

THE EFFECTS OF BEING JUSTIFIED

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, 2017

Romans 5:1-8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 5:1-8: ¹ **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,** ² **through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.** ³ **Not only that, but we also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;** ⁴ **and perseverance produces character; and character, hope.** ⁵ **Hope does not disappoint us either, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us.** ⁶ **For, while we were still helpless, at the set time Christ died for ungodly people.** ⁷ **For very rarely will someone die for a righteous person, although someone might perhaps even dare to die for a good person.** ⁸ **However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your Truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Genesis 12 tells of how Abram was chosen by God to leave his land, relatives, and his father's family, to go to the land God would show him. God was going to make Abram and his descendants into a great nation, namely through that one great Descendant, Jesus Christ. Although Abram's wife Sarai, was barren, yet the Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.¹

¹ Romans 4:3

We are part of that great nation descended from Abram, since God has also chosen us. We are the recipients of the blessing of Abram, because God has chosen us through Holy Baptism to be members of His family. He has called us through faith to trust the promises of the Gospel.

Being members in God's family is good news, because, since we sinned, we deserved to die. Instead of requiring our death, however, God sent His Son to earth, Abram's Descendant, to live the perfect life we could not live, and to die the death we should have died. By His life He earned righteousness for us, and by His death He paid for our sins. In Christ, God now views us as righteous; in Him we have been declared righteous, that is, we have been justified.

This justification is an accomplished fact, for when Jesus cried on the cross, "*It is finished*"² He meant what He said, and to show that He had accepted His Son's sacrificial death for the justification of all sinners, God raised His Son from death on Easter morning. In doing so, God made a statement to all the world. Paul summarises this law/gospel statement when he says: "*He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification,*" (Rom. 4:25).

Paul begins our passage today by saying: "**Therefore.**" With this one word, everything that he had earlier said in Romans 3&4 comes together. The participle is causal: "**since we have been justified.**" The cause is objective and outside of us, for God in heaven on His judgment seat made this declaration in regard to us. This finished work of the Saviour is for all people of all times. It is what we call objective justification, and this invitation of Jesus extends to the entire world.

However, the objective aspect of justification is just one side of the picture. The necessary counterpart to this teaching of objective justification is a proper understanding also of subjective justification, that is, the need for faith in the heart of an individual to receive the blessings that

² John 19:30

objectively are there for him and for all people by virtue of God's doing. Anyone who rejects Christ's righteousness loses the benefit of what is truly there also for him, or to put it another way, they are lost not because Jesus has not paid for their sins, but because they refuse to receive Jesus.

Now, looking at our text, we see that it is to those who are *subjectively* justified by faith, of whom Paul is speaking. There are great and grand things coming to them in their new life in Christ.

The first blessing Paul mentions is peace. **“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

When we need a little bit of peace in our everyday lives, we might go and lie down on the bed for a while, shutting the door behind us. We might go out and find a nice peaceful spot do to some gardening, or find a quiet spot to do some reading, or something else. The problem is, of course, that sooner or later, you have to break the peacefulness in your lives and get back to reality! But the peace Paul speaks of here is not just a “feel-good kind of emotion.” No, this peace has an objective reality. The peace that God gives has an existence entirely separate from any of us because it is a peace that comes from God. He created and provided it, for it is a peace that comes **“through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

In our natural state, Paul says, we were **“helpless..., ungodly..., and sinners.”** Any positive input from us was nil, and our situation was hopeless, but, as Paul said in our Second Reading before, God has reconciled us *“through the death of His Son”* (5:10). Hence there is now peace because of God's having brought about a reconciliation.

In addition to the great gift of peace with God, there is another blessing springing from the sinner's justification, and that is **“access”** to God. We are free to come to God's throne of grace with any and every petition. Paul points out that all of this is possible by our connection with Christ, **“through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”**

Instead of hostility or fear and anxiety, there is now a serene peace in the life of the believer, marked by continual and unhampered access to God. But that's just the beginning. There's more, namely, a glorious hope for the future. Paul continues, "...**and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**" What we have now is just a tiny foretaste of the unspeakably greater joy of sharing in the glories of heaven and of God Himself.

In our lives, we have many crosses to carry, and those crosses come in many different forms. It might be loneliness, chronic illness, suffering, depression, and so on. It might be a constant feeling of weak faith, of wondering why God seems so distant. Yet **rejoic(ing) in the hope of the glory of God** makes those crosses more bearable, and not only do they become more bearable, but in the midst of them, we can still rejoice. Why? Because we know that under the loving care of a good and gracious God, even suffering leads to blessings and positive results in the Christian life. Hence Paul can make the bold claim that we rejoice not only in the **hope of the glory of God, but we also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;** ⁴ **and perseverance produces character; and character, hope.** ⁵ **Hope does not disappoint us either, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us."**

A number of passages in Scripture set up a sequence, or chain, of virtues. We find them in the writings of Paul, James, and Peter.³ The order in which the virtues are listed is not always the same, seemingly because each author has a particular point of emphasis he wishes to bring out, but here in his Letter to the Romans, Paul wants to end with hope, which is really a synonym for faith in the sense of trust and confidence.

According to Paul's sequence, suffering produces "**perseverance**," the quality of bearing up under adversity. Such perseverance produces "**character**," as seen in the reliability and dependability of the veteran who

³ Galatians 5:22-23, James 1:2-4, 2 Peter 1:5-7

has withstood and survived some challenging situations. Hence character leads to “**hope**,” which is nothing other than trust and confidence.

Hope and confidence, if misplaced, can leave us in the lurch. But that is not the case with the hope Paul speaks of, for it is well placed. Christians hope **because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us**.

This hope is reliable because the One in whom it trusts is trustworthy and reliable. The object of trust is God, and **the love of God has been poured out into our hearts**. The form of the verb used here for “has been poured out” makes the point that God has previously done this and the effect of it still continues at the present time. God has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts to bring us to a knowledge of God’s love for us. The Spirit has worked in us a faith that reflects a confidence in God’s continuing love for us.

But how can this hope be so sure of God’s love? Paul urges us: Take a look at what God’s love was willing to do - even under the most adverse circumstances. ⁶ **For, while we were still helpless, at the set time Christ died for ungodly people.** ⁷ **For very rarely will someone die for a righteous person, although someone might perhaps even dare to die for a good person.** ⁸ **However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

In the English language, there are widely varying levels of attachment expressed by the solitary verb *love*. We love God; we love our spouses; we love family and friends; we love animals; we love the outdoors; we love chocolate cake.

The Greek language had a number of verbs to differentiate, to some extent at least, between varying levels of affection and attachment. It is important to realise that the word used here for God’s love is *agape*, the term indicating a one-way, unreciprocated love coming entirely from God. There were no endearing qualities in rebellious humanity that moved or influenced God. It wasn’t like in human friendship where both parties bring

endearing qualities to the relationship so that a mutual affection develops. No, in the situation Paul is describing, all the good things originate on God's side of the relationship.

Note first of all the timing. The apostle says, “...**at the set time Christ died for ungodly people.**” In writing to the Galatians, he said, “*When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman*” (4:4). Christ came according to God's timetable, not in response to any human choosing or planning.

Note, furthermore, that Christ came when we were “**still sinners.**” Even if we had wanted Him to come, which was not the case, we couldn't have done anything positive to bring it about. But the infinitely worse situation was that by nature we didn't want anything to do with God and His promised Saviour, because we were “**still sinners.**” And yet, for such sinful people as us, the Father sent His Son to die. That's one-way love, the kind one can hardly find even the faintest approximation of in the human experience.

Again, note the negative adverbs “very rarely” and “might perhaps” when the apostle writes, “⁷ **For very rarely will someone die for a righteous person, although someone *might perhaps* even dare to die for a good person.**”

The point to be made is that human love generally doesn't extend to the point of a person's dying for his neighbour. What doesn't happen among people, however, God did. ⁸ **However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Dear friends, do you want to know if God loves you? Look at what He has been willing to do for you. When you were not just weak and “powerless” but an “ungodly” sinner actively opposed to Him, Christ died for you - as He did for everyone. That is God's one-way love in action. It is the love that allows Paul to say that God is a God who “*justifies the wicked*” (4:5).

Justification is a present reality, bringing the priceless blessings of peace, joy, and hope even now amid sufferings.

The fact that Christ died for us while we were still sinners, constitutes God's own love to us and is the substance of God's commendation to us. This connection of Christ's sacrificial death with God's love involves all that Christ Himself tells us about His being sent from God, sent especially so that He might come into the hour of His passion.⁴

Voluntarily, of His own will, Jesus laid down His life without compulsion of any kind, to finish His work of saving us. Praise be to God for justifying us freely through His grace! Through the merits of His Son, all our sins have been forgiven, and we have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, our strength and our stay, we praise You for creating all things by Your power, and for sustaining the earth and all who live on it. Help us to hear the witness of Your creation and to see the wonder of Your glory.

Father, we praise You for revealing Yourself to us in Your Word, and for showing us Your holy will. We thank You for the inspired writers of Your wise and true Word, for through them You have shown us Your forgiving love and given us rich promises of hope. We praise You for Your grace in Christ Jesus, by which You have provided us our escape from Your judgment on all disobedience. Pour out Your Spirit on us so that we may grow in knowing You.

We praise You for leading us from death to life through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Je-sus Your Son. We praise You for our freedom from the condemnation of Your Law, and for delivering us from the

⁴ John 12:23, 27-28

ceremonial shadows of the Old Testament Law. By Your love for us, move us to the love and mercy that is the concern of Your moral Law, so that we may not love in mere words but in deed and truth. Give us sympathetic hearts for those in need, that we may share with them the things You have given us. Grant that through our love they may learn to know Your love, and praise You.

We thank You that You have prepared for all people the rest of eternal salvation, and that through the Gospel You invite all to it. Enable us faithfully to spread the good news of this great relief to all whom we meet in our lives, that they also may respond to Your mercy with happy and thankful hearts. Grant that the spiritually poor may taste and see that You are merciful and good.

Almighty Lord, rule over our nation, and guide all to whom You have given authority. Bless our society with pure motives, noble goals, and moral strength. Give all Australians the desire to live before You in loving trust and obedience.

Bless our homes, and make them places of true learning and love, that all who live in them may find peace and joy in harmony with You and with one another.

We pray for Your special protection and help for the sick, the sorrowful, the aged, and the lonely. Meet their needs with Your mercy, and show them the wonderful things You have prepared for all Your children. Father, hear our prayers, and if there is anything else we should have asked for, grant it for the sake of Jesus Christ who has saved us and pleads for us. Amen.

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 19:2-8

² After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Wilderness of Sinai and set up camp in the wilderness. Therefore Israel camped there in

front of the mountain. ³ Then Moses went up the mountain to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain. He said: "This is what you shall inform the family of Jacob, and what you shall tell the people of Israel: ⁴

‘You have seen for yourselves what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have carried you on the wings of eagles and have brought you here to Myself! ⁵ Now, if you strictly obey Me and keep My Covenant, then out of all nations you will be a special treasure to Me, because the whole earth is Mine. ⁶ You will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation.’ These are the Words that you shall speak to the people of Israel!”

⁷ Moses came back, summoned the elders of the people, and laid before them all these things, which the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “We shall do everything that the LORD has said.”

Romans 5:6-15

⁶ For, while we were still helpless, at the set time Christ died for ungodly people. ⁷ For very rarely will someone die for a righteous person, although someone might perhaps even dare to die for a good person. ⁸ However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we

were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more, therefore, now that we have been justified by His blood, we shall be saved through Him from God’s wrath.

¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, now that we have been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

¹² Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death also spread to all people, since all have sinned. ¹³ For until the Law sin was in the world. However, sin is not charged against anyone’s account when there is no Law. ¹⁴ Yet death ruled from Adam to Moses, also over those who had not sinned in the same way as Adam did when he broke the Command (Adam was a type of Him who was to come). ¹⁵ However, the free gift is not like the transgression. For, if the many died as the result of the one

man's transgression, much more, God's grace and the gracious gift of the One Man, Jesus Christ, have overflowed to the many.

Matthew 9:35-10:8-20

³⁵ Then Jesus travelled through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.

³⁶ When He saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them, because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He told His disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest!"

^{10:1} Jesus called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness.

² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax-

collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

⁵ Jesus sent these Twelve out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any city of the Samaritans! ⁶ Go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel! ⁷ As you go, preach: 'The kingdom of heaven is near!' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons! You have received freely: give freely! ⁹ Do not get any gold, silver, or copper money to put into your money-belts! ¹⁰ Do not take a bag for the road, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff! For a worker is worth his food. ¹¹ Whenever you go into any city or village, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay there until you leave! ¹² When you go into the home, greet it! ¹³ If the home is deserving, let your peace come on it! However, if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you! ¹⁴ If anyone does not welcome you or listen to your words, go outside of that house or that city and shake off the dust

from your feet! ¹⁵ Truly, I tell you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city. ¹⁶ You see, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves!

¹⁷ “Nevertheless, be on your guard against men! For they will hand you over to councils and will flog you in their synagogues.

¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings because of Me, to testify to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ However, when they hand you over, do not worry how you are to speak or what you are to say! For it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ For you are not the ones who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father, who is speaking in you.