of God’s design. Did God intend to save a remnant of the world and send His Son to die for those people to ensure their salvation? That is what ‘limited atonement’ means. It means ‘definite atonement.’ The atonement of Christ was not just to make salvation possible. If that were the case, Christ could have died and never have seen the travail of His soul and been satisfied. If the efficacy of Christ’s death depends on us, Christ would have no fruit from His death; but while we were powerless in our souls to incline ourselves to the things of God, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

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(2) The Pinnacle of Human Love (5:7)

⁷*For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—*

Paul accentuates the love of God manifested in the cross of Christ by reminding us that the pinnacle of human love is the giving of one's life for a person one is close to – a spouse, child, or combat buddy – whereas God sent His Son to die for people who hated Him (v. 8).

Paul is not contrasting 'a righteous man' with 'a good man,' but is simply using those terms synonymously. His point is that it is uncommon for a person to sacrifice his own life in order to save the life even of someone of high character. Still fewer people are inclined to give their lives to save a person they know to be a wicked scoundrel. But God was so inclined, and in that is our security and assurance. Saved, we can never be as wretched as we were before salvation—and He loved us totally then.

Calvin believed that since there is no distinction between a righteous person and a good person that Paul was using a *hendiadys*. A hendiadys is the name given to two different words used to refer to the same thing. Luther, on the other hand, was convinced that Paul was making a distinction.

Even pagans, on occasion, might be willing to jump on a hand grenade for such a person, but in the case of the atonement, Jesus did not die for righteous people or for good people; He died for godless people.

(3) The Demonstration of Divine Love (5:8)

⁸*but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

In contrast to the very best of human love is God's love. Again, we see the assumption that God's love is shown in *Christ's* death (cp. v. 6).

This sort of selfless, undeserved love is completely beyond human comprehension. Yet that is the love that the just and infinitely holy God has toward us, even 'while we were yet sinners.' The God who hates every sinful thought and every sinful deed nevertheless loves the sinners who think and do those things, even while they are still hopeless enmeshed in their sin.

There is a shift in language here from the generic 'ungodly' to the specific 'for us.' While we were in a state of sin, God set forth *for us*. Again and again in his epistles Paul speaks of the specific work of grace that Christ does for the believer. When he talks about 'us,' he is talking about those who are in Christ Jesus. He is talking about Christians.

What about the love of God? Theology distinguishes among three distinct types of God's love. The first type of divine love is the *love of benevolence*. The word *bene* means 'good' or 'well.' The word *volens* has to do with the will. The Bible tells us that God's basic attitude toward the world, toward fallen humanity, is one of goodwill. God is not unkind or mean-spirited; the basic posture of the Creator toward the world is one of goodwill and every person in the world experiences it in one way or another. The fact that people are alive is an indication of God's goodwill.

The second sense of divine love is God's *benevolence*. His benevolence refers to His goodwill, whereas His beneficence refers to His good acts. The Bible tells us that God's rain falls on the

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just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45). All people, repentant or not, believers or not, receive certain kind acts from the hand of God. In that sense, they all experience God's beneficent love.

When we talk about the unconditional love of God, the love that never fails, we are talking about His *complacent* love, the third type of divine love. The concept of complacent love is a bit difficult to grasp, because it is not used in the sense in which we use the word *complacent* today. When we talk about God's complacent love, we are talking about the delight He takes, supremely, in His Son. God's love for His Son is without measure or qualification; He loves His Son fully and perfectly. The love the Father has for His Son extends beyond His Son to those who belong to His Son. Therefore, only believers receive God's complacent love. They do not receive it because of anything in them but only because God gifts to His Son. From all eternity He has loved His Son and planned to give Him a portion of humanity so that His Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. God loves His Son with the love of complacency, and He demonstrates that complacent love for us in that 'while we were still sinners Christ died for us.'

6. Assurance (Romans 5:9-10)

In vv. 9-10, Paul gathers together the main pieces of vv. 1-8 into a synthesis that reiterates and expands the central point of the paragraph as a whole: the certainty of Christian hope (vv. 2b, 5a). The argument in each of the verses takes the form of a popular logical sequence, called by the rabbis *qal wayyōmer* ('light and heavy') and in the western tradition *a minori ad maius* ('from the minor to the major'). In this case, however, the 'how much more' in Paul's transition suggests that the argument proceeds from the 'major' to the 'minor': if God has already done the most difficult thing – reconcile and justify unworthy sinners – how much more can He be depended on to accomplish the 'easier' thing – save from eschatological wrath those who have been brought into such relationship with Him.

We have already seen sufficient ground to never waver in our exultation. But God gives us even more. In verses 9-10, Paul uses an argument that the rabbis called a *kal wahomer*, which means 'light and heavy'—an argument from the lighter to the heavier. We call it today in legal terms an *a fortiori* argument. We say, 'If it was true in one place, it will be true in another.' Paul's arguments in verses 9&10 are virtually identical and hinge on the term 'much more.'

The style or argument springs from the 'major to the minor,' from the 'harder to the easier.' This is the reverse of the usual rabbinic pattern (called *qal wahomer*) that argues from the 'lighter to the heavier' (as employed by Paul, e.g., in 2 Cor. 3:7-9). Here, God has done the 'harder' thing, justifying the godless and reconciling His enemies through the blood of Christ/the death of His Son. Let there be no doubt that He will save them from His wrath on the Last Day.

a) Through Justification (5:9)

⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

As in verse 1, 'being justified' alludes to the past declaration of acquittal pronounced over the sinner who believes in Christ. But the 'now' adds the nuance of the continuing 'just' status of those so acquitted. The means by which this justifying act takes place is Christ's blood. As in 3:25, 'blood' signifies Christ's death as the sacrifice for sins. The justified status conveyed to the believer on the basis of Christ's sacrificial death issues in salvation from wrath. The temporal element in the verse makes clear that wrath refers her to eschatological judgment (cp. 2:5). 'We will be saved' is, therefore, a genuine temporal future. As he typically does, Paul uses

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salvation language to depict the final deliverance of the believer from sin, death, and judgment. Salvation, accomplished in Christ and the believer's appropriation of Christ, is finally realized only in the last day.

'By His blood' means 'by His sacrificial death' and reminds us that our 'faith' is not the instrument of our 'righteousness before God, as if we humans are the sources of our own salvation. We are not justified by faith as if faith were just another 'work.' Not at all. We are saved by Christ, that is, by Christ's blood. 'Faith' is merely the hand of the moral beggar receiving this gift from the hand of God. What then of the 'wrath' of the Day of Judgment? Will Christ's blood prevail for us then? Indeed, yes, says Paul.

The phrase 'much more then' indicates that what follows is even more overwhelming and significant than what has preceded, astounding and wonderful as that is. 'Having been justified by His blood' refers to the initial aspect of salvation, which for believers is past. In light of the fact that we already have been justified, Paul is saying, we are assured of being 'saved from the wrath of God through Him,' that is, through Christ. As part of His atoning work, Jesus delivered us 'from the wrath to come' (1 Th. 1:10; cp. 5:9), because on the cross He took upon Himself the penalty and suffered the wrath that we deserve.

b) Through Reconciliation (5:10)

¹⁰*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.*

The parallelism between this verse and v. 9 renders the differences between them all the more significant. Perhaps the most interesting is the substitution of 'reconciled' for 'justified.' Justification language is legal, law-court language, picturing the believer being declared innocent by the judge. Reconciliation language, on the other hand, comes from the world of personal relationships. 'To reconcile' means to bring together, or make peace between, two estranged or hostile parties (cp. 1 Cor. 7:11).

This reconciliation is necessary because we are 'enemies,' that is, of God. The enmity comes from our side and is directed towards Him, our Creator, to whom we owe everything. The hostility is ours. It is who we are. The passive voice shows that God does the reconciling. God reconciles His enemies 'to Himself' (as 2 Cor. 5:19) also specifically says. What is the relationship between 'justification' and 'reconciliation'? The former word is a Law-court term and the latter word is a relational term. Careful study of this passage and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 indicates that the counting of sinners 'righteous' before Him in Christ lies at the center of Pauline thought, with reconciliation consequential to it.

Paul makes explicit the hostile relationship implicit in the language of reconciliation: it was 'while we were enemies' that we were reconciled to God. Paul may mean by this simply that we rebellious sinners and hostile toward God – violating His laws, putting other gods in His place. But as Paul has repeatedly affirmed in this letter (cp. 1:18; 3:25), God is also 'hostile' toward us – our sins have justly incurred His wrath, which stands as a sentence over us (1:19-32). Probably, then, the 'enmity' in which Paul refers there includes God's hostility toward human beings as well as human beings' hostility toward God. Outside of Christ, people are in a situation of 'enmity' with God; and in reconciliation, it is that status, or relationship, that changes: we go from being God's 'enemies' to being His 'children' (cp. 8:14-17).

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Nothing provokes more anger from unbelievers than when we tell them that they hate God. They deny it emphatically. ‘I might be indifferent to God, but I do not hate God,’ they say. However, if people are indifferent to the Lord God Almighty, the one who created them and has given them every blessing they receive, what is that except hatred? We do not sense the weight of our natural hostility toward God. The New Testament speaks about reconciliation because reconciliation to God is so greatly and earnestly needed. We are estranged from Him. Not only are we at enmity with God, but God is at enmity with us. God is the natural enemy of corrupt sinners.

Paul is declaring here the glorious work of redemption in which God takes the initiative for our reconciliation. On the cross by His work of propitiation, Jesus reconciled the Father to the Father’s people. We were reconciled in the sense that God, the injured party, was satisfied. God was reconciled toward us while we were still estranged from Him. We do not experience that reconciliation until our opposition and hostility toward Him end—when we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, our hardened hearts are broken, and we are brought joyfully into a loving relationship with the Father through the Son. It is one thing to experience the reconciliation that comes through the death of Christ, but how much greater is the reconciliation that occurs through the life of Christ.

Paul’s next thought is closely related to the previous one (v. 9) and is the central message of this passage. If God had the power and the will to redeem us in the first place, how ‘much more,’ does He have the power and the will to keep us redeemed? In other words, if God brought us to Himself ‘through the death of His Son, when we were His enemies, how ‘much more,’ now that we are His reconciled children, will He keep us saved by the life of His Son? If the dying Savior reconciled us to God, surely the living Savior can and will keep us reconciled.

Verses 9 and 10 are very similar, but notice the new element in verse 10: Paul has been talking about Christ’s death, but now, at the end of verse 10, he reminds us that Christ isn’t dead—He’s alive! If, when we were enemies, Jesus died for us, what will this living Christ do for us now? We were dead, but now we’re alive. Abraham believed that God could bring life out of the dead (4:20-21). We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead (4:24-25). On the basis of Christ’s work on our behalf, and through our faith in His work, we’re alive (chapters 5-8). And Jesus is alive (5:10).

The gist of this is: seeing what Christ did in dying to save us, how much more will He save us by His life! Jesus said, ‘Because I live, you also will live’ (Jn. 14:19).

The thrust of this truth for believers is that our Savior not only delivered us from sin and its judgment, but also delivers us from uncertainty and doubt about that deliverance. If God has already made sure our rescue from sin, death, and future judgment, how could our present spiritual life possibly be in jeopardy? How can a Christian, whose past and future salvation are secured by God, be insecure during the time between? If sin was no barrier to the beginning of our redemption, how can it become a barrier to its completion? If sin in the greatest degree could not prevent our becoming reconciled, how can sin in lesser degree prevent our staying reconciled? If God’s grace covers the sins even of His enemies, how much more does it cover the sins of His children? Paul here reasons from the greater to the lesser. It is a greater work of God to bring sinners to grace than to bring saints to glory, because sin is further from grace than grace is from glory.

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7. Joy (Romans 5:11)

¹¹*More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

The final link in the unbreakable chain that eternally binds believers to Christ is their joy, their great exultation, in God. This may not be the most important or the most profound evidence of our security in Christ, but it is perhaps the most beautiful. And although this divine evidence is subjective, it is none the less real. The abundant joy that God gives His children through the Lord Jesus Christ includes grateful joy in their salvation and simply in who God is.

Paul has stated that boasting is wrong (3:27). However, he means that boasting is wrong unless we are boasting in God. Verse 2 says we exult in the hope of God's glory. Verse 3 likewise shows that we exult in our tribulations, the road to glory. But above all, we exult in God Himself (v. 11). Our rejoicing is not some theological chest-beating, but rather humble confidence of triumph through Jesus Christ.

Although Paul states our boasting as a fact, he undoubtedly wants to encourage any who are faltering or downhearted to contemplate again what he or she has in Christ – a new relationship with God ('justification,' 'peace with God,' 'reconciliation') that overcomes all present adversity ('rejoicing in afflictions') and that provides absolute security for the life to come ('rejoicing in the glory of God,' 'hope does not disappoint us,' 'saved from wrath'). And such contemplation can lead only to rejoicing.

'Reconciliation' – God restoring all things harmoniously to Himself – will happen at the End (cp. 11:15). But, says Paul, 'reconciliation' has happened 'now' (*nun*) before the End, through the death of the Son of God (see v. 10). The center of gravity of God's salvation history is not the future, but the past, in the appearing, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. This is the *nun*/the 'now,' the significance-laden *kairos*/'moment' of God's salvation. As a result, we may know that we are 'righteous' *now* and 'reconciled' to God *now*. Consequently, says Paul, we 'exult in God.'

The result of reconciliation is unspeakable joy. The Christian life from beginning to end is meant to be a life of joy. We have much to be happy about. There is no room for the sourpuss in the kingdom of God. There is nothing dour about our redemption. Joy is another benefit that flows from our justification. Verse 11 is just an expansion of what Paul said at the beginning of Romans 5, that, having been justified, we have peace with God and access into His presence, and we can now glory in tribulation because it works perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope, which is never put to shame.

This verse wraps up the section by rehearsing many of its key elements: 'boasting/rejoicing' (cp. vv. 2-3); the present experience of reconciliation with God (vv. 1b, 10); and, most of all, the fact that this boasting, and this reconciliation are 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' (vv. 1, 2. 6-8, 9, 10). In verse 11, Paul is turning back from the future prospect of the believer, with which he has been occupied in vv. 5-10, to the 'boasting' or 'rejoicing' that marks the reaction of the believer in this life to all that God has done for him or her (cp. vv. 1-4) – rejoicing that everything God gives us is 'through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

For next time: Read Romans 5:12-21.