

Romans 5:1-11

The Revelation of God's Righteousness as the Certainty of Salvation

In the foregoing, Paul elaborated on the essence of the epistle both positively and negatively. He showed that the Jew and the Gentile deserved God's judgment and he showed the way in which both will be righteous before God, viz., by faith in Jesus Christ. Now the apostle is going to speak about the fruit of justification, namely the assurance of salvation in peace with God.

A. Notes on the Text

Verse 1

The word "therefore" points to the reasons given in the previous chapters, especially 3 and 4. (See Glossary #24.) We shall leave the text-critical issue whether to read "we have" or "let us have" aside. The fruits of justification are listed as follows: peace, hope, perseverance (endurance), character.

Verse 2

"Access" is conduit or way to grace (cf. Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:19ff). Some manuscripts add "by faith." These words probably do not belong to the original text, but were added later. In substance, they are correct.

"This grace": the peace with God, or probably: all of God's grace in our salvation.

"In which we now stand": we now have solid ground under our feet, and a firm footing upon that ground. Thus, we have peace with God (v. 1), and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. The first (we have peace) is the basis for, and transition to, the second (we rejoice).

Rejoicing in the certainty of salvation is the theme of vv. 2-11; hence "rejoice" (exult) in vv. 3 and 11. Rejoicing is considering oneself fortunate, with an undertone of thankfulness and joy. Rejoicing in God is praising him in thankfulness and joy. (See Glossary #14 and #6.)

Verse 3

The experiences and marks of the Christian life are: sufferings, perseverance, (proven) character and hope (vv. 3-5). The sufferings are not only persecution, contemptuous treatment and prison for Christ's sake, but also hunger, war, earthquakes and shipwreck (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23ff., Colossians 1:24, and 1 Peter 4:12).

"Know": we know (it) from God's Word and experience it in our life.

"Produces": has the blessed result.

"Perseverance," also translated as "endurance": strength to bear up under great difficulties, persevere in the faith, be steadfast. (On the perseverance of the saints, see Canons of Dort, V.)

Verse 4

Perseverance has as blessed result "character": the state of someone who has passed the test to which he was subjected.

Verse 5

"Does not disappoint us": does not let us down. (cf. Psalm 22:5).

"His love": God's love towards us. (See Glossary #21.)

Verse 6

Expresses that through grace God's love for us existed before our salvation, and that our salvation was undeserved.

"Powerless": because of sin; the weak are the ungodly (v. 6), the sinners (v. 8), and the enemies (v. 10). Each word exposes us as unredeemed.

Verse 9

"How much more": much more certainly, much more definitely.

"Be saved from God's wrath": in the last judgment. In vv. 8-10 Paul puts it as follows: we were enemies - past; we are reconciled - present; we shall be saved - future.

Verse 10

"Enemies" can refer to (a) the active voice: hating God as sinners, or (b) the passive voice: hated by God because of our sin. Here it is both. That means that not only must we be changed (from enemy to friend of God), but also God had to change: his wrath over our sins had to be taken away. The word "reconcile" (Greek:*kat-allassein*) means in the first place an action, a change of heart of the previously wrathful God, and after that an action of men as well, letting themselves be reconciled. (See Glossary #26.)

Verse 11

"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice..." means: we are saved not only as *reconciled people*, but also as *people who rejoice*.

B. Main Thoughts

1. Justification as forgiveness of guilt and punishment, and as claim to eternal life produces many fruits. Justification is a new relationship with God, a peaceful relationship. We may rejoice in this relationship in faith, for all is

secure and certain in Christ. Thus this passage begins (v. 2) and ends (v. 11) with rejoicing in God.

2. The "character" referred to in v. 4 means: proven character. Someone is subjected to a test and passes it with flying colours. The continuous subjection to opposition, hardens and toughens. The steel of faith is tempered in suffering (v. 3). In this context we can speak of "experience." This is usually understood as referring to something that happens inside a person, an inner emotion of the heart, one's conscience or soul. It is there that a child of God experiences emotion in his life with God. But in the Bible, "experience" is usually something else. Typically it means to establish, conclude or determine something, for example, that someone is a liar (Proverbs 30:6), or, after weighing it, that an object has a certain weight (1 Chronicles 20:2). Thus, the psalmist concluded on the basis of experience that the LORD is a help in trouble (Psalms 46:1), and the Jews concluded after an investigation that Paul was a troublemaker (Acts 24:5). Sometimes "experience" means discover, find (e.g. 2 Kings 17:4; Jeremiah 11:9 [KJV "found"]).

The realization of the things God works in our lives by his Spirit and Word is therefore, part of experience, but the working of the personal certainty of salvation is not part of experience. To summarize: we experience; and on the basis of that experience we conclude that the LORD is faithful to his Word of promise and threat.

In the Canons of Dort, I, 12, we read also about experience as an observation, that is, a discovery that the fruits of election are present.

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