

The Benefits of Faith

Romans 5:1-5

August 6, 2017

Introduction:

Do you know what I find amusing? Television commercials for medications. I'll get to see at least a couple of them when I'm watching NBC Nightly News and the thing that amuses me about them is the cure sounds like it would be far worse than the problem. It seems to me the commercials spend more time warning of the potential side effects of the drug than describing its benefits. For example, the first one that came to mind when writing this was Zantac, which is a medicine used to treat stomach ulcers and heartburn. But then they go on to list the possible side effects which include: constipation, diarrhea, fatigue, headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, insomnia, muscle pain, nausea, and vomiting. Well, by all means, sign me up right away! Let me ask my doctor if Zantac is right for me. I don't think so.

This morning we're going to talk about the benefits of faith, but unlike Zantac, there are no nasty side effects. Now that the apostle Paul has laid out the gospel, showing us how we are rescued from God's wrath not by our own works but rather by faith in Christ, he begins chapter 5 by presenting some of the wonderful benefits that come to us as a result.

So we're going to consider four benefits that come as a result of being justified by faith and in order to do that, I'll need you to open your Bibles to Romans 5. Should you be using the pew Bibles, our passage today can be found on pg. 942. We will begin by first reading through the entire passage and then we'll highlight the benefits Paul mentions as we move along. So then, we're in Romans 5, reading just verses 1-5. Please follow along as I read. **"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."**

That opening phrase in v. 1 prepares us for what follows. **"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith..."** With those words, Paul's summing up what he said throughout Romans 1-4 and now is preparing to draw out some conclusions based upon it. Since the means by which we have been made right before God comes by faith in Christ, given to us by grace, and not by our own obedience to the law, there are wonderful implications for us who believe. So let's begin by considering the very first benefit Paul lists for us. **Since we have been justified by faith...**

1. We have peace with God

Paul states simply in v. 1, **"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."** What could possibly be more wonderful news than this: we now have peace with God because of what Christ

has done for us. Remember how Paul began his discussion of the gospel back in chapter 1? He said in 1:18, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..." In other words, the current situation apart from Christ is that rather than having peace with God, we are at war with God. We were rebelling against him and as a result God's anger was kindled against us. There was not a harmonious relationship between God and man. By our sin, we had launched our attack and now God stood over and against us, ready to justly respond to our unrighteousness.

That is a horrifying position to be in. To be in rebellion against God is to be in the ultimate unwinnable war. Usually in wars each side has some degree of power that can inflict damage upon the other. But with God, who can withstand his might? If God should stand against us, what hope do we have? Consider our galaxy for a moment. It has approximately 200 billion stars in it, many of which make our own star, the sun, small by comparison. And our galaxy is but one of at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe. God is the one responsible for both creating and sustaining each of those galaxies with their billions and billions of stars by the word of his power. So then, if that's the God who is angry with us, whose powerful wrath will be unleashed against us for our sin, what hope do we have to withstand his fury? How does one defend himself against a God who commands the galaxies to obey him?

So to hear that because of Christ we now have "**peace with God,**" is glorious news of the highest order! God is no longer at war with you. The power of his wrath no longer hangs over you like the sword of Damocles. The threat of his wrath has been finally and fully averted. Think for a moment of what happened in the US on August 14, 1945, which was known as V-J Day, meaning "Victory in Japan Day." That was the day the Japanese unconditionally surrendered, thus ending the Second World War. You might recall those old black and white photographs of people crowding in streets of Times Square, joyfully celebrating that peace had come at last. The war was over!

Those who lived through the Second World War had every reason to celebrate the peace that had finally been won, but that is small peanuts compared to what we have to celebrate. We have our own V-J Day to celebrate: it is the Victory of Jesus Day, also known as Easter, where God announced by raising Jesus from the dead that the war between God and man had ended. For those in Christ, the war is over. You now have peace with God, a peace that is eternal. Unlike political peace that can too often be temporary, the peace that Christ secured for us will never end. For those who are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation to fear any longer because there's nothing in all creation that would rekindle the wrath of God against you. Peace with God is an eternal, settled fact for those who have been justified by faith in Christ.

The peace with God that we enjoy is an *objective* peace, meaning it is true regardless of how you might personally feel. I think of the story of a Japanese soldier named Hiroo Onoda who was stationed in the Philippines during World War 2. His unit was commanded to hide out in the jungles and make guerilla attacks against the Allies. But due to his extreme isolation, even though the war had ended, he continued to fight on. It wasn't until he was found in an isolated hut deep in the jungles in 1974 that he came

to finally realize the war had ended almost thirty years earlier. We don't want to be like that. If you've trusted Christ, the war is over. Don't keep living as if God is displeased with you, that somehow if you don't get your act together that God's wrath will be rekindled against you. You have peace with God because of Christ, a peace that is objectively true, even if some days you may not feel it subjectively.

But while this is an objective peace that brings to an end the threat of God's wrath, it should lead us to a subjective sense of peace within our souls. It means we don't need to feel anxious about our lives, always questioning whether we've been good enough for God to accept us. Since peace with God comes because of what Christ did for us and not because of our good works, we have nothing to fear. We can rest our heads on the pillow at night knowing that no matter how much we've failed, Christ has paid for it as and therefore God will never reject us. Peace *with* God can and should lead to the peace *of* God in our hearts.

So my friends here at Grace Fellowship, take extraordinary joy in this! God Almighty no longer stands against you. The wrath of God has been satisfied at the cross. Jesus paid the price of our surrender with his blood so that peace could be permanently obtained. If you are a Christian, you are now and forever will be, at peace with God.

So then, that's an incredible benefit that comes as a result of us being justified by faith, but that's only one of four Paul mentions. Let's move on now to the second benefit we gain through faith in Christ and that is, since we have been justified by faith...

2. We have access to God

Look back in your Bibles at the first half of v. 2. **“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...”** The second benefit mentioned by Paul here is that we've been given **“access”** to grace. Now since God is the source of all grace, and since we are no longer enemies of God but adopted son and daughters through faith, the idea isn't that we've been given access merely to grace as a vague principle, but to the fountain of grace himself. This is implied by the word **“access”** in Greek which was sometimes used of a person being conducted into the presence of royalty. As a result of being justified by faith, we now have access to God directly, and to all the riches of his grace that come that privilege.

Think of it like this: imagine if next week you were sent an invitation from the President to come and stay for a couple of weeks at the White House. As his honored guest, you would be treated as if you were family and would have complete access to the Oval Office, you would sit at the dining room table with him for meals, and could come and go to speak with the President whenever you wanted. Now putting aside whatever your political dislikes for the current President might be, that would be an amazing honor, wouldn't it? To be invited into the home of the leader of the most powerful nation on earth and to then on top of that be treated as if you were a family member, with total access to the President's ear whenever you wished to do so would arguably be one of the most memorable and exciting two weeks of your entire life.

But what is that compared to being given access to the very throne room of the Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth? God hasn't merely given us a two week pass that allows us access to him for a brief time, but then expires. He has adopted us into this family, made us his sons and daughters, and given us a permanent seat at his supper table. And we have his ear all the time: he invites us to come to him and make our requests and concerns known. Echoing what Paul says here, Hebrews 4:16 says this, *"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

We have been given access not just to the throne of grace but to the very one who sits upon it! Paul says this in Ephesians 2:18-19, *"For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God..."* Far more than an invited guest, in Christ you are actual members of God's household. Like John F. Kennedy's son who played under his father's desk, we have the same kind of free and unlimited access to God our Heavenly Father. Christ has opened up the door to us to have access to God and all the riches of his kingdom.

That's an astonishing benefit that Christ has purchased for us - access to the throne of grace - but do we take advantage of what's been given to us? Do we with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, or do we get so busy with our lives that we don't come to him in prayer? Do we needlessly bear burdens of guilt and shame and anxiety when instead we could be finding mercy and grace to help in our time of need? Benefits are great, provided you benefit from them.

For example, back when our girls were little, we bought Huggies diapers and on the box they had points that if you cut out and saved you could turn in for free supplies. But we didn't notice them until our third child, so even though we had purchased a boatload of diapers for our first two daughters, we never took advantage of the points available to us. The benefits were there for us, but we missed them.

So then, don't do that when it comes to what's been given to you in Christ. Benefit from the benefits of having access to God through faith in Christ. Come to God in prayer. Christ has radically changed our relationship with God: we used to be under his wrath as his enemies but now we are his children by faith. So then, come to your Heavenly Father in prayer. The way has been opened to us and we would be fools not to make the most of every opportunity afforded to us.

But moving on now, there is a third benefit that comes to us through Christ that we need to see at the end of v. 2. So let's consider the what else we have received now that we've been justified by faith and that is...

3. We have hope in God

Adding to peace with God and access to God, Paul says this at the end of v. 2, **"...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."** Sadly, the word "hope" has gotten watered down in the English language. Generally, when we use the word hope, it means we

want something that we aren't certain we'll get. For example, I've been a Chicago Cubs fan for over twenty years now and at the end of every season I would say, "Well, let's hope they'll do better next year." Considering how long the Billy Goat curse had been in effect, my hope didn't have much certainty, at least until last year. So then, hope too often means "I would like this to happen, and possibly it will, but there's no way to say for certain."

Now that's *not* what is meant by the biblical word for hope. When Scripture talks about our hope, it's speaking of a rock-solid certainty for something that we do not have yet, but are sure to receive. And what does Paul say we hope in? He says we **"rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."** To behold God's glory and to reflect that glory in our own lives is what we are eagerly awaiting. Remember how back in chapter 3 Paul said that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God?" Due to our sin, we fell short of God's glory in terms of reflecting it by living righteously and fell short of being able to behold it for all eternity in heaven. But because of faith in Christ, what we once fell short of is now to be ours. We will reflect God's glory in heaven because we will be made righteous, free from the stain and power of sin, as we behold the glory of God for all eternity in his presence.

That we will be glorified and will behold God's glory is not a "maybe" or "possibly" or wishful thinking: it will happen. God has promised us this in Christ and every promise of God is sure. As Paul will say later in Romans 8, all who are called are justified, and all who are justified are glorified. It is more likely that the sun won't rise tomorrow than for those who have been justified by faith in Christ not to behold the glory of God in heaven. Every believer can bank on the fact that God's glory will be ours to reflect and enjoy for all eternity when we enter into our heavenly home.

And so we should, as Paul says here in v. 2, **"rejoice"** in this hope. Grace Fellowship, do you rejoice in this? Does your heart well up with joy knowing that one day, you will behold God in all of his glory? Do you rejoice in the liberation from all your sin that will be your eternal possession in heaven? We are people that should be characterized by joy because we know with certainty what awaits us.

But notice that Paul also adds that we are to rejoice in something else in v. 3. Look back there with me. Paul writes, **"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame..."** We'll stop right there.

It seems odd to mention suffering here in the middle of all these wonderful benefits that have come to us in Christ. Is this perhaps an example of a "negative side effect" of justification by faith we need to put up with, as with the case with the prescription drug Zantac? Not at all. Suffering is part of this life, no matter whether you are a Christian or not, but as a Christian, Christ gives you an entirely different perspective by which to understand suffering. Because we know that God loves us and has totally accepted us by virtue of Christ's life and death, and because we know further that God then works all things for the good of those who love him, we can view suffering as a

means by which God is working in us to develop our character and deepen our faith. Notice that Paul doesn't tell us to rejoice in our sufferings and then stop there. That of course would be masochistic. He says we can rejoice in them because of what our sufferings produce in us.

First, he says suffering produces endurance. We toughen up through tough times. It helps us preserve in the faith. Second, endurance produces character. It molds us and makes us more godly. Those who have gone through difficult times grow wiser, they begin to see what is really important, and it gives them focus. Then third, Paul says character produces hope, a hope that does not put us to shame. When we suffer, we see how transitory life is. It pulls our eyes heavenward to look beyond this life alone to what awaits us. And that then brings us full circle because our hope is not wishful thinking but rather a certainty. Unlike my hope in the Chicago Cubs for all those years, my hope in what God has promised me in Christ will not fail. I will not be put to shame for foolishly believing in something that will never transpire.

So then, we can rejoice in our suffering not because we love to suffer but because God is at work even in suffering to strengthen our faith and increase our hope in a promise that we will one day dwell in a new heaven and new earth where all such suffering will come to an end. Our hope of eternal life strengthens us to trust that nothing at all can indeed separate us from that love of God in Christ Jesus, which then is a perfect transition into our fourth and final benefit Paul mentions in this passage. Because we've been justified by faith, we've learned first that we have peace with God, second that we have access to God, third that we hope in God, and now fourth and finally, Paul tells us that because of Christ...

4. We have the love of God

Let's look back in our Bibles now at v 5-6. Paul says, **"...and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."** There is more than just the objective reality of God declaring us righteous through faith in Christ. God also pours out his love into our hearts so that we experientially know the love of God for us. In other words, the reality of our salvation is not merely head-knowledge but also heart-knowledge.

This verse speaks very dearly to me as it uses the same language that I've used when talking about my experience of first coming to faith in Christ. I was saved when I was 18 years old during my first year of college at Savannah College of Art and Design. I went on a Baptist retreat for the weekend because my girlfriend wanted me to. On the Saturday night we were in a cabin with a few dozen other college students and people there started talking about their love for Jesus. I had intellectual beliefs about Jesus due to my upbringing in the Lutheran church and Lutheran school I attended, but this was different. These students knew Jesus, not just facts about him. During my time there, the love of God flooded over me and changed me. I left that cabin that evening a totally transformed man. I believe what happened to me that night is what Paul is speaking of here: God caused me to be born again through the Holy Spirit and in doing so, I experienced the love of God being poured out on me. I knew the love of God as

far more than a historical fact: I felt it. It was powerful and deeply moving and utterly transforming. I went from indifferently knowing some truths about Christ to loving him in return, passionately desiring to live my life for him as a result.

So then, that's yet other incredible benefit of our justification: God allows us not merely to know that he loves us but he pours of his love into our hearts so that we also have a deeply experiential sense of his love. Our salvation is not only a truth to believe but it affects us personally because God's love is not left as an abstract notion but is poured out lavishly upon us personally.

This is why Scripture makes so much of how our faith expresses itself in our lives. If the love of God is poured out upon us as part of our coming to faith in Christ, then it must overflow from us to others, otherwise one has to question whether you've ever experience it to begin with. This is exactly what the apostle John speaks about in the book of 1 John. Turn ahead in your Bible with me for a moment for 1 John 4. You can find that on pg. 1023 of the pew Bibles if that's what you are using. I want you to see how John connects the experience of God's love with how we ought to love.

So then, I'm going to read from 1 John 4:7-12. *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."*

God's love leads to us loving. Justification through faith in Christ doesn't leave a person unchanged. God's love is poured out on us so that it overflows from our hearts to others. So our salvation does more than just give us the hope of eternal life: it actually transforms us in the here and now, as the Holy Spirit begins to mold and shape us into ever-greater Christlikeness through the powerful love of God working in our hearts and minds.

Conclusion

So as we close, I hope your hearts would indeed rejoice over the many benefits that have been richly lavished upon your through Christ Jesus. My friends, you have peace with God! You have been given access to God so that at any time you can boldly approach the throne of grace. You have a certain hope of beholding the glory of God as you yourself are glorified before him. And finally, the love of God has been poured out upon you so you can experience in your heart the heart of God towards you. May we joyfully give thanks for all such glorious riches we have received in Christ Jesus our Lord!

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Grace Fellowship of Waterloo, IA by Pastor Rob Borkowitz. Copyright 2017.