

Romans: Justification By Faith Means Freedom From God's Wrath

Romans 5:9-11

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Through this great chapter in Paul's book, in which he speaks to us of the implications of justification. True believers love to meditate upon the doctrine of justification. There are many reasons for that. Reminds us of what our Lord Jesus has done for us that we might be brought into friendship and fellowship with the heavenly father, forever. It is also so important to our assurance, isn't it? Most of us, all of us from time to time, hear the voice of the evil one, or the voice of our own sins, bringing the question to our heart. Are you really in Christ? Are you really spared? Are you really justified? Are you really reconciled? And only a proper understanding of what God has done for us in justification will supply the right answer of heart to those accusations.

And that assurance is so important for our energy and our motivation in the Christian life. It is the assured believer who is the confident believer in the face of all challenges, and obstacles and that is what we want to be. We want to be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. And so the apostle Paul spares no opportunity to talk about justification with believers. He takes it and he runs with it. And he repeats it over and over as I have, as we have worked through his book. And I don't apologize for that. Because Paul didn't apologize for it. So let's hear God's word here in Romans chapter 5, and we will begin in verse 9.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exalt in God, through whom our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Amen.

And thus ends this reading of God's holy word. May He add his blessing to it. Let's pray.

Our Lord and our God this is your word, we ask that by your spirit you would open our eyes to understand it. Our hearts to embrace it. Give us hearing ears,

search us out, apply your truth to us in our own specific situations in our own particular needs. Help us all to bow the knee to the authority of your word, when your word is read, and proclaimed, you speak to your people. We pray as well for those who have never embraced Christ, or who thinking they have, have never known him truly. We ask, O Lord, that You would speak to them of the glorious benefits of a saving interest in Jesus Christ. And so draw them by faith to him today. Help us then we pray. May all the honor and praise be yours. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Left behind. It is all a rage. You may have already seen the video. May have read some of the books. May have been to Tinseltown to see the movie. Thirty years ago there was a similar rage going on. I bet there are a few of you that remember it. It wasn't *Left Behind*. That was a long time before *Left Behind*. It was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. And there were some chintzy little black and white movie, too, that went along with it, that scared the living bejabbers out of high school students when they saw it. You know, it had something about the rapture and this and that and the other, and we were all scared to death. And all sorts of people made professions of faith. I remember being in Mr. Beland's seventh grade class at Beck Middle School. He read great books to us during reading hour. He read George Orwell's *Animal Farm* to us that year. Never ever had an inclination after that to be a Marxist socialist. I want you to know, never ever. Though I sort of got excited about reading in Mr. Beland's class. I am not sure whether I done a lot of it before then. One of the books I read was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Gave it to my friend, Bobby Bradford, he was a young man whose parents were members at Springfield Baptist Church. Bobby's mother called me up the next week, said Ligon, thanks for giving that book to Bobby. He made a profession of faith and was baptized last week at church. Scared him to death. Isn't it interesting, we almost delight in scaring ourselves to death about the pictures, the realities of the end time. But it is interesting where we run for relief. Isn't it interesting how believers often run for relief in these apocalyptic visions of what is going to happen in the end. They run for relief to the hope that they won't be there. That is how I will manage that. I won't be there. They take comfort, oh, well, I won't be subject to the great white judgment throne. I won't be there. Isn't it interesting that that is not how the New Testament ever comforts us about the great and awesome day of the Lord? In fact, Jesus and Paul go out of their way to say, oh, yes, you will be there. All will be called to account at the judgment seat of Christ. No, you can't run for comfort into the hope that you won't be there because you weren't one of the ones left behind. Though we will all be there in that great day. What then, enables us to have confidence in that great and awesome day? For surely the scriptures speak of such a great and awesome day. Well, the apostle Paul tells us in this passage, it is not your absence that will give you comfort in that great day, it is the finished and the ongoing work of Jesus Christ. All yours by virtue of your justification. I would like you to see three or four things that Paul says to us in this passage today. Beginning in verse 9.

And here is the first thing. Paul says in verse 9, that our salvation is future. And that future salvation is secure. Ever had someone say to you, brother, are you saved? It is a good question. Biblical question. But you know, the Bible just doesn't speak of saved in the past tense. Or saved in the present. It speaks of a future salvation, and that is precisely what Paul is speaking of here in Romans chapter 5, verse 9. Notice his words. Much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God. Paul is saying, that by the work of Jesus Christ, you are not only justified, you are not only caused to be declared right with God now, with reference to the sins of your past, and carried along by his spirit in sanctification in the present, but in the future, you shall be saved. There is a future dimension to what you have received in Jesus Christ. And so, as you anticipate that wrath to come, and it will surely come, and let me say that the picture that the New Testament paints of that great day of the Lord makes Left Behind look like child's play. If you want to hear a more biblical rendering of the picture of the Apocalypse from John's writing in the book of Revelation, come on Wednesday night and hear Derek Thomas as he unfolds that glorious book for us. But there is one thing that is certain. The New Testament tells us there will be a day, a day of the Lord, a great and terrible day of reckoning where he will call to account. And Paul says the reason that the believer does not tremble with slavish fear as he contemplates that is not that somehow we are going to be missed out in that. It is that the salvation which you have in Jesus Christ assures you that you will be secure in his hand, even in that great day. You have been saved. You are saved, and Paul says you shall be saved in that great day of wrath. Now it is just possible that there are few skeptics among us. And you think that this teaching about the day of the Lord the wrath of the God, this great day of reckoning to come, this is something that Charlatan preachers came up with to scare me into heaven. Or maybe at least making a contribution to the church. And I want to assure you my friends, this is not the preacher's weapon for scaring anybody into heaven. I couldn't scare you into heaven, if I wanted to. And that is not my method. Because the apostle Paul makes it very clear that the sharp point of the spearhead of salvation is the word of the cross itself. It is the message of the cross of Jesus Christ with which I lead to woo you into saving fellowship with God. That is the message that I preach, but I am also bound because I believe the word of God to teach all that it says and Paul and Jesus more than anyone else, emphatically asserts this day of the Lord to come, a day of reckoning. It is not designed to scare anyone into heaven, it is designed to brace you in to reality, a reality, which Paul has already said in Romans chapter 1, that all men already know in their hearts. All men already know that they ought to praise God and that they are under his wrath. Now you say, still, I think this is something that preachers came up with. Let me bother you a little bit. Even the Pagan Greek Philosophers long before Plato, in Plato's time, in Aristotle's time and after believed that there would be a great day of reckoning. Even the Pagans know in their heart of hearts that there will be a day of reckoning. The New Testament is emphatic about it and Paul says this to believers. Brothers and sisters, you may rest easy, because as you have had faith in Christ, as you have been united to him, you will be secure in the wrath to

come. You have nothing to tremble about in the wrath to come. Though indeed our hearts will be awed by the display of the justice of the Lord, we will be the singular recipients of his mercy. And we will rejoice even in that wrath to come. Paul is telling us here that our salvation is future too. Not just past and present, and it is secure. Because not only our present state of being declared right with God is the result of the work of Christ, but our future security in the day of the Lord's reckoning is certain because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the apostle having said that in verse 9 wants to elaborate on that in verse 10. And so he tells us a second thing there. In verse 10, Paul tells us that if the sheer extravagance of God's provision of salvation has made us to be friends with God again in the here and now, then it will also certainly assure us of this salvation to come. If God has already in the here and now declared us to be right with him, put us right with him, reconciled us to him, then certainly Paul says how much more will he save us in this wrath to come? Notice how Paul argues this. He argues it in stages in verse 10. First he says, if while enemies God reconciled us to himself, think about that. He points us specifically to what we were. We were objectively enemies against him. It is not just that we were rebelling against him. It was that as God looked upon us, he considered us to be enemies. And Paul says, now stop and think about this. While you were the considered enemies of God, he gave his son to die for you. That you might be drawn back into fellowship with him. Now Paul says, consider this my friends, if God did that for you, while you were his enemies, what do you think he is going to do for you now that you are his friends, now that you are his children? Do you think that he is going to reconcile you as enemies, and then fail to save you in the wrath to come? Of course not. Paul is making it emphatically clear that the work that God begins, he intends to bring to completion. My friends, if you had no other verses in the Bible to prove the doctrine of the eternal security of believers, the perseverance of the saints, you would need to go to no other verses than Romans 5, verses 9 and 10, where the apostle Paul makes it absolutely clear that once God has laid his hands on you, that once God has united you to Christ and justified you by grace through faith, that there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can separate you from his love. And the teaching that somehow one can become a justified believer, can experience the glories of union with Christ and then fall away from it, lose one's salvation is pernicious. It is monstrous. It is a pestilent view. And it contradicts precisely what the apostle Paul is saying here. If while enemies, God reconciled us to himself, how much more will he save us from the wrath to come? But that is just the first stage of Paul's argument.

In verse 10 he goes on, notice he says, if while enemies, God reconciled himself to us. Now wait a second you say, that is not how verse 10 reads. Look at it. It says that if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God. Doesn't that mean that we reconciled ourselves to him? We reached out to him? We longed to be brought back into fellowship with him? Absolutely not. You say, well you are reading your theology into that. No I am not. Look at verse 11. Verse 11 says this reconciliation was not accomplished by us, it was not brought about by us, it was not initiated by us, it was received. Verse 11 says, through whom we have now

received the reconciliation. The reconciliation which is spoken of here, is not our reconciliation to God, it is God's reconciliation to us, initiated by himself, accomplished by himself, given to you as a gift. The result of it is that you are reconciled to him. And the apostle is saying, now think of it. You are the enemy of God. You are his enemy. He has done everything necessary to reconcile you to himself. Can you possibly believe that having done that, he is going to let something slip in the last day? Can you possibly believe that he will have done all that is necessary to make you again, his friend, and somehow he will forget to save you from the wrath to come? Come on, Paul says. But he is not done.

That is just the second step of his argument. He says while enemies, God reconciled himself to us, by his son's death. You see, Paul says, this is how I want you to think about it. Think about what you were. Think about what God did and then think about how much it cost him. Think about what you were. You weren't lovely. You weren't attractive. You were his enemy. Think about what he did. He did everything necessary to break down the barriers between you and him, and to assuage his just judgment on you. Your due penalty of sin, and he did it at the cost of his son. The most valuable thing in the universe. The most valuable thing to the heart of the father and that is the cost that he bore to reconcile you. And Paul says this. Now think about it for a minute Christian. You were his enemy. He reconciled himself to you. He did it at the cost of his son. He is going to forget something in the future. He didn't think about the wrath to come. He left that out. His son's blood would not avail for that. Oh no, the apostle Paul says. You need to understand that if you have Christ, you have salvation past, present and future. It is secure. Your sins are forgiven. The new life of God is poured out in you and you are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. You will certainly be glorified and you will be kept secure. The apostle is saying to us that if God in his sheer extravagance provided justification for us now, and we have tasted of it, how much more, how much more are we assured that we will be saved? And that is the next step of his argument.

If while enemies, God reconciled himself to us by his son's death, how much more will we be saved by? And here he enters something new. By his life. Now let's pause and think about that for a minute. It is tempting, isn't it, to read Paul as saying, as the death of Christ, brought about our justification, so the perfect life of Christ, brings about our being preserved from the wrath of God. It is tempting, isn't it to read that as the active obedience of Christ as theologians call it. That during Christ's life on this earth, prior to his ascension, he lived perfectly under the law of God fulfilling it in every aspect positively and negatively and that benefit of righteous accrues to our account. That is a glorious scriptural truth. That is not what Paul is talking about here. Paul begins by talking about the benefits which accrue to you because of the death of Christ, then he starts talking about this life of Christ. What life is it? It is my friends, the resurrected life of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ was raised again from the dead, he did not cease to be your mediator. When Jesus Christ ascended on high, leaving captivity captive and giving gifts to men and being seated at the right hand of

God, the very control room of the universe, he did not cease to be your mediator. And the apostle Paul is saying, if the life and death of Christ availed, for you justification, how much more will his resurrection life which goes on even now at the right hand of God in which he ever lives to intercede for you, how much more will you be spared from the wrath to come because of that resurrection life? He ever lives to intercede. He didn't say, okay, I am going to justify you, now you take it from here. He ever lives to intercede. He is still your mediator. And the sheer extravagance of God's provision of salvation and justification assures us of this salvation to come. How much more will we be saved by his resurrection life? Now the apostle Paul says as we think of the great day to come, the way we find assurance is not in hoping that we will miss out on that bit, not in hoping that we will be sort of taken off the playing field during the tribulations of life. I wonder just how many of you think that you have been taken off the playing field in the tribulations of life? I think there probably just a few of you who know just a little bit about tribulation. That is now where our comfort is. Our comfort is in the sheer extravagance of the provision of God's love in Jesus Christ, which assures us that we are saved from the wrath to come, as well as justified by faith.

And then Paul, in verse 11, tells us a third thing. And frankly, it is a little strange. Because he says, we boast in God. We exalt in God. Now I say that is strange and I will explain why that is strange. Turn back with me to Romans chapter 2, verse 17. Paul had already criticized his Jewish opponents in Romans 2:17, and rely upon the law and boast in God. He had already criticized them for boasting in God. Furthermore, turn with me to Romans 3:27, he has said, that the Gospel puts an end to boasting. Romans 3:27 says where then is boasting? From Romans 3:21-26, he is giving you the summary of the Gospel. Where then is boasting is his response. It is excluded by what kind of law of works, but no, by a law of faith. Now, knowing that, you have got to be scratching your head when you get to Romans chapter 5 and saying, Paul what are you talking about? You open up Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2 saying, we boast in the hope of glory. He criticized the Jews for boasting. We boast in the hope of glory. Then you said, and then you said, and Paul, frankly we thought you were off your rocker. We boast in suffering. We boast in tribulation. Now you are telling me, Paul, that we boast in God and that was what you accused the Jews of doing in Romans 2:17. What are you talking about? And here is Paul's answer. We boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our boasting has nothing to do with our works. Our boasting has nothing to do with our righteousness. Our boasting has nothing to do with anything inherent in us which conditions and claims and constrains the love of God. We boast in God, knowing that we deserve damnation, and yet in his mercy, God has spared us in Jesus Christ. And therefore, we exalt in him. We boast in him. We glory in him. And our boasting is not about ourselves, or our status. It is a boasting about him. And you say to me that is unfair. That kind of mercy is unfair, and I say to you, yelp it sure is. And I exalt in the fact that I have received that undeserved mercy. And it has nothing to do with me. And it has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Has Satan ever come to you as a Rabshakeh, or a Sennacherib and said, God will fail you. He has failed everyone else. No need to trust in him, he will fail you. What have you said back? What have you said back? The apostle's Paul answer is, I boast in God. Who has saved me and is saving me and shall save me in Jesus Christ, to the very end. J.I. Packer opens the book, *Knowing God*, with a story of a friend of his who had lost everything that he had always dreamed for in the advancement of his academic career, because of his profession of faith in Jesus Christ. And he tells us that as he walked in the woods with that friend, amazed at what had just happened in this man's life. His friend responded to him, it doesn't matter, because I have known God, and they haven't. You see, a believer can boast in God, not because of anything in us, but because of what God has done by his undeserved mercy in Jesus Christ. In his death and in his continuing life. May God grant you such an assurance that you can respond to the voice of that great Sennacherib, the accuser of your soul with an exultant boasting in the certainty of the salvation provided by God. Let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, your word is hard to believe. Not because you are unfaithful, not because you are untruthful. But because our hearts are cynical and unbelieving and frankly because what you tell us in it is so glorious. Well it is just hard to accept. By the Spirit, help us believe the truth because it is glorious and because it is true in Jesus' name. Amen.

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