

THE SURPRISING FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION, ROMAN 5:1-11

Pax Romana #10

◆**Intro:** You never know when you might blow it, do you? A few years ago one of my sons got one too many tickets and our insurance company dropped him like a hot potato! All our policies now state, "excluding so-and-so" which kinda ticks me off to be honest. I mean they've gotten thousands of my dollars every year for most of my life, yet they have decided that my son isn't good enough to constantly give their company money. Max Lucado has observed that many people worry about getting a drop notice from God for not being good enough, much like one from your insurance company. He imagines the following notice from God:

◆"Dear Mrs Smith, I'm writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness. I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached your quota of sins. Our records show that, since employing our services, you have erred seven times in the area of greed, and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others of like age and circumstance.

◆Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20 percentile and you have excessive tendencies to gossip. Because of your sins you are a high-risk candidate for heaven. You understand that grace has its limits. Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards and hopes that you will find some other form of coverage."

◆Some people live their whole lives in fear of pushing God too far. But guess what? You don't have to! As we have been moving through the book of Romans together we've seen several things:

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- ◆1) God has created the perfect insurance policy and wants us to have it!;
 - ◆2) if you were thinking of buying it, guess again. There's not a soul in the history of humanity who may purchase this policy. One ticket disqualifies you, and everyone of us already has millions of tickets;
 - ◆3) on the other hand, Jesus will trade records with you, qualifying for the policy all who accept the offer in faith.
- ◆Now in our text Paul begins the second major section of his letter in which he delights to tell you all the perks that come with accepting the insurance policy from God's company. And that's what I want to do today. I want us to mediate on the beauties of the God's policy of Justification by Faith in Jesus. I expect that as we do you will find hope rising in your chest! So lets dig in. What I want to do is show you all the cool things that go along with the justification through Christ, just like you might show a friend all the cool things that a new app on your phone can do.
- ◆Paul spells it out twice (v1, and v9) "Since we have been justified" we...
- ◆**1. We have peace with God (v1).** Paul is not talking about the peace *of* God that you might feel inside, though that too is a gift from God. No, this is a war image. Instead of being at war, we have a peace treaty with God. Understand that God is against sin and wickedness precisely because he is *for* his children, us. God is by his very nature on the war path to destroy all that is

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unholy in his once perfect creation. That means that none of us live in a neutral safety zone. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are either at peace with God or at war with God. That's reality. Recall chapter one: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness," Romans 1:18, NIV.

◆ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16, NIV.

◆ But two verses later Jesus says...

◆ *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." John 3:18, NIV.*

◆ All sinners have a price on their heads. There is a contract out on them. There's no sidelines in this battle. You're in it.

◆ B. But, thankfully something else is revealed too!

◆ "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith.'" Romans 1:17, NIV.

◆ That's what Paul is excited about in our chapter. This "justification" (same word as "righteousness") by faith gives us a peace treaty with God. Justification means The war is over for all who believe in Jesus. It is past tense for them. Whether or not you feel happy on any given day, you are not in danger from the biggest superpower, God. It is an objective reality.

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◆ You see, whenever you and I sin it is like declaring war against God. We want to be king instead of him. We want to decide the laws instead of him. And that's a little spot of spiritual heat firing up while God's holiness is a heat-seeking missile by nature. You can't avoid it or wish it away. But when you accept Jesus' death for your sin, his body becomes your eternal shield, so you always live in the shadow of peace. Don't you want this!?

◆ **2. We have access to grace (v2).** This is another perk, or fruit of justification by faith in Christ. Access is a term used of being able to gain an audience with royalty. If you have put your faith in Jesus, Paul says, you are standing in grace. It's like everywhere you go you have a portal that can step you right into the throne room of heaven. It's present tense. You can FaceTime with the president of the Universe at all times in the simple act of prayer.

◆ This is too good to be true, isn't it? The implication is that you do not have to grovel, you do not have to make up for your misdeeds just to gain access of the ear of God. Justification means you are friends with God. He has time for you, always. Now!

◆ Pastor Rick Warren writes: My friend Ron Dunn took his young son to a carnival one time for his birthday. His son picked six boys to go with him, so Ron bought a roll of tickets. Every line he'd come up to, he'd pull off seven tickets and give them to all the kids. When they got to the

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Ferris wheel, all of a sudden there was this eighth little kid with his hand out.

◆ Ron said, "Who are you?"

◆ The kid said, "I'm Johnny."

◆ Ron said, "Who are you, Johnny?"

◆ Johnny said, "I'm your son's new friend. And he said you would give me a ticket."

◆ Ron asked me, "Do you think I gave him one? Absolutely."

◆ B. What's the first thing the devil whispers in your ear when you've done something you know to be against God's holy will? "You louse. You blew it now! God won't bless you this week. It'll be days before he'll even want to hear your prayers again." We believe him because we think God is like us, or our parents, or our friends. But he isn't. When in faith we trust that he declares us righteous because of Jesus' death, we step into grace and stay there.

◆ **3. We have hope of glory.** Paul has moved from a past tense benefit, to a present benefit, and now to a future benefit: the hope of glory. Do you know what glory is? Well, it's something Jesus left behind when he came to earth.

◆ "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." John 17:24, NIV.

◆ It's something that will appear at the end of time at Judgment day.

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◆“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.” Matthew 25:31, NIV.

◆It’s the end result of everything God has been doing with his people in history.

◆*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:28-31, NIV.*

When Paul writes that we have the hope of glory, he doesn’t mean that we kinda wish for a good future. This hope is a conviction, and assurance, a joyous certainty of the good life the believer is headed to in eternity. It’s future tense. (Like how Roy felt on Shanghai Noon when the barrage of bullets all missed him. “I’m invincible”!) Sin had made us “fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). Only justification through faith in the person Jesus gets us all the way there! If it depended on our good behavior, we ought always to question our future. But if it depends on an act of God himself, there is no need to doubt.

◆Now when people live by faith in Jesus’ perfection and not their own, even suffering just drives them closer to God. And when we get close to God we get even more certain. Why? Well, because we know that his love is for real! How can you tell? Well, when

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we were powerless(6), ungodly(6), sinners(8), and God's enemies(10) –that was the time when Jesus came looking for us. Now that's intentional love!! The one who *comes* to you, that person is the one who really cares.

◆[Larry **Nassar** and what Rachel DenHollander said to him on the final day of court...] or...[Imagine the villain on your TV show: he's hurt women and children, or killed his own son, or got out of jail when he shouldn't have, or blackmailed a really nice person out of all they possess. This ugly slime is "enemy".]

◆Most of us try to shoot our enemies. Most of us avoid people when they're mean. When our sister charges us what we think is too much, we give her the evil eye when we walk by. When someone trips us on the basketball court. We look for ways to foul him back. But Jesus wanted us when we were still bad!
Jesus always wanted you before you wanted him.

◆**4. We have joy even in suffering.** Wow, this is a big one when you think about it! Somehow justification by faith and not by good works enables us to be joyful even

◆when we suffer or are persecuted, or everyone is against us,

◆or when the world is going to hell in a hand bag,

◆or when Washington is becoming a swamp,

◆or when more and more kids are shooting up their schools.

◆When these things happen people don't tend to live in joy. They feel fear, and depression instead. That goes along with the

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theology of salvation by goodness. When you see continual badness, your hopes are dashed!

◆ If I'm a legalist how does suffering affect me? Well, I begin with **guilt** and shame, assuming I must have done something wrong. That's where we all go first. I have failed to perform and therefore am not valued or loved. I am responsible for achieving my fate. Next, I feel **hopeless** because I see myself having failed again. I've failed before and it's repetition depresses me. Then my **darkness** leads me to act out darkness. I wear dark clothes. I surround myself with dark artwork or symbols or dark tattoos because I feel dark. And if I **blame** others' evil, I'm no more joyful. They are as hopeless as I feel about me! I **resent** people who achieve, or at least seem to be "successful" or blessed because I know they're not good either and I'm jealous that they have more fortune than me. I might **make fun** of them mostly because seeing them prosper makes me feel bad about myself.

◆ On the other side of the equation I can become **proud** instead of despairing. I'm a good person. I obey laws, help my neighbors. Therefore this trouble ought not to be happening to ME! This leads me to **anger** at the supposed injustice of it all. In the end, my suffering, either in my pride or my despair drives me away from God and into my fallen, limited self instead. This leaves me **cynical**, and disillusioned because I always know my

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own inability to overcome the world. All this accompanies my belief that you have to earn your own salvation.

◆**B.** But suffering is different for the one given righteousness of Christ, for free, without deserving it at all! Paul tells us suffering as a Christian sets off a chain reaction of three more perks of justification by faith, which we'll look at next.

◆But first, note that this is the distinctive nature of the Christian religion that sets it apart from every other attempt at religion. During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. Philip Yancy writes, "The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of Karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of

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law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.”

◆ Now then, If I’m justified by faith and not works, and I live aware of the unconditional love of God, how does suffering affect me? That’s our next fruit of justification by the blood of Christ!!

◆ **5. We have perseverance.** The term is *υπομενω*. It means to “under-remain”, to “take it”, or to have stamina. For example, walking through my son’s apartment which he shares with several other students, I noticed a large jar, big enough for you to fit your hands into easily. It was full of rice. “Hmm, I thought. Somebody here likes rice.” No. Turns out one of his roommates is a rock-wall climber. Climbers habitually jam their hands into rice to toughen their fingers. Martial arts fighters do the same thing with big bowls of pebbles. Your skin gets harder, your bones strengthen, like scar tissue your nails harden and thicken. One instructor in a class once told me that his sensei had to break his nails off with a pliers!

◆ The person living by faith in Jesus’ payment for sin knows her mistakes do not alter her destiny. She can keep at it, try again, persevere on account of she knows suffering can’t beat her! She has already won through Christ! For her, suffering only makes for more perseverance. What’s the next reaction in the chain?

◆ **6. We have character or sturdiness.** A fruit of justification by faith is character, but the term means more “reliability” or sturdiness. Literally it means “tested” or “proved”. So maybe

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Subaru says, "Our Outback has been tested on the most rugged environments. We've driven it off of cliffs. We've left it on a frozen lake all winter and it started right up. We've crashed tested it into brick walls so that we could fine tune the airbag deployment system. It's been tested and rated. Or it's like playing a video game with various levels and bosses to conquer. You've not conquered level 4 and you're trying for the 11th time. You might have some apprehension, but not on the way there through levels 1-3. You *know* what to do there. You have character, proveness there. Even though you are still fighting through level 1,2,3 you have no anxiety. You got this. You have character.

◆ Paul tells us that when we live in faith that Jesus has beat the highest level of the game of life and death, sin and holiness, we just live more and more in confidence through our troubles.

◆ **Conclusion:** Living in the knowledge of what we've been talking about requires meditation. It's not just automatic. That's what we've been doing and that's what you need to do daily as well if you expect it to make the difference between being a depressed person or a hopeful one. When you mess up you don't excuse it. You say "Jesus died for me. His blood has this covered too and millions like it." When you discover another flaw in yourself, you remind yourself that Jesus would say, "I know about that Randy. I want you to live in glory with me bad enough to cover that too. Yes you heard me right." When you suffer you declare the truth to your heart, "God is not hating me. Every

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ounce of punishment was absorbed by Jesus on the Cross. He may be intervening, or correcting -but all his wrath was loosed on Christ.”

I have never been good enough
To merit your grace
And I know I've been bad enough to
Be put in my place
I will never be good enough
For the music I face
But Jesus wanted me bad enough
To take my place

I believe in the gospel Christ
I believe in his righteousness
I believe he was raised from the dead
Oh I believe Jesus was good for me.