

The Believer's Benefits Package – Part 1

Romans 5:1-4

Pastor John Miller

I'm going to read all eleven verses. We're going to spend two weeks in this. Tonight is just Romans 5:1-4. I want you to follow me in your Bibles. Paul starts with, "Therefore,"—we'll come back to that—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory"—or rejoice—"in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 5 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad"—in the Greek that would be 'shedding abroad' His love—"in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us. 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth"—or displayed, demonstrated—"his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There's a clear reference to the cross of Christ and He died a substitutionary death for us or in our place.

Verse 9, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received"—this is one of the blessings of being a child of God, being justified—"the atonement"—or actually reconciliation is the reference to that atonement. That atonement is bringing us together and we have experienced reconciliation.

At this point in the book of Romans, Paul's made it clear that the believer is the person that's a Christian is saved not by their good works—not by rites, not by rituals—but by faith. We're saved by grace ". . . through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast," to quote Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, but that's what he said in this chapter. He talked about justification in Romans 3, the blessings of it in Romans 4, and now he comes to Romans 5 and wants us to understand that we're blessed in Christ and the blessings that we have and that we possess.

The question now is, if we are saved by grace through faith, and we're justified by faith alone in Christ alone, the question is, what are the blessings, what are the benefits that we have as believers who are justified; and secondly, can we be sure that it will last. Paul answers these questions by explaining two basic truths: 1) the blessings of our justification, Romans 5:1-11; 2) the basis for our justification, Romans 5:12-21. These verses, verses 1-11, give us assurance that justification will last, that it cannot be lost, and the blessings that it brings.

Before we unpack these verses, and trust me, we'll get there, I'm just warming up to my text, let me mention three things about these verses that are super important. First, they are hymn-like in their exalted language. Paul states the believer's blessings in a chain of confident

assertions. It's almost like, "This is a faithful saying," that we got in Titus. It's one of those exalted passages in the New Testament. Secondly, understanding this text that we're going to spend two weeks on will deepen your joy and it will be a contagious optimism. It will produce optimism and joy in your Christian heart and life. Thirdly, Paul's words switch to the first person plural in this text. This experience, along with all true believers, Paul experienced. Notice the little phrases in verse 1, "... we have;" verse 2, "... we have ... we stand;" verse 3, "... we glory"—or rejoice. Paul is including himself in these blessings that all believers possess in Christ.

Look at verse 1. Paul says, "Therefore," now those of you that have studied Romans know that it's a logically laid out book—very systematically, very logically laid out. He sees all the world as guilty before God, how God justifies the righteous, how God makes them righteous or sanctifies them. He starts with "Therefore," and Romans is full of "therefore" because it's a book of logic. He's telling us what the results are of having been justified by faith. Look at verse 1. This is so powerful and so clear. This is the conclusion up to this point, "Therefore being"—or having been—"justified by faith, we have"—here's blessing one—"peace with God." He makes it very clear that we are justified by faith. That statement, "having been justified by faith" is in what's called the aorist passive participle in Greek. It means in a time of action in the past that Christ has justified us. What Paul is saying is that we have been justified, we are justified, and will always be justified; so it has a past, present, and future implication. It means that it's an accomplished fact.

Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say, "We're being justified," we have been justified. This is so very important. I'm going to try and not tarry on this. Justification is the act of God when He declares the believing sinner righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Every word of that definition is key. It's the act of God, we can't justify ourselves; He declares—not makes—but declares us righteous; and He's declaring the believing sinner—there's faith—righteous; and it's all based on the fact that Jesus died for us on the cross. Here's something super important for you to understand: Justification is not progressional. You're not being more justified as you walk with the Lord. You're not going to be any more justified after you've been a Christian for twenty years than you were twenty minutes after you were declared righteous. This is your standing in Christ, your position. It's not your walk, that's sanctification, that's progressional. It's a lifelong process.

I emphasize that because in the Roman Catholic church, Roman Catholic theology actually teaches that justification is a process. It starts with your hopefully infant baptism, and you're following the sacraments and a lifelong of works and devotion, and then you cross your fingers and hope that you'll be good enough to get out of Purgatory and go to heaven. They first believe that no one goes straight to heaven, you've got to go to Purgatory for a while, so it's a process. Teaching that justification is a process flies directly in the face of Scripture, what the Bible teaches, that we have been justified—God has declared you righteous in Christ.

Here's the goal of the Christian life, to live up to your justification. You're declared righteous positionally, the goal is practically to bring your walk and your life up to your position by walking

in the Spirit, by applying the Word of God to your life, by looking to Jesus Christ, and growing through trials and tribulations, we're going to see in our text, so justification starts a lifelong process of sanctification—God setting you apart. If you just understand that the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you were regenerated or born again, you were indwelt by the Spirit, you were sealed unto the day of redemption, you're a child of God. You have all these blessings.

Let me make another statement: There is no such thing as one Christian being more justified than another. There's no Christian more justified than another because it's not progressional. There are Christians that are more sanctified, they're more like Christ. They're more holy in the way they live, but it has nothing to do with their standing or their position in Jesus Christ. You cannot grow in justification, but you can grow in sanctification or likeness to Jesus Christ. It's so very, very important.

Notice that Paul says, “. . . we have,”—it is a present possession. Now, go back to what we have, verse 1, “peace with God,”—that's our first blessing as believers. This is a military metaphor and before we were justified, we were declared in the Bible, Romans 5:10, Romans 8:7, as being at “. . . enmity against God,”—or being at war with God. You may not have realized it, but before you were converted, before you were saved, you were God's enemy, not on God's part, on your part. We were running from God. We were hostile toward God. We were at, the Bible uses the word “enmity” with God, so we were at war with God. We were running from God, and thank God that in His grace He ran after us. Amen? And He runs faster than we do. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is called the hound dog of heaven. Maybe you had a Christian praying for you, “Sick ‘em, hound dog!” and the Spirit of God came after you and ran you down and brought you to Jesus Christ. How marvelous!

In Colossians 1:20 it says, “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross” We have peace with God through the blood, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We must surrender, stop fighting, stop running from God. We have peace with God. The moment we surrender and are justified, we are also reconciled as is clear from the text. I love the clear teaching here that we have. It's a present possession. It's not that we are going to have, or we hope we'll have, we are right with God.

This is peace with God, it's not the peace of God. There's a difference. Peace with God, again, is your standing, your justification. Everybody has that equally as believers. The peace of God is your experience of God's peace as Paul talked about in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God . . . shall keep”—or guard or garrison—“your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” That's as we grow in sanctification, we have the peace of God because we have the peace with God. You can't have the peace of God until you first have peace with God.

I don't know why, but I was watching WWII stuff on tv a few weeks ago. They were talking about the war with Japan in the South Pacific. This has always interested me, and after the war was over, some of the Japanese soldiers especially were still hiding in the jungles. They're still hiding in the jungles thinking that the war was still going on, and they hid for a long time. They

had a hard time convincing them, “The war is over. There’s peace. You can come out of the jungles.” And when you become a Christian, the war is over, you can come out of the jungle. You don’t need to live in fear anymore. You have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the peace with God, and that’s, notice verse 1, “ . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ,”—and only through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, here’s blessing two, write it down, it’s in the text, “ . . . we have access . . . ”—to God. Notice verse 2, “By whom”—that is reference to Jesus Christ—“we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,” stop right there. So, we have peace with God, we’ve been justified, brings peace with God, and now we have access to God. The unsaved person not only is at war with God, but has no open access to approach God. They have no standing before God.

It’s interesting that we hear so much about prayer in the public sector today. Everybody thinks anybody can just pray to anybody, anytime, just say words. Sometimes I’m wondering, Who are you praying to and are you His child? Do you have access to Him? In the old covenant they could only go through the priest and only that was sacrifice, and there was the veil that was in the temple separating the holy God from sinful man. When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to that veil, remember? It was torn in two thus signifying the way into the presence of God is now made accessible through the ripped veil of the flesh of Jesus on the cross. This is direct access. You don’t have to go through another mediator. You don’t have to go through some saint or some spiritual leader, ascended master. You have direct access to God.

The first time I ever went to Washington, D.C. I was outside the fence of the White House looking into the White House standing there with a pastor friend. I said, “What do you think would happen if I jumped the fence and ran toward the White House right now?” He said, “You’d be in the evening news, and then you’d also be in jail.” I thought the evening news would be kind of cool, but I don’t like the idea of being thrown in jail. But I’m sure I couldn’t get access, “Hey, hey! I’m John Miller, pastor of Revival Christian Fellowship.” They don’t care. I have no access to the President.

But, I can go at any moment, at any time, boldly—which means with plainness of speech—into the presence of the God of all the universe. Think about that. Every one of us, as God’s children, we have access. We can come right before His presence directly and that is through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “For there is . . . one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” If you want to get to the Father, you’ve got to go through the Son. If you want to talk to God the Father, you come through God the Son, in the power of God the Holy Spirit.

It’s also intimate. The Bible says we’re adopted as sons and daughters, so “ . . . we cry, Abba, Father,” when we’re justified. And, it’s continuous access—anytime, any place. It’s by faith into His grace. Look at verse 2, it’s “ . . . by faith into this grace wherein we stand,” so we’re standing by faith in God’s grace. What a marvelous blessing that is. We stand before God by grace; we’re standing by grace experiencing His peace.

Here's the third blessing, verse 2, we have the joyful hope of heaven. So, 1) we have peace with God, all believers have that; 2) we have access to God, verse 2; and 3) we have the joyful hope of heaven. Look at verse 2. Paul says, ". . . into this grace wherein we stand,"—and what do we do?—"and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." When he says, "glory in tribulations," verse 3, it's the same word translated "rejoice" in verse 2. So, we're glorying or rejoicing ". . . in hope of the glory of God."

Christians have hope of heaven, we have the hope of heaven. Non-Christians, unbelievers, they are without God and without hope. Think about how black and dark it was before you became a Christian. You had no peace with God, you had no peace of God, you had no access to God, you were estranged from God, you were a stranger to God, you were an enemy of God, you were running from God, and now you have all these blessings—you have the joyful hope of heaven, peace, access, and joyful hope of heaven. I do believe that as Christians we need to be more heavenly minded—we need to sing about heaven, we need to think about heaven, we need to get excited about heaven—because that's where we're going to spend eternity. And, we're not going to just be sitting around on a cloud playing a harp either, it's going to be amazing. It's going to be absolutely amazing! There's going to be ". . . fulness of joy"—and—" . . . pleasures for evermore." What a blessing this motivation of heaven is. As I've said, heaven is not just a final destination for the believer, it becomes a present motivation for the believer.

Hope, in the New Testament sense, is a sure, steadfast hope. It's not hoping in the sense it might not be, but it's a steadfast assurance and rejoicing is what we boast in that's jubilation and celebration—we're going to heaven. Before salvation, we fell short of the glory of God; but now that we've been saved, we rejoice in the coming glory of God that we will share in heaven. Read Romans 8:29-30 how God chose us and justified us, and He's called us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Paul said in Colossians 3, "Set your affection"—or your mind—"on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Here's the fourth blessing, the last one we look at tonight, we rejoice in tribulation. You say, "You should've stopped while you were ahead. Man, you got peace with God, awesome! You've got access to God, that's amazing! You have joyful hope of heaven, outta sight! Now, he says, 'And not only so, but we glory'—rejoice—"in tribulations?" Is that supposed to be there? Does Paul know what he's talking about? Rejoice in tribulations?" Yes, because we know something. We know ". . . that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience"—brings us back to—"hope." So, we rejoice in something as positive as heaven, now we are also rejoicing in something that is as supernatural as rejoicing in trials and tribulations and difficulties. It's something the natural man cannot do. This is why being a Christian changes life. Even our sorrows, even our heartaches, even our troubles have purpose and meaning—God is using them to mold us and to make us and to shape us into the people He wants us to be.

One of the number one ways God sanctifies us, that's that lifelong process of being made more

like Jesus, is through suffering. He uses suffering in this fallen world, and our bodies have not yet been redeemed, and He'll use it to teach us lessons we never could have learned to develop Christlikeness in us and a wonderful thing that is. So, what we want is not comfort, we want character, so we can rejoice in our trials because they are making us more like Jesus Christ.

Have you ever prayed for patience? What happened? Everything blows up, everything breaks, you say, "Never mind, Lord, never mind." I heard the story about a young pastor that went to an old seasoned pastor and said, "Would you pray for me? I need patience." The pastor laid his hand on the young man and said, "Lord, send the trials, the trouble, the tribulation, the difficulties," and the young pastor, "Wait, wait, wait. You misunderstood me! I asked you to pray for patience." He said, "Young man, tribulation works patience. There's no shortcut." "Never mind, then I don't want that. Never mind don't pray for it." That's how God is using that to make us more like Jesus. This is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12 when he talked about his "thorn in the flesh, this messenger of Satan to buffet him." When God says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong." He realized that it was keeping him humble, which was a good thing, and keeping him usable, this "thorn in his flesh."

Notice the word "knowing" in verse 3, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations" That word "tribulations," by the way, is a word used for a big, long piece of wood where they would put nails and pieces of glass and pieces of sharp stone and drag it over the threshing floor to winnow the wheat to separate the wheat from the chaff. It's a metaphor, a picture, of how God winnows us to separate the wheat from the chaff in our lives. What a blessing that is. So, we rejoice in tribulations. Christians can rejoice even in sufferings "knowing." In James 1:2-3, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"—trials and testings. Again, he says, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." God often uses suffering in our lives to develop Christian character, so the tribulation " . . . worketh patience."

The word "patience" means fortitude or perseverance or brave endurance. It means you are able to face life's problems. Some people just go to pieces when life is turned upside down. But if you're a child of God, you've been justified, you have peace with God, you have access to God, you joy and rejoice in heaven, no matter what comes into your life you know that God is for you, not against you, that God's making you more like Christ, and you can joy and rejoice even in your threshings, even in your tribulations, even in your difficulties you're able to face life's problems.

Have you ever had a full cup of coffee? It's filled right to the brim, and you're trying not to spill it and somebody bumps you and it spills out? It's the same way in life, when you get bumped or when you get jostled, when someone hits you, whatever comes out is what was in there. Someone said, "If it's in the well, it comes up in the bucket," so that which is in us is the joy and the rejoicing at the blessings of God; and when life bumps us, then we overflow with goodness of God.

Notice also, verse 4, that it produces patience, “And patience, experience.” It’s tested character. “Patience” is steadfast endurance, and “experience” is character or proven character. God wants trials to be used in your life to make you more like Jesus Christ, to develop Christlikeness in you. Obviously, we would love it if there were some shortcuts, but there are no shortcuts. God has to chip away, grind away, thrash us, winnow us, put us in the crucible of affliction, heat up the fire, skim off the dross until He looks in that crucible and see’s a perfect reflection of Himself in our lives. We want that proven character. God uses that time of tribulation to separate the wheat from the chaff in our lives. It’s so very, very important.

I heard the story of a nine-year-old boy, it was actually Ray Stedman tells the story, the great pastor from Palo Alto from many years ago. The little boy was asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The little boy said, “I want to be a returned missionary.” The pastor thought, Well, what is a returned missionary? He said, “I want to be a returned missionary because whenever he would come to church and they would have a missionary come back from the mission field and tell the stories of how God provided, guided, and sustained and watched over them and the miracles in their life.” He wanted to see that happen in his own life, “I want to be a returned missionary like that one. I want to have these experiences of God using even my sorrows and my disappointments for my good and for His glory.” That’s when we’re really growing. That’s when we’re really maturing, and notice it brings proven character which brings us back to verse 4, “. . . hope.”

This first section ends in verse 4 with the word “hope.” It starts with “. . . peace with God,” then to access to the presence of God, then we have joyful hope of heaven. We’re definitely on our way to heaven, we should be rejoicing.

You know, the older you get the closer you get to heaven. It’s funny how the older you get when you get together with your old friends all you ever do is have organ recitals—you talk about what’s not working, talk about your medications, talk about what medications you should take. You know, it’s a blessing because it only means we’re closer to heaven, right? It means we’re closer to heaven. It’s a challenge to age, but it means we’re getting closer to heaven, that God could take you home at any time, any age. So, get your mind on heaven. Get your focus on where you’re going to spend eternity. It’s so very important.

It brings hope. It’s kind of a cycle—peace with God, access to God, standing in grace, joyful hope of heaven, rejoicing in tribulation—and because of that we’re walking with Christ, being made more like Jesus Christ into His image.

R. Kent Hughes, in his commentary on this section talks about Abraham. If you were to ask Abraham what God was doing in his life he would direct you to the sacrifice on Mount Moriah. If you asked Jacob how God worked to make him more holy, he would point to the stone pillow. If you asked Joseph about his life, his growing as a man of God, he will tell you about the dungeon. If you ask Moses, he will remind you of the trials with Pharaoh. If you ask David, he will tell you about the songs he was given in the night. If you spoke with Peter, he would say it was his denial when he went out and wept bitterly. If you asked John, he would point you to the

island of Patmos. If you asked Jesus, He would point you to the blessings that were poured out in His bitter cup when He died upon the cross.

Remember Jesus in Gethsemane, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," and Jesus submitted to the Father's purpose and plan of redeeming mankind. I never take Communion but what I think about Gethsemane. I don't just look at the cross, I think about Gethsemane, and He was sweating great drops of blood. He was looking at the cross, and He was in agony. He realized the sin of the world was going to be placed on His sinless soul, and He prayed and said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass," but there was no other way for God to redeem man back to Himself, so Jesus went faithfully and willingly to the cross.

We'll get it next time we're together. Just a quick peek, and we'll move into Communion. Look at verse 5, Paul says, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." That's the fifth blessing—the love of God is poured into us and is given to us by the Holy Spirit. What a blessing! Let's pray.