

Romans 5: Peace with God

In Romans 5, Paul traces the results of having been justified by faith. We can see this from the opening word of the chapter: “Therefore...” Clearly, as a result of what he already has said, Paul is coming to certain conclusions. The word *rejoice* is the key to this whole chapter. In the first two verses Paul says there are three results when we have really believed in Jesus Christ for our justification, and we rejoice in these results. In v 3 he says, “Not only that, but we *rejoice* in our sufferings ...” That is a higher stage of Christian growth and development. Then, in v 11, we find that Paul, with his very logical mind, says, “More than that, we also *rejoice* in God...” This is the third level of Christian growth...

Peace with God through faith (Romans 5 v 1 to 11)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith” (v 1) – up to this point, Paul has argued that the only way of salvation is to be justified by grace through faith. Now he states the practical benefits. ‘Justified by faith’ speaks of a *legal decree*. Romans 1 v 18 to 3 v 20 found us guilty before God’s court of law, God’s glory, and our conscience. Paul explains how the righteousness of God is given to all who believe. “Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” – this is the first benefit. Because the price is paid in full by the work of Jesus on the cross, God’s justice towards us is eternally satisfied. This is not the ‘peace of God’ (Philippians 4 v 7); this is *peace with God*; the battle between God and self is *finished* – and God has won, winning us. This peace comes only through Jesus – his work is the entire ground for our peace: Jesus *is* our peace (Ephesians 2 v 14). “Into this grace in which we stand” (v 2) – this is the second benefit – we *stand in grace*, in God’s unmerited favour. This grace is given *through* Jesus, and gained *by* faith.

- What three benefits do we enjoy as a result of ‘justification by faith’ (v 1, 2)?
- What does it mean to “rejoice in our sufferings” (v 3)? What does it *not* mean? Hebrews 12 v 11 is helpful here. Why can we rejoice in our sufferings (v 3 to 5)?
- Suffering produces something – what? Is this automatic (v 5)?
- How does God demonstrate his love for us (v 6 to 8)?
- What in addition to Jesus’ death is involved in our ultimate salvation (v 10)?

“Knowing that suffering produces endurance” (v 3) – we can rejoice in our sufferings because they can produce endurance (perseverance). A long-distance runner must be stressed to gain endurance. Sailors go to sea. Soldiers go to battle. For a follower of Christ, suffering is part of the Christian life. We should not expect a trouble-free Christian life, because: (i) God uses suffering for our good; (ii) God knows how much suffering we can take, and measures the suffering we face; (iii) those who are not Christians also face suffering.

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (v 5) – every Christian should have an experience of this, a deep inner awareness of God’s love for us. God’s love isn’t given to us in a trickle, it is *poured* out in our hearts. God’s love is communicated through the Holy Spirit. A lack of awareness of God’s love can often be caused by a failure to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, and to walk in the Spirit.

“Christ died for the ungodly” (v 6) – Paul mentioned the idea of a substitutionary atonement with the word *propitiation* in Romans 3 v 25; here, he makes the point again by saying that Christ died *for* the ungodly. The Greek word ‘for’ is ὑπέρ (*hyper*), which means ‘for the sake of’, ‘on behalf of’, or ‘instead of’, as in John 11 v 50 and Galatians 3 v 13...

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“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (v 8) – how does the death of the Son demonstrate the love of the Father? Because “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5 v 19). The work of Jesus on the cross for us is God’s ultimate proof of his love for us. The demonstration of God’s love isn’t displayed only in that Jesus died, but it is also seen in *whom* Jesus died for – undeserving sinners and rebels against him.

“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God” (v 9) – if we are justified by the work of Jesus, we can be assured that we are also saved from wrath through him. The wrath of God that was “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1 v 18) was placed upon Jesus as our substitute. What is this ‘wrath of God’? It is God’s righteous wrath. It is true that we must be saved from the world, the flesh and the devil; but most of all we must be rescued from the righteous wrath of God!

“If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (v 10) – if God showed such dramatic love to us when we were enemies, think of the blessings we will enjoy once we are reconciled to God! If God does this much for his enemies, how much more will he do for his friends! This reconciliation isn’t just helpful when we die; it touches our life *right now*. God has finished dealing with believers on the basis of wrath. He may chasten us as a loving Father, but not in punishment or payment for our sins. “Through whom we have now received reconciliation” (v 11) – the point is clearly emphasized: what matters is what we have through Jesus.

Death in Adam, life in Christ (Romans 5 v 12 to 21)

This is one of the most theologically important passages in the Bible. It is a complicated argument, and we need to follow it carefully. In this passage is the clearest statement in the Bible on what is called ‘original sin,’ that is, the blight that has been passed on to the whole human race as the result of the sin of our ancestor Adam. There are four sections: (i) in verses 12 to 14, Paul begins with us in Adam, where we start as a human race; (ii) verses 15 to 17 give us a great parallel of what we are brought to if we are in Christ, as contrasted with what we were in Adam; (iii) verses 18 and 19 give a brief summary of this truth; and (iv) the chapter closes with a brief explanation of the relationship of the law to all of this (verses 20 and 21).

- What was the consequence of Adam’s sin upon all men (v 12)? What is the consequence of Jesus’ “act of righteousness” (v 18)?
- What other comparisons are made between Adam and Christ (v 12 to 19)?
- “But the free gift is not like the trespass” (v 15). What was the trespass? What is this gift of God?
- How has this gift been made possible, and how can it be enjoyed?
- Which abounded more – sin or grace (v 20)? Why?
- What four ‘reigns’ are described in this passage (v 14 to 21)? Two are the sad experience of all men – why? How do the other two operate? What benefits do they bring and how can we enjoy them?

“Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come” (v 14) – Paul presents Adam as a ‘type’ – a picture, a representation – of Jesus. Both Adam and Jesus were completely sinless men from the beginning, and both of them did things that had consequences for *all* mankind. “By the one man’s disobedience” (v 19) – Adam’s *disobedience* makes mankind sinners, but Jesus’ *obedience* makes many righteous. Each representative communicates the effect of their work to their ‘followers’. See also 1 Corinthians 15 v 21, 22.

“So that... grace also might reign” v 21) – as Paul states, “sin reigned in death”, but grace also reigns. The reign of grace is marked by righteousness and eternal life, and is through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Prayer – Lord, thank you for these wonderful, but awe-inspiring truths. Thank you that since we have been justified by faith, we now have peace with God through Jesus, our Lord. Thank you that through him we have access by faith into your grace, and indeed we rejoice in our hope of the glory of God. We give you humble thanks for these wonderful truths, in Jesus’ name, Amen.