



I Have Been Justified

*"Therefore, since we have been justified through
faith, we have peace with God through our
Lord Jesus Christ."*

ROMANS 5:1

The school district in the small farming community where I was raised used to release students from school early every Tuesday afternoon for religious day instruction. Those who didn't want to go to the church of their choice went to the school's study hall instead. The rest of us went to our churches for an hour of Bible study. One Tuesday afternoon, a friend and I decided that we would skip this time. We went and played in the gravel pit.

The next day the principal called me in and confronted me with the fact that I had skipped school. He concluded his remarks by saying he had arranged for me to be home from school on Thursday and Friday of that week. I was shocked. I thought, *I can't believe it! I've been suspended from school for two days for skipping religious day instruction.*

As I rode the school bus back home that afternoon, I was terrified. I walked slowly up the long lane that led to our house, fearing my parents' wrath. I thought about faking an illness for

two days or getting dressed for school as usual but hiding in the woods all day. No, I couldn't do that to my parents. Lying wasn't the answer.

There was great unrest in my heart as I trudged up that lane. Because I was suspended from school, there was no way I could hide from my parents what I had done. When I finally told my parents, my mother was at first surprised, and then she started to smile. Unknown to me, she had called the principal earlier that week and asked permission for me to be released from school for two days to help with the fall harvest. I had already been justified for not going to school those two days!

There's Nothing Left for You to Do

Many Christians fear the prospect of facing an angry God, knowing that He is holy and we are sinful. They haven't grasped the fact that we have already been justified. The Greek language makes the concept of our justification very clear. Because of the precision of the verbs, the language is explicit in describing when something has already been done (past tense), is being done (present tense), will be done (future tense), or is a continuous action. In Romans 5:1, it clearly says we *have already* been justified before a Holy Father, Jesus *has already* paid the penalty for our sins, establishing our peace with God the Father.

When something has already been done, there is nothing left for you to do. Many Christians try desperately to become something they already are while the Bible declares that you cannot do for yourself what has already been done for you by Christ. The enemy's lie is that you must atone for your sin by works of some kind and thereby prove your love for God. The occult and non-Christian religions teach that.

So often, people will be aware of past sins, will have confessed them (perhaps many times), and will have forsaken them. Yet, they still have nagging thoughts of remorse and condemnation. One lady said, "I studied the Bible and prayed as many as 8 to 10 hours a day, but I still could not get free from my past until I went through the Steps to Freedom and accepted what Christ has done for me." Satan, who accuses us day and night (see Rev. 12:10), had kept her in bondage with his lies.

What Can Wash Away My Sin?

It's also true that much Christian service is done out of drivenness or guilt. Let me hasten to say, "Don't quit serving the Lord, but do check your motivation."

Other people punish themselves by cutting themselves, purging or hurting their bodies in various other ways. They do not realize that such deeds and thoughts are directly from the deceiver who does not want us wholly dependent on Christ. The enemy wants to keep us in bondage, having us attempt to pay for our own sins. I asked one lady who binged and purged several times a day, "Why do you do it?" She said she felt cleansed afterward. I asked her if she would be willing to renounce her purging and trust only in the cleansing work of Christ; she did and joyfully exclaimed, "That's it! My cleansing is in the shed blood of Christ on the cross!" As the old hymn says, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

Justified in, Through and by Christ Alone

Faith is the only means by which you and I can enter into a relationship with God. Galatians 2:16 says, "Know that a man is

not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." I cannot do for myself what only Christ alone could and has done for me.

The little preposition "in" plays a critical role in the New Testament. The fact that you are *in Christ*, that you are *in union* with Him, means that you are spiritually alive right now—you have *already been justified* before God.

What does that mean exactly? Look at Romans 5:9-11: "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

—Much, Much More

Here are four results of our justification, as revealed in Romans 5:9-11:

First, we are saved from God's wrath; our future is secure because God's wrath has been satisfied. You say, "Great, I have escaped eternal damnation."

True, but there is *much more*. We have peace with God. Before we were His enemies; now we are friends with God. Facing God would be an unpleasant prospect if we had not been justified. I mean, would you pursue God if He were a consuming fire? When I ditched school that one day, I was not

looking forward to facing the judgment, rejection or punishment of my parents. Knowing I was already justified and forgiven would have caused me to want to run to their loving arms rather than feeling dread and fear. We have peace with God. We don't have to pursue that peace; by the grace of God we have it now.

But that's not all! There's still *much more*. We have been saved through His life. My present life is already alive in Christ; I have spiritual life now. Eternal life is not something we get when we die; we possess it right now.

Well, is that it? No, *much more*. We also rejoice. John's stated purpose for his first epistle is, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete" (1 John 1:3,4). Many Christians are trying to appease an angry God to avoid punishment, when they should be pursuing a loving God whose justice has been satisfied by the sacrifice of His only Son. We have been justified, therefore we have, *right now*, the joy of peace with God. Why don't you thank Him as follows:

DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER, I thank You for sending Your only begotten Son to pay the price in order that I may be justified. I now accept by faith that I have peace with You through my Lord Jesus Christ. I renounce the lie that we are enemies and claim the truth that we are friends, reconciled by the death of Your Son. I rejoice in the life that I now have in Christ and I look forward to the day when I shall see You face-to-face. In Jesus' precious name I pray. AMEN.