

Jan. 30, 2022

The Security of Justification

Part 4

Romans 5:1-5

Justification by faith is proved sufficient by the eternal gifts that it secures.

LTS: 2 Cor. 4:7-18

Introduction:

Once again, we gather to climb a little higher on the Mt. Everest of the N.T. known by every bible student as Paul's epistle to the Romans. We are now on our fifth leg of the journey having ascended to the beginning of chapter five, and O what a breath-taking view we have discovered.

In Paul's mind, everywhere we look we discover reason for rejoicing. In v. 2 we are invited to Rejoice in the glory of God. In v. 3, we are invited to rejoice in our suffering. Then, in v. 11, we are invited to rejoice in God himself.

I think it is safe to say that the Christian Gospel is an invitation to a life of rejoicing. To be sure, Jesus Himself said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

This is a wonderful reality for those who live in fellowship with Jesus. But it is made even more wonderful when we remember that at one time, we were enemies, without hope and without God in this world.

And I suspect there are some who are listening to this message right now who know nothing of this joy. If that is you this morning my friend, I want you to know that this joy can be yours. And it will be yours if you will be honest with yourself and confess to Jesus what a sinner you are and how desperately you need Him to make you right with God through His atoning work on the cross. I am here to tell you that this very day all your sins can be forgiven. You need but to ask.

If you already know and love Jesus, then you already know some measure of His joy. You know the joy of the promise that one day you will both see and share in God's glory. If you know Jesus, then you taste what it means to rejoice in God. And if you know Jesus, then you have probably even experienced genuine joy in times of suffering. And that is the focus of this text and message this morning.

Perhaps it sounds strange when you hear me say that Christians can experience joy in suffering. But we are NOT talking about some masochistic enjoyment of pain. Rather, its about joy in the heart that transcends our suffering.

We should remember that Paul was the one who wrote this portion of Scripture; the same Paul who, along with Silas, was arrested for preaching the gospel, beaten mercilessly with rods and tossed into a cold dark prison cell. And what do we find them doing at midnight? They were praying and singing Hymns to God. Furthermore, some time later, when he wrote a letter to the church of Philippi from a different jail cell, he commanded his fellow Christians with these words: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). Again, we hear a

similar admonition from James, who wrote, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of various kinds (Jam. 1:2).

The question for this morning is, What place does suffering have in the believer’s life and how can suffering be mingled with God’s joy? Many professing Christians think that personal suffering is always the result of sin and has no place in the life of a Christian. But that doesn’t seem to be the view of the Apostle Paul. So how should we think about suffering and joy?

Before we consider the answer, let’s read the text for this morning.

Read Rom. 5:1-5

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 Not only that, but 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.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

As you can see in your printed outline, we are going to focus on the 4th benefit of our justification; namely that because of our justification we have...

“Confidence in the Love of God.”

And that confidence in the love of God enables us to respond to suffering and trials in a manner that is quite different from how our unbelieving family and friends respond to trials. You see, when the H.S. comes and changes a man’s heart, he not only discovers within himself a love for Jesus and God’s word, but he also discovers in himself a whole new set of values. Many of the things he once loved he now hates. And things that he once hated he now loves.

Justification has that kind of effect upon people’s values. Knowing Christ causes us to Boast or Rejoice in things that come to us from God’s hand.

The Jews to whom Paul was writing in Romans had previously boasted in their Jewishness. They boasted in the Law. They boasted in their traditions, their temple, their sacrifices, and a whole host of other things. But when they came face-to-face with the Gospel, the H.S. arrested their hearts by grace, through faith and they were changed.

Now they found themselves boasting in things like,

- The Crucified messiah. And as these dear saints received the apostles teaching and continued growing in grace and the knowledge of God and His Gospel, they began boasting and rejoicing in...
- their new-found Peace with God

- their new-found access to God
- their future participation in glory of God

Of course, all of this is nonsense to unbelievers. It's not at all uncommon to hear unbelievers refer to Christians as people who have grounded their lives in the fantasy of religion. Faith in God seems to them to be nothing but foolishness. All this talk about God, His judgment on sinners, His incarnation, His sinless life and substitutionary death is mere allusion.

But there is one reality in the world that believers and unbelievers universally share. We all experience suffering in this life. As Job said, "Man was born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." The difference between those who are Justified and those who are lost becomes evident NOT in their experience of suffering, but in the way they respond to suffering.

You see, for men and women who love and live for Jesus, suffering is cause for rejoicing. We don't ask for it. We don't find it in our prayer list under things we want God to give us. But when, in the providence of God, it comes, we have the capacity rejoice in it.

To be sure, Paul's primary concern here may have to do with men and women who suffer for the sake of Christ; those who experience personal hardships because of their faithful ministry of the Word.

Nevertheless, I think it clearly applies to any kind of personal suffering on the part of those who know and love Jesus.

The fact of the matter is, God's people are not immune to pain and suffering. We live in a world that has experienced the devastating effects of sin, so all of us suffer. Jesus said in John 16:33 "In this world will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world." Later on in Romans, Paul will say... (Rom. 8:22-24)

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴

Everyone experiences suffering. While it's true that your justification protects you from God's judgment and eternal condemnation, it does not shield us from the normal, difficult struggles of life in a broken, sin-cursed world.

This brings us to the first point in the outline:

I. Justified People Can Rejoice in their suffering (v.3)

1. As we have been learning over the past few weeks, since we have been justified, God has blessed us tremendous spiritual treasures. In Christ we now have:

- Peace with God
- Access to God by grace
- Hope in the glory of God

- And now, joy in our suffering.

2. All of these treasures are ours “since we have been justified.” But rejoicing in suffering doesn’t seem like a benefit at all! Nobody enjoys suffering! Nevertheless, Paul is determined to help us understand that it is possible to rejoice in suffering. He says, says (v. 3)

“we rejoice in our sufferings.”

3. Now, I want you to observe with me that one verse earlier (v.2) Paul uses the word “rejoice” same as he uses it here. There in v.2 he says that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That is, when we consider the promise that one day, we will not only See God’s glory but also Share His glory, we rejoice! As believers, this makes perfect sense. Seeing and sharing in God’s glory are magnificent gifts from the hand of God so, of course, we have good reason to rejoice! But Paul is telling us here (v.3) that we can also rejoice in our suffering.

4. I say we “CAN” rejoice rather than we “must” rejoice in our suffering because Paul is not issuing a command here even though he repeatedly does so in his letter to the Philippians. (e.g. “Rejoice in the Lord always! And again I say, rejoice” Phil. 4:4). (this is a pres, Act, Imp).

5. The verb REJOICE here (v.3) simply indicates how believers often respond to personal suffering. But Perhaps the greater question is “Why.” Why do believers often respond to hardships and suffering with joy? Its NOT natural. What is natural is for suffering to provoke depression and despair.

- Over the years I have officiated a number of funerals for unbelieving families. With few exceptions, these were occasions of despair, hopelessness, and heart-wrenching grief.
- Funerals for believers, on the other hand, are usually occasions for joy.
- But this kind of joy is evident in other kinds of suffering as well. For example, in Acts 5, when the high priest arrested the apostles for preaching the gospel at the temple, he had them beaten and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. How did they respond to such mistreatment? (Acts. 5:41) “They left the counsel of the high priest rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”

6. How is it possible to rejoice in the midst of suffering? Isn’t it because we believe that God uses our suffering for His own glory and our good? Isn’t it because we believe the promise that our Redeemer will never leave us or forsake us; Isn’t it because we believe the promise that that He will be our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble?

Its difficult to imagine a suffering Christian in this world who doesn’t cling with all their might to Rom. 8:28,

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

7. Someone may ask, What good could possibly come from
- my car being totaled, or

- The loss of my job
- The terminal cancer diagnosis
- The perpetual singleness of one who desires to be married
- My divorce
- The murder of an innocent child
- The death of a spouse
- How can any good come of these painful, sometimes evil circumstances?

8. Well, to be perfectly honest, we don't always know. God is not obliged to explain his sovereign and holy will. For who has known the mind of the Lord and who has become His counselor?"(Rom 11:34). God is the One who works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11).

9. Then again, there are times when God's good purposes become evident, such as when the diagnosis of terminal cancer results in the salvation of the one who is ill. This was the testimony of my own mother.

10. On the other hand, sometimes God tells us the good things He is doing in our suffering. In fact, that's what we discover in this text.

11. Verse 3 tells us that God uses suffering to sharpen and strengthen our inner-person. And he does so in three specific ways. Paul presents them in what some scholars call a chain of reasoning. That is, a short list of truths that are interconnected, each dependent upon the one before like links in a chain.

We should note also that this chain is anchored to a certain kind of knowledge. Specifically, he says "we rejoice in our suffering knowing... You see, the key to experiencing real joy in suffering is something we know; something we have learned. Joy in suffering not merely a feeling or experience that descends upon us randomly. No, this joy is grounded something we know; namely, the precious promises of God.

12. So what do Christians know that provokes us to rejoice in our suffering?

13. A few minutes ago I pointed you to Romans 8:28 from which we have learned that God works all things together for good for those who love him. What exactly is that "Good." Well, we need only to read the next verse. Rom. 8:29 tells us that God is working to conform us to the image of His Son.

14. You see, beloved, we know this promise! Think about it; The purpose of our existence is to show the world what Christ is like. But by nature, the impulses of our inner person bears little resemblance to the heart of Christ.

15. The best thing that could ever happen to us is that we would become like Christ! And that is what God does in your suffering. He is making you more like Jesus. In this text, Paul mentions three specific characteristics that God forms in us through suffering. So, let's think about these for a few minutes.

16. The first link in the chain (v.3) is that we know suffering produces endurance.
- The word “Endurance” conveys the idea of power to withstand hardships. It’s about inward fortitude, steadfastness and perseverance.¹
 - Every time we experience the heat and pressure of a trial and walk through it without caving to the temptation to sin, we become stronger.
 - Jesus’ life on earth was a living picture of endurance. He didn’t collapse under the pressure of suffering. (think of Gathsemene)
 - Unlike us, Jesus never gave in to temptation. He never gave way to lust, or sinful anger, or bitterness, or hatred. His life was characterized by holy endurance.
 - You see, beloved, You can rejoice in your suffering because God is conforming you to the likeness of Christ in His endurance.

17. John R. W. Stott once wrote,

Suffering can be productive, if we respond to it positively, and not with anger or bitterness. We know this, especially from the experience of God’s people in every generation. Suffering produces endurance. We could not learn endurance without suffering, because without suffering there would be nothing to endure.²

18. Our world, and even many churches, are committed to pursuing the easy life where there is as little difficulty as possible. The goal is to keep everything positive, to make us feel good about ourselves at all costs. We see this in...

- Standards for college admission
- Where there is No need to work or hold down a job.
- Where there are No consequences for illegal behavior
- Where Everything seems to be focused on positivity, self-esteem, and personal entitlement.
- But the Lord’s goal; for us is not comfort at all costs. Rather, it is conformity to Christ. And that doesn’t happy on the easy road.
- Its hard to do what’s right. It’s hard to successfully battle temptation and sin.
- It’s hard to stay the course toward godliness.
- So the Lord takes us in his hands like a lump of clay; he presses us, squeezes us, molds us and shapes us. It’s not pleasant and its not easy.
- Jesus used a different analogy when he said (Jn. 15:2, “Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, so that it will bear more fruit.

19. The second link in the chain sounds like this: (v.4),

“Suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character.”

¹ Stephen (Yuille, *The Obedience of Faith*, Commentary on Romans, p. 136)

² John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 141–142.

- The word “character” here is a word that’s difficult to put into English. It indicates the result of being tested. It’s “the temper of the veteran as opposed to that of the raw [untested] recruit”.³
- This reminds me of 1 Cor.9 where Paul likens the Christian to a runner in the race similar to the Olympic marathon. Paul exhorts us to run in such a way that you may win. To do that you must exercise self-control over the long haul. He must discipline his body and keep it under control lest he be disqualified.
- In the case of the athlete, he brings hardship upon himself to effect change. But in Rom 5:3 the Lord is the one who brings the hardship in order to create proven character.
- Consider this. If when you find yourself in a painful, difficult trial and you need help, what kind of counselor would you see out? A young happy-slappy seminary grad whose still wet behind the ears, or an aged follow of Christ who has experienced much suffering and disappointment but whose life is still filled with the joy of the Lord?

20. The third link in the chain reads (v.4) “And Character produces hope.” This is not the first time Paul has mentioned HOPE in this text.

21. The previous appearance of the the word “Hope” was in v. 2 where Paul speaks of the “hope of the glory of God.” IN both cases “Hope” means “confident expectation based on the promises of God who cannot lie. It’s the confident expectation that every struggle I face is sovereignly governed by an omnipotent and gracious God.

22. Now I confess that at this point in the sermon I intended to take you through point #2 and talk about the fact that

II. Justified people trust God’s providence in their suffering.

However, for the sake of time, I’ve decided to wait until next week to address that. So, let’s take a minute or two to consider

Point #3 “Justified People discover God’s love in their suffering” (5)

³ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 220–221.

1. In verse 4, Paul says character produces hope. That is, people who have a proven history of faithfulness in suffering know that in the time of trial, their struggle will never be greater than the Hope God has promised. They know by experience that God will never abandon them. They believe that wherever the Good Shepherd leads His sheep, it is always the right path – Even if that path goes through the valley of the shadow of death. They learned that wherever they are circumstantially, they are “in God’s place, moving at god’s pace.”⁴

2. How do they learn this? Well, they learned it first by hiding God’s promises in their hearts. Second, they learned it (v.5) by “the love God has poured into our hearts through the H.S..”

3. Of course the promises of God are objective. They come to us a propositional truth. The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to believe and obey what we read. But there is also a subjective element of the Spirit’s work in the hour of suffering. The God who declared that He loved his people by Sending Jesus to die on the cross in their place, is the God who fills us with delight in his love through the H.S.

4. The term “poured out” speaks of the lavishness of God’s love. He pours his love in abundance.

Personal example: Dan in hospital w/ Covid. These are the Scripture promises I clung to each day as I lay in bed.

Isaiah 43:1

¹ But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

This text continues...

Isaiah 43:2–3

² “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. ³ “For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

5. Every day in that hospital bed I read and meditated on these words as if they were written just for me. Because in a very real sense they were written for me, and for everyone who knows and loves Jesus. My hope in Him was not disappointed.

Another Scripture I clung to was **Isaiah 41:10**

¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Notice the five pillars of hope.

⁴ From John Piper, but I can’t remember the sermon in which he says it.

- I am with you
- I am your God
- I will strengthen you
- I will help you
- I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

6. You know, the book of acts tells us that Paul and Silas sang at midnight in that horrible jail. I have to wonder if they were sinning one of these precious promises of God. Why do I think so? Because the source of Joy in suffering is whole-hearted trust in the promises of God.