

Romans 5:1-5

Before we start digging into our text today, perhaps you will **indulge** me for a few moments. Since we are celebrating Graduation tonight, and the Festival of the Holy Trinity on Sunday, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about what a tremendous God we have. He is **Triune**, ie. three in one - a **mystery** beyond our comprehension - three distinct persons, and yet only one God. He is also **eternal**, **all-knowing**, and **all-powerful**. God loves what is **good** and hates what is **evil**. How **strange** it is then, that God should love **us**, for we cannot deny that we are **sinners**. We hate, we lie, we are selfish, and sometimes cold - we break the commandments which God has given to us **thousands** of times by the things we **do**, as well as by the things we **don't** do. Yet, God **loves** us. He loves us enough to **reconcile** us with Himself - to bridge the **gap** which **sin** has made between sinful mankind and the perfect Triune God. Even though we are guilty of **breaking** God's laws and were without excuse, nevertheless, God declared us **not** guilty. He **justified** us by forgiving our sins for the sake of His **Son**. That is truly tremendous, and for us, it means the difference between eternal **death** and eternal **life**.

Today we will consider **The Blessings Of Justification** - the blessings which we receive from the Heavenly Father through faith in Christ. Now, just as God has three **persons**, our justification results in three **blessings**. They are: **peace**, **joy**, and **hope**.

Paul writes, "*Since we have been justified through faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This is **not** the peace which the old League of Nations or the United Nations are trying to achieve. It is **not** the peace which anti-nuclear protestors are attempting to bring about either, for God tells us that there will **never** be world-wide peace between men. There will **always** be wars and rumors of wars - brother fighting against brother, and nation fighting against nation. Rather, this is "*the peace of **God** which **surpasses** all understanding.*" It is peace which comes from **God**, and peace which exists between **man** and God **Himself**.

This peace is something we often take for **granted**. Have you ever stopped to think of what life would be like if you were **not** at peace with God? It would be **terrible**. There would be no one to go to for **comfort**, and nowhere to escape for **refuge**. Many people in the world are **in** that wretched condition. They are **afraid**

of God's terrible **anger** which He threatens to bring down upon them because of their **sins**. So, they attempt to **run** and **hide** from God. But they cannot escape. They are like **Jonah**, who tried to **run away** from what God wanted Him to do, only to be stopped short by a great fish, and brought back to **do** God's will. They are like King David during the time when he refused to admit that he had **sinned** by taking another man's wife to be his own. He wrote in Psalm 32, "*When I kept **silent**, my bones **wasted away** through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was **heavy** upon me. My strength was **sapped** as in the heat of summer.*"

These are all symptoms of **guilt** - the symptoms of an individual who is not at **peace** with God. It took a while, but David found **relief** from those symptoms. He confessed his sins to the Lord, and God **forgave** his sins. Then David could write, "***Blessed** is he whose transgressions are **forgiven**, whose sins are **covered**. **Blessed** is the man whose sin the Lord does not count **against** him, and in whose spirit there is no **deceit**.*" David had to learn the **hard** way how precious it is to have **peace** with God, and to experience His grace and forgiveness.

Actually, not much has **changed** over the years in regard to learning things the **hard** way. So very often **we too** rob ourselves of the **joy** which is ours through faith in Jesus. That **joy** is the **second** blessing of our justification, and just as Jesus, the second person of the Trinity has two **natures** (divine and human), so also this **joy** comes from two **sources** - from **glory**, and from **sufferings**. Paul writes, "*We **rejoice** in the hope of the **glory** of God. Not **only** so, but we **also** rejoice in our **sufferings**.*"

It's **easy** to rejoice in God's **glory**, ie. in the glory or praise which comes **from** God. Any time someone praises **us**, there is that warm glow inside which makes us feel **happy**, but we might **wonder** how **sufferings** can make us happy. Paul explains, "*We know that **suffering** produces **perseverance**; perseverance, **character**; and character, **hope**.*" Many people would openly say that suffering makes them **angry** or **impatient**, but actually, suffering develops more fully **whatever it finds** in us. So, suffering doesn't **make** a person angry or impatient, it simply **magnifies** the fact that they were angry or impatient in the **first** place.

Now in the case of our **text**, Paul is speaking about those who have been justified through **faith**. In such a person suffering will find qualities like spiritual **wisdom**, **humility**, and **patience**; and it will magnify those **positive** attributes.

Therefore, Paul can truthfully say, “*Suffering produces **perseverance**; and perseverance, **character**.*”

By **character**, Paul means a calm, collected, and settled attitude - an attitude which usually comes about through **experience**. It’s similar to comparing a seasoned **veteran** with a green, untried **rookie**. When situations start getting **tense**, the rookie will have the tendency to get shook up, and may even **panic** - thinking that if something isn’t done **soon**, there will be no chance for **success**. However, the seasoned **veteran** may look at the same tense situation, and drawing from his former **experience**, he will recognize that even though he cannot see an **immediate** solution, nevertheless, a solution **exists** - for our gracious Lord is directing even the times of **crisis** in our lives.

Looking at it **another** way, our life is like a **tapestry**, and we are only allowed to see the **bottom** side. Any of you who work with tapestry, or needlepoint, or cross-stitch will recognize that the **bottom** side of your project always looks somewhat **disorganized**. All of the knots and restarts are clearly **visible**. However, when the project is viewed from the **top** side, it can be a real work of **art**. **God** is the only one who can see the **top side** of the tapestry of our **lives**. So, even though things in our lives may **appear** to be all knotted up and disorganized, **God knows** what the **end result** looks like - for it is His wisdom which directs **all** the events of our lives.

And that brings us to the third and final blessing of justification mentioned in our text: **hope**. Paul concludes, “*Hope does not **disappoint** us, because God has poured out **His** love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has **given** us.*” Perhaps some of you noticed that all three persons of the Trinity were **mentioned** in our text: God the **Father**, our Lord **Jesus Christ**, and the **Holy Spirit**. It is **this God** who gives us **hope** in this life. Therefore, that hope will not **disappoint** us. While **human** hopes and dreams can be smashed to bits by tribulation, that is **not** the case with hopes which come from **God**. Such hopes are **unshakable** because God Himself is unshakable. These are **our** hopes - not only for **this** life, but also in the life to **come**.

Notice that the blessings of peace, joy, and hope are poured into our hearts by the **Holy Spirit**. This is a reminder to us of the **Pentecost** miracle, when the Holy Spirit was poured into the hearts of the disciples, enabling them to boldly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. May we also make

use of the blessings which God has poured out on us. May we use the gift of **peace** - to show others the true **inner** peace between us and God, which is far more **important** than bringing an end to **earthly** war and strife. May we use the gift of **joy** - to let others see our light of **faith** glowing brightly in this sin-darkened world. And may we use the gift of **hope** - to illustrate to others that God has a definite **purpose** for each and every one of us - a purpose which He alone can see **clearly**, and which He will definitely bring to **completion** with His boundless love. Amen.