

We proclaim that we are blessed - Sunday, July 13th 2014

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:1-5

Beloved in The Lord,

A little while ago we considered the truth that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. We saw that our mouth testifies to what resides in our hearts. We have also considered, the importance of our witness, and seen that it is vitally important that our testimony is pure and honourable to God at all times in all places.

I have given today's sermon the title: "We proclaim that we are blessed". This immediately raises the question: Is this your personal proclamation? Do you consider yourself to be blessed? How would you describe your life? Do you see and understand that you have so much to be thankful for?

It is so easy to lose perspective in life and to begin to believe that you have what you have, because you deserve it, or have in some way earned it. It is so easy to forget that everything that we have is completely dependent upon the grace of Almighty God. That is why we must always give Him all glory, honour and praise. It is good to regularly read Psalm 103, because this Psalm is a powerful reminder to praise God for all that we have.

***"Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;
Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases;
Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with loving-kindness and
compassion;
Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
The Lord performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed.
He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel.
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,***

***So great is His loving-kindness toward those who fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him” (Psalm 103:1-13).***

Verse ten contains a phrase that reminds us that if we are in Christ we are truly blessed:

“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

Praise God. Imagine for a moment how terrible it would be for us if God were to deal with us according to our sins. We would be eternally damned for the Bible clearly tells us that the wages of sin is death. Praise God that He is a God of mercy and love. This is why Paul writes:

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

Through Christ’s sacrifice, God has provided for our salvation. When we believe on Jesus, then His sacrifice becomes payment for our sin debt in full. We do not deserve salvation, we have not earned it, it is purely God’s gift of grace and love. Never ever think that you deserve to be saved and deserve a place in heaven. You don’t. I don’t. We deserve God’s wrath and punishment, but God chose to save us, forgive us and give us a place in His Heaven, because He is a God of Grace and Love.

Salvation is a gift, that is freely given to all who believe. It is a very expensive gift, bought with Christ’s own precious blood. Jesus had to shed His own innocent blood in order to save us. He did it because He loves us:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:16-17).

Praise God. Had Jesus come into the world to judge the world, we would all be condemned to eternal death. There would be only one verdict for all people: Guilty, sentenced to eternal; damnation.

But out of His indescribable grace and mercy and love, God sent us Jesus not as a judge, but as a Saviour.

This is why we are to consider ourselves blessed, and why that should be our proclamation and testimony. If we do not consider ourselves blessed, then we must seriously examine ourselves and see if we are truly saved, if we have received God’s gift of salvation.

If you were drowning in the sea, and someone rescued you, you would be eternally grateful to that person. I am sure that for the rest of your life you would remember that person and be grateful.

We were all drowning in the sea of sin, with no hope, when Jesus saved us, rescued us from the clutches of the Devil. How can we thank Him enough? We must consider ourselves blessed every day, and humbly thank Him every day.

But that is not all. Our text today gives us even more reason to consider ourselves blessed:

“and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through The Holy Spirit, who is given to us. What more do we need? We have the love of God poured into our hearts, through Jesus by The Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself abides in our hearts through God The Holy Spirit. Through Jesus we have peace with God. You see we are blessed and we should reflect this always.

In the two previous verses we read: ***“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;”***

Only the person who truly knows Jesus as his or her personal Saviour can say that they exult in their tribulations. The Christian understands that trials and tribulations are used by God to strengthen our character and faith. The Christian knows that tribulations are also under God’s control. In this same Epistle, Paul writes in Romans 8:28

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

The phrase: “To those who love God” is the key phrase in this passage. The things that we are talking about today are only in force in the lives of those who believe in Jesus, who love Him. If you do not love God through Jesus, then you cannot see yourself as blessed when trials and tribulations come. You cannot say that you know that all things will work together for your good. Outside of Jesus you do not have, and cannot have this assurance,

But if you are in Jesus then you can and should have this confidence, because God makes sure that all things work together for your good. You may neither see nor feel it, but it is the case because God has said so. This is a promise on which you can hang your hat. You can anchor your boat to this promise and it will stay safe in the greatest of storms. God said it, I believe it and that settles it!

Oh, how blessed it is to have peace with God, to be reconciled with Him through Jesus Christ His Son. You live in victory, no matter what your circumstances may be.

You know that no matter what, you have the victory in Christ Jesus the Lord. In the end all will be well! Hallelujah.

We consider ourselves to be, and proclaim that we are blessed because we have a God who loves us. We have a God who knows us and calls us by name. We have a God who is always looking out for us and watching over us. Psalm 121 reminds us that God neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Jesus said that if we are His sheep, then nothing can snatch us away from Him. We read:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29).

Praise God. If you are in Jesus then you are eternally secure. Nothing can separate you from Him. You are secure in Him ever and always. He has promised this in His Word and His Word is Truth. We proclaim that we are blessed because nothing can separate us from His love.

Do you see? Do you understand? This is why you must read His Word, because God’s provision in His promises. If you do not know His promises then you are easily deceived and the Devil can rob you of your peace and joy.

God has provided for all of our needs and therefore we proclaim that we are blessed.

I will close with a powerful reminder from Paul:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?³³ Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies;³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31-35;37-39)

Pastor Colvin MacPherson

Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.