

## Studies in Romans 5

### Justification's spiritual benefits

#### Part One: 5:1-2 "From Justification to Glory"

**Note:** I have inserted a number of Greek words for those who are familiar with New Testament Greek. However, I have also provided the English equivalents for those unfamiliar with the Greek text. This study, therefore, can be useful for all who are committed to a serious study of the Word of God.

For those using the Greek please use the Greek fonts provided on the Home Page.

#### Verse 1

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

*"Therefore"*. The word, *"therefore"* can serve for us as an introduction to this passage for it refers us back to the previous chapter and in particular to verse 25 *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification"*. It is in chapter 4 that the apostle deals with the subject of Justification in detail, but in this verse he associates our justification with the death and resurrection of Christ.

What, then, is the connection between verse 1 of chapter 5 and verse 25 of chapter 4? I suggest that as Paul is about to introduce us to the blessings and benefits of justification that come to us personally, he does not want us to omit the fact that all this is due to the death and resurrection of Christ. Justification, which is our being made right with God, was bought with a price. Although justification is a forensic, legal pronouncement that God makes concerning us, it was not something that He was able to do without the death of Christ His Son. God justifies us with a word, it is a divine statement concerning us, but it cost the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*"since we have been justified through faith..."* Δικαιωθεντες (dikaiouthentes). This is a passive word which means that the subject (us) have been acted upon. There are many words used in the New Testament that are written in the

passive voice. Another term that is used frequently is γεννηθη (gennethe) which is the word used for “born again” (John 3:5).

The point I am making is that much of that which contributes to our salvation comes directly from God without any personal involvement or activity. I am aware that faith (which is the next word in Romans 5:1) and repentance are actions for which we are responsible. However, it is important for us to consider the activity of God on our behalf, to observe the degree of divine grace that was in operation.

Regeneration and Justification are written in the passive voice in the Greek because all this is from God alone. We do not cause our own regeneration, just as we did not cause our own physical birth. Neither did we justify ourselves, God alone can make this pronouncement.

*“through faith”*. The Greek preposition that is used by the apostles is “out of”. The Greek text has ἐκ (ek). The significance of this is that the New Testament never teaches that justification is “because of faith”, or “on the basis of faith”, or “on the grounds of our faith”. The NIV translation has “through faith”, and the RSV has “by”. Both translations show that faith is being used as the instrument, the means by which justification comes to us. It is preferable to think of faith as an instrument used by God to convey justification to us. Faith itself is merely the channel or the tool used by God through which He justifies us. We must never consider faith as the cause, or the ground upon which we are justified. Do not make faith into a work, which merits God’s justification.

*“...we have peace with God...”* The first of the blessings or benefits that arise from justification is this, “peace with God”. It is interesting to note that in contrast to the current emphasis in preaching where subjective benefits of salvation are described as “feeling happy; having your problems solved; prayers answered; experiencing a meaningful life; knowing the guidance of God...” (none of which I question), the apostle presents an objective blessing. Instead of presenting a long list of all the personal benefits that would improve one’s quality of life through justification, the one significant objective advantage is mentioned, “peace with God”.

Why is this so significant? Why does not the apostle launch into a description of all the material and spiritual subjective advantages that justification could bring to us? The reason is that this, “peace with God” strikes at the very heart of our salvation. We would have nothing from God if we did not begin with this.

We must remember that we have not always had this “*peace with God*”. There was a time, due to the Fall, when instead of peace there was war with God. Listen to some of the other statements made by the apostle in this chapter; “*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him*” (Romans 5:9), and also “*For if, when we were God's enemies...* Romans 5:10). In Romans 3:17 Paul shows that to the man outside of Christ there is no peace, “*and the way of peace they do not know.*”

But, now, through justification the most important blessing is given to us, we now have “*peace with God*”. For those who reject any notion of the wrath of God it is impossible to read these words accurately. If through justification we have peace with God, it is to be assumed that previously we did not have this peace with God. The opposite of peace is war, wrath, and judgement.

Another translation of this Greek phrase might read, “*we have peace face to face with God*”. The words, “*with God*” in the Greek προς τον θεον (pros ton theon) denote interaction, face-to-face direct relationship. The same phrase occurs in John 1:1 “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*”, προς τον θεον (pros ton theon).

The significance of this is that now, through justification we can look into the face of God. At one time we could not do this; we could not have personal interaction with God due to our sin and godlessness. But now, being justified we have “*peace face to face with God*”.

The verb “*we have*” (Greek ἐχομεν exomen) has caused some difficulty for the translators as there is an alternative Greek word with equal authority, ἔχομεν (exomen). The latter, being a hortatory subjunctive would be rendered, “*let us have*”. It is argued by the commentators that the standard reading is preferred given that Paul's purpose here is to state facts and not to exhort his readers. Peace with God is a natural outcome of justification, it is automatic, it is not something that we have to seek.

(Incidentally, it is important to note that within chapter 5 there are no exhortations. We are not told to do anything within this chapter: there is no command for us to obey, or lesson to adopt. All this will appear in the following chapters, but not chapter 5. This chapter is stating facts; truth; doctrine. This, I think, is quite significant.)

Therefore, if we used the hortatory subjunctive it becomes an exhortations, “*let us...*”. This is not typical of the

material in this chapter. Within this chapter we do not have Paul urging us to action or behaviour. He is not calling us to change our lives or become more holy. Chapter 5 is purely statements of truth. The following chapter (6) is totally different. Whereas it contains teaching material it is largely designed to call upon Christian people to a holy and pure godly lifestyle. But chapter 5, by contrast, is dedicated to teaching the Gospel and does not contain any exhortations. Thus we prefer the present indicative of “we have” of the Greek ἔχομεν

*“...through out Lord Jesus Christ.”* This is a repeat of what he has said in more detail in chapter 4 vs 25. Justification has as its basis, not our faith, but rather the death and resurrection of Christ. It is essential that we honour Christ and not our faith; that we speak much of the work of Christ rather than our activity of faith and that Christ’s death and resurrection are demonstrated to be the ground and cause of our justification and thus the basis of our peace with God.

### **Verse 2**

“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”.

*“through whom...”* It is Paul's aim to always present Christ as the explanation for our justification and so he continues to pursue this issue.

*“we have gained access...”*. The Greek προσαγωγήν (prosaogēn) signifies “an introduction, admission and access”. For Paul's use of this term in Ephesians see 2:18 *“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit”*, and 3:12 *“In him and through faith in him we may approach (Greek προσαγωγήν prosaogēn) God with freedom and confidence”*. In a sense, being members of God's Kingdom, we have His permission to enter or to be admitted. Access is not denied us.

*“we have gained...”* The one Greek word here is ἔστηκαμεν (estēkamen) present perfect of ἵστημι (histēmi) meaning, “we have”; a past action with continuing present results. Another rendering would be, “we have got, we have obtained”. Our permission to have access is something that we already possess; it is not some future item.

*“by faith”*. Paul, whilst demonstrating that Christ is the ground and reason for our justification and in particular our “access”, has not forgotten the importance of “faith”. If Christ is the primary cause of our access, faith is the means.

*“into this grace...”*. Here is the object of our access. Are we disappointed that Paul only mentions “grace” at this point? We should be rejoicing for “grace” typifies every blessing that God could ever give us, it is His undeserved favour shown to poor pitiful sinners. Notice how Paul presents this matter, *“into this grace”*. The Greek has εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην (eis ten charin tautēn). Theologically we could speak of different kinds of grace such as *saving grace; preserving grace* or *sanctifying grace*. I suggest that this is the sphere into which we have been admitted through justification. Whilst we experienced saving “grace” that led to justification, through this saving grace we have experienced an introduction and access into a new world of living “grace”. If we do have access to this grace, let us use it. Through being justified we have stepped into a new sphere of grace. There is much more grace to be known and enjoyed.

It is important to recognise that admission to *“this grace”* is only through justification and in the death and resurrection of Christ. Membership into the Kingdom of God has to be granted.

"... in which we now stand." Why does Paul add these extra words? I suggest that he is showing us that since we have this "peace face to face with God" we do not shuffle or slouch with fear in His presence as if we are afraid of God on account of our sin. We can now stand upright and face God. Whilst the element of awesomeness still persists given that we are in the presence of a holy God, there is this freedom and confidence in His presence that enables us to "stand". See also Ephesians 3:12 "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence".

"And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God". The word "rejoice" *καυχώμεθα (kauchometha) meaning "boast, rejoice, talk loudly of something, to glory". It could also mean to "congratulate one self" upon an accomplishment. This is not the usual Greek word for "rejoice". The emphasis here is upon our boasting, or feeling proud of our hope of the glory of God. It something that has so gripped us that we "talk loudly" about it. It is the same word used previously in chapter 3:27 "Where, then, is boasting?", and also 2:17 "brag about your relationship to God".*

"hope" in the scripture is not to be thought of as some vague hope, as in the phrase "I hope that it does not rain today". The "hope" of the Christian is something that is definite, expected and anticipated. The hope is something that we know will happen.

"the glory of God". The RSV has "sharing the glory of God". Whilst theologically this is true and may be the proper meaning of this text, these words are not found in the original manuscript. All we have in the Greek are the words "boast upon the hope of the glory of God". It may carry a variety of meanings, such as "share, look forward to, anticipate, expect". The glory of God is coming, it will be revealed on that last day and we will share and take part in the glory. There is the teaching of the Second Advent, which speaks of us being "glorified". For example, Romans 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us". And then 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory".

Now come back to this term that is rendered "rejoice". As noted above it means basically to "boast about", or as the NIV have translated the term in 2:17 it means "to brag about something". Do we do this about the glory to come? Is the glory so important and vital in our lives that we speak much about it, brag about it, boast in it and are proud of what is coming to us?

Within this section, therefore, we have seen that the apostle has taken us from the point of our initial “justification”, through the Christian life lived within this new realm of “grace” to the “glory” that is come to us.