

Romans: The Good News of God

Rejoicing in Hope

Romans 5:2b

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February 24, 2008

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Scripture

In the first four chapters of his letter to the Romans the apostle Paul explains how we come into a right relationship with God. The good news of God is that we can come into a right relationship with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is called *justification by faith*.

Now, as he begins chapter 5, the apostle Paul writes about the *blessings* of justification. Having explained *how* we receive justification, he now explains *what* justification gives us.

In Romans 5:1-11 we read of several blessings of justification. Let's read Romans 5:1-11, paying special attention to verse 2b, which is our text for today:

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² 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.** ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ 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.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-11)

Introduction

Paul wrote the fifth chapter of Romans to teach those who have been justified by God through faith in Jesus Christ that they also have the blessings of justification.

We have already examined two blessings. They are peace with God and standing in grace. Today, we examine the third blessing, which is rejoicing in hope.

The English poet Alexander Pope wrote, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest.” But where does man turn when hope dries up?

The director of a medical clinic told of a terminally ill young man who came in for his usual treatment. A new doctor who was on duty said to him casually and carelessly, “You know, don’t you, that you won’t live out the year?”

As the young man left, he stopped by the director’s desk and began to cry.

“That man took away my hope,” he blurted out.

“I guess he did,” replied the director. “Maybe it’s time to find a new one.”

Commenting on this incident, theologian Lewis Smedes wrote, “Is there a hope when hope is taken away? Is there hope when the situation is hopeless? That question leads us to Christian hope, for in the Bible, hope is no longer a passion for the possible. It becomes a passion for the promise.”¹

Review

As I mentioned, in Romans 5 the apostle Paul explains the blessings of justification by faith. There are a number of blessings, and before we begin today’s lesson, let’s quickly review what we have learned so far.

¹ Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (Biblical Studies Press, 2002; 2002).

I. Our Position in Christ (5:1a)

Let us notice in the first place our position in Christ.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1a, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. . . .”

The apostle Paul begins by stating our position in Christ. If we are Christians, then we have been justified by faith.

He is summarizing all that he has said in Romans 1-4. He is summarizing all that is true of a Christian.

If we are Christians, then we have been justified by faith, and that is our position in Christ.

II. Our Possessions in Christ (5:1b-2)

But what are the blessings of our justification? What are our possessions in Christ?

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1b, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, *we have*. . . .” certain possessions.

It is important to note that these possessions are the sure and true possessions of all Christians at all times.

A. Peace with God (5:1b)

Our first possession in Christ is peace with God.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1b, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Before we were justified by faith we were at war with God. But, having been justified by faith, we are now at peace with God.

Peace *with* God is not the same as the peace *of* God.

Peace with God is a permanent change of relationship with God. It is objective and never changes.

However the peace of God is subjective and variable, depending upon how we react to certain situations.

B. Standing in Grace (5:2a)

Our second possession in Christ is standing in grace.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:2a, “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”

The apostle Paul is teaching that our right standing with God is because of what God has done for us in his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived and died. He paid the penalty for all our sin, and we receive his righteousness by faith. All of this is a gift of God’s amazing grace. And that is what enables us to stand before God.

Lesson

Today, in Romans 5:2b we come to the third blessing of justification, a third possession in Christ.

C. Rejoicing in Hope (5:2b)

Our third possession in Christ is rejoicing in hope.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:2b, “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.**”

As was the case in the previous lesson, there are a number of important words in this verse: **rejoice**, **hope**, and **glory**. Let’s look more closely at each word (although in a different order) so that we can better understand this blessing of justification.

1. Rejoice

First, let’s look at the word **rejoice**.

The apostle Paul used a number of different words for **rejoice**. However, Paul did not use the more common word for **rejoice** here in verse 2. The Greek word (*kauchometha*) that Paul

used for **rejoice** in verse 2 can mean “rejoice,” but it actually means “boast” or “glory in.” So, the meaning is even stronger than **rejoice**.

Paul is saying that we don’t merely **rejoice in the hope of the glory of God**, but rather we *boast* in, we *glory in the hope of the glory of God*.

Since we have been justified by faith, since we have certain possessions in Christ, we boast about and glory in the hope of the glory of God.

2. Glory

Second, let’s look at the word **glory**.

Glory is one of the richest concepts in the Bible. So, let’s understand it better.

First, look at the meaning of glory in the New Testament.

The common New Testament word for **glory** is *doxa*. It means, “beauty, power, or honor.” **Glory** is a quality of God’s character that emphasizes his exceeding greatness and authority.

The glory of God has been ultimately and most gloriously shown in the Person of Jesus (Luke 9:29-32; John 1:14-18; 2:11).

At times God’s **glory** means the honor and audible praise which his creatures give to him (Psalm 115:1; Revelation 5:12-13).² Thus, we use the word “doxology,” which technically means “a word of praise,” but we usually understand doxology to mean “an expression of praise to God.”

Second, look at the meaning of glory in the Old Testament.

There are two words for **glory** in the Old Testament. The more common Hebrew word for **glory** is *kabod*. *Kabod* can mean “reputation” or “renown.” But the root meaning actually refers to something that is “weighty” as opposed to something that is “weightless.”

Thus when we refer to the **glory of God** we mean that God

² Jack W. Hayford and Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Hayford’s Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995).

has real gravity (or *gravitas*) and that he is the only truly weighty being in the entire universe.

The other Old Testament Hebrew word is *shekinah*. This was the visible manifestation of God, generally seen as a light so brilliant that he was unapproachable.

The *shekinah* glory was the glory that was reflected off the face of Moses when he spent time with God on top of Mount Sinai when he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:29-35).

When Moses came down from the mountain his face glowed with a transferred brilliance, and this was so bright that the people were unable to look directly at him. To speak with them Moses had to cover his face with a veil until the heavenly glory faded.

The *shekinah* glory was also the glory, veiled in a cloud, that descended to fill the Most Holy Place of the wilderness tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38) and later the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:10-11).

Now that I have briefly explained what the **glory** of God was in the Old Testament, let me point you to an illustration about it.

Moses had led the people of Israel to Mount Sinai where they had received the Ten Commandments. Moses had come down from Mount Sinai and his face was so radiant with the reflected glory of God that he had to cover it when he spoke to the people. After a while, however, the radiance diminished, and it was time to move on. Somewhat surprisingly, Moses was not at all sure about his ability to lead the people forward.

He expressed his concern to God, and God said to him, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

But Moses was still not satisfied. And he said to God, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” (33:15-16).

God said that he would do what Moses asked. He would go

with them.

Then Moses got brave and asked the most daring thing of all, “Please show me your glory” (33:18).

God said to Moses, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”

Continuing, God said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen” (33:19-23).

In these verses, seeing the glory of God and seeing the face of God is treated as identical. Thus, when Paul says that **we rejoice in hope of the glory of God**, he is expressing what theologians have called the *beatific vision*. That is the eternal and direct perception of God enjoyed by those who are in heaven, imparting supreme happiness and blessedness. It is the goal and the climax of our faith.

So, what the apostle Paul is telling us is that the request of Moses, and the desire of the saints throughout the ages is to be ours. And it is ours because we have been justified by faith. In other words, those who have been justified will *see* God!

Therefore, as Paul wrote, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

3. Hope

And third, let’s look at the word **hope**.

In our day “**hope**” is a rather weak word. One dictionary defines it: “desire with expectation of obtaining what is desired,” listing “trust” and “reliance” as synonyms.

But we usually mean much less than this. We speak of “hop-

ing against hope” or “hoping for the best,” which implies that we are not very hopeful.

But this is not what **hope** means in the Bible, and even the dictionary definition falls short of it.

In the Bible, **hope** means “certainty,” and the only reason it is called **hope** rather than certainty is that we do not *yet* possess it, although we surely will.

Here are some examples of how **hope** is used in the New Testament:

- Acts 2:26-27: “. . . my flesh also will dwell in **hope**. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades. . . .”
- Colossians 1:5: “because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven. . . .”
- Colossians 1:27: “. . . which is Christ in you, the **hope** of glory.”
- Titus 1:2: “in **hope** of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”
- Titus 2:13: “waiting for our blessed **hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- Hebrews 6:19-20: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a **hope** that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. . . .”
- 1 Peter 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

In each of those passages, **hope** refers to certainty. For even though we are not yet in full possession of what is hoped for, we are nevertheless certain of it, since it has been won for us by Christ and has been promised to us by God “who does not lie.”

This is how Paul is speaking in Romans 5:2 when he says, “**and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**”

Conclusion

So, how are we to respond to **“and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God”**?

In 1 John 3:1-3, the apostle John is speaking of the return of Jesus Christ and of the fact that when he appears we shall be like him. He calls this our “hope,” which is an appropriate use of the word, as we have already seen.

But this is not only something having to do with the future, says John. Hope has a present significance, too. Here is how he puts it: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*” (vv. 2-3, emphasis added).

It is our hope, or confidence, or certainty, that we will be like Jesus one day that motivates us to be like him now. It leads us to live as morally pure a life as possible.

How do you do that?

You live day by day, indeed, moment by moment on the gospel of God’s grace. It means that you are looking to Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and glorification. You know that you are bound for heaven only because of Christ, because of who he is and what he has done for you. That is faith.

And it also means that you repent daily. You are quick to acknowledge sin and fault and failure. You confess it as sin to God, and turn from it and walk in the path that is laid for us in God’s excellent Word.

On *February 24, 1208*, which is 800 years ago today, Francis of Assisi attended Mass in the little church of Saint Mary of the Angels. The priest read from Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 10: *Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: You received without paying, now give without being paid. Don’t take along any gold, silver, or copper coins. And don’t carry a traveling bag or an extra shirt or sandals.*

Those verses so moved Francis that he resolved to become an itinerant evangelist in the mold of the original apostles. He shared his burden with a few followers, and they devised a simple strategy: to wander through the country as poor men, preaching the gospel and attending those with needs.

Francis put his thoughts into writing and traveled to Rome, seeking endorsement from Pope Innocent III.

The pope hesitated. “My son,” he said, “your plan of life seems too hard and rough.”

But eventually he acquiesced. And Francis later wrote:

When the Lord entrusted brothers to me, nobody told me how to treat them, but the Most High revealed to me personally that I ought to live according to the norms of the Holy Gospel. I had it all written down in a few simple words, and the lord Pope approved it. And those who wished to embrace the life gave the poor everything they had and contented themselves with a tunic patched inside and out, and a belt and some underclothes. And we did not wish for anything more.

Within eight years Francis’s order numbered 5,000 men, and by the time he died from tuberculoid leprosy in his mid-forties, he was so loved that his followers feared the masses would steal his body. So they entombed him beneath the altar of the Basilica of Saint Francis under a slab of granite, gravel, ten welded bands of iron, a 190-pound grill, and a 200-pound rock. They buried him so well, in fact, that his coffin wasn’t discovered until the 19th century. His followers, however, continued his mission, and today the Franciscan Order in all its branches is the largest religious order in the Roman Catholic Church.³

You and I don’t need a pope to approve what we do. Nor do we necessarily have to give everything away. But we need to follow Francis’ example of living each moment of every day according to the norms of the Holy Gospel. That is our calling too. Amen.

³ Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, c1997) February 24.

Mission Statement

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*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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PRAAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the blessings of justification by faith.

Thank you for the possessions we have in Christ: peace with God, standing in grace, and rejoicing in hope.

We long for the day when we shall stand in your presence and behold you face to face. Now we know in part, but then we shall know fully, even as we have been fully known.

O Lord, these blessings of justification are ours because we have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

If there is anyone here today who does not know Christ savingly, please grant that person faith alone in Christ alone by your grace alone.

And all of this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.