

"The Fruits of Justification"

by

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It has been thought by many Christians that justification is a dry doctrine, and that it is a topic to be studied in the schools and considered only by theologians; but this is a misapprehension. It has a practical bearing upon Christian life and experience. No one can carefully study it as set forth in the Epistle to the Romans and not be filled with inspiration and delight. The soul bounds with joy in discovering and receiving the rich concurrent blessing which justification carries with it.

Paul, in the fifth chapter of Romans, presents the glorious theme of the life of the justified. It is a joy to follow him as he unfolds the moral and spiritual results of justification in the experience of the believer. Says Professor Moule, in this connection: The apostle "lays deep, indeed, the foundations of law and atonement, but he does it in the manner of a man who is not drawing the plan of a refuge, but calling his reader from the tempest into what is not only a refuge, but a home. He does not discuss it in isolation. He spends his fullest, largest, and most loving expositions on its intense and vital connection with concurrent truths. He is about now to take us through a noble vestibule, into the sanctuary of a life of the accepted, the life of union, of surrender, of the Holy Ghost."

The law-aspect of justification is fundamental and antecedent in the order of thought and relation. Pardon or forgiveness is included in the first legal transaction of justification; but other blessings are the fruit of this wonderful achievement.

1. Peace is one of the fruits of justification. It results from the changed relationship between the believer and God. There is no longer any controversy between the sinner and God. Reconciliation has been effected through faith in Christ. Out of this, friendly affections spring, and by reason of it there is a changed attitude on both sides. This brings the blessing of covenant peace to the believer. All condemnation is removed, and the penitent believer, though not innocent, is treated for Christ's sake as if he were. This is a blessed peace. What must it be to be freed from the storm of conscious guilt and condemnation and enter into the haven of divine composure and assurance in Christ. With what exultation the apostle described this glorious blessing. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God." Our life is in and from the Beloved, in whom we are accepted. And this life is one of peace, which flows through the soul as a river. In the possession of this divine composure and tranquillity of soul, let no Christian put a low estimate upon the fact and experience of justification, for springing from it is personal assurance experienced in and through faith in God in all the situations of life. The joy of this inward conscious comfort and peace consequent upon our access to the pardoning grace of God is exceedingly precious.

2. Life union with the Lord is another issue of justification. The apostle advances from the law-aspect of our acceptance to the life-aspect of our part in Christ's resurrection-life. "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10, R.V.). We are brought into union with the risen Christ, who lives for us and in us, and we in him. We are not only accused men,

transformed into friends of the law and Lawgiver, but we are also quickened from a state of spiritual death through the power of the living Christ and brought in spiritual union with his mighty life. This law-aspect and life-aspect, of which we have just spoken, though distinct in the order of thought, yet are intimately related. "The justifying sacrifice procures the possibility of our regeneration into the life of Christ."

3. Liberty. Sin is slavery. It exercises merciless dominion over the sinner. But now the Lord has met the claims of sin in our justification, and has liberated us from that tyrant. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). We are not only pardoned of all our offenses, but we are also brought into perfect freedom, in which we are joyful servants of Christ. Jesus paid the ransom price for us, even his own precious blood. Hence, we are not our own, but his property. Our slavery now is consistent with the highest and fullest freedom. Paul counted himself a prisoner of Christ, in the sense of gladly doing his bidding; and yet the apostle was delivered from the bondage of sin and released from the sentence of condemnation. So, as a fruit of justification, we are emancipated from the dominion and power of sin, and brought into the glorious liberty of the gospel.

4. The fruit of justification is a life of holiness and good works. Paul taught the vital relation between justification by faith and holy living upon the part of the justified. "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." This is in harmony with the teaching of our fathers. Our Church holds fast to the standard as set forth in our Confession of Faith. We define justification before God to be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by works, and we hold that "good works in Christ are acceptable to God and spring out of a true and living faith."

The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith without works does not encourage, as some would assert, indolence and license to a life of disobedience. It rather leads to obedience and holy living. The apostle, in the sixth chapter of Romans, shows how our acceptance through Christ's mediatorial sacrifice is in vital connection with our life in the risen Christ. The believer is not only justified in Christ, but he is still in Christ as the resurrection-life. The justified has the life of the Justifier, and being clothed with the power of this new, risen life, he goes forth under its impulsion to a career of holiness and Christian service. Justification is thus not an end, but a means to an end. We have received the ministry of reconciliation that we might walk in the newness of light. We have been released from the prison-house of sin, not to depart from God, but to honor and serve him as his free, loving children. The relationship is plain and vital. The fruit of justification, which God expects, is holiness and obedience. Since we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin unto God. This is its meaning and purpose. We are justified that we might be holy. Why should the sinner accept the grace of justification and then live unto himself? The fruit of the tree should be that for which it exists.

Professor Moule, in commenting upon the fruits of the new life of the justified in union with Christ, says: "It gives him a new power with which to live a grateful life; a power residing not in justification itself, but in what it opens up. It is the gate through which he passes to the fountain; it is the wall which ramparts the fountain, the roof which shields him as he drinks. The fountain is his justifying Lord, exalted life, his risen life, poured into the man's being by the Spirit, who is head and member one. And it is as justified, that he has access to the fountain, and drinks as deep as he will of its life, its power, its purity."

Nothing is more clearly taught in the New Testament than that Christian life is a life of faith unto good works. Jesus taught the duty and value of personal obedience and service. A life of consecration can only begin after the penitent sinner has been reconciled to God and his guilt canceled. Then his new relation and new life should be marked with the fruits of holiness and Christian activity.

5. Justification includes pardon of sins, restoration to divine fellowship and friendship, heirship with Christ, hope of the future life, and the complete redemption of the soul and body, together with the believer's final glorification in heaven. This gives a new phase to everything, both for time and for eternity. It changes the aspect of the present life, in that it gives us a vision of God as our father, our friend, and our beneficent lawgiver. He appears no longer as our judicial adversary. Our hearts are no longer oppressed with a sense of his displeasure and disapproval, but are now in pacific relations with him. His justice and mercy alike are revealed and maintained in our forgiveness through the merit of his Son's expiation.

This transforms the present life and gives a new meaning to our troubles and strange experiences. Before our reconciliation and peace with God, our afflictions seemed to be the signs of divine displeasure; but now the war is ended, the controversy is over, friendship is established. There is a clearer vision of God as a wise, gracious father, into whose spiritual household we have been introduced and adopted as his children. We have even the spirit of childship, which enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." Storms, misfortunes, and afflictions still come, but they are the test of our faith and devotion. We are now in the school of discipline which develops character and braces our hearts to a manly, heroic faith that evidences and certifies to our loyalty to Christ, who "died for our sins and rose for our justification." In such an experience, we may even rejoice in tribulations, yea, glory in them. In the assurance of our standing before God and our acceptance for Christ's sake, we are made to "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

The future is also transformed. We are no longer estranged from God. Darkness is lifted and dispelled from our existence. Our feet are no longer in the pit and the miry clay, but rest upon a rock, while the song of anticipation and hope fills our heart. What will not God do for those for whom he was willing to die! With Jehovah on our side and the mighty life of Christ in us, what must be in store for the believer! His peace is assured, his protection is vouchsafed, and his destiny is glorious. He has a right to have boundless anticipations of the glories and splendor of the immortal life. If God be for us, who can be against us? If God spared not his beloved Son, what will he not freely give us? What aspirations of holiness and perfection will he not satisfy? What a rich inheritance awaits the justified in the glorified state in heaven! Such a wonderful achievement as the reconciliation of man and God, through the death of Christ, and such a display of divine love as that which led the Son of God to die for his enemies and to make provision for their pardon, restoration, cleansing, and final glorification, is sufficient to put into the mouth of the justified believer a hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

Those who apprehend this great truth in its complete aspects, and have entered into the experience of its concurrent blessings, to which attention has just been called, cannot but be

stirred to the very depths of their being with holy joy. For pardon of sins, reconciliation to God, life-union with the risen One, acceptance in the Beloved, and adoption into the household of the Father, before whom we have good standing, to whom we sustain the relation of friendship, and to whose exhaustless grace, love, and power we have free and uninterrupted access, are great blessings. These are sufficient to arouse the profoundest emotions of the soul, command our loyalty, inspire our devotion, awaken our gratitude, stir us to holy living and joyous service, and fill us with the anticipation of the promised vision of the glory of God.

Such a change of relationship and such a standing in the boundless grace of God as the justified enjoys in Christ, illuminates the whole spiritual horizon of the believer, and gives him ground for the assurance and triumphant hope that, in the completed life beyond, he shall behold the glory of his God and share the blessedness of his immediate presence.

This is Chapter VI from *Justification* by Bishop G. M. Mathews (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1902). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that KJV-era verb forms have been modernized.