

What's the Message – Lesson 145

Our study of Justification continues today with some insight into how justification affects our lives.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Lord, help us to comprehend that Your free gift of Justification came at a very high cost, the death of Your priceless and faithful Son, Jesus. Help us to thank You every day that we have received a gift we do not deserve, but do receive it in mercy only because of Your deep love for all of Your children. Amen.

Last time, as we began our study of the doctrine of Justification, we saw mankind's need for it, and learned the definition of it. In brief, we saw that it is strictly a work of God, and is a gift to man; that it is universal in scope, yet is appropriated by each of us through faith. There is much, much more to this core doctrine of the Christian faith, but today we want to see what St. Paul tells us in his letter to the church at Rome about how justification affects us in our daily life.

And let's start with what Paul says in chapter 5: *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. More than that, 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.

Does that strike you as strange, that Paul would say we can now rejoice in our suffering? Isn't that just the exact opposite of our human logic? Our normal feeling is to not only feel down-in-the-dumps, but to complain and carry on. And suffering comes in so many forms, not just the typical aches and pains of our body. There can be the suffering of a severe disease, an un-rewarding or un-satisfying job, the loss of a job and its paycheck, a heartache caused by – or against – a loved one, and on it goes. These are common occurrences for all of us. But Paul tells us there is a positive side to suffering. It can produce endurance, character, and hope, and

make our lives much better in the here-and-now. Why does this happen? Because the Holy Spirit has been given to us and we feel the love of God.

But there is a suffering far more painful than what we experience on earth, and that is the wrath of God eternally. Hear what Paul has to say about this, also in chapter 5, starting at verse 9:

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. . . . For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Now, since we have been freed from the eternal wrath of God, we instead receive something we don't deserve, and that is to be reconciled and brought back into the family of God's children. And how should this reconciliation effect our lives? How are we to respond to our loving God? Hear what Paul says in chapter 6:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

. . . For the death He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

How are we to respond to our loving God? Do we arrogantly think that we are now above the law, and like one group of Gnostics, think that we can sin as much as we like? Or do we recognize that we can produce a far better outcome by obeying God? Let's turn again to chapter 6 of Romans starting with verse 15: *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!*

. . . But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. . . . For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

But now that you have been set free from sin and become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . . Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

So there you have it. We are to respond to our loving God and His mercy with nothing less than a life that reflects the glory of God.

Next time we will focus on the completeness of Justification through faith in Jesus.