

The Blessing Of Our Justification – Part 1

Romans 5:1-4

Pastor John Miller

We're only going to read four verses. I want you to follow me in Romans 5. It starts with, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom..." that is, Jesus Christ, "...also we 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 in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope." Paul has made it very clear at this point in his letter to the Romans, that God saves and justifies the ungodly by faith, not by works, not by rites and not by law, but by faith. We're looking at the subject of justification by faith. I want you to notice at the end of chapter 4, Paul says in verse 25, "Who was delivered for our offenses..." that is, Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and He was raised again for our justification. That's the theme or the topic in this section. It started at the end of chapter three and ran all the way through chapter four where he talked about how God saves sinners and illustrated it by looking at Abraham and David. Now, we move into chapter five where the subject is still justification.

Let me define justification once again. It's super important for you to get this. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. I gave you that definition weeks ago, and we broke it down, but it's still important to grab hold of that idea that it's God who justifies. It's an act not a process, and it's based on the finished work of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins.

Now, when we come to chapter 5, these are the questions that Paul is asking and answering. The first question is: What are the results or benefits of being justified by faith. So, he's established we're justified by faith, and the questioner would ask Paul, "Well, so what?" What is the benefit? What are the blessings? What is the package? What is the believer's benefits of being justified by faith?" He is going to answer that in these first 11 verses. He is also going to answer the question: Can we be sure that we will not be lost or that we cannot lose our justification by faith? Or another way to think of it: Will justification last? Will justification by faith last or do I have to keep myself saved or work to be saved? What do I need to do to endure unto the end to be saved, so the blessings of justification and the fact that they will last. In verses 12-21 of chapter 5, he is going to talk about the basis of our justification being taken out of Adam and then placed in Christ. In verses 1-11, we have the assurance that it will last and the blessings that it brings.

Before I unpack verses 1-4, I want to make some general survey statements about these first 11 verses of Romans 5. These verses are remarkable for several reasons. First, they are hymn-like in their exalted language. Paul states the believer's blessings in a chain of confident assurances, and anyone who has studied Romans 5 knows the glory and the beauty and the splendor of these blessings that are ours in Christ. I've often said for years, there is nothing more important for a Christian than to know what he has in Christ—to know what you have in

Christ, and these blessings come to every Christian equally the moment they are declared righteous or justified before God. The second observation I would make is that understanding them will deepen your joy. They are contagious with optimism. If you are discouraged, if you are downcast, if you are lacking in joy, excitement and enthusiasm about your Christianity, do a study of Romans 5:1-11. You say, "Well, that's what we're doing with you right now, so why don't you get going?" Hang on to your little horsies, we will do that. I'm dead serious. If you want to be blessed out of your socks, or out of your sandals, or out of your Ugg boots or whatever you're wearing, your flip-flops. I have a friend who lives in Hawaii, and every time he comes to California (he just texted me a few weeks ago) he goes, "I'm coming to California. What do you want from Hawaii?" I go, "Well, there are a lot of things I'd like. I want to be in Hawaii is what I want to do." But, I always tell him I want some local flip-flops. "Bring some local flip-flops." He always brings me boxes of them, so I'm pretty supplied with those things. That's awesome! But, it's wonderful to know the blessings and the joys that we have in Jesus. Lastly, I would say, Paul's words, first of all, are in what is called the first-person plural. This is his experience along with all true believers. He switches to the first-person plural. I want you to notice this. Notice these statements in verse 1, "we have." These are key phrases, "we have" not "they have," or "you hope to have," but "we," Paul included, "we have." Then notice in verse 2, "we have," and notice again in verse 2, "we stand," notice again in verse 3 the phrase, "we rejoice." So, "we have," "we stand" and "we rejoice."

I want you to notice verse 1 starts with "therefore." Romans is a book of logic, therefore we have "therefores." All the way through the book of Romans—therefore, therefore, therefore—because he states a premise, and then he says, "Therefore this is the implication." He states his premise, therefore this is the implication. So, he says in verse 1, "Therefore having been justified." Now in the Greek, that's the way that should read. Being isn't just past tense, but you have already been justified. How were we justified (verse 1)? By faith. That is an established fact, "having been justified." Now that statement, "having been justified," as I said is in what is called the aorist passive participle. It means that in a time an action took place in the past, that it has a positive effect on the present and on into the future. What Paul is saying is that at some point in time in the past, without our help, God justified us. He declared us righteous, and He began to treat us as righteous, so the Greek points to the accomplished fact you already have been justified. Now remember, justification is the act of God where He declares, not makes but declares, you righteous. It's an act, not a process. It's a declaration of what you are in Christ, that is, righteous before God.

Just a little footnote. I don't want to get bogged down, and by no means do I want to offend anybody, but I want you to know the truth, and this is an important doctrine. The reason why I emphasize the fact that it is a done deal, having been justified, is because one example (there are many) that is so common is in Roman Catholicism. In Roman Catholic theology, justification is a process. Now, are there a lot of things we can agree on with Roman Catholics? Yes. There are a lot of things we can agree on. In Roman Catholicism they will use words like justification by faith, but they believe that starts a process. That's not what the Bible teaches. In Roman Catholicism it starts a process that begins when you are baptized, so they baptize as early as you can as an infant, and it moves on to your confirmation. It moves on to

your confessions and your taking communion and all the sacraments that are involved in Roman Catholic doctrine. The truth is, a Roman Catholic never has assurance that they have been justified, but right here in this verse, very clearly, Paul says, "You have been justified." It's a done deal. It's not a process where you hope so and if you're not fully justified when you die then you hope that you can go to Purgatory and eventually from there go to heaven. That isn't taught in the Scriptures. Nothing more important for you to understand—the moment that you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you are born again and you are declared righteous. Justification cannot progress and it can't grow. You can never become more justified. The moment you are saved you are justified, and you will never, ever become more justified. Now, you will go into heaven and be glorified, but during your time on earth you can't be more justified by going to church more, praying more, getting baptized four or five times—make sure you're really washed off good. I've had people say, "Hold me down a long time, Pastor John, I've got a lot to bury." "I can do that!" I've often thought we should throw you off the pier down in Oceanside. If you make it back to the beach, you're saved. Sometimes people get saved and then they are living tenuously like, "Man, I hope I get to heaven. I hope I'm gonna make it. I hope I'm really gonna make it through, and I'm gonna persevere." You've been justified. Now, let me tell you this. You may have a Christian over here that's really walking close to the Lord, and you may have a Christian over here that may not be quite as spiritual. They are equal in their standing before God. No one is more justified than anyone else. No one. Let me underline that word again, no one. No one on planet earth—I don't care what kind of robes they wear or hat they wear or jewelry they wear or what organization they are a part of—equally God's children are justified before God. An old black spiritual they used to sing is "All God's Children Got Shoes." I love that song. The slaves would be working out in the field and they'd be singing, "All God's children got shoes!" They were talking about all God's children stand before God equally, and the ground around the foot of the cross is equal. So, this doctrine of justification is marvelous! Now, with it comes amazing blessings, and you'll want to write them down.

There are four of them tonight, and we're going to try to get through them. The first is peace with God. Everyone justified has this equally, peace with God. Look at it there in verse 1. "Therefore having been justified by faith..." and notice justification is by faith, "...we have..." not hope we might, or if we're really spiritual we will, or if we live a really good life we will have it, "...peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, I don't know about you but that first blessing is enough to just stop right there and have the worship team come back out and just start praising the Lord. We're not going to do that, they'll be out in just a minute here. You're going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I mean this is praise God, Hallelujah, isn't God amazing! We have peace with God! Now, don't take this for granted. Let me break it down and explain what this "peace" is all about. It's a military metaphor. Before we were justified, the Bible says we were at war with God. Let me show you, turn to Romans 5:10, we'll get there next week. "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." I want you to notice in verse 10, we were what? Enemies. Thus, we were at war with God. I want you to go to Romans 8:7, we'll get there in several weeks. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That enmity, or enemies, means we are at war with God in our

unconverted state before we were saved. We were actually enemies with God. The war was not on God's part because He already made peace through the blood of the cross. The war was on our part. We were carnal and at enmity with God. We were running from God.

Do you know that after WWII was over in the South Pacific many Japanese soldiers still hid in the jungles for months and up to years, hiding in the jungle thinking the war was still on? Some of them were coming out of the jungle a year later, and they didn't realize the war was over. The peace treaty has been signed; you don't have to be hiding anymore! That's what we proclaim to sinners. We say, "The war is over! God has made peace through the blood of His cross." So, you who were enemies and you who were estranged from God, you can come to Jesus Christ. You can come back to God, and when you do, the first thing you will have is peace with God, but you must surrender and stop fighting and stop running from God. Tonight, if you're in that place, you can have peace with God if the white flag goes up in your heart and you surrender your life to Him.

It's the present possession, but you've got to notice a really important word in this statement. Peace with not peace of—peace with God not the peace of God. What's the difference? Well, both can be given to a child of God, but it starts with peace with God. Peace with God is an objective fact. The peace of God is a subjective experience. Paul mentions this in Philippians 4:7. He says, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding..." and he uses another military metaphor, he says it will guard or garrison or protect your mind. Have you ever had a mind that is just full of turmoil, trouble, strife, worry and fear? God wants to put a military garrison or guard around your mind. That's the peace of God.

This is different here in Romans 5. This is peace with God. Now, what does that mean? It means that every Christian, the moment you're saved, the war is over. Praise God! That's why when I came to Christ I just felt this joy in my heart! The war is over! I have peace with God, and it's talking about our standing and our position. We have a relationship now with God. Peace with God must come first before you can experience the peace of God. One of the reasons people are having strife and turmoil and difficulty in their relationships is because they haven't made peace with God, and not having peace with God you're not going to have peace with people. We must first get our vertical relationship right with God, and then our horizontal relationship will come into sync. A lot of Christians are trying to get their marriage worked on, and they don't focus on the fact that they are right with God, walking with God, and then experience the peace of God. Then, they are able to enjoy that in their marriage relationship or relationships with other people. This is something that every Christian has. Some Christians have the peace of God, and some have it to a greater degree, and some are living in turmoil.

The other Sunday I made the statement that a lot of Christians who are on their way to heaven look like hell here on earth. That's because they don't have the peace of God. They have peace with God, but they don't have the peace of God. I've said it too much lately, but a lot of what I'm teaching overlaps from Sunday morning to Wednesday night. A little faith will give you peace with God; a lot of faith will give you the peace of God if you learn to trust Him in the trials and storms of life.

Here's the second blessing that is automatically yours as a Christian the moment you are declared righteous or justified. That is, we have access to God. So, we have the peace of God, and then we have a position as sons of God. I want you to notice it in verse 2. He says, "By whom..." referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, "...also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Now, the unsaved person not only is at war with God, they have no open access to God because they have no standing in God or before God. However, the justified believer has both peace with God and open access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, lest I forget, notice the access that we have to God is through who? Nowhere in the Bible does it teach any other way to get to God. There is no other way to get to God. There is no other mediator to God. There is only one way to come to God and that's through Jesus Christ. The person trying to approach God in the temple, if he was a Gentile, he was blocked out by an outer wall and couldn't pass any further. The Jews, the women were blocked out, they had an outer court; the male Jews were blocked out, they had an outer court. Only the priest could go into the inner sanctum of the holy place, and only the high priest could go once a year into the holy of holies into the presence of God, and not without sacrifice. When Jesus died on the cross, do you remember one of the miracles that happened at the crucifixion? The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, right? What that signifies, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, is that the way unto God has now been made open and available to us through Jesus Christ.

You know, years ago, my first and only time I went to Washington D.C., we went to look at the white house. All we could do was look at the white house because I couldn't get in. I was with another pastor, and we were standing by the fence looking in. I was just trying to freak him out and goof off and I said, "What do you think would happen if I jumped this fence and ran toward the white house?" He's like, "You'd better not." I said, "I'd be in the news. Everybody would know me. I'd be famous." He said, "And you'd be in jail as well!" Can you imagine turning on the news—"Pastor Miller jumped the fence and ran into the white house. He wanted to talk to the President." There was actually a camera there, and I stood in front of the camera, "Hi! I'm John Miller. I want to see the President." Nothing happened. They didn't come running out, "Oh, Pastor Miller, the President is waiting to see you. He was hoping you'd show up, and he wants to see you." I don't have access to the President, but guess what I have anytime, day or night, 24/7? Me, little ol John Miller, ungodly man that I was, justified before God, I can come walking right into the presence of God! Isn't that awesome!

When I'm lying on my bed in the middle of the night and I wake up, I can just turn over and go, "Abba." Boom! I'm in the presence; I'm in the throne room, anytime, day or night. I don't know about you but that gets me pretty stoked—that means happy excited. That is awesome! A lot of people want to see me, and a lot of times I'm busy and can't see them. You can't get in to see the pastor, what's with that? But, you can come see God. You can see Him anytime. You don't have to make an appointment. You don't have to schedule it weeks away. Anytime, day or night, and you are His child you can just say, "Abba." You can come running up, jump in His lap, "Daddy, Papa," and you have access to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You know why? Because you've been justified. So, since you've been justified, you have peace with God. The war is over. You're standing in Him, and now you have access to God. You can come before

Him. Notice our access, it's intimate, "Abba, Father." It's continuous, the present tense there, we have access anytime, anyplace, and it's by faith into this grace. It's something that we, verse 2, stand in. He breaks it down. It's intimate, it's continuous, it's by faith into grace wherein we stand. The moment you become a Christian, you are standing in the grace of God, and you are standing in the presence of God. You have access to God. Is justification an awesome thing? Yes it is an awesome thing because it brings incredible blessings!

Here's number three. We have the joyful hope of heaven or the prospect of heaven. Notice it in verse 2. He says, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand..." and at the end of verse 2 it says, "...and rejoice..." or exalt or rejoice or boast in. The unique word rejoice there actually means to glory in or to boast in, "...in hope of the glory of God." Stop right there. So, we have peace with God, we have access to God, and we have the joyful hope of the glory of God. Now, when the Bible uses the word "hope," this is the introduction of this concept of hope and it follows all the way through to chapter 8, this is what the Bible means by hope. It means a sure thing. It doesn't mean we cross our fingers and say, "Oh, I hope I'll go to heaven. I'm just hoping," wishful thinking, "I hope, I hope, I hope." It means a settled assurance. This is why not only is Paul teaching us the blessings that are ours in Christ, Paul is teaching us that we are sure of heaven.

Have you ever had the thought hit you as a Christian, "I am actually going to go to heaven!" Isn't that cool? I'm actually going to be in heaven! Some totally get discouraged, and we get tired, weary and all we see is earth. We see our bills and our work and our problems, the messed up car that won't start and sickness, you know. Just stop and go, "It's cool!" Because the present sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed. You know one of the problems with the church today is we don't think about heaven enough. We don't talk about heaven enough. We don't long for heaven enough. We're so earthly minded, we are no heavenly good. We're not too heavenly minded, we aren't enough heavenly minded. I think we need to keep our focus fixed on our eternal reward. Everything that is seen is temporal. If you got a brand new car tonight, I want you to go out and look at it and go, "Temporal." Don't get too excited. If it gets a scratch on it just say, "It's gonna burn, huh." I just wanted to encourage you. It's all gonna pass away. Everything we see is temporal. It's going to all pass away, but that which is unseen is eternal. When he talks about, "we rejoice in this hope," at the end of verse 2, "...of the glory of God," I believe he's talking about the believer's assurance that we will go to heaven. Do you know what happens when you get justified? Do you know what happens when you're standing in the grace of God and have this peace, and you have access to God? You have assurance. I am bound for heaven. Everything that now keeps us from being what God wants us to be will be gone forever, and we will have an eternal home. What a blessed truth that is, and it is sure!

There is a fourth and last blessing, and it is marvelous! This blessing is in verses 3-4. We rejoice in tribulation. At the end of verse 2, the same word, we "...rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We can all say, "I like that," and you're probably thinking, "You should've stopped, Preacher Boy, while you were ahead." What a great note to end on, "We're going to heaven. Hallelujah! We're all going to heaven! Let's rejoice!" You know, we can close on that note, but

the very next verse says, verse 3, "And not only so, but we glory..." we boast, we celebrate, "...in tribulations?!" Let's erase that. Let's skip that. "We..." rejoice or "...glory in tribulations also..." why? Because we know something. Circle the word "know." It's a very important word. We know something. Knowledge is important in the Christian life. We know, "...that tribulation worketh..." what? "Patience..." or endurance, "...And patience..." verse 4, produces experience and experience brings us back to what? Oh, these verses are so marvelous, so very marvelous! Now, rejoicing in something as positive as heaven seems quite natural, but to exalt in tribulation? That would have to be supernatural.

Guess what justified people do? Guess what justified people do? They have joy, and they rejoice when all around their soul gives way because Christ is still our hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. We can lose our health. We can lose our wealth. We can lose our loved ones. We can lose everything we have, but we can't lose God. The world can't give salvation, and the world can't take it away. This is so clear that this is teaching us the permanency of justification. Even when we go through affliction and tribulation, trials and testings, sickness and loss, bereavement and pain and sorrows, we can have a joy in our hearts! We can glory. The idea means to boast or to celebrate, and it's all because we know something. James says, "My brethren, count it all joy...knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience." So, know this, I want you to look at this text. "...knowing that tribulation worketh..." it works what? Patience. The word tribulation is that word tribulum. It's that big heavy board, I mentioned in Peter the other day, with all the rocks and stone and things that they'd drag over the threshing floor to winnow the wheat, the chaff from the husk. It's the same threshing. God's trying to refine us. So, tribulation in our lives that God allows works patience. Patience is fortitude, or perseverance would be a good translation, or some translations have brave endurance. What we would say today is the ability to hang in there. If you don't have a problem, you'd never know God can solve them, right? You wanna know God can solve your problems, then you gotta first have a problem. The Christian that says, "Man, I'm just so filled with joy because I've had all these problems, but God solves them all! God takes care of 'em all! God is with me in 'em all and I can rejoice. I know that God is working." He's developing brave endurance. You are able to handle life's problems. Someone said, "What life does to you depends on what life finds in you." I love that statement. What life does to you is determined by what life finds in you. Why is it that the same trial can destroy one person and make another person better? It's because of what was in them. The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay. It all depends upon how you're going to respond to trials and troubles in your life.

I like to use the illustration of a full cup, maybe it's coffee. I'm not a big coffee drinker, you know, once every six years I drink a cup of coffee. If you have a cup of coffee, and you're walking along, have you ever seen people walking with a cup of coffee that's really full? Then, they trip or they stumble and it splashes all over. By the way, please don't do that around the church, okay? We're constantly cleaning carpets. That's why we ask people not to bring coffee in the church because they spill it on the carpet and we have to clean it up. Anyway, back to my sermon. I just thought that would be a good place to interject that. A primitive illustration, but if you trip holding a cup, what comes out? Coffee, right? The point is, whatever is in the cup

comes out. If it's Kool aid, Kool aid comes out. If it's orange juice, orange juice comes out. If it's Gatorade, Gatorade comes out. Whatever is in the cup, when it's bumped, comes out. It's the same way in the Christian life. When you get bumped, whatever comes out was in the cup. That's why Jesus said, "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." When you get bumped and bad things come out, you go, "Oh, I don't know where that came from?" Especially when you're in the presence of the Pastor and he hears you. It's funny. God hears you. God's around you. Why do you freak out because you said a bad word and John is standing there. "Oo, Pastor!" They just freak out. They say, "I don't know where that came from?" I do. It came from your heart. Someone said, "If it's in the well, it comes up in the bucket." If it's in the cup, and gets jostled, it comes out. Whatever comes out, so if you have God's love and God's grace and God's mercy and God's joy, when you get bumped what comes out? The joy of the Lord, the love of the Lord. So let Him fill you tonight, and when you go through trials, He will produce proven character—the tribulation that works patience.

I heard of a nine-year-old boy who was asked by Ray Stedman, the pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Palo Alto, California for many years (any books you can get by Ray Stedman are worth reading). He said, "I asked this nine-year-old boy what he wanted to be when he grew up?" Do you know what the little boy said? "I want to be a returned missionary—not a missionary, a returned missionary—the kind that comes back and tells the stories about all the miracles God does and all the things that God did through their life," because he sat at church and saw the returning missionaries and said, "I want to be a returned missionary." That's exactly what this text is talking about, proven character. I want to be one that has gone through the fire and got bumped and jostled and has the joy of the Lord and the goodness of God coming out of their lives. Now, proven character, notice in verse 4, produces all the way down to hope. So, we have in verse 3, tribulation works patience or endurance and patience works experience. Now that experience is a returned missionary, proven character. God puts you through the test, and you are proven to be genuine. Peace with God, access to God, standing in the grace of God, joyful in the hope of heaven, and rejoicing in tribulations because it's working to make me more like Jesus.

I heard of a discouraged Christian walking downtown in a city where he lived, and he was just so bummed out at all the trials, adversities and difficulties he was passing through. He said, "Lord, why are you letting this happen in my life? Why all this suffering and why all this sorrow?" He came onto some construction workers that were doing some stone masonry at the front of this big cathedral. He saw a man down on the ground with a stone cutter, and he was cutting a stone in a little diamond shape. He asked him, "Well, what are you cutting that stone for?" The man stopped his saw and sat back and said, "See way up there at the very top of that kind of tower up there? That little spot, that little opening? I'm cutting this stone down here so that it will fit up there." Immediately tears came to his eyes as he felt God was speaking to his own heart, and he realized that God was cutting him down here so that he would fit up there. Do you know that God is actually preparing you to fit up there? You say, "God, why are you cutting me right now. I like that little corner on me right there." God says, "No, that doesn't look like Jesus...ghzut!" Ouch! I'm cutting you to prepare you to fit in the purpose and plan and eternal glory. What an awesome thing to think that God is actually working. Do you know if you

were to ask any saint of the Old Testament...take Abraham, and ask him what trouble and tribulation did for him. Ask Abraham, and he would direct you to the sacrifice on Mount Moriah and the blessings that came out of that; ask Jacob, and he will point to a stone pillow; ask Joseph, and he will tell you about a dungeon; ask Moses, and he will remind you of the trial with Pharaoh; ask David, and he will tell you about the songs that came to him in the night; ask Peter, and he speaks of his denial and his fall; ask John, and he will talk to you about the island of Patmos; ask Jesus, and he will point to a cross. Ask anyone who has proven character, whose life is bearing fruit for the glory of God. So what we're rejoicing in is that as Christians who are justified, we know something. We know that God would never waste suffering on us. He's purposing a crop. He's plowing our life to produce a crop. God doesn't waste energy and effort in our lives.

So what do we have? Peace with God, verse 1; the grace of God that we stand in, verse 2; the hope of the glory of God, verse 2; the work of God in our lives, verses 3-4, where He is producing patience and endurance and experience or proven character or character that has the approval of God; and we'll get it next week, verse 5, because the "...hope maketh not ashamed..." or would never disappoint, "...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." It's hard to break in this first 11 verses because it's just one flow of all the blessings and benefits that are ours as God's people.

I want to say this in closing tonight. Do you have peace with God? Are you absolutely sure tonight that it is well with your soul, that you have peace with God through Jesus Christ? Have you repented of your sins? Have you turned and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you have the peace of God? If not, you don't have access with God. You can't talk to God. You can't run into the presence of God. You might have religion, but you don't have a relationship, and when you're passing through a fire, you don't have the joy of the Lord in your life. You don't know that God is working for you because you aren't His child. And, if you're not a Christian, you'd better pray that nothing goes wrong. You'd better pray that nothing goes wrong, life is good, life is smooth because this is the only heaven you're ever going to know. This is as close as you'll ever get to heaven right now if you're not a Christian. If you're a Christian, this is as close to hell that you'll ever get. The older you get, the more decrepit you get, the more pain you have to live with—you're closer to glory! Amen? It's what the world looks at unbelievers for. You know, I've seen elderly people that can hardly walk and hardly talk and hardly hear, and they're all smiling and go, "Yeah! I'm gonna be in heaven real soon! I ain't got no teeth, but I'm gonna be in glory!" It just means that you are closer to heaven! We get all bummed out and go, "Oh, man! I got pain! I can't move!" I mean, you know you're getting old, which I know I'm getting old, when you get together with your friends and it's an organ recital. All you talk about is your medications, and your aches and your pains. It's like, "God have mercy on us!" I mean, remember when there were other things to talk about? The truth is for the Christian, the future just gets brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter, amen, until the day of glory. That's why we rejoice that God is working in our lives.

I don't know, if you're here tonight I want to give you an opportunity. I don't want anyone to leave here tonight without knowing that you've been justified. I can't read these blessings

without saying, "Do you want them?" Do you want to know the joy of the Lord? Do you want to know your sins are forgiven? Do you want to know that if you die you're going to go to heaven? Do you want to know that you are a child of God, that you have eternal life? Jesus died on the cross for your sins, and He was buried and He rose again. All you have to do tonight is admit I'm a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins, and I want to invite Him to come into my heart and forgive me of my sins and give me eternal life. I want to be justified before God so that I can have peace with God, so that I can have the peace of God, so that God is working in my life even through trials, that I can rejoice in the glory and the hope that is in Christ. I want to have the hope of heaven. I don't want to live through life without having hope. So, if you haven't trusted Jesus Christ tonight, I'm going to ask in just a second that we all bow in prayer, and then I'm going to give you an opportunity to invite Christ to come into your life and to forgive your sins. Don't run from Him anymore. Remember that we're enemies of God, we're at war with God and we're running from God? If God's Spirit is speaking to you, convicting you and drawing you. If you don't have assurance tonight, if you're not absolutely sure that you're right with God, commit your life tonight to Jesus Christ. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.