

*Romans 5:1 - Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It was the book of Romans about which Martin Luther was talking when he once said,

*It is worthy not only that every Christian should know [this letter] word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. We can never read it or ponder over it too much; for the more we deal with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. (Luther's Works, Vol. 35 – page 365)*

I think that it is safe to say that Martin Luther felt this way about the book of Romans not only because it's God's Word, but also because it so clearly sets forth, in simple and plain language, the very heart of the Bible – salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

This letter was written to Christians who needed more instruction in regard to the teaching that we are declared not guilty by faith in Jesus as our Savior: or in other terms - the teaching of justification. And who of us couldn't use more instruction in that teaching as well? We can never hear the story of our salvation too often! We can never know it too well! It can never mean too much to us in our lives. Therefore, we study God's Word recorded in the book of Romans this morning to help us see just how wonderful it is to be justified!

To be justified means to be declared not guilty. It is a court-room term that announces a one-time verdict on someone. But it would be insufficient to think of being justified as simply “getting off” unpunished. It’s more than that! It’s also blessings that we enjoy here and now! And Jesus pictured this very thing when he told the parable of the lost son (who is a picture of us sinners) returning to his father (who is a picture of God) - remember that story.

1. What does it mean to be justified?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Pastor writes: “who of us couldn’t use more instruction in [the teaching of justification] as well? We can never hear the story of our salvation too often! We can never know it too well! It can never mean too much to us in our lives.” What is he seeking to emphasize here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Read the Parable of the Lost Son – Luke 15:11-24 – and answer these questions.
  - a. What great truth about God’s feelings toward us is taught in this parable?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What are we to do when we realize our lost condition due to our sins?

*Prayer: Lord, daily show us our sin and your work of salvation. Guide us safely through this world. Amen.*

*Romans 5:1,2 - Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.*

Thinking of the parable of the lost son, we remember that while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and ran to him. And what did the son receive: a life of servitude? A life of bleak existence? The possibility that someday he might be treated like a son again? No, although that was all he could hope for, he received a return to full sonship. It meant a warm embrace, a father's kiss, a ring, a robe, feasting, music and dancing. So too for us, justified by faith we enjoy blessings here and now.

The first blessing that Paul tells us is ours because we are justified is peace. And he's not just talking about a feel good kind of emotion in the heart of the believer. No, this is the equivalent to the warmth and love of the father's welcome for the returning son in Jesus' parable.

All we need to do is look ahead a few verses in chapter five to see why this peace is so special. In the verses after our lesson, Paul describes us in our natural condition as "*powerless*," "*ungodly*," "*sinners*" and "*God's enemies*." By nature we wanted nothing to do with God. We were at war with him. It was impossible for us to obey his law or fulfill his will. Our situation was hopeless. As a result God's declaration on us was condemnation.

So how then can Paul say we have peace? Here's the answer: **"Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** We didn't change our feelings about God; God changed the relationship between him and us through his Son.

1. What words in Romans 5:1,2 above confirm that the blessings of being justified are for the here and now?
  
2. What blessing is ours because we are justified (be specific)?
  
3. Discuss the final phrase: "We didn't change our feelings about God; God changed the relationship between him and us through his Son." (to help in the discussion, consider these three points: "We didn't change...God changed...through.")

*Prayer: Lord, we praise you for the Spirit's work of revealing your truth to us. Let us seek Christ where he may be found. Amen.*

Our sin and its guilt put us at war with God. Because we cannot obey God's law or fulfill God's will the law can condemn us. We cannot stand before God because of his all-consuming holiness and our utter lack of perfection. But in Jesus all that changed. Jesus provided the answer to our lack of perfection by being perfect for us. Then, the problem of our sin and guilt was settled when God the Father declared Jesus guilty of it and punished him on the cross instead of us. When Jesus died, the penalty for sin was paid. With the perfect blood he shed, the stain of guilt was removed. Then, rising victorious from the grave God declares guilty sinners not guilty. And this declaration becomes our personal possession by the faith worked when God poured out the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The result is peace.

We are no longer threatened by God's wrath. The war is over. Instead of fear and anxiety, there is peace. Through Jesus, things between God and us are as they ought to be. As justified sinners we can stand in the presence of God, guiltless and un-condemned and righteous in a righteousness which God accepts, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus.

This peace now fills the present. It means we have access to God. Right now! At anytime! Are you going through a troubled relationship? You can go to God's throne of grace with every request and every petition and every prayer and every need. And he will listen! He will listen because of our connection with Christ. He will listen because we have been justified by faith. And he will answer!

Are you fearful of the direction of our country, of the world? Be filled with peace, because every promise God makes is yours. He will work all things for the good of those who love him! He will be with us always and never leave us or forsake us! He will give us the strength to handle everything that comes our way! He will help us in temptation and deliver us from evil! He will graciously give us all that we need! Having access to God means we have been brought into a force-field of grace in which we can stand and play our part in history according to the will of God.

1. All three persons of our triune God are mentioned in the first paragraph. How is the work of each person in regard to our salvation mentioned there?
  
2. Discuss the phrase, "As justified sinners we can stand...righteous in a righteousness which God accepts, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus"? (to help in the discussion, consider especially the words "which God accepts.")
  
3. In what way does this peace fill the present?

*Prayer suggestion: Since God invites us to come to him with every request, why not let everyone present offer up a prayer to the Lord. Yes, even your children. It is good to pray in front of others.*

*Romans 5:1-5 - Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.*

That's not all. Being justified by faith also opens up the future. **“We rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.”** That is a reference to heaven. And it's interesting to note that the word translated “rejoice” literally means “to boast.” As sinners, there is nothing to boast about in ourselves, because we fall short of the glory of God. But in Christ, we boast in his righteousness and glory. We boast in the wonderful salvation God has given us in Christ.

You see, peace with God takes care of the past: He will no longer hold our sins against us. “Access to God” takes care of the present: we can come to him at any time for the help we need. “Hope of the glory of God” takes care of the future: one day we will share in his glory. How wonderful it is to be justified!

Especially when you take a moment to look at you! It's the last thing we deserve. Even on our best days our lives look more like the lost son's wild living than obedient children. But God is our Father who stands with arms wide open welcoming us back when we return to him in repentant faith. How wonderful it is to be justified! Especially when you take a moment to look at what we deal with in this life! The suffering, the sorrow, the pain, the spiritual battles - but now we have security; now there is assurance. And this makes all the difference for us – and not just on Sunday's!

1. How does...
  - a. Peace with God take care of the past?
  - b. Access to God take care of the present?
  - c. Hope of the glory of God take care of the future?
2. The Bible calls believers “heirs of heaven.” What does that mean?

*Prayer: Lord, you promise us what is in store for us through your Son. Drive all doubt out of our hearts. Replace it with steady confidence in your glory, both present and future. Amen.*

The fact that we have peace with God, access to his throne and the certainty of a future home in heaven because we have been justified by faith through the working of Father, Son and Holy Spirit gives us the safety and security we need for this life. It's like, for example, the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

For the first part of the construction of the bridge no safety devices were used, and 23 men fell to their deaths. But for the last part of the project a large net which cost \$100,000 was employed. At least 10 men fell into it and were saved. And 25% more work was accomplished because the men were assured of their safety!

The assurance of our security with God and the glorious prospect of heaven make it possible for us to endure the inevitable difficulties that come into our Christian lives. That's why Paul could write, **“we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.”**

Justification is not an escape from the trials of life. Our faith will still be attacked. We still suffer as a direct result of being Christians. We still must fight against Satan's continual barrage of accusations against God's love and power to help those he loves. Bad things will happen. But this shouldn't surprise us, Jesus warned, **“In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33)**. That's why it almost sounds ridiculous to hear Paul say that we rejoice, literally boast, in our suffering.

1. What does the assurance of our security with God – that is, forgiveness and salvation – make it possible for the Christian to endure?

- a. How does the Golden Gate Bridge illustration help make that point?

2. Justification is not an escape from the trials of life. Why is it so important to remember this?

*Prayer: Lord, teach us to despair of our own works and merits before you. Fill our hearts with trust in Christ for us. Amen.*

Here's the thing. Because we have been justified by faith through Jesus; because we have access to God; because we have the security of a home in heaven; for us believers these trials work for us, not against us. God uses them to draw believers closer to himself and work perseverance in us. As times get tough, Christians stand on God's word of promise and their faith in God becomes stronger. Therefore, we rejoice, in fact boast in suffering because they drive us back to God's Word, which gives us courage to live on without weakening, remembering that no amount of suffering can separate us from the Lord.

Then, learning and experiencing the reality that God always maneuvers us through difficulties and causes them to work for our good we become seasoned Christians. We know from the outset that the Lord will find a way. So we dare to trust him even more. We dare to do things for him we would never have considered before. Our character grows.

And Christians with character live in a state of perpetual hope – that is certainty. And that hope, since it is centered in God and his promises; since it has as its foundation God's love in Christ; since it has been sealed by the work of the Holy Spirit - does not disappoint us. Our faith, our trust, our certainty, our hope in God and his promise of forgiveness and glory is not misplaced and will not fail. How wonderful it is to be justified. Amen.

1. Why can we rejoice in our sufferings? How do we normally handle them?
2. Paul isn't the only one who speaks of joy in the midst of suffering. Read James 1:2-5 below, and then answer the questions.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

- a. Discuss/consider the ways trials have given you Christian maturity?
- b. Read James 1:5 again. What advice does James give to someone who might say: "I don't have what it takes to view trials as a blessing"? How does this fit in with our Romans sermon lesson?

\*Turn to the answer section of this page to find an illustration the suffering produces perseverance produces character produces hope thought.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me a great faith that turns first to you in every need. Amen.*

## ANSWER PAGES

### PAGE 1

1. What does it mean to be justified? It means that God has declared us not guilty because Jesus has paid for our sins. This is the central message of the Bible. God planned the justification of humanity from the first sin in the Garden of Eden, and the story of the Bible is how God carried out his plan. Not only is justification central to all of the Bible, it is also central to every sinner. Without what Jesus has done to justify us, we cannot stand in a right relationship with God. All sinners would be condemned without God's declaration of justification. In addition, it is through the message of our justification that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. Only through faith in Jesus' justifying life, death and resurrection do we receive acquittal from sin as our personal possession.
2. Pastor writes: "who of us couldn't use more instruction in [the teaching of justification] as well? We can never hear the story of our salvation too often! We can never know it too well! It can never mean too much to us in our lives." What is he seeking to emphasize here? There is always this temptation to make the truths of our faith a Sunday morning thing only. Or, there is the temptation to think that since we have been confirmed, since we know Jesus died for my sins, that's enough. I don't need to keep hearing it. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Just like we need food and water every day to keep our strength up, so we need the message of our Savior regularly to keep our spiritual life alive. But it isn't only the hearing of the Word that is being emphasized here. It is also making the truth of justification a daily part of your life. Talk about it with your family members. Think about it as you go about your day. Let it mean something to you when you are sick or burdened with some problem. It can never be on our mind too much.
3. Read the Parable of the Lost Son – Luke 15:11-24 – and answer these questions.
  - a. What great truth about God's feelings toward us is taught in this parable? God loves the sinner and wants us to be in his family. It reminds us of Jesus. Like the father of the parable, he raced to our side. He let his body be whipped and then stretched out on the cross, clad in nothing more than a loincloth. He suffered a humiliating death to save us from Satan's taunts that we are sinners bound for hell. He did this all before we even had the chance to repent of our sins.
  - b. What are we to do when we realize our lost condition due to our sins? Turn to God in repentance and receive his amazing forgiveness in Christ

### PAGE 2

1. What words in Romans 5:1,2 above confirm that the blessings of being justified are for the here and now? The words "have obtained," and "in which we stand," emphasize that it is an accomplished fact that is not meant to stay in the past.
2. What blessing is ours because we are justified (be specific)? The reason I say "be specific" is because the peace Paul is talking about is peace WITH God. This is more than a fuzzy feeling in our heart; more than no discord in our relationships on earth; more than no troubles in our hearts; this is talking about the outward situation of being in a right relationship with God.
3. Discuss the final phrase: "We didn't change our feelings about God; God changed the relationship between him and us through his Son." (to help in the discussion, consider these three points: "We didn't change...God changed...through.") Your discussion may take many shapes, but here are a few things to consider about that phrase. It is important to remember that by nature, we do not have the power to make a move toward God. This runs counter to what many in the world want to think, and counter to what many church bodies teach. This false idea can be found in the phrase, "Everybody has a little good in them." There's even a country song on the radio these days where the refrain is "I believe most people are good." By nature, we are not good. Our sinful nature is an enemy to God. That means that we can't change. We can't make a move toward God. We can't change the relationship with God. If it was going to change, God had to do it. This he did, and he did it not because of anything in us, but because of who he is – a gracious, loving God. It is also important to remember that he changed the relationship not because he decided to ignore sin, or because he decided not to be bothered by it, but he changed the



relationship through Jesus. The only way the relationship could be changed was to have the guilt of our sin punished so that his justness could be satisfied.

PAGE 3

1. All three persons of our triune God are mentioned in the first paragraph. How is the work of each person in regard to our salvation mentioned there? The work of the Father is not spoken of as directly as the work of the Son and Holy Spirit. But implied in the paragraph is that the Father sent the Son to carry out the plan of salvation. The work of the Son is seen in his perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection. The work of the Holy Spirit is spoken of when we read that the Holy Spirit was poured into our hearts to bring us to faith so God's declaration of not guilty becomes our personal possession. All three persons of our triune God are active and essential when it comes to our salvation. This is the reason why anyone who denies one person of the Trinity no longer believes in the one true God.
2. Discuss the phrase, "As justified sinners we can stand...righteous in a righteousness which God accepts, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus"? (to help in the discussion, consider especially the words "which God accepts.") The phrase really highlights two things – one from a "negative" perspective and one from a "positive" perspective. The "negative" perspective would be this – there is a false "righteousness" that God does not accept. That false "righteousness" would be the idea that a person can stand before God acceptable on the basis of what they have done. In fact, false "righteousness" would include anything that people think makes them able to enter heaven other than through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The "positive" perspective would be this – the righteousness of Jesus does indeed cover our sins and makes us holy and acceptable in God's sight. This helps us remember and rejoice – God still requires perfection from us to enter heaven. That perfection is indeed ours through the righteousness of Jesus our Savior. God accepts his righteousness as if we lived it ourselves.
3. In what way does this peace fill the present? This specific section speaks about how every day and at any time we can go to God in prayer, confident that he will hear and answer us. This section reminds us that every day, no matter where we are, the promises of God go with us and that he is and will be fulfilling them for our good.

PAGE 4

1. How does...
  - a. Peace with God take care of the past? Take note of the tense of the verb "justified" in Romans 5:1. It is past tense. That's because it is a completed fact. It is finished. This peace is ours because of the completed work of Jesus which dealt with our sins once for all. Now, through Jesus, God no longer holds our sins against us.
  - b. Access to God take care of the present? How awesome it is when a young child is able to come to mom or dad at any time with any problem. It gives the child such confidence and joy. Well, we can go to our heavenly Father, who is able to help in EVERY situation, at any time and with every need.
  - c. Hope of the glory of God take care of the future? We can face every trial and challenge in life because we know that no matter what, we win. One day we will share in the glory of heaven that has been won and prepared for us by Jesus. All three of these truths really help us in the present and make certain our future.
2. The Bible calls believers "heirs of heaven." What does that mean? When the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus, we not only possess the acquittal of God, that is, not only are we justified, but at that moment we also "become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). As in earthly relationships, the heir is the one who will inherit the family estate. So too as children of God through Jesus, we stand to inherit the family estate of God, which is heaven with all its glory and joy. We will live there in the presence of our Father forever. Now we live as heirs entitled to that inheritance because of Jesus.

PAGE 5

1. What does the assurance of our security with God – that is, forgiveness and salvation – make it possible for the Christian to endure? It makes it possible for us to endure the difficulties that come into our lives.
  - a. How does the Golden Gate Bridge illustration help make that point? 25% more work was done when the workers on the bridge had the assurance and safety of the net below them. So too for



the Christian. Knowing the “safety net” that we have in forgiveness and salvation gives us the ability to go out and live our Christian lives and to persevere through troubles. Instead of the troubles grinding us to a halt as we grumble and complain about things, we are able to rejoice and continue to be “productive” Christians because we know that we are safe. It frees us.

2. Justification is not an escape from the trials of life. Why is it so important to remember this? Jesus explained why it is so important to remember this when he told the parable of the sower and the seed. “The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. <sup>22</sup> The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:20-22). If we have the mindset that knowing Jesus by faith is going to mean a life of ease without troubles and without attacks on our faith, we will be caught off guard when we face them. If we are looking for justification simply for an easier life here on earth, we have it all wrong and we will be an easy attack for Satan.

## PAGE 6

1. Why can we rejoice in our sufferings? How do we normally handle them? Because they bring us closer to God and drive us back to his Word. In driving us back to the Word, the Spirit has opportunity to strengthen us in our faith. Strengthened in our faith we persevere and grow in Christian character and hope. We become more heavenly minded as we strive to do earthly good. This is our goal – to grow in faith and godly living as we look forward to our real home in heaven. Unfortunately, we often times handle them by grumbling and complaining. Or we simply look to try and keep a stiff upper lip so no one sees any “weakness” in us. God help us to rejoice in them and turn to him and his word!
2. Paul isn’t the only one who speaks of joy in the midst of suffering. Read James 1:2-5 below, and then answer the questions.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

- a. Discuss/consider the ways trials have given you Christian maturity? Your answers to this will vary. However, you may have found how they have made you “slow down” and focus on what is truly important. They may have also given you the opportunity to look back and see how God has kept his promises. Our faith grows when we have to “sweat,” just as our physical muscles need regular workouts, so does our faith. Troubles drive us to our knees to ask God for help.
- b. Read James 1:5 again. What advice does James give to someone who might say: “I don’t have what it takes to view trials as a blessing”? How does this fit in with our Romans sermon lesson? Pray! Pray for wisdom to view things the way he tells us. To view them as a blessing. Notice the comfort that James gives too – “God...gives generously to all without finding fault.” Think of what that means. God isn’t like the person who criticizes you for getting yourself into some situation or who reminds you how many times he’s had to help you. No. God is interested in helping, not finding fault. He’s already forgiven us in Christ.

Think of how this fits into our Romans lesson. In our lesson Paul wrote that having been justified by faith through Jesus, “we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.” He tells us to pray. God has opened the throne room of grace and wants us to pray. We have access. So pray. Pray for the ability to view things from God’s point of view.

\*Illustration: Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Mountain climbers who learn by experience that they can make the right moves develop a spirit of persevering whenever they encounter a particularly difficult move. They are sure they will find a way to maneuver the pitch. So also Christians who have learned through suffering that God will always maneuver them through difficulties and cause them to work for the good of their faith develop a spirit of perseverance. They know from the outset the Lord will find a way, so they persevere.

Likewise, it is easy to spot seasoned mountain climbers. They have a sense of certainty about them. They are skilled enough to try things they would not have dared earlier. And they serve as an inspiration to the inexperienced. Seasoned Christians are the same. Perseverance has become second-nature. They dare to do things for the Lord they would never have considered earlier in their lives because they have experienced the Lord's power and wisdom.