

Rev. David Strain

The Book of Deliverance #15:
Justified! So What? Part I
Romans 5:1-2

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“So what?” So goes the shrugging dismissal of a million indifferent teenagers to the patient explanations of their parents that *actions have consequences*.

Maybe you’ve found yourself sounding just a touch like one of those frustrated teens as we’ve worked our way with Paul through the great central and foundational truths of the gospel. Week after week we’ve focused on our inability and sin and God’s gracious provision for sinners in Jesus Christ. We’ve dwelt for weeks on justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. We’ve lingered over the astonishing fact that God declares *sinner*s righteous in His sight because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them as they simply believe the gospel.

And maybe you’ve found yourself asking the “*so what?*” question. Well, if that has been your temptation, Romans 5:1-11 expounds for us some of the great implications of this gospel of free justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Jesus Christ alone. Paul provides us here with one great reason for taking our time, in the way that we have, with Paul’s teaching in these opening chapters. Paul is about to show us something of the superstructure of the Christian life that rises like some great skyscraper from the foundation of his gospel. But if we get that gospel wrong, if we elide some important emphases into one another or overlook a crucial distinction, if we take *shortcuts* with the gospel, there will inevitably be disastrous consequences for the way we live our Christian lives.

I like to skip stones. You know, you find those smooth, flat stones and spin them across the surface of the calm waters, and they bounce as they spin across the lake. It’s a lot of fun, but I fear that for some people reading the Bible looks like one of those skimming stones. They bounce around, they dip in and out, they skim the surface. Well, I want to say that it’s not *safe* to skip across the surface of the biblical waters. We can’t skip and bounce our way through God’s Word without missing important and health-giving emphases. We need to plunge into its depths and immerse ourselves in its truth.

It's important that we get the foundation truths right. And in Romans 5-8 Paul unpacks for us, in various ways, what the superstructure of the Christian life should look like when it is carefully built on the foundation of the gospel of free justification by faith alone. He is answering the "so what?" question. He is explaining the implications of this great teaching.

Today I want to begin examining the teaching of chapter 5:1-5. Looking at the passage, you can see immediately, can't you, that Paul is drawing out the implications of his teaching so far? "***Therefore***" he says. "In view of all I've been saying, ***having been justified by faith.***" That has been his preoccupation and burden in this letter so far; the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. "Since ***that*** is what has taken place, since ***that*** is the condition in which we who believe find ourselves, ***here now are the implications.***"

Specifically Paul mentions ***four*** consequences of justification in these opening verses. In verse 1 there is ***peace with God.*** In verses 2 there is ***access in to this grace.*** Then in 3 and 4 there is ***joy in the hope of glory and the sanctifying power of suffering,*** and then finally in verse 5 there is ***confidence arising from the love of God poured out by God's Spirit who dwells within us.*** Today I want to begin our study of this passage by looking at the first few of these and then next time, God willing, we'll come back and finish Paul's exposition of the benefits of justification.

Think with me, ***first of all,*** about the blessing of ***peace with God.*** And the first thing to say here is that the peace in view is not the peace *of* God. It is not the subjective, personal experience of peace that God gives to us. Paul speaks about ***that*** kind of peace in Philippians 4:7 where, as we shun anxiety and present our requests to God in prayer, "***the peace of God, which surpasses understanding***" ***guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.***" That is a wonderful spiritual blessing, but it is ***not*** the blessing Paul is talking about here. He is talking about peace ***with*** God. ***There is no possibility of our knowing the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as we face down the anxiety inducing crises of life, unless and until we first have peace with God.***

As human beings we are ***born at war.*** We exist at enmity against God. We are sinners, as we've seen in Romans 1. We live constantly exchanging the truth of God for a lie and suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. But when a person comes to place his trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and pardon and acceptance with God,

everything changes. Notice that Paul says here that we have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is our peace maker. He brokers the peace between God and rebel sinners by making satisfaction for our sins in His own blood on the cross. And *now*, because of Jesus Christ, we have *peace with God*.

Of course, that means much more than simply the absence of hostilities. That is what *we* tend to mean when we are “at peace” with a nation with whom formerly we had been at war. We mean we are no longer fighting each other. Hostilities have ceased. But in scripture, to be at peace with God means more than a ceasefire. It means, rather, that we stand now rightly related to God. It means that enemies become intimates. It means we who lived in open hostility against the claim of Jesus Christ have now been embraced as beloved because we have been robed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And notice too, the *tense* Paul uses. The tenses are very important in these opening five verses. Most of the others are “perfect tenses.” They tell us that we *have something given to us or done for us as completed actions in the past which continue to have ongoing implications for the present*. But *here*, right at the outset, Paul uses a present tense. We have peace with God right now, in the present. That, dear Christian, is the remarkable condition in which *you now exist*. You stand *permanently* and *irrevocably* at peace with Almighty God. There is therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Our Savior has brokered a permanent peace for you at the cost of His own death, and it is yours now and always in Him.

Now, can you see how, if you had not lingered over justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, you might rob yourself of the comfort of this glorious truth? The peace that God establishes between you and Himself rests wholly upon the atoning blood of Christ and the justification He has provided for believers. If Paul could not say “*having been justified*”, *past* tense, he could not say “*we have peace with God*” in the *present* tense. Now some people teach that justification is a future thing. Rome teaches that final justification takes place at the end of the age on judgment day and based on the sum total of our life’s good works, and some recent errors that have crept into contemporary protestant preaching have suggested the same thing. But without the “*having been justified*,” there is no “*we have peace.*” I wonder if you can say, “*I have been justified?*” If you *can*, Paul assures you that today,

whatever else may be said of you, you stand ineradicably at peace with God. He loves you. Hostility and enmity between your heart and His is a permanent impossibility.

Then the *second* blessing flowing from justification is access. Look at the text, please. Verse 2, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says, “We also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”

And here, again, the *tenses* are crucial. In verse 1 we have peace with God in the *present tense*. It is something that is *a permanent present enjoyment for all who believe*. But in verse 2 we have access into this grace in which we stand in the *perfect tense*. Literally, Paul says, “we *have been given* access into this grace in the past.” The word “access” can mean “an introduction.” We have been introduced into this grace as an event in the past. And notice what it is that we have access into: we have access not just to grace *in general*. Now that’s a truth, isn’t it? Christians *do* have access to the grace of God in general. There *is* grace of every stripe and sort abounding for sinners, whatever their need, through our Lord Jesus Christ. “My God,” Paul told the Philippians, “shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory.” There is an inexhaustible storehouse of rich grace ready to supply the deepest need of every Christian life. That is wonderfully true. But again, that is not what Paul has in mind *here*. Here he has *one particular grace in view*. “We have access into this grace,” he says, “this *particular* grace.” The grace he is talking about is, of course, the grace of justification by faith alone over which he has been laboring for so long.

So Paul is saying that we were given access into this gracious condition of being justified in the sight of the Lord. In an instant, the doors were opened, and we who once were shut out, excluded and condemned because of our sin, are now suddenly welcomed in, included and accepted in the sight of God. That is what has happened to you in the past when you believed the gospel. But then Paul says *more* than that. He says that having been given access to justifying grace in the past, we stand in that grace.

It is, I think, almost impossible to overestimate how pastorally important Paul’s point here really is. We have been given access into the grace of justification in the past. That is done. It is a given. It is an historical fact regarding us if we are believers in Christ. But then he says, having been introduced into that gracious state, we have been made to *stand* in it. We *live* in it. We *inhabit* and *exist within* it. What is he telling us?

Edward Mote's well known hymn sums up Paul's meaning well, I think: "His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand." That's what Paul is saying. We are faced with the overwhelming flood of our own native sin and corruption, but the righteousness of Christ provides a safe place to stand. Everywhere else is sinking sand, but Christ and His righteousness imputed to us provides secure footing.

Sometimes we think of justification as a thing that happened when we were converted with no continuing relevance to our ongoing Christian lives. We have been given access into this grace, perfect tense. It's a matter of *history*, right? Well, that is not Paul's position. *Yes*, our justification is a never to be repeated act of God's free grace, taking place at a particular moment, in an instant as it were, in the second we placed our faith in Jesus Christ. But day by day, and every day, and right now, we have the privilege of *standing in* the grace of justification. When we were introduced into this grace of justification, we were made to stand there, given a vantage point, secure footing, high ground. You know, some of us are virtually paralyzed by guilt and shame. Our pasts haunt us. Our previous sins stalk our present lives, constantly accusing and condemning and smiting our consciences with their petrifying power. Satan comes to you, and he says to you, "What a *fraud* you are! What a *failure!* *Call yourself a Christian?* If these people only knew what filth lurked in your heart! If they had heard those words coming out of your mouth...if they had watched you do those things... You are not worthy to be called a child of God *and you know it!*" That is what he says. How many of your have heard those words echo in your consciences?

What weapon is available to us to fight such a paralyzing attack? How do we fend off the onslaught of satanic accusation and condemnation? We must remember that we have been given this place to stand. We must learn, or re-learn all over again, the gospel discipline of *standing* in this grace into which we have been introduced. We must learn to stand in, live from, exist within the once for all fact of our justification. Each day we must get a hold again of this unchangeable reality, this great gospel given: "God has counted me righteous in His sight. Satan's mud cannot stick as he hurls it at me. I stand today robed in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. I am accepted in the beloved." Whenever our consciences cry out in despair with Paul "who can save me from this body of death?" we must begin to preach Romans 8:1 to our hearts with all the power and force we can muster. We must imitate the best

preacher we ever heard and thunder from the pulpits of our own souls, “***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***” Oh, how we need to learn to stand in this grace! Oh how we need to appropriate daily the once-for-all-time, blood-bought, empty tomb-guaranteed ***fact*** of our justification! How many tears of ***shame*** would be transformed into tears of joy and love and worship if we simply began to practice ***this verse*** and took our daily stance in the glorious gospel reality that ***today***, in my sin and weakness and fear, in my brokenness and failures and need, ***today*** as I rest on Jesus, I am counted righteous in Him and nothing can ever, EVER, change that fact. We have peace with God. We have access into this grace in which we stand.

Then thirdly, we have joy. Look at verses 2-4 with me, please. We “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations.”

When Paul says “we rejoice” here, he ***does*** mean that there is joy in the hearts of the justified, but the word he uses is much stronger than the usual word often translated “rejoice.” It is the same word he uses later in the verse when he says, “and not only that, but we also ***glory*** in tribulations.” Paul says literally, “we ***glory*** in the hope of God’s glory, and not only that but we also we ***glory*** in tribulations.” The word means to boast in, revel in, to savor and delight in something. The word evokes the scene of a parent whose child excels at their chosen sport, baseball let’s say. When their child scores that spectacular home run, they cheer louder than anyone else in the stands. But long after the game is done and all the other parents have forgotten the details, this parent still harps on and on and on to anyone who will listen to the blow by blow account of how magnificent their child was that day. They are so proud of them. They ***glory*** in their triumphs. They ***delight*** in them, ***revel*** in them, savor their triumphs and can’t resist telling others about them.

Well Paul says Christians, justified people, ***glory in the hope of the glory of God.*** Now that is an important expression that that bears some closer examination. Look at what Paul says is the object of the Christian’s glorying, their rejoicing and boasting and delight. It is what? We rejoice in.... “the hope of the glory of God.”

I remember, in the days leading up to my wedding day one of the things I heard from family was the hope that the weather would be bright and pleasant and that the rain would stay away for the big day. Now remember this was Dundee, Scotland. It is grey and wet and cold, most of the time. So the weather is a big deal, especially for an

occasion like this. So everyone was hoping the weather would be fine. What they meant was “we’d really like it all to turn out this way, but we are not too sure. Anything could happen. I hope the weather stays dry, but who knows!” That is how we tend to use hope, by and large. It is an aspiration without certainty. It is a wish or a longing that may or may not be realized.

But the hope Paul has in mind is of a different sort altogether. The Christian hope is not a subjective, uncertain shot in the dark. It is not a “maybe.” Christians are not “hopefuls” like contestants on *American Idol*, who may or may not make it to the final and win the victory. No, the Christian hope is a sure and certain hope. It is a guaranteed and inevitable destiny. Our hope is not a wished for uncertainty. It is a promised, blood-bought, empty tomb-guaranteed inevitability.

But here is the really remarkable thing. What, according to Paul, is the content of the Christian hope? It is the hope of the glory of God. That is the content of our hope. The glory of God. If you long for heaven but not for the glory of God, you will never see heaven. If you long for glorified bodies but not to delight in and savor and relish and boast in the outshining of the glory of God, you can have no certain hope that glory will shroud your body at all. If you want sin to be gone, and sickness to be gone, and death to be gone, but you don’t want God above all else to be glorified, it will not be an entrance into the brightness of the glory to come that you can expect, but a departure to the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. If you want the gifts and not the Giver, you will have neither the gifts nor the Giver! Heaven is the outshining of the glory of God. Our hope is the glory *of God*. ***Our hope does not terminate on self but on Him.***

Sometimes I come across a frustration with preaching that focuses on God and on the gospel. There is a demand for *practicality*. “We want to know what to do.” But let me ask you this, if you think that way: what do you suppose we will be *doing* in heaven? What will be our chief occupation? Where will our gaze be turned in glory? Our constant activity and occupation will be the exaltation and adoration of God and the Lamb! Our eyes will never stray for the majesty of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Do you think you can be *ready* for heaven, more than that, do you think you can be *happy in heaven*, when that is our great preoccupation, if you grow impatient with such a preoccupation here on earth?

So certain and inexorable is the glory Paul sees, that he says the justified soul boasts *already* in that coming reality. Like the parent who keeps boasting long after the dust has settled on their child's home run, Christians boast long before the fullness of the glory dawns. Our *future*, justified believer in Jesus Christ, *is as sure and certain as our past history*.

That is the message here, and it is the point of Romans 8:20, isn't it? "Those whom He predestined these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." He leaps from justification all the way to glorification as though there was no gap between them, as though glorification was as much a past tense as justification, he is so certain that the one follows the other. That is the assurance of God's Word to you today, dear believer in Jesus. The justified shall be glorified. It is sure. Soon we will be placed into the context of the glory of God there to dwell forever. That is our hope.

Some of us are rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God have no right to it at all. We have not been justified. The great issue of your sin has not been settled. The peace maker, the Lord Jesus Christ, has not reconciled you to God. You must repent of your sin and turn from yourself to Christ, otherwise when the glory of God shines, it will be no source of joy to you but terror and shame and ultimate condemnation. Some of us rejoice in the hope of glory who have no right to.

But others of us are not rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God who ought to. You have lost sight of your justification. You are not standing in it. You have forgotten the certain promise of God and the finished work of Christ. Your feet have slipped from the solid rock of Christ and His righteousness. You also need to repent. You need to repent for moving from the gospel rock to the sinking sand of self reliance. You need to repent of thinking you can outgrow justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and robbing your heart of joy. You need to get back to the gospel and cling to Jesus Christ. Learn what it means to stand in the grace of justification and rekindle the glorying, boasting joy of the justified in the hope of the glory of God.

Amen.