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## The Blessed Results of Justification

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year marks the fourth centenary of Luther's death, we have an added incentive to do this very thing. In the *Leichenprogramm of 1546* our attention is called to the fact that Luther, when he edited his translation of the Old and the New Testament, was even summoned by his co-workers to pass judgment on certain Hebrew phrases. The words pertaining to this interesting bit of news read: "Cum Rev. vir D. Martinus Lutherus edidit Germanicam interpretationem scripturae Propheticae et Apostolicae, adhibitus est et ipse, ut de phrasi hebraea iudicaret." The Luther who entered the *collegium biblicum*, as it was called either by Luther himself or more likely by Mathesius, was armed not only with his Latin and his new German Bibles, but invariably with His Hebrew Bible and with a new store of Hebrew vocables. Thus armed, he was called in and consulted by the Hebraists of this *collegium biblicum* in order to gain his advice both in regard to the reading and the meaning of Hebrew phrases. Let us also not fail to seek Luther's advice in applying the art of textual criticism to the Masoretic text. As Lutheran theologians and scholars we emphasize with Luther not only the "buchstaebische Sinn" of a passage, but as a very necessary premise the "Buchstabe," the original letter, word, and phrase of every text.

(EDITORIAL NOTE: This essay is an elaboration of a paper on the same subject, read at the Lutheran Academy Convention in Chicago on August 13, 1946, and published in *The Lutheran Scholar*, January, 1947.)

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## The Blessed Results of Justification

ROM. 5:1-5

By H. J. BOUMAN

In human affairs the results often are not in proportion to the preparations. There the old saying "The mountain labors and brings forth a ridiculous mouse" is frequently true. It is never thus in divine affairs. There the results always are commensurate with preparations, even though our limited vision and understanding fails to see it. Let us remember this as we study the blessed results of justification according to Rom. 5:1-5.

V. 1. Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Tischendorf has ἔχομεν, let us have. But many important codices have ἔχομεν, the indicative, and that seems to fit better into the context, because the holy writer objectively names a result of justification. Οὖν reminds us of all the tremendous preparations before there could be peace, all that is involved in the vicarious atonement, the incarnation of Christ, His substitutionary life, suffering, and death, His resurrection and the resultant declaration of God that the ungodly is now righteous, that all sins are now forgiven. And the sinner who believes this is now in possession of the righteousness of God. Thus are we justified by ("out of") faith because faith has accepted it. These are tremendous preparations indeed.

And the first result is peace πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, toward God, before God. As far as God is concerned, there is peace. The enmity which preceded this peace began when Adam and Eve believed the lies of the Serpent. The result was expulsion from Eden, the divine curse, man's subjection to misery, death, decay, eternal damnation, and, morally, his rebellion, his willing slavery to sin, his moral bankruptcy, his helplessness and hopelessness. He did not even want peace with God. His one desire was to continue in sin with impunity. His foolish and feeble efforts to appease God, his equally foolish endeavors to abolish God by simply denying His existence, originate in his desire to sin without restraint. If only God would leave him alone, he would be satisfied.

This most bitter enmity could end only in the total destruction of the world and in the eternal damnation of mankind. What horrors that implies surpasses all human comprehension.

But God, moved by His infinite mercy, decided to work a reconciliation. He sent forth His own Son into the world. To Him all the sins of man were imputed; He bore them in His body on the cross; He paid the penalty. He was not only made to be sin for us but also holy for us. By His vicarious active and passive obedience He reconciled God. God now is satisfied; His wrath is appeased; He has declared all sins forgiven. As far as He is concerned, there is peace. He now sends out His messengers to proclaim this peace and to invite and urge everyone to accept this peace. Hence these mes-

sengers are called the messengers of peace and their message the Gospel, the glad word of peace. The declaration of God that because of the vicarious atonement of Christ there is now with Him forgiveness of sin, reveals that on His side there is peace. And all who by faith have applied this divine declaration to themselves have entered into a state of peace with God. And thus objective peace becomes subjective peace, we who believe have this peace now subjectively.

*Peace* — it is difficult to define that term. Many hours I have searched for a satisfying explanation, but to no avail. The fact is that the full happiness and joy contained in the phrase "We have peace with God" cannot be grasped by the human mind in this life.

A young man boldly and courageously confesses Christ before a hate-inflamed, snarling crowd. They drag and push him out of the city; they hurl stones upon him. Yet he sees heaven open and the Savior beckoning; he sinks down, and under the hail of rocks he prays for his tormentors. Stephen had peace with God. By contrast behold the man slinking along forsaken lanes, His face is distorted; in his eyes is terror and despair. He ties a rope to a branch; he slips a noose around his trembling neck; he hangs himself. Judas had no peace. He barred himself from entering the state of peace by the erroneous thought that his sin was too great to be forgiven.

There was an old man eagerly awaiting the coming of the Messiah. When he saw Him, he said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." There was no fear of death, but joyful anticipation of the heavenly joys. Old Simeon had peace with God. — Another old man is sitting on the ash pile; his body is covered with festering sores; he mourns the sudden death of all his sons and daughters; he has lost all his property in one day; his friends pester him with accusing criticisms; his wife well-nigh curses him; his soul is tormented with doubts; his heart quakes with uneasy thoughts of divine displeasure. And yet he can triumph: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Job had peace with God.

We are living in perilous times. Our political leaders issue warnings of another war, a war that will destroy more lives and property than all other wars combined. Our nation is harassed by strikes and unrest. In other countries famine

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and epidemics mow down humanity by the millions. These are signs that the end of time is near. But Jesus says: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your hearts, for your redemption draweth nigh," Luke 21:28. To look up, to look forward to the end with all its terrors as to our redemption, that means to have peace with God. And if in your last hour you can pray:

Jesus' blood and righteousness  
 My jewels are, my glorious dress.  
 In these before my God I'll stand  
 When I shall reach the heavenly land,

that is to have peace with God. Read, study, pray the 23d Psalm; it breathes this peace and security, for the two go together: "I fear no evil, for Thou art with me . . . goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." That is peace.

But the certainty of this peace is not based on feeling. Very often we feel the very opposite of peace. When Satan shoots his fiery darts of doubt into our soul; when the holy Law points its ten accusing fingers at us; when sorrows, sickness, afflictions, engulf us; when the terrors of death make us tremble with fear—then we do not feel that we have peace with God, but we are troubled with the uneasy thought that God is against us. In such situations we must remember that this peace is a state, and that by faith in Christ, the Prince of peace, we are in that state in spite of our uneasy emotions. Having been justified by faith we *have*. *Have*, not shall have or will have, but *have*, now, at this time, we *have* peace with God. And we base this fact not on our conduct or feeling, but on Jesus Christ, as our verse points out, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

V. 2. Δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν τῇ πίστει εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ἣ ἑστήκαμεν, καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Note the two perfect forms. The perfect denotes something that has been accomplished and now lasts. Thus ἐσχήκαμεν, we have obtained and now have permanently, and ἑστήκαμεν, we have placed ourselves and now stand.

When Jesus by His vicarious atonement reconciled God and effected peace with God, He thereby secured access to this grace for us. The door was closed behind Adam and Eve, and an angel with a flaming sword placed there to bar re-entrance, and the word was: Stay out, keep out, stay away.

But now the door is wide open, and the word is: Come in, enter; come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out; in heaven is joy over every sinner that repenteth. An open door, free, unconditioned access to the grace of God, to this peace with God, to a full pardon, the forgiveness of sin, that is what we have through Jesus.

And that is true for all sinners. However, here St. Paul speaks of us who already stand in this grace, who have already entered through the open door. But we need this comfort too, and it adds to our peace to know this. For we daily sin much, by omission and commission. God's holy Law accuses us day and night; Satan torments us without letup; our soul is filled with the anxious thought: "Am I really forgiven, dare I ask for pardon again and again?" What joy to hear: Yes, you have free access to the grace of God; the door is always open; the fountain of the cleansing blood of Christ never runs dry; the living waters of grace are always there to refresh us. This access to the grace in which we stand includes the great privilege of prayer to our gracious Father in heaven.

No wonder, therefore, that the inspired writer proceeds: "And we boast of hope of the glory of God." We joyously, praisefully boast, in the good sense of the term, of the hope of the glory of God. That is the glory which God has in heaven and which He will share with us. Sometimes not much boasting is heard, but groaning and sighing aplenty. There are times when our eyes are filled with tears, when our heart is heavy and our soul is weary. We are discouraged by the seeming futility of our efforts; we are cast into the slough of despondency by accumulating sorrows. Yet deep down in our soul lives the boastful thought: Someday we shall be in heaven and share in all the glory of heaven. And that is sustaining us and renews our courage and zeal, re-animates our tiring spirit. That is the wine of gladness we need.

V. 3-4. Οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται, ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα.

Καυχᾶσθαι ἐν τινί means to boast not in, but of, something. We are glad not only of our hope, but, strange to say, we are glad also of our tribulations. Now, that is strange indeed, to

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have sorrows and to boast of them, to be glad of them. But that is one of the results of our justification. Being justified, having peace with God, having free access to God's grace, to stand in this grace — that certainly means that God is for us, on our side, wholly and fully; and since with God nothing is impossible, he can make even tribulations a blessing for us. In chapter 8:28 we read: "And we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God." The paradoxes in the Christian's life become blessed realities. Tribulation works patience, endurance, perseverance. God uses tribulation to strengthen our faith, to confirm our trust in our Savior. In sorrow God's assurances of His grace seem to be sweeter and more comforting.

That is our Father's purpose in permitting sorrows to befall us. Tribulations taste like bitter medicine, but they are wholesome. It is what we need lest we become careless and lightly take things for granted, lest our churchgoing become a mere habit and our prayers a mere repeating of words, lest we fall into a spiritual coma and ultimately sink into spiritual death. From this the merciful God wants to save us. Therefore He sends us tribulations to awaken us. Thus tribulations are really a blessing. That is why we can boast of them, enjoy them, praise and thank God for them.

And patience, or endurance, works experience. Δοκιμή denotes a test as well as the result of the test, experience. Experience cannot be obtained at universities or seminaries, but only in the school of life. If our faith has weathered the test of many tribulations, it has gained experience, which is of great value for future onslaughts. As the oak tree which is buffeted by the gales becomes sturdier and more firmly rooted, so our faith clings more tenaciously to the promises of God after each test of tribulations. But we must look at this truth in God's way. The feeble cry of a harassed sinner in distress "Lord, have mercy on me" often indicates a stronger, more experienced faith than our repetition of the Lord's prayer every Sunday.

Experience worketh hope. The hope of a tested, experienced faith is stronger, more unwavering, more intense. When Paul languished in prison, he triumphed: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Our future glory and happiness look brightest on a background of the darkness of tribulations. Our longing for the final deliverance becomes more intense when the angry billows of adversity threaten to engulf us. It is at such times that we learn to sing with deeper understanding:

Jerusalem, thou city fair and high,  
 Would God I were in thee!  
 My longing heart fain, fain, to Thee would fly;  
 It will not stay with me.  
 Far over vale and mountain,  
 Far over field and plain,  
 It hastes to seek its Fountain  
 And leave this world of pain.

Jacob said to Pharaoh: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life," Gen. 47:9. And on his death-bed he said: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord," Gen. 49:18. I think the meaning of these words become clearer by what Paul wrote to Titus: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

V. 5. Ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχώνει, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἀγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.

Ἐκκέχυται is a perfect passive form of the verb ἐκχέω, to pour out. Our hope, that is, our expectation to share in the glory of heaven, is not based on wishful thinking. We shall not be deceived in our hope; it will not put us to shame. Our hope is not a mirage, which disappears, dissolves into thin air. What we hope for is real; it is based on the promise of God, who cannot lie, and on the redeeming work of the Son of God. That convinces us that we shall most assuredly receive what we hoped for, that our hope will be fulfilled. How do we know this? Because the love of God is poured out in our hearts. St. Paul establishes an indissoluble connection between justification and the blessed results of justification. Therefore the love of God is the love of God revealed in the sacrifice of His Son for our salvation. And to make us realize,



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and rejoice in, this wonderful love of God, the Holy Spirit has been given us. He has by the Gospel opened our eyes to know our Savior and to appreciate the marvelous love that sent Him. And so we are convinced that our hope of eternal life will not prove a dream, will not shame us, but is real and true. To sum up: The blessed results of justification, as stated in these five verses, are peace with God, continued access to the grace of God, the hope to share in the glory of God, the ability to glory in the tribulations of this life, and the assurance that our hope will be fulfilled.

These are far-reaching results, more wonderful than we can now understand. But are these results not in a certain sense a matter of course? St. Paul exclaims: "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things!" 8:32. Yes, would the Holy Trinity plan our salvation before the creation of the world, would God the Father send His own beloved Son into suffering and death, and would the Son of God willingly give Himself for us, with all that this implies, and would the Holy Spirit deign to come to us in the Word and the Sacraments, would God do all this for trivial things? Certainly not. Such elaborate and tremendous preparations cannot but have marvelous results. That we do not fully see them nor at times feel them is due to our sinful state. And therefore we must constantly meditate upon them, study them, hold them up before our and our people's eyes.

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