

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Romans 5

Comments on Romans 5

The Fruit of Righteousness by Faith. 5:1-11.

5:1-11 - All who are justified are justified by faith in Christ. It is evident that in Paul's language, to be righteous and to be justified is the same thing; for he has been arguing that we are made righteous by faith, and then adds: "Having therefore been justified by faith, we have peace with God ..."

What should be the fruit of such a doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ? A life of holiness should spring from it. Paul will discuss this more fully later, but he begins by asserting that it ought to bring three things.

1 - 11 -- Three things justification by faith does:

1. 1, 2 - It produces peace with God and the privilege of access to him. There is the peace of justification and the war of sanctification. In Christ we have peace; in the world we have tribulation. Mt. 10:34. Jesus had no difficulty teaching both truths; he experienced them both in his own life.

The peace here is objective peace. It implies the removal of divine wrath from the sinner and the sinner's restoration to divine favor. Phil. 4:7.

The peace is obtained through our Lord (owner, master) Jesus (Savior) Christ (Anointed) and is accompanied by access by faith into grace in which we stand. Clearly

Rom. 5: 1 Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;
2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

salvation is not universal – access into grace is obtained through Christ. That access is a confident access. Heb. 4:16. Christ not only makes intercession for his people (Rom. 8:34), he ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25).

To offer Jesus as the Prince of Peace while we ourselves are spiritually neurotic makes no sense at all. Paul says we are in – we have gained access into grace. It is gained by faith. Faith here is not in contrast to repentance or obedience, it is in contrast to law or works of law (flawlessness). We don't gain access by merit.

This access into grace by faith in Christ leads to joy – we rejoice (exult) in hope of the glory of God. The “glory of God” refers to the marvelous salvation that God has in store for his people. It isn't only that we exult while we hope, it's in the realm of hope that we rejoice. Hope enables rejoicing. Scriptural hope is no weak thing. It is not simply a desire for the object of hope, it is a confident expectation. Those who have hope don't fearfully await the judgment, they joyfully expect salvation. We rejoice when we think on the solid basis for the expectation of future bliss. Hope as the scripture uses it is incompatible with anxiety, uncertainty, and hand wringing.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' name.
On Christ the Solid Rock I stand.
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

3 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our

tribulations: knowing that tribulation
worketh stedfastness;
4 and stedfastness, approvedness; and
approvedness, hope:
5 and hope putteth not to shame; because
the love of God hath been shed abroad in
our hearts through the Holy Spirit which
was given unto us.

2. 3 - 5 -- It furnishes support in affliction.

A person who can only be happy when everything is going well won't remain that way for very long. Happiness or blessedness doesn't depend on outward circumstances (Mt. 5:1ff). But how is it possible to exult in sufferings? How can suffering – here probably especially tribulation for the sake of Christ and the gospel – be regarded as a blessing? Perhaps we should first define “blessing.” We speak of pain, poverty and deprivation as “curses” and the possession of things as “blessings.” That is much too simple. A “blessing” is that (and only that) which brings us closer to God.

“Tribulation” is the rendering of “thlipsis.” Trench, in *Synonyms of the New Testament*, describes it as what happened in ancient England when an accused refused to plead and heavy weights were placed on their chests until they were so pressed that they were crushed to death. This, Trench said, was literally “thlipsis.” Tribulations are the pressures of life that come upon saints. The German philosopher Nietzsche rightly said, “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.”

Tribulation is the arena of rejoicing “knowing” that tribulation works “patience” or “steadfastness.” It is a bearing-up under and not simply endurance. It is spiritual staying power.

This staying power results in “approvedness.” This word speaks of the process of proving or the result of proving. The object of this hope will be fulfilled; it

will not be put to shame.

At the bottom of all of this is the love of God that is seized by faith and is the foundation of all that has gone before. This love is shed abroad in (not into) our heart by the Holy Spirit whom God gives as a seal of sonship (2 Cor. 1:21-211; Gal. 4:6) and as an earnest of that for which we hope (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14). God continues to shed that love in our hearts by the fact that he has given to his children an abiding gift of that love, the Holy Spirit. God's love is not portioned out drop by drop, it is poured, supplied freely, abundantly, copiously, lavishly.

6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly.

3. 6 - 11 -- It infers the certainty of salvation from the fact that God has sent his son to die for us.

v. 6 - Man's helplessness without the death of Christ.

All of this sheds light on the glorious character of justification by faith, specifically on the divine deed whereby the sinner who flees to God for refuge is declared righteous. While we were still weak, Christ died for the **ungodly** (a term we would hardly have applied to ourselves even before we became Christians). It happened at just the right time – in due season. The emphasis here is on the love of the Father as it is expressed in the death of Christ.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his own love

vv. 7-11 – If he died for us when we were sinners, how much more now that we are justified.

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of *God* through him.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life;

11 and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

God's love for us is both unprecedented and unparalleled. This becomes apparent from the fact that for a righteous man one will scarcely die though, by rare exception, one might possibly dare to die for a good man. God demonstrates his love for us in that he sent Christ to die for us when we were weak and sinful. Some spend much time debating the "righteous" and the "godly" and completely miss the point.

"Demonstrates" is in the present tense, indicating that what was true when Paul wrote it continues to be true for us.

Since God has given us the greater blessings, he will not withhold from us the lesser blessings. If he wanted to save us when we were enemies, how much more will he want to save us now that we are friends? If God wanted to reconcile us so much that he provided the basis in the death of his Son while we were enemies, how much more will we be saved through the life that he is now gloriously living. If he endured the hard part for enemies, shouldn't that assure us all the more that he will not treat wrathfully those who have faith in Christ?

How can we fail to rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ? We rejoice not only in what God has given us. We rejoice in who and what God is. It is because of what God is that we have from him the things that we have. It is by Jesus that we really know God, and, consequently, it is "in" Jesus that we have ground for rejoicing in God. 1:Pet. 1:21 assures us that it is by Jesus Christ that we believe in God. 1 Pet.

1:1-9.

12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:

13 for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the trespass, so also *is* the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many.

16 And not as through one that sinned, *so* is the gift: for the judgment *came* of one unto condemnation, but the free gift *came* of many trespasses unto justification.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, *even* Jesus Christ.

18 So then as through one trespass *the judgment came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness *the free gift came* unto all men to justification of life.

19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

20 And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin

5:12 - 21 -- The Summary of the Case for Righteousness by Faith.

This section summarizes the situation that faces all people. "In Adam" there is only condemnation and death. "In Christ" there is acquittal and eternal life. A person is "in Christ" through faith; without faith he is "in Adam." "In Adam" is to stand on one's performance apart from faith and to be "out of Christ." Those "in Adam" are represented by Adam; those "in Christ" are represented by Christ.

First, let us learn that this passage does not teach original sin – inherited guilt and inherited spiritual death. Neither does it teach Universalism – the salvation of all men. The truth that God does not hold one person responsible for another's sins is taught throughout scripture (review appropriate lessons on Ezekiel chs. 18 and 20; see also 2 Chron. 25:4). These passages are clear (and thus control more difficult passages), yet Calvinism teaches exactly that doctrine. Calvinism has God teaching one doctrine and practicing another.

Romans 5:12-21 is not the only passage with the difficulty of "representation" in it. See Gen. 9:20-25. There Ham sins against his father, and Canaan is cursed. All kinds of explanations flow from Calvinists seeking to exonerate God of the charge of unfairness. But if it is

abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly:

21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

quite fair for God to condemn the world on account of Adam's sin, there should be no unfairness for punishing Canaan for Ham's sin. The truth is that Ham is punished in Canaan and that Canaan "inherits" the curse because he has the character of his father and it is in him that the curse really comes out. The issue is one of "like father like son." Calvin himself, in commenting on Genesis 9:25, explains the passage on the basis that Canaan is a reprobate son like his father and so is justly punished. But why is such justification of God necessary? According to Calvin, God acted on mankind in a punishing fashion even before they were born.

In Exodus 20:5 the iniquity of the fathers is visited on their children. Are these also our representatives as is Adam according to the Calvinists? Did they sin for their children? This passage has the appearance of "inheritance"? But isn't it the fact that these children acted just like their father?

Then there is Matt. 23:35-36. Can there be any clearer statement of one set of people being held responsible for the sins of another set of people. But there is no such thing here and no sensible student of the Bible teaches that there is. Jesus likens them to their fathers (Matt. 23:31-32) and not just in physical matters. They are sons of their fathers in spirit; they have their fathers' ways and walk in their fathers' steps. In them Cain is alive again because they are the kind who kill their brother, and in them the judgment of Cain will happen again. Christ no more holds them personally responsible for the personal crime of Cain than God holds us

personally responsible for Adam's personal crime. But we are all just like Adam so he is the fit representative of his children. In the wording of this text we have a generation bearing the sin of former generations ("ye" slew), yet no Calvinist holds that all our forefathers are our "federal heads" or representatives. That is reserved for Adam.

On the flip side, what should we say about God's showing lovingkindness to the children of the lovers of God? Is this inherited also? If not, why not? Yet all agree that if our parents are righteous while we are wicked that we will not inherit mercy.

What Paul is discussing here what is available "in Christ" and "in Adam." Paul sets conditions aside and asserts that in Adam we have condemnation and in Christ we have eternal life. He has established that man, standing on his own record has failed miserably and has found death, but that in Christ there is life. Adam's record is ours under "law"; Christ's record is ours under "faith."

Paul also sets conditions aside in Romans 11. In 11:11 Paul says that the Gentiles are blessed by the Jewish fall (no conditions). See also 11:15. In 11:30 Paul says that the Gentiles received mercy through Jewish unbelief (no conditions). This does not mean that there are no conditions. They are simply unstated. The world is rich through the fall of the Jews IF it turns to Christ in faith. The world was made sinners by Adam IF they go the way of Adam. The world is made righteous by Christ IF they turn to Christ in faith.

Calvinists who condemn ALL in Adam strangely explain ALL in Christ as less than 100%. They have no trouble reading the requirement of “faith” into the passage. Read the passage and see if you can find any condition, faith or otherwise. If the ALL in Christ has conditions stated elsewhere in Scripture, can not the ALL in Adam have the same? If not, why not? The Calvinists can only avoid Universalism by importing conditions from other passages.

v. 12 – “Therefore” points back to reconciliation through Jesus Christ. He sets us up for a comparison – Adam is one way for the race, Jesus another. Adam’s gift to the world was death. While it is true that physical death came into the world through sin, Paul’s point throughout is spiritual death – separation from God. In this section “death” contrasts to “eternal life.”

This death passed onto all men because all sinned. Babies die and it has nothing to do with their morals. While it is grammatically possible for this to mean that all sinned when Adam sinned, it is not consistent with Paul’s prior argument. It would hardly have been necessary for him to quote the texts found in Rom. 3:9-18 to prove that the Jew was dead in sin if he and they were all dead because they had sinned in Adam’s sin. When he says “all sinned,” he is summing up the history of the race. With sin came spiritual death (although accompanied by physical death) and that death spread to all men because, as Paul looked back, all had sinned. Since saving grace came through one Man and destroying sin came through

one man, these two became representatives of the race.

v. 13 – For until the law sin was in the world. Here the law of which he speaks must be the law of Moses. Before Moses came along sin was in the world. People were breaking laws, they just weren't sins like Adam's (v. 14b) until Moses came along. But they were breaking laws and that means there was law in the world before Moses. The book of Genesis confirms this. Gen 9 lists some of them. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for breaking some. Noah's flood was sent because man was breaking laws. Man has never been without law.

But sin is not imputed where there is no law. Some suggest that this says that there was sin without law because it says that the sin that exists is not imputed in the absence of law. This has been discussed in connection with 4:15. This must refer to a law arrangement, i.e., in the realm of faith.

v. 14 – Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses. "Nevertheless" stresses the reign of death in spite of the gracious arrangement of God that involved the imputation of righteousness or the non-imputations of sin. In spite of the faith arrangement, sin reigned.

Death reigned over them that had not sinned after the similitude or likeness of Adam. Adam sinned against a law that had explicitly written over it: SIN AND YOU WILL DIE! He sinned and he died. Others sinned sins that didn't have a death penalty spelled out along with the law, and they died, too. Paul makes clear that any of sin's

manifestations brings death.

In what respect was their sin unlike Adam's? One suggestion has been made. Others suggest that Adam's sin was the first sin and no other was like it in that regard. Whatever it means, one thing is clear – their sin was different from Adam's and they died. If they inherited Adam's sin it would have been of the same likeness or similitude. The fact that they died for a sin that was not after the likeness of Adam's says plainly that they did not die for Adam's sin. Col. 2:13 and Eph. 2:1 leave the definite impression that people are dead through their own trespasses and sins.

In Romans 7:9 Paul says that he was alive apart from the law but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died. He met up with the commandment of God and he died. Paul clearly did not believe that he was born spiritually dead due to Adam's sin. He stated that he sinned (sin revived) and he died.

Adam was a type of him who was to come. Adam was the father of the race as it fell under bondage to sin. Christ is the "father" of the race as it finds salvation from God by grace. Christ is here called "the coming one." Paul takes his stand with Adam and looks forward. Some contend that this means coming soon and refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

v. 15 – Paul contrasts the sin of Adam with God's gift. Christ has procured more blessings than Adam lost, and thus repairs the evil of the fall. Grace surpassed sin.

Grace outdid sin. We are not dead spiritually because Adam brought death into the world any more than we are spiritually alive because Christ brought that into the world. We do not partake of the spiritual life unconditionally, so neither do we partake of the spiritual death unconditionally.

v. 16 – The free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. This phrase is the key to the verse. The first part of the verse stresses another contrast between the gift and the just judgment on sin. The condemnation came as the result of one sin, but the free gift was made ours even after many sins. Sin's horror is seen in that one sin is enough to bring condemnation on a man or woman. Grace's beauty and wonder is even in the fact that even after many sins a person can receive justification.

v. 17 – They that receive the abundance of grace. . .reign. . . This verse brings in the contrast on reigning. Sin brought death to the throne to reign while the obedience of Christ brought life to reign.

v. 18 – Through one act of righteousness. Paul stresses by repetition the concept of "one man" and "one trespass." We have all so completely agreed with Adam that we have all taken the same downward course. Our life has testified that this would have been our choice had we been Adam. All people under law have chosen one route. The point being stressed is man's solidarity in sin.

The same is true when one Man is stressed. By him we find life. In union with him we are justified. By his work, through

faith, we receive justification – through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men.

Here the Universalists come up with their “ultimate reconciliation.” Grammatically this may be possible, but it can only be reached by interpreting purely linguistically and ignoring the need to interpret harmoniously with the entire scripture.

v. 19 – Through the obedience of one. This verse supports v. 18. It stresses the certainty of what will follow. “For” as through the disobedience of one (who represents us all since we follow in his steps) “the many” were made sinners, “even so” through the obedience of Christ shall “the many” be made righteous. Paul does not say how these were made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, nor how they are to be made righteous by the obedience of Christ. As Adam's disobedience did not make the many sinners without their choice, so neither does the obedience of Christ make the many righteous without their choice.

v. 20 – And the law came in besides that the trespass might abound. There is no definite article before “law,” but the context dictates that it is the Mosaic law. It cannot be “law” of any kind because it is clear that sin was in the world before this “law” appeared. It refers to revealed law through which men would see the enormity of sin and their helplessness under its reign. This would help them to realize more their need of deliverance. Sin abounded in that it triumphed over the sinner and offered no hope of deliverance. Paul wants to make

clear that “law” isn’t the answer to man’s dilemma. If “law” had been the answer, death wouldn’t have reigned from Adam to Moses since they had law. It cannot be that it was just the wrong kind of law, because when the law of Moses came in the result was multiplied sinning.

When there was law, sin abounded, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Grace was more than a match for sin. Sin worked hard and grace was the winner.

v. 21 – that as sin reigned in death even so might grace reign. God wanted to give grace an opportunity to shine. He wanted grace to be seen as the more lovely; reigning by giving life while sin had a baleful role in dealing out death.

In conclusion, we learn that Adam brings death, Christ brings life. The central stress is that Law can acquit no flesh for we are all sinners and the law cannot change that fact. In Adam, therefore, our heritage is condemnation. In Christ our heritage is life. And what of the law of Moses? Didn’t it change things when it came in? Not at all. It was more of the same; more law meant more sinning. The only thing that law did was to give grace an occasion to shine. But if that’s true, doesn’t it follow logically that we should sin that grace may abound? Paul answers that question beginning in chapter 6.