

“Those who proclaim God’s message [prophesy, preach] speak to people and give them help, encouragement, and comfort” (1 Cor 14.3 paraphrase).

This message [of God’s Word preached] has a threefold purpose: it must be instructive, encouraging, and comforting for the believers. It builds people in their faith, points them to Christ, and teaches them to live holy lives. Moreover, the prophetic message heartens and inspires the hearers to be able to face the burdens of their daily lives. And the spoken words comfort, nurture, and sustain God’s people in periods of depression, sorrow, and heartache (Kistemaker).

Preaching is my great privilege and joy. As God blesses the pulpit ministry, it can encourage, comfort, nurture, and sustain you in your darkest days. Our text is one of the best to strengthen and heal your hearts in all your trials.

Pr. Donnelly once recommended the doctrine of justification for nearly all pastoral counseling of troubled souls. It is like heaven’s fruit-laden tree of life with leaves for the healing of the nations (Rev 22.2).

“But how can the doctrine of justification really help me?” That question is abundantly answered in Rom 5.1-5. Believing it will make you rejoice even if suffering much.

**THE BELIEVER’S JUSTIFICATION (5.1a)**

In Rom 4, Paul proved justification (*an act of God’s free grace in which he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone, WSC #33*). Now he condenses all this in a glorious gospel phrase.

- It Is a Fact. “Being justified.”

A single Greek verb (plural, passive, participle, aorist; same grammatical form in 5.9, “being now justified”).

- 1) Paul has in mind ALL real Christians as a group: WE are *justified*, a blessing not just for some.
- 2) God is the active One who justifies us, and we are the passive ones justified by God’s action.
- 3) This state of justification is one which is always a present reality, because it was once-for-all and definitively accomplished. Some translations bring this out by rendering this word, “Having been justified,” but the AV stresses its abiding reality for all believers. All real Christians live constantly in a state of justification before God. He has pardoned ALL our sins and is ALWAYS accepting us as righteous. Even when you sin, he does not count it against you (4.6-8).

Brethren, this is a spiritual fact though non-Christians disbelieve it and you forget it or sometimes doubt it. The glorious gospel announces that we have been and are continually being justified by God (cf. Rom 8.1a).

- It Is by Faith. “By faith.”

Justification “by faith” is linked with “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3.24). It is opposed to justification “by works”

(4.2) and “by the law” (3.21-22, 28). *Faith alone* (i.e., “without works,” 4.6), both before and after conversion, is the instrument of justification.

When people really accept the reality of justification by faith, “there is unavoidably linked with it a reduction to nothing which deeply shakes the righteous by associating them with the ungodly” (Morris on 4.17).

Remember 4.5; we trust in God who justifies the ungodly (i.e., us). Once you really grasp this, you come to realize that your native and remaining ungodliness could never overthrow your justification! I was ungodly when the Lord came to me in his merciful love. I never did nor can I ever bring any godliness to the table as part of the grounds of my justification. It is and always will be a free gift through Christ alone by grace alone and faith alone!

- It Is Foundational. “Therefore.”

Paul is about to celebrate a torrent of overwhelming blessings that come upon all those who are so justified, but he prefaces the whole list by this phrase, “Therefore being justified by faith,” or, “[because we] have been declared righteous, therefore, by faith, PEACE we have with God, . . . also ACCESS we have obtained,” etc. (Lexham G-E INT). *See the five blessings on back.*

It is completely impossible, given God’s holiness and justice, that he should ever lavish these blessings upon the unjustified, those still condemned in his court:

- 1) The enemies of God cannot have peace with him until he pardons their sins and declares them righteous in his Son Jesus Christ.
- 2) God’s just wrath abides on those who continue unjustified before him because they disbelieve his testimony concerning his Son (John 3.36).
- 3) Conditional eternal condemnation hangs over the sinner who is not in Christ by faith.
- 4) Their sufferings in this life are well-deserved pre-punishments that come in advance of Judgment Day when they shall be cast into hellfire.
- 5) They have no grounds to expect anything except unending torment forever when Christ returns! Deut 32.35; Psa 73.18-20; 2 Thess 1.7-10.

But when it pleases God to justify *even the worst sinner* who believes in Christ, the wealth of our heavenly Father becomes his inheritance by grace and he, super-rich members of his blessed household, like the prodigal son.

JUSTIFICATION is the legal foundation which vindicates God’s favor to his elect. He remains “just” while “the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (3.26).

**APPLICATION:** Do you humbly own yourself a sinner by nature? Have you sensibly abandoned all hope of self-justification by your works? Do you know for sure that you are justified by God, and before him, so that if Judgment Day were today, he would declare you perfectly righteous in Christ? You must believe upon Christ to have a well-founded assurance of all this! If you do believe, then this is just the start of your blessedness!

**THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE JUSTIFIED (5.1b-5)**

Now Paul proceeds to display the soul-nourishing fruits of this glorious tree of life which is justification. You taste, savor, and digest the fruit by faith.

The justified believer really is God's friend, always in his favor, destined to his glory, and benefits from present sufferings with a guarantee against future disappointment.

- **Our Friendship with God Is Real (5.1b)**

Only after Abraham believed God and was justified was he called "the friend of God" (Jas 2.23). Even so Paul says "We [justified believers] have peace with God." The first effect of justification is reconciliation. Our relationship has changed from mutual enmity-hostility-antagonism to mutual amity-friendliness-fellowship. This reconciliation is both legal (we have been pardoned of a death sentence and declared righteous in Christ, awarded eternal life) and personal (we are not only on speaking terms, but bound in covenantal love to God and his Son). Only the justified are truly God's friends; the rest are still enemies.

"Through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul stresses that all gospel blessings come to us through Christ, for his glory is the great reason God saves us. "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (5.10). On the cross, Christ suffered the penalty of God's enemies (death) that they might enjoy the eternal life he deserved, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3.18).

- **Our Favor with God Is Constant (5.2a)**

"By whom [our LJC] also." Glory to the Savior!

"We have access by faith into grace." "Access" → "the means or opportunity to approach or enter a place" (COED), and it may connote "introduction" in this context (Morris). By his past act Christ has brought us out from strict justice, demerit, God's anger, condemnation, and into the realm of grace, God's unmerited favor, and . . .

Access to this grace is access to God. Grace is not something apart from God, but God is giving himself to us in his graciousness (Morris).

"This grace wherein we stand." "Stand" is in a form that means a present experience which continues.

The justified man is not only freed *from* past guilt . . . but also is freed *for* the new future and consequently for a new present (J. P. Martin, quoted in Morris).

The justified are in God's constant favor; whatever happens in our lives we do not vacillate between being in a state of God's grace and a state of his disfavor, but we abide in a state of grace continually! Our sins only make us wayward sons in need of discipline, not condemned enemies deserving punishment.

- **Our Future with God Is Glorious (5.2b)**

We have "hope of the glory of God." Biblical hope is a well-grounded confident expectation of the fullness of

blessing when Christ returns. Here it is God's glory: we will see his glory and we will share his glory (8.17-18).

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you may talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and corruption such as you now meet if at all only in a nightmare (C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory").

In hell the reprobate will be completely ruined, both soul and body mere ghastly resemblances of their former selves; a veritable waste heap of humanity in constant and ever-increasing torment. Lewis' phrase "gods and goddesses" is hyperbole. As one justified, you are destined to become unspeakably glorious, even the image of God and the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself (1 John 3.2; cf. Psalms 17.15; Romans 8.29-30).

We "rejoice in [this] hope." The verb means to exult, boast; here, an expression of confidence in future salvation by God's grace that causes celebration.

- **Our Feeling Pain Before God Is Redemptive (5.3-4)**

The justified are not exempt from pain but from wasted pain. That is why we rejoice/exult/boast/glory in it. Ultimately, our "tribulations" ("trouble involving direct suffering," LN 22.2) produce more hope (increased confidence of future grace) by a 3-link chain of events.

Tribulation works (i.e., makes) patience ("capacity to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances; endurance, being able to endure," LN 25.174), as the young oak sapling stressed in the wind grows strong.

Patience [makes] experience ("a process of enduring something amounts to a test that promotes and validates the character of the one undergoing it," BDAG; "proven character," Lexham NT).

Experience [makes] hope. When we see that God has sustained us spiritually through trials, we have greater evidence of our justification and future glory. This explains how saints can glory even in tribulations.

- **Our Felicity Before God Is Guaranteed (5.5)**

Our hope of God's glory will not disappoint us. The verb ("to humiliate, disgrace," LN 25.194) is strongly negated.

The proof of God's love is his present gift of the Spirit.

And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love (NLT).

"The love of God" is his love to us, and not ours to him, as seen in the following verses, illustrating the greatness and freeness of this love (C. Hodge).

**YOUR GOSPEL OPPORTUNITIES**

- Close with Christ by Faith. Be justified on his terms.
- Seize the Assurance That Is Yours in Christ.
- Glory in Your Painful Trials as a Christian.