

# The Benefits of Justification

*Psalms 69:6-7; Romans 5:1-11*

By Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • August 15, 2021 (BSCC)

Dear Congregation of Christ: Let me begin with two quotes: From Beatle George Harrison: “Give me love, give me peace on earth, give me light, give me life.” From Mahatma Gandhi: “Each one has to find his peace from within.” Both Harrison and Gandhi were Buddhists and pacifists, practicing Eastern meditations.

But Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian writer, says, “Men need only trust in Christ's teaching and obey it, and there will be peace on earth.” And J. I. Packer, a Christian theologian, also writes, “The peace of God is first and foremost peace with God; it is the state of affairs in which God, instead of being against us, is for us. No account of God's peace which does not start here can do other than mislead.” Both believed that peace on earth can only be attained when all people have peace with God. This is what Paul says in our opening verse, *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom 5:1). He is not talking about peace between two persons, or between nations, or peace of mind, or the classic Jewish definition of *shalom* or wholeness of being. Rather, he is talking about peace between God and man.

In our last lesson in Romans 3, the Apostle Paul writes that God is both *“just and the justifier of one who has faith in Jesus”* (3:26). We learned that all human beings are hopeless sinners who will never be righteous before a holy God by doing good works in obedience to God's commandments. How then can a person be saved? God is the one who justifies. To be justified means that God declares a sinner not guilty or acquitted of all his sins, thereby making him righteous in God's sight. When does this happen? When a sinner's heart is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and given faith to believe and trust in Christ and repentance from his sins.

Paul then continues his explanation of this doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone in our text by pointing out two primary benefits of justification. First, we have “peace with God” because Christ has accomplished his work of reconciling enemies: sinful man versus a holy God. Second, we have the “hope of glory” even when we suffer in this world.

Therefore, this morning, the sermon is entitled, **The Benefits of Justification**, under two headings: first, **Peace with God (Enemies Reconciled)**; and second, **Hope of Glory (Rejoicing in Sufferings)**.

## **Peace with God (Enemies Reconciled)**

Why is Paul talking about “peace with God”? Simply, because all sinful human beings are enemies of a perfectly holy God. God is wrathful against all sinners because of their violations of his holy commandments. Since he is the only Creator, he is in this way the Father of all mankind. And what does a Father do? He disciplines his children. He gets angry when his children disobey his rules in the house and outside the house. When this happens, the children get punished, usually by being grounded, or by having their cell phones or laptops or watching TV taken away.

This discipline is what our heavenly Father does to his special people, his people whom he has justified. He chastises us when we stray away from his word. We read this in Hebrews 12:5–6, “*My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*” The writer goes on to say that as our earthly disciplines us because we are his legitimate, adopted children. If he does not, then it means that we are illegitimate children, children whom he does not love as much as his legitimate children. He disciplines us “*for our good, that we may share his holiness... and later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*” (Heb 12:7-11).

This is how much our heavenly Father loves us whom he has chosen and saved in Christ. What about those whom he did not choose? They are under his curse of eternal death and curse. It is terrible to think about it. They are not merely “grounded.” Rather, they do not have any of the benefits and privileges of justification today and in a future heaven. Worse, since they are enemies of God in this life, they will be enemies of God even in life after death, a life of torment and accursed by God. We read in Revelation 21:8 about who they are and what kind of future they will have as enemies of God forever, “*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*”

Paul says that we were formerly “enemies of God” before he justified us or declared us righteous by faith in Christ and his death and resurrection for our sins (5:10). We were hostile to God. And God is hostile to us because of our rebellion against him. We were formerly at war against each other. Job 15:25 tells us that when the unbeliever sees Judgment Day coming, he “[*stretches*] out his hand against God and defies the Almighty.” He shakes his fist against God in defiant rebellion, like the logo of Black Lives Matter. Their followers shake their fist against God and against all civil laws.

But when God justified and saved us from sin and his eternal wrath, he “reconciled” us to himself. Reconciliation between two persons means a bringing together or making peace between two hostile parties. When we were justified, we were reconciled with God, because we were hostile toward each other. In our text, Paul uses the words “justification” and “reconciliation” almost as synonyms. Justification or reconciliation deals with our broken personal relationship with God.

Paul explains that there are two aspects of this reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> One is the accomplishment of this reconciliation by Christ’s death and resurrection. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:19, “*in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*” Our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled the world to his Father in heaven. Enemies from all nations of the world have become God’s friends. Second, reconciliation happens only when Christ’s death and resurrection are believed and embraced by a person with all his heart. We read in the next verse God’s appeal to all who hear the gospel, “*We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*” (2 Cor 5:20). God calls us to sign a peace treaty with him.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

In the 1970s, Don Richardson, a Canadian missionary to the Indonesian country of West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), wrote a book called *Peace Child*. In this book, he writes about two warring tribes in the villages. They would kill and wound each other, and they were cannibalistic headhunters. Because of the danger of violence, the Richardsons were considering leaving the village. So the warring tribes sought to end their decades-old wars. One of the village chiefs designated one of his sons to be a sort of mediator or go-between. The child was adopted by the other village chief as his own son. As long as the child was alive, there would be peace between the two tribes. Richardson saw this as a picture of Christ the Son of God whom God sacrificed to reconcile us to himself. Therefore, the child who became a mediator between two enemies was called a “peace child.”

God accomplished this reconciliation through the sacrifice of Christ his Son while we were still “weak, ungodly, and sinners.” Think about it. Would you die for someone who is your weak, ungodly and sinful enemy? Absolutely not! Most soldiers, police officers, firefighters, and close friends often sacrifice for each other. But not for enemies. And this is what God did: reconcile us to him through the sacrificial death of his own beloved Son.

Amazing grace indeed! Therefore, Paul writes in verse 2, “*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.*” Grace is undeserved mercy and love by God toward us sinners. When we were formerly enemies of God, we did not have access to God. We were aliens who were barred from entering God’s chosen nation. There are no “illegal aliens” in God’s kingdom. We have to have a legal passport and visa to enter in. And that passport is faith in Christ, stamped with the word “Justified.” Then, Christ the King welcomes us with joy as full citizens of his heavenly city.

### **Hope of Glory (Rejoicing in Sufferings)**

A second benefit of justification in God’s sight is that we have hope of glory. This is not merely “wishful thinking,” but a true confidence that gives us peace. It is a hope based on God’s faithful and truthful promises in his word, not on man’s broken promises, lies and deceptions. We “stand” on the firm foundation of God’s grace.

Therefore, “*we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” We believe of future glorification. God has chosen us, called us, justified us, and finally, will bring us to his glory in heaven (Rom 8:30). So we read about this promise in Romans 8:18, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*” On Judgment Day, we will receive our eternal reward, a glorious body and soul, like the glorious resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our present state, “*we have borne the image of the man of dust,*” our first father Adam. But in our eternal state, “*we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven,*” Jesus our Lord (1 Cor 15:49). The Apostle John writes about this same hope, “*but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2). As Jesus is now, with his glorified, resurrected body in heaven, we shall also be. Our bodies will be changed into a glorious, incorruptible state (1 Cor 15:51-52).

This is why “*we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (5:2). But God’s word not only commands us to rejoice in this blessed hope of glory. Paul also tells us to be joyful in our sufferings because they also produce hope, “*we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance*

*produces character, and character produces hope.*” We suffer because this world is a world of sin; because of persecution by unbelievers; because of ill health; because of broken relationships; because of financial difficulties. But without sufferings, without God’s discipline, we will not endure to the end of our lives. Near the end of his life of sufferings, Paul can rejoice, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim 4:7). The writer of Hebrews exhorts us in our life’s sufferings, *“let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith”* (Heb 12:1-2).

And without endurance, we will not have “character,” a strong, tested, respectable character. We will be able to stand against all of Satan’s fiery darts of temptations, accusations and persecutions. The enemy might weaken our faith and assurance for a time, but we will not be completely shaken to fall out of God’s grace. This is God’s promise, *“he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ,”* when he returns from heaven (Phil 1:6).

And sufferings, endurance and character lead us again to the hope of the glory of God. This hope *“does not put us to shame”* (5:5). This is the prayer in Psalm 69:6-7, *“Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel.”* On Judgment Day, unbelievers, those who are God’s enemies, will receive shame and dishonor because of their wicked deeds.

But those of us who have been reconciled by God to himself will receive glorious bodies and souls. Before the whole world, God will give us our “gold medals,” the golden *“crown of righteousness”* (2 Tim 4:8), *“the crown of life,”* eternal life (Jas 1:12). We will joyfully and proudly stand on the podium in God’s heavenly court with glory and honor. We will boast of our righteous standing before God and of the eternal life of blessedness, not because we worked for it, but because of Christ’s work for us. He was put to shame and dishonor on the cross before all his enemies (Psa 69:19; Heb 12:2) to save us from death and eternal wrath, so we may receive also his honor and glory.

**D**ear brothers and sisters in Christ, how do we know that we have peace with God and we are reconciled to God? How do we know the hope of God’s glory? We know these *“because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (5:5).

When we were reconciled to God through faith alone in Christ alone, God pours out his love for us his people into our hearts. He gives us the Holy Spirit who indwells us, who gives us understanding of his word so we may embrace Christ and his saving work for us. The Holy Spirit also guides our lives through sufferings and persecutions, so we may endure, we may have a strong faith, and confidence that we are his people, and he is our God forever and ever.

Therefore, let me leave you with these assurance from Romans 8:16–17, *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”*