

*Introduction:* Romans 5:1-2 outline the privileges of justification.

These are most glorious verses in this wonderful letter. If Christians really understood these verses the counseling of pastors would be reduced by 50 percent. In these verses are the answers to spiritual problems, ailments, and questions. There is nothing more invigorating, there is nothing more transforming than the privileges of justification. Paul is exploring the privileges of justification by faith.

Article 11 of the *39 Articles of the Church of England*, which in 1563 summarized their beliefs, describes justification as “a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” Correctly understood, justification will comfort you and strengthen you.

The believer’s acceptance to eternal life is not some far-off goal, grounded in the storing up of moral and spiritual qualities in the believer’s life. It is a present reality, here and now. As far as the demands of the law are concerned, justification is based on the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer. (Imputation means reckoning or crediting something to someone’s account, and is used repeatedly in Romans 4.) Because of the union between believers and Christ, the sins of believers are imputed to Christ, who died as their sin-bearer, so securing forgiveness; and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers, which is the basis of their acceptance with God. John Calvin gives a classic definition of this cluster of concepts: “We explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> Here are the two elements of justification -- both the forgiveness of sins (negatively), and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (positively).<sup>2</sup>

Paul’s starting point is, “Therefore having been justified by faith ...” He is referring to a completed act done for us in the past and is decisively finished. We have been justified. That is completed. It is finished. Nothing more needs to be done. An irreversible change has taken place in our status.

Is this true of you? Have you been justified by faith? Is this your position? Are you in doubt? Are you unsure? The previous four chapters show your desperate need for righteousness from God and God’s provision for your need in His Son. Respond to the gospel which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Call in faith on Jesus Christ that you might receive in Him the righteousness of God.

If you have been justified by faith, then the connecting word “therefore” is very relevant to you. Therefore something else is also true. In this context, “therefore” is not merely chronological. Paul is NOT saying that we have dealt with justification therefore let us move on to something else. We might say today is Sunday, therefore tomorrow is Monday. Rather, the “therefore” is dynamic. Being justified by faith is the foundation, the basis, for all that Paul is about to discuss. Justification is the resource for the first 11 verses. He is listing the privileges we have as a result of justification. He is filling in what the doctrine of justification means to you. We have been justified by faith, and therefore this is true.

This is a situation you need to memorize, to absorb, and to internalize. If you are a Christian your basic identity is that you have been justified by faith. That’s what God has made you. That defines your existence. This awareness needs to saturate every part of your life. Christians become downcast, discouraged, and depressed when they forget that they have been justified by faith. Justification must govern all that we think about ourselves, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes*, 3:11:2

<sup>2</sup> N. R. Needham, *2,000 Years of Christ’s Power, Part Three: Renaissance and Reformation* (Grace Publications Trust, London, England). 2004, p. 87

all we do. By God's mercy, you have been justified by faith. What are the privileges of the justified? In Romans 5:1-2, Paul announces three implications. They are: (1) the privilege of peace in the past; (2) the privilege of grace in the present; (3) the privilege of glory in the future.

**A. THE PRIVILEGE OF PEACE IN THE PAST** – “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice two ideas in this phrase: (1) what we have, and (2) how we get it.

**1. What we have is peace.** What Paul says literally is that “we have peace TOWARDS God” [εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν]. We have peace with regard to God. We have peace as far as God is concerned.

This is different from the peace OF God. That is a feeling, a very real blessing. Paul writes about the peace of God in Philippians 4:7, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This is the peace that God gives us. It is serenity, calmness, or the sense of being loved. It is something we experience and feel. It is something we don't always have. Sometimes we lose the peace of God. We get distressed about circumstances. We become downcast when we grieve the Holy Spirit. It is a wonderful blessing that we are to seek, the peace of God.

That is NOT what Paul is describing in Romans 5:1. He is NOT speaking about something that is subjective, or inside ourselves, that we have much of the time, but not all of the time. He IS speaking about something that is objective, or outside ourselves. This is something that is always true whether we feel it or not. He is saying, as a matter of fact, there is peace between us and God. Previously, we were God's enemies. Our Creator was angry with us. But now, since we have been justified by faith we are at peace. There is no enmity between God and the believer. There are no issues that separate us. God holds nothing against us. We have peace towards God. We have peace with God.

This sounds simple. Yet, numerous Christians forget that they have peace with God. There are believers who are haunted by their sins in the past. Sometimes those sins are very serious and have dreadful consequences. Sometimes the sins are comparatively trivial. Sometimes it happened last week. Sometimes it occurred decades ago. These Christians are burdened with a heavy conscience. They wake up in the middle of the night and remember what they said or what they did. Their assurance of salvation is weakened. They are disturbed and depressed.

The problem is this. They don't understand the doctrine of justification. They have forgotten that Jesus Christ has taken all our sins on Himself. He was punished for them on the cross. God's justice was fully satisfied. Their sins have been taken away. They have been forgiven. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.” Paul says that God doesn't count our trespasses. He doesn't remember them. He doesn't hold them against us. He doesn't notice them. They are forgiven in Christ.

Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), English reformer and martyr, was a preacher with a forceful and vivid style. In 1555, under Queen Mary, he was burned at the stake for his Reformation beliefs. In one of his sermons he said, “Our Savior maketh our sins nothing so that we be like as if we had done no sin at all. Our sins be gone. They are no sins. They cannot be hurtful to us.”

We have been justified by faith. That's what happens when you believe in Christ. All your sins are forgiven and forgotten. Don't let past sins haunt you. Remember them so that

you are careful. They are a warning. Don't let them depress you or rob you of the joy of salvation. What we have is peace.

**2. How we get peace is through Jesus.** Look at the phrase "through our Lord Jesus Christ." This means that all our dealings with God are through Christ. All of God's dealings with us are through Christ. God never deals with us in any other way than through His blessed Son. Jesus is the Mediator. He is the One between God and man as Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

Martin Luther once said, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." He meant by that, "I cannot relate to God apart from Jesus. I cannot bypass Jesus Christ. There is no interaction between God and me now than through Christ." Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). All of God's dealings with you are through the Savior who loved you and died for you. This is the reason that God can forgive you.

This is fundamental and basic. You may enjoy the peace OF God only as you remember the peace TOWARDS God which is through Jesus Christ. The first privilege of justification is that we have peace in the past.

**B. THE PRIVILEGE OF GRACE IN THE PRESENT** – "through whom also we have access by faith in this grace in which we stand"

The second privilege of justification is that we have grace in the present. There are three themes in this phrase: (1) the position of the Christian, which is grace; (2) the prerogative of the Christian, which is access; and (3) the posture of the Christian, which is to stand.

**1. The position of the Christian, which is grace.** On one hand, too many evangelical churches have people who are legalistic. They are harsh, judgmental, and critical. Christianity is hard work. Christianity is grim duty. On the other hand, too many evangelical churches have other people who are like John Bunyan's Mr. Fearing and his daughter, Much-Afraid. They are fragile. They are down in the dumps. They are guilt-ridden. They are burdened by a constant sense of failure. To both of these people the problem is the same. They have forgotten about grace.

Justification speaks of grace. Grace takes us further than peace. Peace with God means that God has nothing against us. Grace from God means that God loves us. He delights in us. He is generous. He showers blessings upon us. God doesn't just put up with us. God doesn't accept us grudgingly. He loves His children. He sees us as perfectly righteous in His Son.

Charles Spurgeon once said something that might seem shocking at first. "When God looks upon a sinner who an hour ago was dead in trespasses and sins, He looks upon him with as much love and affection as He ever looked upon His Son." This is an expression of our union with Christ. Because the believer is in Christ, when God looks at us He sees Christ. He loves His Son in us.

Sometimes we grieve Him. Sometimes He has to discipline us. A parent properly disciplines a child out of love, not hate. God's discipline is because of love. God is always gracious towards us. He always loves us.

If you are a Christian you don't need to prove anything to God. You don't need to try to impress God. You don't need to win His favor. We have it now and always. The position of the Christian is grace.

**2. The prerogative of the Christian, which is access.** Paul uses this word "access"

which means entrance into the presence of a king through the favor of another. It is only used three times in the New Testament (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18, 3:12). Someone takes you into the palace, through all the corridors and into the throne room of the king. Jesus brings us into the presence of God and in God's favor. Paul says in Ephesians 2:18, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." He says in Ephesians 3:12, "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."

Are you using this access? Have you been in the King's presence this day? Have you gone into the holy of holies by the blood of Christ? Is it your practice to be there each day? Or, are you living as if the veil of the temple was not torn in two? We have gained access. At any time, in any place, you can go right into the presence of God and find Him gracious. We have grace and access.

**3. The posture of the Christian, which is to stand.** We stand. We don't lie. We don't kneel. We don't gravel. We stand. This is a favorite word for Paul and it has the two main ideas of confidence and certainty.

There is the idea of boldness or confidence. It is used of someone standing in a court of law. Psalm 1:5 says, "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment ..." Psalm 130:3 asks, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Because we are in Christ, we don't crawl into the presence of God. We don't cringe before God. There is a sense that we have a right to be there. In Christ we are sons and daughters of God. Confidence!

There is also the idea of stability or certainty. It is used of troops in battle. They take a stand against the enemy. You couldn't move them back. Paul speaks of standing in Ephesians 6, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:11), "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (6:13), "Stand therefore" (6:14). Certainty!

When Martin Luther was on trial for his faith he said, "Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason -- I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other -- my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." The earliest printed version added the words: "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise." The words, though not recorded on the spot, may nevertheless be genuine, because the listeners at the moment may have been too moved to write.<sup>3</sup>

We stand confidently and securely because we are standing in grace, like on a rock. If you stood on your works or your faith, you would be standing on shifting sand. It was nothing we did that brought us into grace. There is nothing we can do that will put us out of grace. Do you really believe in the grace of God?

One of the gems of the Reformation is the *Heidelberg Catechism* written in 1563. It sets forth the privilege of grace in the present in question 60. "How are thou righteous before God? Only by true faith in Jesus Christ; that is, although my conscience accuse me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and am still prone always to all evil; yet God without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me; if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart."

<sup>3</sup> Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Abingdon Press, Nashville), 1978, p. 144

Do not live looking only at the weariness and frustrations of life. The position of the Christian is grace; the prerogative of the Christian is access; and the posture of the Christian is to stand. Look again at your present privilege of grace.

### C. THE PRIVILEGE OF GLORY IN THE FUTURE – “and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”

The third privilege of justification is that we rejoice in the glory of God. We live in uncertain times. The optimism of the mid-twentieth century is gone. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have crippled our hope. Nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists in four coordinated attacks with commercial airlines, killed 2,977 people and injured more than 6,000 others. People are fearful about the future. We are uncertain about the environment, the economy, and the culture. Believers are affected. There is moral decline and Christian weakness. Our temptation is to become pessimistic and discouraged. We need to repel these things and little slogans will not be enough.

Paul says that we Christians “rejoice.” The word means to boast, to exalt, to glory. We are filled with triumphant confidence. It is both the expression and the emotion of joy. In every believer there should be a real center of inner joy. If you understand justification, you will be a rejoicing people.

We rejoice “in hope.” Hope in the New Testament has a different sense than the one common to us. For us, hope is something that we want, but it is not certain. I hope it will be nice tomorrow, but I don’t know. In the New Testament, hope is something that is certain but has not yet happened. There is no doubt. The “hope of the glory of God” is something that is sure but has not yet fully happened. The hope of the glory of God is anticipated in three ways: (1) glory in the world, (2) glory in the believer, and (3) glory in the Lord.

**1. Glory in the world.** Christ is going to restore this world. Christ is going to renew the creation. The powers of wickedness and evil are going to be expelled. There is going to be a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13). As we look at this fallen, sin cursed world, we know that the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14). We are hopeful. We rejoice in that hope of the glory of God in the world.

**2. Glory in the believer.** Paul describes this in Romans 8:18 as, “the glory which shall be revealed in us.” How dissatisfied we are with ourselves! How ashamed we are! How often are we disappointed in ourselves? We have things in us that we hate. We want to be free.

To die will be a big adventure. C.S. Lewis writes, “If you could see the person sitting beside you now as they will be one day, you would be tempted to fall down and worship them.” We will be so glorious. We will be so beautiful. In our resurrected bodies and our sinless souls we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Think about who you will be and what you will be. By God’s grace you will be glorified for ever and ever. Never again will you be sorry for what you said. Never again will you ask for forgiveness for what you have done. Never again will you grieve the Holy Spirit. You will be gloriously holy for all eternity. You will be surrounded by glorious, beautiful people. We rejoice in a confident expectation of the glory of God in the believer. Glory in the world; glory in the believer, and

**3. Glory in the Lord.** We shall gaze upon the Lord of glory for ever. John writes in Revelation 22:3-4, “His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face.” The psalmists say, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”

(Psa. 16:11). “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness” (Psa. 17:15). It will be infinitely more than our little minds can take in. We will be ravished with inexpressible delight to all eternity.

This is who we are. We are not an outdated minority. We are not primitive, bigoted fundamentalists. We are not pathetic people who need the crutch of religion. We are not offering an optional extra for life. We are people who have a grand and glorious vision of a renewed universe with renewed men and women in the very presence of God Himself.

Is this how other people perceive us? Do those around us sense our rejoicing? Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, “The church of today is as she is because we behold these things so little. We are so ignorant of them. We are concerned about getting reluctant, outsiders into the church. But when you and I know something of the glory of God, they will come to us of their own accord. What is it you have? What makes you different? They will ask us to give a reason for the hope that is in us.” The hope of the glory of God is the glory in the world, the glory in the believer, and the glory in the Lord.

Is this how we see ourselves: peace towards God, standing in grace, rejoicing in glory? Churches are looking around for something new. We don’t need it. All we need is for the Holy Spirit to impress on our hearts the magnificence of the gospel that we already know.

An old couple in the highlands of Scotland lived all their life in comparative poverty. An art expert was traveling around Scotland. They remembered an old painting in the attic they had inherited and brought it down to show the art expert. It was a masterpiece and was sold for millions of dollars. They had been wealthy all their life but they didn’t know it. The wealth was in the attic. They never realized how wealthy they were.

*Conclusion:* Sometimes we are like that old couple. We don’t realize what we have. So we live poverty stricken spiritual lives. We have the privilege of peace in the past, the privilege of grace in the present, and the privilege of glory in the future. May the Holy Spirit give you eyes to behold the privileges of justification.

---

*Resource:* Edward Donnelly, **We Are Justified Therefore We Have Peace With God**, Romans 5:1-11, 09/05/2010, Trinity RP Church, Newtownabbey, NI, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)  
 Edward Donnelly, **Privileges of the Justified**, Rom. 5:1-2, 06/28/2009, Christ Covenant RP Church, Lawrence, KS, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)  
 Edward Donnelly, **Privileges of the Justified**, Rom. 5:1-2, 06/28/2009, RP Church, Shawnee, KS, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)  
 Edward Donnelly, **The Fruits of Justification**, Rom. 5:1-2, 05/16/2010, First RP Church, Grand Rapids, MI, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)

*The Book of Psalms for Singing:* 111A, 111B, 115C, 115D [Glory of God]