

Intro:

We concluded last week's message with the idea of 'rejoicing in hope' from Rm 5.2. This idea speaks to one of the many blessings that flow to us out of justification.

Justification is that which happens to you the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation – you are declared righteous by God.

Immediately a number of things become your true spiritual possessions:

- Peace with God – the war is over, your sin-debt is satisfied, no more wrath on you forever.
- Standing with God – you have a right to enter, a right to stay and a hope of eternal standing in God's presence forever. This is your boast.

These truths ought to thrill your soul.

But of course, we don't stop just there. Our passage moves on.

And our passage moves on in a way that reminds me of some of those television commercials you may be familiar with:

You see some wonder product being advertised – it is one that will cleanse very stain known to man, or one that will magically turn your vegetables into some gourmet salad presentation, or some such thing.

The pitchman gets to the end of the commercial where he tells you that all this wonder may be had for only \$19.99 (or some such number). And then he says...

“But wait, there's more...”

And he moves on to list several other smaller versions of the same product that will be thrown in 'absolutely free' with the base package!

Can you believe it?

Now I don't want to trivialize the Scriptures in this way! Please don't think that!

But let's think about the blessings God gives us in salvation – can you put any price on them? Salvation and its blessings are free to you (the cost is paid by Christ).

And salvation's blessings are far beyond anything that we could comprehend. Even those things we have listed so far, peace with God, access to His presence – we probably are incapable of understanding them or even fully appreciating them.

But our passage goes on... 'but wait there's more!'

Let's read our passage again and catch the next blessing of salvation:

Read Rm 5.1-3

Did you catch the next blessing?

- Peace with God
- Access by faith
- Standing in grace
- Hope of glory

And not only that, glory in tribulations!

Wait a minute, you say... I thought we were talking about benefits!

And we are. So let's see what we mean by this glory in tribulations before we shudder at God's blessing.

Proposition: The spiritual blessing of justification produces the spiritual blessing of an entirely new mindset in the troubles of life.

I. The great trouble of tribulations

A. The concept of tribulation

1. Literal root meaning

- a. To press
- b. To squash
- c. To rub
- d. To hem in
- e. To crush
- f. To press together

“Our English word ‘tribulation’ comes from a Latin word *tribulum*. In Paul’s day, a *tribulum* was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the grain. The *tribulum* was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff.”¹

2. The word can speak of external *or* internal pressure

- a. The political constriction by encircling enemies
- b. The scourge of war
- c. The troubles of sickness or fear

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right*, p. 51.

B. The Christian experience of tribulation

1. Tribulation is to be expected (Jn 16.33)
2. Tribulation was experienced by the New Testament church
 - a. The persecution (tribulation) that arose about Stephen (Ac 11.19)
 - b. The commendation of the suffering church of Smyrna (Rev 2.8-10)

“Justification is no escape from the trials of life.”²

“But ere we reach the glory we must tread the sands of the wilderness.”³

II. Our scriptural examples in tribulations

A. The apostle Paul

1. His testimony in 2 Corinthians
 - a. Given just a few months before writing Romans
 - b. Given in defense of the authenticity of his apostleship

2 Cor 4.8-9, 6.3-10, 11.23-28

2. The afflictions that awaited him after he wrote Romans
 - a. Prophesied (Ac 20.22-23)
 - b. Experienced (Ac 21-28)
 - c. Ultimate martyrdom (2 Tim 4.6)

^{KJV} **2 Ti 4.6** For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

B. The Lord Jesus

1. For the joy set before him, endured the cross – our example (Heb 12.2-3)
2. The Lord Jesus resolved the conflict first in his own soul (Lk 22.41-44)

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right*, p. 50.

³ H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Romans*, p. 61.

3. You know the record of his suffering on the cross
 - a. The crown of thorns
 - b. The beating
 - c. The carrying of the cross
 - d. The crucifixion
 - e. The thirst
 - f. The separation from the father
 - g. The death

^{KJV} **Heb 12.2-3** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

III. The new attitude in tribulations

A. Described in our text ('we glory')

1. NAU = 'exult'
2. 'Boast'

We are not talking about foolish giddiness, pretending that suffering is pleasure.

We are talking about a new attitude of mind where we consider our experience of pressure to be God's means of molding us into his image.

B. It is a turning away from

1. Doubt of God's goodness or God's promise
2. Bitterness towards others or towards God
3. Despair or resignation

Those attitudes are the way to spiritual defeat.

C. Paul's attitude in 2 Corinthians

1. Our light affliction (2 Cor 4.17)
2. I glory in tribulation (2 Cor 12.7-10)

William Newell, writing in 1938, spoke of a believer who had been sent to Siberia. Some letters managed to come out of Siberia from this woman named Mary.

- She wrote of her sufferings: “The best thing to report is, that I feel so happy here. It would be so easy to grow bitter if one lost the spiritual viewpoint and began to look at circumstances. I am learning to thank God for literally everything that comes. I experienced so many things that looked terrible, but which finally brought me closer to Him. Each time circumstances became lighter, I was tempted to break fellowship with the Lord. How can I do otherwise than thank Him for additional hardships? They only help me to what I always longed for — a continuous, unbroken abiding in Him. Every so-called hard experience is just another step higher and closer to Him.”
- One of her fellow prisoners couldn’t understand her – joined in the abuse of this woman
- Mary prayed specifically for this prisoner and tried to show Christ’s love to this woman
- The other woman accepted the Lord and testified about it to all – she was taken into solitary confinement and abused terribly

Mary managed to see her two months after this. She asked, “Are you not sorry for what you have done [in accepting the Lord and testifying for Him]?”

- “No. If they would free me, I would go again and tell my comrades about the marvelous love of Christ. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and counts me worthy to suffer for Him.”⁴

We have been praying for Bill Miner’s step-brother, Chip Stam. Chip has been fighting a certain kind of cancer for a couple of years now. He recently said this in an e-mail update:

- When Doris and I met with our primary care doctor and the “cancer” vocabulary first formed in his voice, of course I was nervous and afraid and wondering about all the obvious fears and concerns

⁴ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, pp. 167-168, footnote.

- ...; but in terms of life and death, I was very much at peace. As a follower of Jesus, the first lines of Scripture that came to my mind were the opening verses of John 9. The disciples wanted to know who was to blame for the blind man's condition: Who had sinned to cause this terrible condition? Jesus responded, "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." We don't know what God is up to in bringing us through this "valley of the shadow," but it has shown us a side of our Christian faith that had not been put to the test. We are at peace. The apostle Paul calls it a "peace that passes understanding."
- One well-intentioned pastor friend encouraged me to express my frustration and anger to God for this hard road. Well, I believe in lament. A serious follower of Jesus can't read very far in the Bible, especially the Psalms, without encountering a godly posture of protest towards God. A huge slice of the biblical Psalter is dedicated to asking why the "good guys" are troubled and dodging arrows while the godless seem to be thriving. But honestly, it has never even occurred to me to complain to God about this cancer journey. Without any exceptions, it has deepened my faith in God and my love for others.⁵

Conclusion:

Now what do you think about this?

Do you think these voices could be you? Could you approach tribulation in this way?

The point of this message is that *justification* secures a blessing for you – the blessing of rejoicing – exulting – boasting in tribulation.

Perhaps your say your walk with God hasn't gotten to that point yet.

Really?

Are you justified? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins?

Then there is no tribulation taken you that God hasn't already given you everything you need to rejoice in it.

⁵ Chip Stam, "Update on Chip Stam", 10/29/09 e-mail