

Romans: The Good News of God

God's Love Demonstrated

Romans 5:6-8

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Scripture

In Romans 5:1-11 we read of several blessings of justification. Let's read Romans 5:1-11, paying special attention to verses 6-8, 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 four blessings. They are peace with God, standing in grace, rejoicing in hope, and rejoicing in suf-

fering. Today, we examine a fifth blessing, which is God's love demonstrated.

The Ultimate Gift is a sweetly sentimental movie (released a year ago today) about an arrogant, spoiled young man named Jason Stevens. Jason expects a huge inheritance when he hears that his grandfather has died. What he gets instead is a crash course in life. Jason is required to do twelve tasks—what his grandfather calls “gifts”—designed to challenge him in improbable ways. Among Jason's tasks is the challenge to make one true friend within a month. He soon befriends Emily, a little girl battling leukemia.

In one scene, Jason finds Emily sitting alone in a hospital chapel. She is staring at a statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched.

“I wonder if he takes advance orders,” she says.

“For what?” Jason asks.

“For my place. You know—up there,” Emily answers as she points upward.

“What do you think it's going to be like?” Jason asks.

“Butterflies—lots of butterflies. Do you know God paints every color on a butterfly with his finger?” asks Emily.

“I didn't know you thought about stuff like that,” Jason replies.

“I think about dying,” Emily says, as she begins to cry. “There's something basically unfair about a person dying. I even hate the idea.”

“You know,” Jason says softly, “I don't know much about God or Jesus, but I can promise you that those arms are meant for you.”

Soon after Emily's death, Jason eventually inherits \$100 million from his grandfather. He invests every dime of it to build Emily's Home, a facility for families whose children are facing extraordinary health challenges.¹

When people face death they often think about eternity and

¹ *The Ultimate Gift* (Life Media, 2006), directed by Michael Saibel.

heaven, as young Emily did. And the only way to get into heaven and be with God for all eternity is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Romans 5:6-8 speaks about the love that God has for sinners who have been justified by faith. The greatness of his love, which is mentioned here in Romans for the very first time, is a great truth.

The apostle Paul mentions it to assure you that if you have been justified by God through faith in Christ, you have been saved because of God's love for you, and that nothing will ever be able to separate you from his love.

Review

Before we explore how God shows his love for us, let's briefly review what we have learned so far.

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.

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.

A. *Peace with God (5:1b)*

Our first possession in Christ is peace with God.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:1b, ". . . we have peace

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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.”

C. Rejoicing in Hope (5:2b)

Our third possession in Christ is rejoicing in hope.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:2b, “. . . and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

D. Rejoicing in Suffering (5:3-5)

Our fourth possession in Christ is rejoicing in suffering.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:3-5, “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Lesson

Today, in Romans 5:3-5 we come to a fifth blessing of justification, a fifth possession in Christ.

E. God’s Love Demonstrated (5:6-8)

Our fifth possession in Christ is God’s love demonstrated.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:6-8, “**For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For**

one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God’s love for us is shown by Christ’s work at Calvary. And what was Christ’s work at Calvary?

1. What he did (5:6)

First, notice what he did. Paul said in Romans 5:6, **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”**

What did Jesus do? Jesus died on the cross.

God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross. He did that in order to pay the penalty for all of our sin.

We should pay the penalty for our sin. We should die and be cut off from God for all eternity. We should be sentenced to hell.

But, by his grace, God allowed our penalty to be paid by Jesus. He paid the penalty for our sin. He died and was cut off from God in our place. He suffered the pains of hell in our stead.

That is what Jesus did on the cross. He died so that we might live. He died so that we might be accepted by his Father.

If you go over to Scotland, or anywhere there are lots of sheep, sooner or later you’re going to see a very unusual sight. You’ll see a little lamb running around the field, and you’ll notice this lamb has what looks like an extra fleece tied on to its back. In fact, you’ll see there are little holes in the fleece for its four legs and usually a hole for its head. If you see a little lamb running around like that, that usually means its mother has died.

Without the protection and nourishment of a mother, any orphaned lamb will die. If you take the orphaned lamb and try to introduce it to another mother, the new mother will butt it away. She won’t recognize the lamb’s scent and will know the new baby is not one of her own lambs.

But thankfully, most flocks are large enough that there is a

mother that has recently lost a lamb. The shepherd will skin the dead lamb and make its fleece into a covering for the orphaned lamb. And then he will take the orphaned lamb to the mother whose baby just died. Now, when she sniffs the orphaned lamb, she will smell the fleece of her own lamb. Instead of butting the lamb away, she will accept it as one of her own.

In a similar way, we have become acceptable to God by being clothed with Christ as a result of his death on our behalf.²

So, what he did is die on the cross as a substitute for sinners so that we could be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

2. Why he did it (5:7-8a)

Second, observe why he did it. Paul said in Romans 5:7-8a, **“For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us. . . .”**

Why did Jesus die? He died to show God’s love for us.

In his excellent commentary on Romans, Donald Grey Barnhouse tells the story of a tough youngster from the streets of one of our large cities. His sister had been crippled and needed an operation. The operation was provided for her. But after the operation the girl needed a blood transfusion, and the boy, her brother, was asked to volunteer. He was taken to her bedside and watched tight-lipped as a needle was inserted into his vein and blood was fed into his sister’s body.

When the transfusion was over, the doctor put his arm on the boy’s shoulder and told him that he had been very brave. The youngster knew nothing about the nature of a blood transfusion.

But the doctor knew even less about the actual bravery of the boy—until the boy looked up at him and asked steadily, “Doc, how long before I die?”

The boy believed that he would have to die to save his sister.

² From Peter Grant’s sermon, “In What Way Is Jesus Christ Different?”

And he thought that he was dying drop by drop as his blood flowed into her veins.

But he did it anyway! Why? Because he loved his sister.³

That story tells us something about the highest of human love.

Yet, when we read Romans 5 we realize that God's love is not shown to friends but rather to enemies.

Someone once said that if you ever doubt the love of God, look at Calvary. It is at the cross that you see the love of God in its fullness. What a great love this is!

You may recall that when the Swiss theologian Karl Barth was in this country some years before his death, someone asked a question at one of his question-and-answer sessions that went like this: "Dr. Barth, what is the greatest thought that has ever gone through your mind?"

The questioner probably expected some complicated and incomprehensible answer, as if Einstein were being asked to explain the theory of relativity. But after he had thought a long while, Barth replied by saying: "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so."⁴

Jesus died to show us God's love. If you are justified by faith, and if you ever doubt God's love, simply look to the cross.

3. When he did it (5:8b)

And third, notice when he did it. Paul said in Romans 5:8b, "**.. in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**"

God's Son died while we were still sinners.

It is not as if some are nice and worth dying for. No. All of us has sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

Each one of us deserves to die for our own sin. And yet, God sent Jesus to take our death upon himself.

In the 1993 movie *In the Line of Fire* Frank Horrigan was a

³ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 177.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 539.

Secret Service agent assigned to protect the President. Horrigan had protected the life of the President for more than three decades, but he was haunted by the memory of what had happened thirty years before.

Horrigan was a young agent assigned to President Kennedy on that fateful day in Dallas in 1963. When the assassin fired, Horrigan froze in shock. For thirty years afterward, he wrestled with the ultimate question for a Secret Service agent: *Can I take a bullet for the President?*

In the climax of the movie, Horrigan does what he had been unable to do earlier: he throws himself into the path of an assassin's bullet to save the President.

Secret Service agents are willing to do such a thing because they believe the President is so valuable to our country and the world that he is worth dying for. Obviously they would not take a bullet for just anyone.

At Calvary the situation was reversed. The Creator of the Universe actually took a bullet for us. At the Cross we see how Jesus died in our place. And he did that while we were still sinners.⁵

Conclusion

There are many blessings of justification for those who have been justified by faith. Over the past few weeks we have examined the blessings of peace with God, standing in grace, rejoicing in hope, and rejoicing in suffering.

Today, we looked at God's love demonstrated. God's love for his own is great. It is supremely demonstrated at the cross of Calvary. It is difficult to put into words the greatness of God's love for his own.

Someone once tried to express the greatness of God's love by printing on a little card a special arrangement of John 3:16, with certain descriptive phrases added. The twelve parts of the verse

⁵ *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 2.

were arranged down one side of the card, and the added phrases were printed across from them. It went like this:

God.....the greatest Lover
so loved.....the greatest degree
the world.....the greatest company
that he gave.....the greatest act
his one and only Son.....the greatest gift
that whoever.....the greatest opportunity
believes.....the greatest simplicity
in him.....the greatest attraction
shall not perish.....the greatest promise
but.....the greatest difference
have.....the greatest certainty
eternal life.....the greatest possession

The title for this card was: “Christ—the Greatest Gift.”

One of the greatest expressions of the love of God is in the words of a hymn written by F. M. Lehman.

Lehman wrote most of this hymn, but the final stanza was added to it later, after it had been found scratched on the wall of a room in an asylum by a man said to have been insane. The first and last verses of the hymn and the chorus, go as follows:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star;
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave his Son to win:
His erring child he reconciled
And rescued from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

Chorus:

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure –
The saints' and angels' song.

And yet, I feel that I have not even begun to explain the greatness of God's love. So, let me read the text again: **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

If you do not yet fully appreciate the greatness of the love God has for you, the explanation is probably that you have never really thought of yourself as God sees you in your fallen state.

Perhaps you have never thought of yourself as someone who was utterly without strength or powerless before God saved you.

Perhaps you have never considered yourself to have been ungodly. Nor a sinner. Nor God's enemy.

But that is what you were—and still are if you have never come to Christ to be justified. It is only if you can recognize the truth of these descriptions that you can begin to appreciate the love that God holds out to you through the death of his Son.

If you have never responded to this great overture of the divine love, let me encourage you to do that, assuring you that there is no greater truth in all the universe. Can you think of anything greater? Of course, you can't. How could anybody? Believe that God loves you. Believe that Jesus died for you. Let those truly great thoughts move you to abandon your sin, love God in return, and live for Jesus. Amen.

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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PRAYER:

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, rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in suffering, and God's love demonstrated.

Oh God, we thank you that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. We do not deserve anything from you, and yet, in your grace, you have sent your Son to pay the penalty for all of our sin.

Help us to love you in return. Help us also to live for you.
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.