**Romans**

***How to be a Christian without Being Religious!***

**Lesson 8: A Place of Highest Privilege! (Romans 5:1-11)**

In Romans 1:18-3:21, Paul provides a compelling argument regarding *the need* for justification. Justification is a legal term, meaning a man has been declared righteous in God’s courtroom the moment he believes; therefore, he no longer stands condemned but rather is in “right standing” with God. The declaration is both legal and permanent.

Then in Romans 3:22-4:25, Paul explains *the way* of justification. This imputed *righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe* (3:22). “Imputed” means “granted” or “attributed to another.” We learn from Paul that salvation comes by faith alone through Christ alone. This is God’s way and the only way (John 14:6). After explaining the need for and way of justification, Paul shares *blessings* and *privileges* enjoyed by the justified man. Paul wants every man who has been truly justified to see that he stands in a place of highest privilege. The justified man receives ultimately privileged status as a son of God.

In Romans 5:1-5, Paul reveals several blessings that accrue to the justified man. Chapter 5 begins with the word “therefore,” as a response to verse 25 of the preceding chapter, which says, “He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” The first blessing that follows “justification” is peace with God. Paul contends, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.1). Notice that it does not say the peace *of* God. That is entirely different. The *peace of God* refers to the abiding peace man experiences when he walks with God through life in obedience to His Word. *Peace with God* comes via a peace treaty that is enacted at the moment of belief. At one time, we were all enemies of God (5:10), a condition into which all of us are born. Contrary to claims of famous psychologists, we are not born with a clean slate (*tabula rasa*) but rather as enemies of God under His wrath. John 3:36 states, “whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” When a man receives Christ into his heart by faith and truly believes, God’s wrath is removed from him. A peace treaty is declared between that man and God. Hence, the war is over, and he has peace with God. No longer an enemy, he actually becomes God’s friend. What a blessing and privilege to be counted as a friend of God. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:13-14). Are you God’s friend?

In addition to peace with God, the justified man gains access to God’s grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (vv.1-2). In other words, we are introduced to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God! The justified man goes from a negative position of enmity to a positive one of friendship with God, an eternal relationship that can never be severed. He stands permanently in God’s grace—a place of highest privilege. God becomes the justified man’s heavenly Father, to whom he can go at any time with any problem and know God hears and will respond. Hebrews 4:16 illustrates: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

The justified man has peace with God, permanent access to His grace, and a third blessing—joy, because he is able to “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (v. 2). The justified man has lasting joy as he anticipates the coming glory of God. This is his great hope. Keller writes,

*This is a definite anticipation of sharing God’s future glory. The word ‘hope’ in English is rather weak. To ‘hope’ means to want something without certainty. But the Greek word underlying it, elpis, means conviction. Christian hope is not a hopeful wish—it is a hope-filled certainty*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Do you have this certain hope? Biblical hope is both confident and certain. The writer of Hebrews proclaims, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf” (6:19-20). Our hope is based on what Jesus has already done for us—past tense! He conquered death, entered heaven, and promised to come again one day for us. On that day, he will establish his throne on earth, take back the earth from Satan, and cast him into hell (Revelation 20:10). Then he will create a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1-2) and will either restore it to its former glory or to an even greater, unimaginable glory. At that time, those who have been justified will reign with him over the new heaven and earth forever, and God’s glory will fill the earth. This is the hope of glory, the hope of every justified believer, the hope to which we cling amidst great difficulties in a fallen world. Hebrews 11:1 reminds us, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”Believers in the Old Testament, e.g. Noah, Abraham, and Moses, were commended for their faith. Abraham looked forward to “the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God…All these people …were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:10, 13, 16)*.* The justified man is headed to the heavenly country where he will see the glory of God, be given a glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44), and live in a glorious city. The whole universe will be filled with the glory of God. This is the hope of Glory!

The justified man should possess great joy in regard to the past, present, and future. First, he should have great joy as he reflects on a moment in the past when God made peace with him. Next, he should have great joy as he considers his current standing of peace by God’s grace. And finally, he should have great joy as he looks forward to the coming glory of God. What a place of highest privilege!

In verses 3-5, Paul shows how, given his privileged status, the justified man should view suffering. Suffering is the beginning of a chain reaction that ends with hope. Many Christians see suffering as punishment from God, but that is not a biblical view. Believers should always look at everything through the lens of Scripture. If God allows suffering in the life of a believer, there is a reason. God has a purpose in mind, which Paul reveals in verse 4. For the believer who lives in submission to God’s will, suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character. And, character produces hope. Suffering, when viewed through the lens of Scripture, leads the justified man to rejoice. He doesn’t rejoice because he *is* suffering but rather *in* his suffering. There is a big difference. He is able to rejoice in suffering because of 1) God’s grace, 2) the indwelling Holy Spirit, and 3) hope in the coming glory of God. According to verse 5, “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.” As God’s children, we have God’s Spirit in us. His Spirit has the power to help us overcome and endure hardships and difficulties, which are promised. Jesus warned: “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33b). Once again, when suffering is viewed through the lens of Scripture, a new perspective is gained in light of eternity. Paul writes,

*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

How do you view suffering? Do you have an eternal perspective? Are you able to rejoice in the midst of suffering?

The believer’s hope is not a pipe dream. Paul gives solid reasons why the justified man can and should have confident faith and hope. Our blessed assurance is based on God’s love that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 contains the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Romans. God’s love was poured into our hearts when we first believed, and it continues to be poured out. We who believe have had this experience and know it. It is subjective but nonetheless real. For this reason, Paul says, “The Spirithimself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). On the other hand, the fact that Jesus Christ died for us is an objective truth. Thus, we read, “At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly” (5:6). The passage goes on to explain that it is rare, at best, that anyone would die for a good man, but God did it for us when we were steeped in sin. Jesus’s death on the cross is the most profound demonstration of God’s love for His children. We were powerless, ungodly sinners, yet God demonstrated His great love for the world by sending His own son to die for us.

Finally, Paul makes an astonishing claim—since we have been justified by Jesus’ death, then how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him who is now alive in heaven (v.9). Verse 10 continues: “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Here is Paul’s point: If God saved us through Jesus’ death on the cross when we were His enemies, how much more will He save us now that we are His friends? This should give us great assurance. Both Jesus’ death on the cross and His empty tomb, found three days later, are historical facts. We have objective evidence of God’s great love for us and, later in Romans, Paul declares that *absolutely nothing* can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

Standing in the place of highest privilege, the justified man has been declared righteous, reconciled to God. Once God’s enemy, now he is God’s friend. Thus, he has access to God’s ongoing and eternal grace. And finally, he has great hope—hope in the coming glory of God. Despite life’s difficult circumstances, the justified man has joy. Stott writes,

*The major mark of justified believers is joy, especially joy in God himself. We should be the most positive people in the world. For the new community of Jesus Christ is characterized not by a self-centered triumphalism but by a God-centered worship.*[[2]](#footnote-2)

**DAY 1**

1. Read chapter 4, pages 46-51 in *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.
   1. What do most people want out of life?
   2. Ridenour writes that “our faith brings three wonderfully practical results.” List and explain each.
   3. Who is the key to being a Christian without being religious?

**DAY 2 and 3** Read Romans 5:1-5

1. V. 1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
   1. Based on the above statement, when a man is justified by God, what does he then have with God? Explain.
   2. What was he to God before he was justified (v. 10; Colossians 1:21-22)? Explain.
2. V. 2 says, “Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”
   1. How does a man gain access into God’s grace?
   2. Explain the phrase “this grace in which we now stand.”
   3. Why should Christians always rejoice? Is this your attitude?
3. Explain what the following words mean to you:

Suffering

Perseverance

Character

Hope

1. What does it mean and how is it possible for a believer to rejoice in suffering?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and 12:7-10.
   1. According to Paul, how should we view our troubles?
   2. What are “troubles” achieving for us? What does this mean to you?
   3. Paul writes that we should “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.” Explain how you do this.
   4. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”
3. Explain.
4. Will you share how you have experienced the sufficiency of God’s grace during times of trouble and hardship?
5. Verse 5 says, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”
   1. Have you experienced this? Do you know, without a doubt, that the Holy Spirit lives in you?
   2. Read Ephesians 1:13-14.
6. In your own words, explain how a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit.
7. What does this mean to you?

**DAYS 4 and 5** Read Romans 5:6-11

1. Verse 6 says, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”
   1. What is meant by “we were still powerless” (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:1)?
   2. Paul uses three words (listed below) to describe the man who has not been justified (unbelivers). Explain what they mean to you.
   3. Ungodly (v. 6)
   4. Sinners (v. 8)
   5. Enemies (v. 10)
2. How did God demonstrate His love for the world (John 3:16)?
3. Verse 9 says, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”
   1. Why did Jesus have to shed his blood (Leviticus 8:15; 17:11; Isaiah 53:5-6, 10, 12; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-20)?
   2. What is meant by “shall be saved…from God’s wrath” in v. 9? When is this wrath coming (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:11-15)?
4. In vv. 10-11, we see the words “reconciled” and “reconciliation.”
   1. What does it mean that we are “reconciled” to God?
   2. Is reconciliation a present reality for justified believers? If so, explain.
5. Do you have reason to rejoice after reading chapter 5? If yes, why?

1. Ibid., 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stott, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)