

GOD'S GRACIOUS  
GIFT OF  
ASSURANCE

---

COMPACT EXPOSITORY PULPIT COMMENTARY SERIES

---

# GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT OF ASSURANCE

Rediscovering the Benefits of  
Justification by Faith

DAVID A. HARRELL

© 2019 David A. Harrell

ISBN 978-1-7343452-1-6

Great Writing Publications, 425 Roberts Road, Taylors,  
SC 29687 [www.greatwriting.org](http://www.greatwriting.org)

Shepherd's Fire 5245 Highway 41-A Joelton, TN 37080  
[www.shepherdsfire.com](http://www.shepherdsfire.com)

All Scripture quotations, unless stated otherwise,  
are taken from the New American Standard Bible®  
(NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972,  
1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation.  
Used by permission. [www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org) All rights  
reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, or  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form  
or by any means, mechanical, electronic, photocopying,  
recording or otherwise, without the prior permission  
of the publishers.

Shepherd's Fire exists to proclaim the unsearchable  
riches of Christ through mass communications for the  
teaching ministry of Bible expositor David Harrell,  
with a special emphasis in encouraging and strength-  
ening pastors and church leaders.

# Table of Contents

---

---

Books in this Series .....	6
Introduction .....	7
Peace with God.....	14
Access to God .....	29
A Permanent Standing Before God.....	41
A Jubilant Hope of Glory .....	54
Joy in Tribulation .....	65
Proof of Salvation.....	73
Hope through a Subjective Awareness of God's Love	84
Endnotes .....	95

# Books in this Series

---

---

Finding Grace in Sorrow: Enduring Trials with the Joy of the Holy Spirit

Finding Strength in Weakness: Drawing Upon the Existing Grace Within

Glorifying God in Your Body: Seeing Ourselves from God's Perspective

God, Evil, and Suffering: Understanding God's Role in Tragedies and Atrocities

God's Gracious Gift of Assurance: Rediscovering the Benefits of Justification by Faith

Our Sin and the Savior: Understanding the Need for Renewing and Sanctifying Grace

The Marvel of Being in Christ: Adoring God's Loving Provision of New Life in the Spirit

The Miracle of Spiritual Sight: Affirming the Transforming Doctrine of Regeneration

# Introduction

---

---

There is no greater source of joy in the life of a Christian than knowing that he or she has been reconciled to God through faith in His Son, our Substitute and Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. To know that our sins are forgiven and the merits of Jesus are now ours through imputation—solely as a gift of God’s grace—produces such soul-satisfying kinship with our Creator that all fears of standing before His holy tribunal evaporate like a morning mist before the sun. Herein is the heart of the doctrine of justification—a doctrine that many believers only appreciate and enjoy superficially.

While sin, doctrinal error, and ignorance can rob a believer of the life-sustaining blessings that flow from the fountain of grace, I fear the greatest culprit may well be the relentless distractions of life that can prevent us from habitually meditating upon the life-giving truths of the gospel. Whether it’s smart phones or television, kids’ sports or even church activities, it seems as though there is

---

always a host of bandits stealing our attention and affections. Instead of setting our minds on things above, we focus on the things of this earth. Perhaps you find yourself in this category, as I do from time to time.

It has been my experience that when this happens, a strange numbing of the conscience begins to justify our trivial (and often sinful) pursuits, producing within us a quiet lethargy of spirit that douses our love for Christ with the waters of a lukewarm religion—a tragic condition that now characterizes much of evangelicalism.

But I have also discovered that in these seasons of apathy, God will often use some form of darkness to make us appreciate light—His light. Such is the case with a very dark article in *The Atlantic* that caught my eye entitled, “Three Decades Ago, America Lost Its Religion. Why?” What struck me most was not so much the worldly speculations used to explain why America has “lost its religion,” but the sad testimony of the author who obviously knows nothing of his sin or the soul-exhilarating joy of being reconciled to an infinitely holy God through faith in Jesus Christ. The following is a quote that illustrates how God can use the darkness of deception to contrast the glorious light of truth.



The deeper question is whether the sudden loss of religion has social consequences for Americans who opt out. Secular Americans, who are familiar with the ways that traditional faiths have betrayed modern liberalism, may not have examined how organized religion has historically offered solutions to their modern existential anxieties. Making friends as an adult without a weekly congregation is hard. Establishing a weekend routine to soothe Sunday-afternoon nerves is hard. Reconciling the overwhelming sense of life's importance with the universe's ostensible indifference to human suffering is hard. Although belief in God is no panacea for these problems, religion is more than a theism. It is a bundle: a theory of the world, a community, a social identity, a means of finding peace and purpose, and a weekly routine. Those, like me, who have largely rejected this package deal, often find themselves shopping à la carte for meaning, community, and routine to fill a faith-shaped void. Their politics is a religion. Their work is a religion. Their spin class is a church. And not looking at their phone for several consecutive hours is a Sabbath. American nones (Americans who say they do not

associate with any established religion) may well build successful secular systems of belief, purpose, and community. But imagine what a devout believer might think: Millions of Americans have abandoned religion, only to re-create it everywhere they look.<sup>1</sup>

The author's dark perspective unwittingly describes what God calls *idolatry*—that which man creates “to fill a faith-shaped void.” Jonathan Edwards defined it biblically this way:

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as his god. If man do not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or some idol: it is impossible it should be otherwise: something will have the heart of man. And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god: and therefore when man by the fall extinguished all love to the true God, he set up the creature in his room. For having lost his esteem and love of the true God, and set up other gods in his room, and in opposition to him; and God still demanding their worship, and opposing them; enmity necessarily follows.<sup>2</sup>

Before coming to faith in Christ, we were all rebellious idolaters. We were all under the sentence of God's curse upon sin. But because of His unmerited grace, we have "been justified by faith" and we now "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" (Rom. 5:1-2). This is "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4), "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (v. 6). And these are the astounding truths upon which we must continually meditate and apply to our lives for our good and His glory.

One of the greatest measures of genuine saving faith is a believer's sincere gratitude for what God has done on his or her behalf. A mature believer will live in a state of boundless adoration and often express the sentiment of the apostle Paul who declared, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15). And at the heart of that gift is the magnificent doctrine of justification by faith alone. Paul declared that people are justified solely because of God's grace through faith, and not of works. We are "justified as a gift by his grace" (Rom. 3:24) and with that justification come at least seven astounding benefits we can enjoy as

we understand them and apply them to our lives.

Simply stated, *justification is that divine gift whereby God, through His grace, imputes the righteousness of Christ to believers, declares them to be righteous, and then treats them as such.* This transforming gift is not merely some initial blessing that stands alone. Rather, it is a blessing that encompasses all God gives the redeemed. Justification impacts every area of our life. It is the bedrock upon which our salvation is permanently and immovably anchored.

The focus of this mini-book will be to explain and apply these seven benefits as they are expressed in Romans 5. We have:

- Peace with God;
- Access to God;
- A Permanent Standing Before God;
- Jubilant Hope of Glory;
- Joy in Tribulation;
- Proof of Salvation;
- Hope Through a Subjective Awareness of God's Love.

My desire is for every believer to know and apply these truths to their life, and as a result, to enjoy an unshakable blessed assurance of eternal salvation, and experience the fullness of joy in Christ available

to us this side of glory. Paul's prayer for the saints in Ephesus perfectly summarizes my passion:

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

# 1

## Peace with God

---

---

*Therefore, having been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

ROMANS 5:1

**B**ecause man is a sinner by nature, he has rebelled against our Holy God and is therefore at war with Him. However, apart from the convicting and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, he will never see his situation. God's Word is clear: "The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7). The unregenerate

walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that

is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

Because of his innate depravity man is ruled by his flesh and enslaved by his sin. He is a friend of the world, and friendship of the world is “enmity with God” (James 4:4). For this reason, the wrath of God abides upon the ungodly who have violated His law and who reject His gracious provision of forgiveness and reconciliation through faith in the Person and Work of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:36).

When someone comes to realize that he is in a state of sedition against his Creator who holds the keys to heaven and hell and whose wrath endures forever, sheer terror will seize his heart. He will be like Belshazzar whose knees knocked together in abject horror when he saw the hand writing of judgment appear on the walls of his palace declaring the divine verdict: “‘TEKĒL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient” (Dan. 5:27).

By nature, however, man is incapable of seeing the true condition of his soul before a holy God. He will compare himself to others and be convinced of

his superior righteousness. He will always be just in his own eyes. He will be at peace with himself, but not with God. He will live under the delusion that his good works will sufficiently impress God and be the grounds for his admittance into heaven. But, in fact, he has laid his spiritual foundation on sand, and fails to consider what is written, that “by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Rom. 3:20). God alone can cause such a man to see the true condition of his soul through the light of the gospel.

I remember a cold winter’s day in Montana when I helped a friend retrieve some materials in a sealed-off cave where miners kept explosives. As we opened the steel door and entered, we could barely see due to the tiny flashlight my friend held in his hand. So he said, “Hang on, I’ll go to the truck and get a bigger light.” As he left, I shut the door to keep out the cold and stood there in darkness so black, it was as if I could feel it. Within a minute he returned with a brighter light, and, to our horror, we could suddenly see dozens of rattle snakes lying all around on the ground and on wooden crates of dynamite and boxes of tools. Some were easily within striking distance of where I stood in the dark, but the darkness had prevented me from seeing them. Fortunately, they were hibernating and the cold



had slowed their metabolism, so they weren't a real danger. But that scene has stuck with me for many years. It perfectly illustrates man's need for the light of the gospel to show him the danger of those loathsome creatures of sin that he cannot see and that dwell in his heart. Such is the condition of fallen man. He simply cannot see what threatens to destroy him—*eternally*.

Knowing this, God must do what only He can do to show sinners the terrifying truth about their pathetic standing before His holy and righteous presence—a standing woefully insufficient to garner the verdict, “not guilty.” The godly Reformed theologian Francis Turretin (1623-1687) described this awakening in a way that continues to grip my soul and make me forever thankful for the gift of spiritual sight:

Hither our eyes must be altogether raised if we wish to inquire profitably concerning true righteousness; in what way we may answer the heavenly Judge, when he shall have called us to account. Truly while among men the comparison holds good; each one supposes he has what is of some worth and value. But when we rise to the heavenly tribunal and place before our eyes that supreme Judge . . .

by whose brightness the stars are darkened, at whose strength the mountains melt; by whose anger the earth is shaken; whose justice not even the angels are equal to bear; who does not make the guilty innocent; whose vengeance when once kindled penetrates even the lowest depths of hell . . . then in an instant the vain confidence of men perishes and falls and conscience is compelled . . . to confess that it has nothing upon which it can rely before God. And so it cries out with David, "Lord, if thou marked iniquity, who can stand?" . . . When the mind is thoroughly terrified with the consciousness of sin and a sense of God's wrath, what is that thing on account of which he may be acquitted before God and be reckoned a righteous person? . . . Is it righteousness inhering in us and inchoate holiness or the righteousness and obedience of Christ alone imputed to us?<sup>3</sup>

The Spirit's work of regeneration that imparts spiritual life to the spiritually dead and causes a sinner to see his self-righteous pride and plead for undeserved mercy is a miracle that rivals creation itself. Like the tax collector who knew he was utterly devoid of any inherent righteousness—a man

who “was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’” (Luke 18:13)! And, with that act of repentant faith, he was instantly forgiven. Moreover, God’s perfect righteousness was imputed to his account; he was justified by faith, ending the war of sin and gaining eternal peace with God through His grace alone. What a magnificent illustration of the doctrine of justification by faith—a divine treasure of unspeakable blessings that cannot be earned or forfeited.

Too often as believers I fear we are like the Black Skimmer who only skims the surface of the waters with his bill to catch his prey rather than diving deep into the ocean depths of divine truth, especially as it relates to our justification. It is easy to skim over the astonishing reality that it is through Christ “we have now received the reconciliation” (Rom. 5:11); and in Him there is treasured up all the fullness of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). It is the purpose of this mini-book to take us deeper into the ocean depths of divine revelation regarding this great doctrine, that together we might enjoy more fully the peace that is ours through justification, and cultivate a richer communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lover of our soul.

In so doing we will discover how justification as-

surely all believers that their salvation is eternally secured by the very One who saved them. While many passages refute the erroneous notion that a believer can forfeit (lose) his or her salvation—and in fact there is not a single text that, when properly interpreted, makes such a claim—the doctrine of justification brings an end to the argument.

Think about it: Paul writes, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have . . .” The phrase “we have” indicates that what follows is already in our possession (Rom. 5:1), not something requiring ongoing merit. Sadly, many believers do not realize and can hardly imagine the present benefits of their justification, especially as it relates to assurance.

If you struggle with fear concerning your eternal security, then understanding the magnificent benefits of this marvelous doctrine will bring you the clarity and comfort you long for. Ongoing worry about salvation is really a needless concern for all who have been justified, because salvation is “a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24), “an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5).

Moreover, these profound truths speak to the very