

Justification – Synonym for Joy!

Romans 5:1-11

Introduction

Today, we will do a biblical word study of the word “justification”. We will look at this word in chapter 5 of Romans.

Paul begins Romans chapter 5 where he left off in chapter 4. In fact, you should underline the last word in chapter 4, which happens to be the word,

. . . justification.

Being justified means that we have been declared righteous; we have been, as a result, reckoned as righteous. God then, treats us as righteous, even though we are still in our sinning state. This is a tremendous doctrinal truth upon which we base our eternal security.

Paul gives us, in Romans 4, illustrations of justification in Abraham and David. In Romans 5, he pauses, as it were, to revel in all that God has done for him – and for us – as a believer.

Paul will now give a list of the blessings of justification. As I studied this passage, it drove me again and again, to the word “rejoice,” “rejoice,” “*rejoice*,” because of who we are in Christ; because of what we have in Christ. Let us look at the reasons we have to rejoice.

Rejoice – Our Position Produces Delight!

First, we rejoice because our position in Christ produces delight; our justification produces joy! Look at Romans 5:1.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Now there is a difference between peace with God and the peace of God.

If you ever doubt your salvation, knowing you have accepted Jesus Christ, then you are doubting the peace of God. This is the feeling, the sense, perhaps the emotional element of your salvation. There is a legitimate peace of God.

Peace with God is justification. This means that God has, in effect, signed the peace treaty. We are

now, no longer enemies of God. We have peace with God.

One of my heroes, as a child and still today, is General Douglas MacArthur. Those of you who are a couple of decades older than I, were involved in the debate between MacArthur and Truman. Although I have a thick book on him, you could fill me in on things I have not learned from my reading on this man.

MacArthur’s memorial is in Norfolk, Virginia, where I grew up. My brothers and I would spend hours at that memorial, when we would go with my parents to the servicemen’s center. The memorial is a three story building designed to hold all of the artifacts from MacArthur’s life. The man had so many awards and presents given to him that it takes three stories to hold it. There are huge murals depicting interesting events in his life. There are showcases with treasures given by dignitaries of countries that he had dealings with.

When my brothers and I would finish running up and down the stairs of that memorial, we would go to a room to watch a short movie on MacArthur’s life. It was actual documentation of events that occurred; such as his stand at Bataan when he told the people of the Philippines, “I shall return.” MacArthur made that famous statement and indeed, did return.

One of the most moving parts of the movie were the events of September 2, 1945, on board the U.S.S. *Missouri*, when MacArthur signed the documents of Japan’s surrender. The Japanese dignitaries were arrayed in their finest and yet, they had been defeated and were about to sign. The movie shows MacArthur sitting at the table signing his name. On his face is a little smile, not a smirk, but a smile of victory. Being the commander of the armed forces, he had engineered much of what occurred.

When I think of him sitting down to sign that peace treaty, I think of what Jesus Christ was doing as the Commander of the forces of God. He was also signing a peace treaty, and there was the adversary; the defeated one observing and knowing he would have to, in effect, put his signature there.

In the background of this movie scene, there are dozens of prisoners of war who have been set free. It is almost as if they are displayed as trophies of MacArthur's victory; of the United States' victory. They are very thin, emaciated men, but they are standing straight, their shoulders are square and they are now enjoying the fruits of victory. When they signed that document, there was peace between Japan and the United States and, of course, all the other countries. The United States now had peace with Japan and Japan now had peace with the United States. However, that peace certainly did not make them "kissing cousins"; it did not say, "Okay, Japan, now let's have you over." No, it took years of salving the wounds.

In a sense, we are POWs who have been freed from slavery. We have peace with God; that is, we are no longer at enmity. We have put our signatures, as it were, to the document of surrender. However, that really did not give us the benefits. It did not make us friends in the sense of now being in a wonderful fellowship. There is the potential, but the peace of God is that very thing.

Turn, in fact, in your Bible to Colossians 3. We have peace with God, but we also have the peace of God. That is what Paul is referring to in this passage. It is a daily thing. The peace with God is past tense. Look at Colossians 3:15.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...

In other words, let the peace of Christ umpire in your hearts; that is, call the shots. This is the sense of being Spirit-led and Spirit-filled. We have peace with God. We are no longer at war. But now, we also have the peace of God.

There are two things that strike me about justification; that is, being at peace with God. We now have:

- acceptance before God;
- access to God.

Look at Romans 5:2

through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace . . .

I think Paul is referring back to the custom of his day. In fact, prior to his day, the custom was first revealed in the book of Esther. Esther was afraid to approach the king without an introduction; without an appointment; without an announcement because one just did not walk into the throne room of the king

unannounced. Do you remember that Nehemiah was afraid the king might see in his face, sorrow or worry? If so, Nehemiah could lose his head. There was a great respect for being in the presence of the king. One did not have access; one could not just stroll into the throne room and say, "Hi, King! It's me, your friend."

It is interesting that in this verse, Paul alludes to this practice. He says, in Romans 5:2,

through whom [Christ] . . . we have obtained our introduction

In other words, "We now have been properly introduced. We now have access to the throne room of God."

I read a cute story this past week, of a little boy who was standing outside the gates of Buckingham Palace in London. He wanted to talk to the king, but was sternly repulsed by the guard. He was rubbing the tears from his cheeks with his grimy little fists, when a well dressed young man walked by and noticed him crying. The young man asked, "What's the problem, sonny?"

The little boy told him. So the young man said, "Well, sonny, you just take my hand and don't worry about these guards."

So the little boy took the man by the hand and when they walked by the guard, he noticed that now, the guard snapped to attention and presented arms. The man led that boy right through the doors, as they flung open, and through carpeted hallways, right into the courtroom. They passed all the glittering array of royalty and nobility and walked right up to the very throne of the king. The man said to the little boy, "Now tell the king your story."

What was the key? The little boy had taken the hand of the Prince of Wales; that is, the son of the king.

This is the idea that Paul is alluding to in Romans 5. We no longer fear walking into the very throne room of God. We have boldness. Why? Because we have access through the Son.

Our justification produces great delight because we have access to the throne room of God. We should rejoice in this.

**Rejoice – Our Progress
Produces Maturity!**

Let me give Paul's second point, which is that we are to rejoice because our progress produces maturity. Look at Romans 5:3. It is as if Paul says, "There is more!"

And not only this, but we also exult [rejoice] in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

Continue to Romans 5:4 and note the order.

and perseverance [brings about], proven character; and proven character, hope;

Paul is saying that we are to rejoice in, not only the fact that we have been justified, but that we have been involved in the process called "sanctification". Sanctification brings us into maturity as sons and daughters of God.

Paul says to rejoice in tribulation. Let me turn your attention to Revelation chapter 2. I want to introduce to you a church that was facing tremendous tribulation. Look at Revelation 2:8-9a.

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: "The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation . . .'"

The word "tribulation," in Romans and in Revelation, is "thlipsis," which could be translated, "pressure". In other words, "I know your pressure."

This word is used of a man being crushed by a heavy boulder. He is being pressed down; he is facing tremendous pressure. In effect, believers then, and believers today, faced incredible pressure.

What kind of pressure were these believers facing?

- The first thing these believers were facing was, what we could call, religious pressure.

We know this from history. At the time of Paul and at this time in Smyrna, Caesar worship was mandatory. In fact, every day the people were supposed to burn a pinch of incense and, as they burned it, to declare, "Caesar is lord." So believers were faced with incredible pressure. Were they going to get out of bed in the morning, go over to the candle, take a pinch of incense, and say, muttered under their breath, "Caesar is lord," or were they going to withstand the pressure and perhaps, lose their lives? They had tremendous pressure facing them because of Caesar worship.

- These believers also faced tremendous financial pressure.

I learned this from the next phrase in Revelation 2:9, which says,

I know your tribulation and your poverty...

Now there are a couple of words for "poverty" in the New Testament. One word refers to a man who does not have anything left over. Another word refers to a man who does not have anything at all. In other words, in the Greek, there is a word to refer to someone who has two jobs to pay the mortgage on their house and there is another word to refer to someone who sleeps on a park bench; who does not even have a house. Those in both of these situations face pressure. One because he does not have anything left over and the other because he does not have anything. The second word is used in this verse in reference to this church.

This church in Smyrna did not have anything. Their financial pressure was the fact that they were poverty stricken. So, I would imagine, this church faced tremendous tribulation or pressure because of their poverty, as well.

- Thirdly, these believers also had social pressure.

Note the last part of Revelation 2:9.

I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

This is referring to the Jewish nation, those who had literally, become informants. They were telling Rome of the ones who did not burn the pinch of incense; of the ones who did not worship Caesar as lord. There were these little informers running around and going to the government to tell on them.

The believers in this church in Smyrna were facing tremendous pressure.

What does Christ say, in Revelation 2:10?

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days [for a period of time]. Be faithful [persevere] until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Now turn back and look at Romans 5:3a.

And not only this, but we also exult [rejoice] in our tribulations . . .

Their tribulations might have been financial; might have been social; might have been religious.

We do not know what they were particularly going through, but they had the pressure; the “thlipsis”; they were under a great burden. Paul said, “I want you to rejoice *in* your tribulation,” not “in spite of,” but during.

Why? How can you ever have this perspective?

Paul says, in Romans 5:3b,

. . . knowing that tribulations brings about perseverance;

“Perseverance,” could be translated, “fortitude”.

We then read in Romans 5:4a,

and perseverance [develops], proven character . . .

It is interesting that the word “character,” is the word that refers to that which has been tested; that which has been proven; that which has no dross. I want you to understand that the pressure you are enduring, if you endure it with the perspective that God would honor, will produce in you, a character that is without dross. Tribulation will bring it to the surface and allow a chance to clean it away. So rejoice because of that.

Romans 5:4 continues to say,

. . . and proven character [leads to], hope;

Now in the English language, “hope” does not mean a whole lot. We say things like, “I hope I’ll win the *Reader’s Digest* sweepstake,” which does not mean much.

“Hope,” in this verse, could be translated “conviction”. In other words, “conviction” of the certainty of eternity.

Turn back to Revelation to find out what these believers were certain of. Revelation 2:10b says,

. . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

There are a couple of different crowns. There is the “diadema,” from which we get our word “diadem,” which is the royal crown. There is also the “stephanos,” which is the crown that was worn by several people. It was worn by athletes who were victorious in some athletic feat – they wore a wreath crown that symbolized victory. There was also the bride who wore it on her wedding day – she wore this wreath crown that symbolized great joy. It was also worn by the civil servant who had been given it as an award for serving his city well – this wreath crown or “stephanos” represented fulfillment.

Jesus said, “If you will endure the pressure; if you will remain focused in your perspective on the fact that I am sovereign and in control, you will one day be given joy or the crown which represents victory and joy and fulfillment.

We are to rejoice because our progress produces maturity.

Rejoice – Our Predicament Produces Gratitude!

Paul also says that we are to rejoice because our predicament produces gratitude. Look at Romans 5:5-8.

and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still helpless [without hope], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In my mind, the perfect picture of helplessness in someone would be the dying thief. On the cross, he had begun, with the other one on the other side of Christ, railing at Him. They were saying, “If you’re really the Christ, let us down. Get us all saved.”

However, something happened and the thief said to Christ,

. . . “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” (Luke 23:42)

This was a man who was totally helpless. He could not do a thing for Jesus Christ. He could not come down from the cross and prove that he had really accepted Him. He could not get baptized. He could not join the church in Jerusalem. He could not do a living thing. He was helpless – totally. Yet, Jesus Christ said,

. . . “today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

This is a perfect picture of helplessness.

When you have a dentist appointment, what do you do? I know what I do, so perhaps you do it too. Just prior to the appointment, you start brushing your teeth. You even brush the hard to reach places that you have not touched in months. You gargle and

swish around all kinds of liquid because you do not want the dentist to see all the dirt and decay in your mouth. Of course, the reason you are going to the dentist in the first place is because you are having pains as a result of that dirt and decay. So, you brush like crazy, walk into the dentist's office, sit in the chair, lean back, and break out in a cold sweat! They give you a little cup of red liquid. You swish it around in your mouth and spit it out. Do you know what that red liquid does? It reveals all the plaque; all the decay. You can forget brushing like crazy – it does not matter – the dentist is going to see it anyway.

This is a perfect picture of those in our world who know, because their conscience tells them so, that one day, they have an appointment with God. So, they start brushing like crazy, especially as they near the goal line. Why? Because in some way, they are going to try to cover the decay.

However, according to Paul, we are to rejoice in our predicament. We are totally sinful, but,

. . . at the right time Christ died for the ungodly [us]. (Romans 5:6b)

Rejoice that God justified you and I as sinners coming to Christ. I think this should produce a tremendous sense of gratitude in our lives.

Rejoice – Our Protection Produces Security!

We should also rejoice because our protection produces security. Look at Romans 5:9. Paul says, once again, “That’s not all – there’s more!”

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Notice this verse says that “we shall be saved from the wrath of God”. This is future tense. In the New Testament, when the words “wrath of God” are preceded by the definite article “the,” it is a reference to the tribulation.

This give us tremendous security knowing that, should Jesus Christ be on His way, we will be saved from *the* wrath of God. We will be saved from the tribulation that will be poured upon this world and will test all the world.

Turn to Revelation 3:10 and mark this cross reference in the margin of your Bible. This is probably the strongest verse for those who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, or that Jesus Christ is going to come and rescue believers before the

tribulation begins. This verse is written to the church in Philadelphia.

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing [tribulation], that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.

So, “Rejoice! You will be saved from the wrath of God.”

We know that we are saved eternally – not just now, from the wrath and anger of God, should we, one day, live to see the rapture. This knowledge produces a great sense of security in us.

Be careful, as there are popular movies and books today that are theologically incorrect. They have people hearing the gospel and becoming saved and then, going through the tribulation. In fact, most things that are written today, are from a post-tribulation or mid-tribulation rapture position.

Paul, however, writes, in Romans 5:9,

. . . we shall be saved from the wrath of God . . .

He is referring to the tribulation. He then writes, in Romans 5:10,

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Rejoice – Our Perspective Produces Worship!

Paul also says to rejoice because our perspective produces worship. He again says, “There’s more!” Look at Romans 5:11.

And not only this, but we also exult [rejoice] in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The word “reconciled,” could be defined as, “a change of relationship between two antagonistic parties or people”. There has been a change; there has been a reconciliation.

Now let us go a little deeper theologically. God is not reconciled to us – He never changed. We are reconciled to God – we have changed. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, we have now changed in God’s

eyes. We are now reconciled to Him, being cleansed by the blood of His Son.

Rejoice! Ultimately, what are we to rejoice in? In God. This is nothing more than worship in its purist form. When we, either alone or as a corporate body, lift our voices or our hearts to God in praise, it is worship.

Application – Three Phases in Our Christian Growth

John Philips has written a lot of commentaries that all begin with the word, “exploring”. They are fantastic commentaries. *Exploring Romans* is the one that I have been using.

Philips made a comment on Romans 5 that I will take a step further because it so intrigued me. I want to look again, in application, at a couple of verses that I think, really speak to us where we are today.

Philips spoke of the Christian life or maturity in an alliterated form. I have developed his comments that represent three cycles or phases in our Christian growth and maturity. I guarantee, these thoughts will encourage you one day.

1. The first phase is what Philips calls, the melting stage.

This is in reference, in Romans 5:3, to tribulation. This is when God, by allowing social or financial pressure into our lives, squeezes us as if it were to break us down; to literally, bring us to the end of ourselves; to bring us to the end of our own efforts. It is a squeezing; a breaking; a melting of us. This is, I think, the beginning cycle or phase because, whether we are five years old in Christ or twenty-five years old in Christ, it is so easy for us to become filled with ourselves. We actually have our perspective distorted.

Have you ever talked to someone or been around someone and had the thought occur to you that their estimation of themselves is unrealistic? Perhaps you have a boss like that. You would like to just sit him down, if you would not get fired, and tell him the truth.

I read a story about a woodpecker that illustrates this. He is pecking on the limb of a great oak tree. A storm comes up and lightning flashes and strikes that limb. The woodpecker flies away and as he is flying, he looks back to see that now, the limb is splintered and has fallen to the ground. The woodpecker thinks, “Hey, look what I did!”

We are like this woodpecker. We think, “Hey, look what I did! Look who I am! Look how far I’ve come in Christ. Have you ever seen growth like this? Sit down and let me tell you about myself.”

I think God, in order to continue this cycle so that it does not get clogged up, starts the melting; the tribulation; the pressure to bring us to the sense of saying, “Lord, how did I ever think that I was adequate?”

God reveals to us our inability, so He can reveal to us His ability.

2. The second phase is what Philips calls, the mellowing stage.

I like this because tribulation produces patience. Have you ever met a believer who is patient? Everyone else is hurrying and this person is patient. There is a mellowed sense in this believer’s life.

“Patience,” one man wrote, “is letting your motor idle when you feel like stripping the gears.”

I like that definition. Patience is a development in our spiritual life when we feel like reaching for the panic button; when we feel like saying, “If God is ever going to do something, He must want me to run faster or work harder or do more.”

Yet, this kind of pressure will produce patience. This is the mellowing that we will experience as we learn to rest and rely upon God.

Turn to James 5:7-8. James talks about this process of developing patience in spiritual growth. He puts his finger right where we are today and gives an illustration.

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

What a beautiful picture of the patience required to allow God to produce spiritual fruit in us.

Now most of us are probably handicapped in understanding this because we did not grow up on a farm. However, even though we know little about farming, we are aware of the fact that a farmer does not plant a seed into the soil, put some water on it, and go back the next day hoping to see something.

Have you farmed or planted a garden? How long does it take before you finally see something? It takes

the early rain and the later rain and it takes time before we can finally see some growth; some development; some fruit.

However, do you know what you and I do? Every day, we are asking, “Oh, Lord, what are You working in my life? I don’t see any change since yesterday. You must not be at work. What do You want me to do? What do You want me to say? Where do You want me to go?”

God knows He has planted the seed. It is the water of the word and the rain – which we could probably refer to as the tribulation; the trial; the testing – it is life, as we maintain the proper focus and perspective that ultimately, will bring forth greenery; fruit; growth.

3. The third phase is what Philips calls, the molding stage.

There has been the melting and the mellowing and now, the molding. This is found in the words, in Romans 5:4,

. . . proven character . . .

This verse says that perseverance or patience produces proven character. This is the firming up of attitudes and ideas. This is being unshakable in the midst of tribulation; in the midst of doctrinal error. We know in whom we have believed. We know where we stand. This is conviction; this is character.

Now today, all of us are in one of these phases. We might be in a couple of them. We may even see hints of all three.

Perhaps you are feeling that God has really turned on the heat; He has really put you into the furnace; He is melting you. Rejoice! This will produce maturity. This will produce patience.

Perhaps God is defining patience. Perhaps you are waiting for something to occur and you lack patience. You know that God has put you there to develop that mellowing spirit; that attitude of patience. Rejoice! Because that produces character.

Maybe today, you know that God is firming up and you sense that God is bringing about some fruit. He is firming up some theological truth or bringing together some place in your life and you rejoice. You should rejoice no more in that than you do in the melting, in the mellowing, and in the molding.

Who would have ever thought that justification would be so wonderful? Who would have ever

thought that justification would be so filled with all of these blessings? There are the blessings of:

- delight;
- maturity;
- gratitude;
- security;
- worship.

God intends our position in Christ to produce joy. In fact, I think justification and joy should go hand in hand.