

## The Benefits of Justification – Part 4

By David Harrell

Romans 5:1-11

It is my great joy to once again minister the Word of God to you and in the providence of God we find ourselves now in Romans chapter five continuing to work our way through verse by verse, word by word, concept by concept so that we might glean all of the truths that we possibly can with respect to our justification. This is now the fourth series on the benefits of justification.

Let me read these first 11 verses to you to once again frame my discourse this morning.

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990 the NASA spacecraft Voyager I which was launched in 1977 was about to leave our solar system and the famous scientist by the name of Carl Sagan requested that they turn the camera around and take a picture of that which they were leaving, this vast expanse of space from 3.8 billion miles away. The picture is utterly astounding. Perhaps you have seen it. If you haven't, you need to look it up. For in that unfathomable sea of space you can see one little speck shining brighter than all of the rest. It is what many call a pale blue dot. And, of course, it is our earth.

For the Christian, our hearts can see that and we are immediately ignited with praise. When I saw it I remembered thinking of Psalm 19 verse one.

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 5:1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 19:1.

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Our hearts see a picture like that and we are filled with hope because of the promises that God has made to the redeemed.

As the psalmist has said in Psalm 33 verse 18, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.”<sup>3</sup>

But for those without Christ all they see is a pale blue dot. They are not filled with praise, nor are they filled with hope. Carl Sagan, unfortunately, was such a man. And here is what he had to say when he looked upon that pale blue dot.

Quote, “Our posturings, our imagined self importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.”

He went on to say, “It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character building experience. There is, perhaps, no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we have ever known,” end quote.

Well, dear friends, I hope you would agree with me that when I see that pale blue dot, it does far more than tell me to deal more kindly with one another. It tells me that we need to praise the creator of the universe who has provided a way for a sinful man to be reconciled unto himself.

As the psalmist said in Psalm chapter eight verse one, “O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!”<sup>4</sup>

How sad. Unfortunately, Carl Sagan now knows the creator of that pale blue dot. The Word of God tells us that only the fool hath said in his heart that there is no God.

Can you imagine what it would be like going through life not knowing God, those of us who know him? Can you imagine being at war with God and he being at war with you and you not even really aware of it? Can you imagine what it would be like to once again realize that the wrath of God abides upon us and that we are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, that we simply refuse to acknowledge God as creator and acknowledge him as our judge, a righteous and holy judge? Can you imagine what it would be like to once again to be so spiritually dead that you cannot see your sin nor the Savior, that the Word of God is foolishness to you, you cannot even being to discern it?

For the unbeliever, this life is all that he has. So he must live it up. Perhaps that describes you today. Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. God calls such a person a fool. As we look at Scripture the fool is described as one who has no fear of

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 33:18.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 8:1.

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God, no knowledge of God, denies God, blasphemes God, mocks sin, hates knowledge and instruction, trusts in his own heart, depends upon his wealth, he is a slave to sin, he is arrogant, self sufficient, self confident and self deceived. And he never learns.

As Proverbs 26 verse 11 says, “Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly.”<sup>5</sup>

In reality the unbeliever goes through life without any hope. How sad, because he has no ground for hope.

In Ephesians chapter two and verse 12 the apostle Paul speaks of unbelievers as “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

You see, the only hope the unbeliever has is in this life only. And as Job tells us in chapter eight verse 13, “So are the paths of all who forget God, And the hope of the godless will perish.”<sup>7</sup>

In chapter 27 and verse eight of Job we read, “For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, When God requires his life?”<sup>8</sup>

The point is he has no hope. But this is not the case for those who by God’s grace have repented of their sins and been justified by God, which, as you know by now, those of you who have been with our study means to be declared righteous by a holy God, to have received the righteousness of Christ and therefore to be treated as Christ. And, as a result of this supernatural declaration, every believer can instantly begin to enjoy the unfathomable benefits of justification.

There are, as I see it, at least nine here in verses one through 11. We continue to make our way through them. We will not be finished with them today. But by way of review remember the first benefit of our justification is that we have peace with God, verse one of chapter five.

It says, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

Remember what Scripture teaches that in eternity past by his uninfluenced choice our sovereign God chose whom he would one day draw unto himself and deliver those people from the corruption and consequences of sin. And the moment that that person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, instantly the wrath of God that once condemned him is forever

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<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 26:11.

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:12.

<sup>7</sup> Job 8:13.

<sup>8</sup> Job 27:8.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 5:1.

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satisfied because of Christ who paid that penalty. The sinner's war with God is suddenly over and God's war with him is likewise over.

So not only do we have peace with God, but, secondly, we have access to God, verse two.

“... through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith.”<sup>10</sup>

Remember, before a man is justified, his sin is so corrupt, it is so vile, he is so unholy, so unrighteousness, that he could never enter into the presence of a holy God. But the moment he is justified the guilt of his sin is permanently removed, past, present and future. He is suddenly supernaturally clothed in the righteousness of Christ. God no longer sees us in our sin, but he sees the righteousness of Christ and on that basis we can one day stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy.

So we have access to God, but, thirdly, we see that because of our justification we have a permanent standing before God. Notice, again in verse two:

“...we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.”<sup>11</sup>

Remember he has forever established or fixed us in a position of grace. That is what this text is speaking of. We are never to be moved. The Bible does not teach that a person who has been justified can lose their salvation and be unjustified. That is foreign to Scripture because it is God who has declared the sinner righteous and there is no court that can ever reverse that decision because there is no higher court of appeal.

And this logically leads to the fourth magnificent benefit of justification that characterizes the life of a true believer and that is jubilant hope of glory, the end of verse two.

We read, “And we exult in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>12</sup>

As we learned the last time we were together, the believer become so consumed with sheer jubilation over the reality of his immovable standing in grace that is the basis of his confident joy, that he is just filled with praise and worship because one day he is going to experience and unrestricted personal fellowship with the triune God and a personal transformation into the glory of Christ. This is our jubilant hope of glory. I trust this describes the preoccupation of your heart. For think that by grace you have been justified. And therefore you possess a salvation that is protected by the power of God, a salvation that is anchored in his faithfulness and his power to accomplish all that he has decreed, all that he has purposed for the praise of his glory.

And that leads us, now, into the fifth glorious benefit of our justification and that is joy in tribulation. Notice verse three.

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 5:2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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“And not only this...”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, not only all of the things that I have just described.

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations.”<sup>14</sup>

“Exult” is the word *καυσαομαι* (kow-khah'-om-ah-ee) that we studied in verse two. Notice in verse two it says, “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>15</sup> Rejoice or exult, it is the same word. And it means to rejoice. It means to revel. It can even mean to boast in something, to glory on account of something.

And isn't it interesting in verse two we rejoice or we glory on account of our glory some day and here he is saying you will do the same thing on the basis of your tribulations. Opposite ends of the spectrum.

You see, our faith literally triumphs in tribulation. Tribulation is a little Greek term *υλιξις* (thlip'-sis) and it means a pressing or a squeezing together. And whenever we experience some tribulation in our life we know what that feels like, the pressure, the weight, the stress.

In fact, the term is used to describe the pressure that was exerted upon grapes or olives to be able to extract the precious juice or oil from them. And so this term “tribulation” refers to just anguish of soul, to affliction. This is what we experience when some great difficulty arises in our life and puts pressure on us, especially the pressure of persecution for our faith.

Now the question is, do you rejoice when you experience these things? As one of the benefits of our justification certainly you can.

Well, I don't really experience much persecution for my faith here in the United States.

Then, my friend, if that is true of you, may I humbly say that you are not experiencing the persecution because you are not engaged in the battle.

The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Timothy three and verse 12, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”<sup>16</sup>

Now, granted, persecution against Christians here in the United States is minimal, but it is rising. Only a fool would not agree that it is politically incorrect to do anything, to say anything bad about, for example, Islam, but it is politically correct to mock Bible believing Christians. We see this all the time. In fact, according to one study, quote,

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 5:3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 5:2.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12.

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“Sixty-four percent of the 70 million Christians who have been martyred in the history of our faith, died in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.” It went on to say, “That is 45 million modern day martyrs, the same number of civilian casualties in World War II and nearly double the number of deaths from the AIDS pandemic since its discovery in 1981,” end quote.

Some time get on the internet and look up the Voice of the Martyrs, persecution dot com. And you will see story after story after story of believers that are being persecuted for their faith around the world. In fact, as you know, some of the elders in our church plant in Sudan are right this very minute hiding with their families in caves to try to preserve their lives from the Muslims trying to attack them from the north. We fear that some of them may have already been killed.

One study estimates that world wide 171,000 believers are martyred every year. You divide that by the days of the year and you get about close to 500 people a day. So make no mistake, all who desire to live glorified in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

So this is a very important topic. It is so important that it occupies a great amount of text in the New Testament. Jesus dealt with it head on in the close of his earthly ministry in John 16. You will recall there he promised the helper to come, the Holy Spirit that would dwell within every believer and he spoke of the power of prayer and how the Father would answer prayer on the basis of the merit of Christ and his righteousness. And then he warned in verse 33:

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”<sup>17</sup>

So, indeed, we can endure tribulation with joy because of our union with Christ who has triumphed over sin and made certain our future glory and by the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within.

Likewise in Acts chapter 14 you will recall after Paul had been stoned and drug out of the city he encouraged the disciples that had gathered around him to continue in the faith. And in verse 22 he says:

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>18</sup>

So, indeed, there is a high price for following Christ, yet the value is utterly incomprehensible. To be sure, trials and tribulations come upon us in many ways. Many of you right now are experiencing enormous pressure, anguish of soul. It could be sickness and sorrow. There is misery. There is persecution, broken relationships, broken marriages, shattered dreams. We all live in a fallen, sin cursed world, a satanic system that is hell bent on thwarting the purposes of God and destroying the children of God.

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<sup>17</sup> John 16:33.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 14:22.

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But, for the justified who are at peace with God, who have access into his presence, who are permanently standing in his grace, who have jubilant hope of glory, we can actually exult or rejoice in our tribulations, regardless of what form they take.

Now, we must ask: How can we possibly do this? What does this mean? How does this work practically?

Well, will you notice carefully the language the Holy Spirit of God uses here through his inspired writer in verse two at the end? He says, again, “We also exult in our tribulations.”<sup>19</sup>

Now he is not saying we rejoice merely in spite of our tribulations, as if we just kind of resign ourselves to them and choose to be happy. He is not even saying that we rejoice in the midst of our tribulations, though that is true.

But, dear friends, it is far more than that. You must understand what he is saying here is we exult because of or on account of our tribulations.

Well, my, that puts it into a whole new level of importance. Well, why is this? Why would we exult in such things, on account of such things? It is because God has ordained our tribulations for our good and his glory. Not only that, it is even for the good of others and many times we don't even know when we are suffering how God is using the way we handle our trials to minister to other people.

Could I give you the example of Job? Think of the millions of people that have been impacted by his perseverance.

In Matthew five beginning at verse 10 the Lord said:

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.<sup>20</sup>

And Paul says something fascinating in Philippians one and verse 29. He says, “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”<sup>21</sup>

And it is interesting. The word “granted” is a Greek verb that comes from the noun for grace. So it is as if he is saying here, “This is a gracious gift that God has given you to suffer for his sake.”

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 5:3.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 5:10-12.

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 1:29.

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Now the question naturally would be: How can this possibly be? How is this for our good? What is this gracious gift that God grants to us in the context of our tribulations?

Well, the answer is found in two more very important words in verse three. Notice he sways, "...we also exult in our tribulations, knowing..."<sup>22</sup>

The term in the original means behold or to perceive, to discern, to discover something. In other words, this joy in tribulation, dear friends, is a result of your knowledge. You have to know something. There has to be intentional discernment.

Well, what must we know? Well, notice what else the Spirit of God reveals in verse three.

"...we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance."<sup>23</sup>

Well, that is an interesting concept. This verb "brings about" *kat'ergazomai* (kat-er-gad'-zom-ahee) in the original language, it means to perform something, to accomplish, to achieve, to work out or bring about something.

You see, God is performing something in your life in the context of a tribulation or trial. He is working something in you and primarily it is perseverance, *upomonh* (hoop-om-on-ay') in the original language. It means patience. It means endurance.

You see, this speaks of the character of a genuine believer. This is how a true child of God responds to tribulation.

So, in summary, we must know that God is up to something in our life, that he is bringing something about, namely perseverance. He is teaching us patience and endurance.

Now think about this. Jehovah God, the creator, the sustainer, the consummator of all things loves the justified sinner so much that he would intimately involve himself in our life that he might work something in us.

Beloved, this is this glorious benefit of justification of which the apostle speaks. He uses tribulations. He uses suffering to accomplish these purposes.

How many of you can look back on your life and see some great trial in your life and look on the other side of it and say, "Oh, my, what a work God did because of all of that"?

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 5:3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



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God has brought about our tribulations, you see, to produce this perseverance, this steadfastness, to produce in us a shape... I am sorry, a faith that cannot be shaken, a steadfast faith. And he strengthens us. He produces in us a loyalty for Christ. And we see our faith and our piety actually increase rather than decrease when confronted with some great affliction.

So Paul is saying the child of God that knows these things will be the one that rejoices in his tribulation.

Now. I must digress for a moment because I know that some will ask: Wait a minute. God does not bring evil into our lives or he does not ordain evil. He is not responsible for something wicked that would come into our life. So how can this be? I mean, that is the work of the devil. God doesn't do that. That is the devil's work.

Well, indeed, the devil does do this, but not apart from sovereign permission.

I ask you. Did not God ordain the greatest evil in the world, the crucifixion of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ?

In Acts two verse 23 Peter speaks to the men of Israel about this man, referring to Jesus who was “delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death,”<sup>24</sup> and so forth.

So please understand though God hates sin, as we study Scripture we see that he ordained it to enter his perfect universe through the voluntary choices of moral creatures in order to dramatically demonstrate his glory through his holiness, through his wrath, through his mercy, through his grace, through his love and power.

You see, this would include the granting of the gracious gift of suffering even from the hands of wicked men as Paul tells us in again in Philippians one and verse 29. This would include Joseph's brothers that sold him into slavery. Joseph said, “You meant it for evil. God meant it for good.”

This would include God giving to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 a messenger from Satan to buffet him.

Beloved, nothing happens outside the purview of God's sovereign will.

Ephesians one and verse 11 says that he “works all things after the counsel of His will.”<sup>25</sup>

Is that so hard to understand? I think not.

In Romans 11 verse 36 in that great doxology, the apostle Paul says, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Acts 2:23.

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 1:11.

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Now, while our holy God is never the cause of sin, he does bring it about indirectly through the willing voluntary actions of moral creatures. This is evident in God's testimony of himself when he said in Isaiah 45 and verse seven, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."<sup>27</sup>

Jeremiah even lamented in Lamentations 3:38, "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?"<sup>28</sup>

We read the same through the prophet Amos in Amos chapter three and verse six.

"If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?"<sup>29</sup>

While God never directly acts wickedly, nor does he take pleasure in evil, he does indirectly bring it about through individuals through the voluntary exercise of their own will and, therefore, they are held accountable for their actions. These are amazing mysteries that we see that God has, indeed, ordained evil to dramatically display his glory again through his holiness, his wrath, his mercy, grace, his love, his power. And this includes the evil of suffering, persecution.

You see, dear friends, this is what we must know. And when we know this, when we experience some great trial in our life we never ask why because God does not owe us an explanation nor could we understand it if he were to give it to us. But instead we ask what? We say, "God, what would you have me to do to give you glory in the midst of this because I know that you have ordained my affliction, that somehow you are working something in me and working in other people that I may not even know about and all of this is going to work together to ultimately give you glory? So, Lord, help me to understand how I am to respond."

Isn't it amazing to see how quickly some great trial drives us to the Savior? We tend to get cocky, don't we? When things are going good we think we are pretty strong, pretty godly. We tend to get a little careless, a little self sufficient. Pride comes before a fall, though, doesn't it? How quickly we can lose sight of how utterly dependent we are on our great God.

Suddenly in a moment the phone rings and our life is changed. Instantly our grip on the world is forever loosened. Suddenly we run to the Lord seeking a fresh sense of his presence and we experience that exhilarating joy that could be likened to a warm blanket on a cold night. Suddenly we find ourselves in our closet of prayer and it becomes our favorite place on earth. His Word becomes more precious than food or drink. And a song is ever present in our heart and we cannot help but sing because of what we are experiencing.

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<sup>26</sup> Romans 11:36.

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah 45:7.

<sup>28</sup> Lamentations 3:38.

<sup>29</sup> Amos 3:6.

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Yes, indeed, as verse three says, “We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.”<sup>30</sup>

But there is yet a sixth benefit of justification that naturally flows from the previous five and that is we are given proof of salvation.

Will you notice this in verse four?

Again, “Tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character.”<sup>31</sup>

This translates the Greek verb *dokimē* (dok-ee-may’). It means proof. It can even be translated “experience.” And in this context it is referring to the tried and proven character of the justified saint. You see, this is what God is working towards in you right now. When you are encountering a trial and you respond with steadfast patience and you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God because you know he is at work in you, then your reaction to that trial proves to others and it proves to you that, indeed, your faith is real, that, indeed, you have been justified by his grace.

Such a reaction proves that the righteousness of God has not only been imputed to you, but it has been imparted to you. So, like Christ, you are committed to doing the Father’s will, come what may.

James assures us in James one verse 12, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life,”<sup>32</sup> literally, the crown which is life, referring to eternal life, “which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”<sup>33</sup>

Oh, child of God, don’t miss this. We rejoice in tribulation. We know that God tempers the steel of our faith through the fires of adversity on the anvil of affliction. He not only wants us to feel the empowerment of the Holy Spirit so that we can remain steadfast in that faith, but he also wants us to therefore manifest genuine faith so that we can see it in ourselves and others can see it as well.

So our perseverance is the experienced proof that we have been justified.

Now, perhaps a bit of comparison would be helpful. Remember, as I said earlier, the unbeliever lives for this life only. If you are here without Christ this is all you have got. If you don’t want Christ, you better live it up, because once you die you are going to face your judge and unless you repent you will experience his wrath through eternity.

But the unbeliever has no hope of eternal life unless he is some hypocrite or unless he has come up with some idea that he can be justified on his own merits or whatever. And the

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 5:3.

<sup>31</sup> Romans 5:3-4.

<sup>32</sup> James 1:12.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

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immature believer has no understanding, who has no understanding of the sovereignty of God and likewise fall into the same trap as the unbeliever when trials come along.

But there is really four ways that unbelievers tend to respond or immature responders tend to respond to trials. One way is through resignation. They just resign themselves to it. It is the good old English, have a stiff upper lip. Or, as we would say around some of my cowboy friends, you just cowboy up. You just tough it out. Grin and bear it.

There is no real joy there. There is no hope that God is up to something.

Others respond with indignation. They are angry. They shake their fist in God's face. They do like Job's wife told him to do. Why don't you just curse God and die? Those trials make that person's heart hard. They become sullen and sour.

So there is resignation and indignation. Others respond with desperation. They frantically try to find happiness somewhere to alleviate the pain, drugs, alcohol, sex, whatever it might be, entertainment, go to the shopping malls. Why do you think we have so many shopping malls? People have to do something to alleviate the pain.

And others respond with renunciation, especially the Christian hypocrite that followed Christ for all of the wrong reasons, the one who has never truly been born again. Jesus described this person in Matthew 13 verse 20. He speaks there of the gospel seed that was sown on the rocky places. This symbolized "the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away."<sup>34</sup>

But, dear friends, because of our justification we do not respond to a trial with resignation or indignation or desperation or renunciation. We respond with exaltation, a radically different response because we know that God is up to something.

If you call yourself a Christian, but you never suffer for the sake of Christ, I would again say to you that you are not engaged in the battle.

"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."<sup>35</sup>

If I can say even more forthrightly with humble love, you are a coward. You fear man more than you fear God.

So you leave the battle to others. To you Jesus warned in Luke 6:26, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Matthew 13:20-21.

<sup>35</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12.

<sup>36</sup> Luke 6:46.

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But if you call yourself a Christian and respond to tribulation and affliction with resignation, indignation, desperation, whatever, then you are ignorant of God's love for you, the sovereign purposes that he has for your life. And certainly if you respond with renunciation you were never a Christian to begin with. The true believer responds with exaltation. He knows that God is working something in his life.

Let me give you three reasons as we wrap this up this morning why God has granted us the gracious gift of suffering for Christ's sake. First of all, to prove himself powerful in our behalf, to prove himself powerful on our behalf.

You see, he wants to do something. He wants to strengthen us to help us persevere.

In 1 Peter five and verse 10 we read, "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself [I love this] perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."<sup>37</sup>

Now that is what I call proving himself powerful on my behalf.

And in 2 Corinthians 12 you remember in verse seven as I mentioned earlier, Paul describes "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!"<sup>38</sup>

In other words, there was some wicked, false apostle within the church that Satan had empowered just to make Paul's life miserable. You will recall that Paul asked the Lord to remove that thorn in his flesh three times, but God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."<sup>39</sup>

In other words, I want to prove myself powerful on your behalf.

So Paul says, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."<sup>40</sup>

Now that is what it means to exult in your tribulation because of what God is doing in you. You see, God wants you to see it. God wants you to feel it. God wants you to live it.

But, secondly, he gives us this gracious gift of suffering to deepen our communion and our trust with Christ, our trust in Christ.

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<sup>37</sup> 1 Peter 5:10.

<sup>38</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7.

<sup>39</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9.

<sup>40</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

## The Benefits of Justification – Part 4

By David Harrell

Romans 5:1-11

In James chapter one and verse two, a text we are familiar with, we read, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.”<sup>41</sup>

And then what is the next word? Knowing. You have to have a full understanding from personal experience.

...knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.<sup>42</sup>

You see, as we rejoice in knowing that God is working in us, then we endure the test and we enjoy the benefits of spiritual maturity. We consider it all joy. We calculate forward, is literally what the text is saying. We look beyond the trial and see the benefit of what God is up to.

Every saint who has ever suffered for the sake of Christ can attest to profound awareness of his presence in the midst of some anguish of soul.

Remember what Paul said in Philippians four verse six.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

You see, when tribulation comes, the justified saint not only possesses an objective peace with God, but he will now also experience a subjective peace from God.

As we experience that peace, we long for more, don't we?

Psalm 91 verses one and two we read:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"<sup>44</sup>

The shelter, the shadow are figures that speak of protection and security. God himself is the one in whom we must dwell and abide. And the figure speaks strongly of the outstretched wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat above the ark of the covenant. They were stretched out to symbolize the protective power of the omnipotent God who would shield those who cast themselves upon his mercy, those who trust in his saving grace.

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<sup>41</sup> James 1:2.

<sup>42</sup> James 1:3-4.

<sup>43</sup> Philippians 4:6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Psalm 91:1-2.

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In other words, those who commune with the Lord, who walk closely with him will enjoy that safety and that protection from his outstretched wings.

So, beloved, don't miss this. The justified saint is the one that will exult on account of his tribulation because he knows that a gracious God has ordained them for his good, for God's glory. And he will actually experience the presence of almighty God when he is in the crucible of grace even as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego experienced the presence of the living Christ in the fires of Nebuchadnezzar causing him to say there is no other God who is able to deliver in this way.

Finally, he grants us the gift of tribulation to exult us in future glory. You will recall Peter encouraged the suffering saints in 1 Peter four and verse 12. He said, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."<sup>45</sup>

In other words, as if it were some accident that caught God by surprise, that somehow this was outside the purview of his will. Don't respond that way.

He goes on to say:

..but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.<sup>46</sup>

And later in chapter five verse six he says:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.<sup>47</sup>

Dear suffering saint, please understand. God is not only in your tribulation, but he has ordained it. You may never know the full extent of what he is doing in your life. But you will know, even as Paul said in Philippians 2:13 that "God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."<sup>48</sup>

For this reason Paul encouraged the saints in 2 Corinthians four and verse 16 saying, "Do not lose heart."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 1 Peter 4:12.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Peter 4:13-14.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Peter 5:6-7.

<sup>48</sup> Philippians 2:13.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:16.

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I love that. That is what I would say to you this morning.

Do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.<sup>50</sup>

Dear Christian, I pray that these marvelous benefits of your justification are real to you, that they shape your life, that they are literally the lens that you look through as you behold all that happens around you. And if that is the case, then when you encounter various tribulations and afflictions you will be able to say with the psalmist in Psalm 119 verse 71:

It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.<sup>51</sup>

Let's pray together.

*Father, we rejoice in these glorious truths. They cause our hearts to be filled with such joy. We pray that we might live out what you have spoken to us today, that this, indeed, might be the manifestation of our character and our conduct. Lord, we want to live for your glory and I pray that if there is anyone within the sound of my voice that knows nothing of the glorious Christ who suffered and died for all who will believe, I pray that today will be the day that you will break their heart over their sin, that they might cast themselves at the foot of the cross and plead for the mercy that you will so gladly, instantly grant. We thank you. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:15-17.

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 119:71-71.



## The Benefits of Justification – Part 4

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Romans 5:1-11