

Study 6: Romans Chapter 5

Introduction

Paul now turns his attention to the *remedy* for sin. So far he has painted a quite bleak picture of all being condemned by sin, and that whilst there is a remedy for sin, it does not come by keeping the Law. It only comes by faith in God – exactly the same kind of faith in God that Abraham showed.

Body of the Study

What is the remedy for the problem of sin?

How do we rejoice in our sufferings?

What function does the Holy Spirit have?

How did God show His love for us?

How is Jesus compared to Adam?

What place does the Law have in all of this?

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *What is it that gives us the assurance of salvation?*
- *What are the practicalities of dealing with the sufferings that we face in life – how do we do it, and how do we endure them? What does “endure” mean?*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 6 in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 6: Chapter 5

Introduction

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Body of the Study

What is the remedy for the problem of sin?

Paul has already shown that the remedy for sin is faith in God through Christ (3:23-25, 28). He has further shown in chapter 4 that the remedy *did not come* by keeping of the Law (as the Jews might have supposed, and was extolled by the Judaisers on many other occasions). Rather, Paul says that whilst we are justified by our faith in God, it is not faith in God (the Father) alone, but “...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” (5:1 NKJV)

There are several possibilities here –

Paul could be saying that Jesus has made peace for us by providing the remedy for sin, and therefore our faith and relationship with the Father is made possible. That is true, but taking it a little further, - that we have a direct relationship with the Father – that part is not true, because Jesus fulfils the role of a mediator.

Paul could be saying that the only way that we can have the relationship with the Father is if we have the relationship with Jesus. This is consistent with other scripture (eg Jn 14:6).

He essentially says this in the next verse – that it is through Jesus that “...we also have access by faith into this grace...” Jesus is the remedy for sin, and it is only through Him that there is a remedy (since He was the total and complete sacrifice). But more – it is only through Him that we can have a relationship with God because He is our mediator (Heb 9:15; 12:24).

How do we rejoice in our sufferings?

A perfectly natural question might be “If God is on our side, and Christ is our mediator, then why and how is it that we as christians have suffering? Why isn’t God looking after us? Does suffering mean that God has forsaken us, or that we are no longer being blessed by Him?”

On the contrary, our ‘trials and tribulations’ *build character*. “...tribulation produces patience, and patience produces character, and character produces hope...” (5:3-4) When we are faced by problems, trials, and sufferings, there is often not much that we can do about it. In fact about the only thing that we can do is to endure them. But we have a model in Jesus. He has been there before and has shown us the way that He endured the sufferings. In Philippians, Paul paints the picture of Jesus as the model who went through pain and suffering – and all for the things that He did not deserve (Phil 2:5-11). The NIV Bible Commentary makes some good comments on suffering and growth:

The word "rejoice," used to characterize the hope of the Christian for participating in the glory yet to be revealed (v. 2), now carries over to another area, different both in nature and in time--that of "sufferings." Peace with God does not necessarily bring peace with other people. The actual conditions of life, especially for believers in the midst of a hostile society, are not easy or pleasant, but the knowledge of acceptance with God, of grace constantly supplied, and of the prospect of future glory enables believers to exult in the face of sufferings. The usual setting for the term "sufferings" is external suffering such as persecution, though it is used occasionally for distress resulting from external events affecting the human spirit.

At this point Paul does not give full treatment on the subject of suffering, since he refers to it here simply as one link in a chain of events that benefit the Christian. Elsewhere Paul stresses that our sufferings are an extension of the sufferings experienced by Christ in the days of his flesh, rightly to be experienced now by those who make up his body (Php 3:10; Col 1:24). Believers rejoice when by their suffering they can show their love and loyalty to the Savior (Ac 5:41).

Suffering has value in that it produces "perseverance" (GK G5705) or "steadfast endurance." Believers do not take the pressure of tribulation passively by abjectly giving in to it; rather, they resist it, like Christ who "endured" the cross and thus triumphed over suffering. One of the distinctives of the Christian faith is that believers are taught to glory and rejoice in the midst of suffering rather than to sigh and submit to it as an inevitable evil.

Such perseverance develops "character" (GK G1509). Job sensed its worth, saying in the midst of his troubles, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10 RSV). The word "character" indicates tested value. The newborn child of God is precious in his sight, but the tested and proven saint means even more to him because such a one is a living demonstration of the character-developing power of the Gospel. When we stand in the presence of God, all material possessions will have been left behind, but all that we have gained by way of spiritual advance will be retained.

This helps to explain Paul's statement that character produces "hope" (GK G1828), the climax of the items beginning with "sufferings." Just prior to that (vv. 1-2) Paul had described hope from the standpoint of another series--faith, peace, access, grace, and then hope of the glory of God. In other words, just as our present access to God gives hope of sharing the divine glory, so with our sufferings. They help to produce character, and approved Christian character finds its ultimate resting place in the presence of God, not in a grave. By the tutelage of suffering the Lord is fitting us for his eternal fellowship.

Paul then makes it plain that this hope is not just a pious wish, for it does not put one to shame. It does not disappoint, because it is coupled with the love of God (v. 5). Human love may bring disappointment and frustration, but not the love of God. Subjective desire is supported by an objective divine gift guaranteeing the realization of an eternal fellowship with God.

This passage concludes with a statement about the importance of the believer's possession of the Holy Spirit as a certification concerning the future aspects of his salvation, a theme developed more fully in ch. 8. But even in the limited treatment given the Spirit here we see something that specially characterizes the Spirit. By him God's love is "poured out" (GK G1772) in our hearts. This verb speaks of the inexhaustible abundance of the supply of God's love through the Spirit. All the blessings found in Christ are mediated to God's people by the Spirit. Looking back over the paragraph, we see that the thought has advanced from faith to hope and from hope to love (the same order as in 1Co 13:13). (NIVBC)

What function does the Holy Spirit have?

We learn quite a few things about the Holy Spirit from this verse (5:5). Most translations use the personal pronoun to describe the Holy Spirit "...*who God has given to us...*" so, we learn that the Holy Spirit is a person. But this is not new, since we already knew that (Jn 16:13).

Secondly, we see a work of the Holy Spirit: "...*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...*" It could be said (and often is said by many!) that the action of the Holy Spirit is only through the word, and that the work of the Holy Spirit was to inspire the New Testament writers, and therefore we know and learn about the love of God by the action of the Holy Spirit acting through the word. But such a remote action of the Holy Spirit is not consistent with the specific context of the Roman letter. We will look at this much closer in chapter 8. When Paul wrote to the Romans about the action of the Holy Spirit, most of the New Testament had not been written. It could not be the case that it was such an action that Paul had in mind. It could have (potentially) been the case that the Holy Spirit acted through the spoken word of the apostles (as indeed he did) and through the inspired word and no other way. But that would not be consistent with the way in which the Romans would have understood the Holy Spirit (having seen the miraculous manifestations in action), and indeed what Paul said about the Holy Spirit later in the letter (chapter 8).

Next we learn that the Holy Spirit “...*was given to us...*” we did not buy it or earn it. It was a gift. This is exactly consistent with other passages on the Holy Spirit that talk about *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. We can quite clearly here see that *the gift of the Holy Spirit* was the Holy Spirit being given to us – that is, that the gift is the Holy Spirit, and not something else that the Holy Spirit brings.

This still begs the question as to how and in what way the Holy Spirit acts to “...*pour out the love of God in our hearts...*”. There are some who would take the Calvinistic position that God *melts our hearts* through the Holy Spirit and it is only through this action that we can open our hearts to God. But that is not what the text says. When we put ourselves into the first century situation, it was through the demonstration of the miraculous that people saw God in action, and then listened to the things that the apostles (and others) had to say. The purpose of the miracles was to confirm the word (Mk 16:17, 20). There are many demonstrations of this throughout the book of Acts, for example Acts 8:6 “...*the multitudes...listened to the things spoken by Philip (when they) saw the miracles which he did...*” (my paraphrase). Acts 13:12 “...*the proconsul believed when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord...*” (emphasis mine).

So, the brethren in Rome had seen some of the miraculous signs (since they had some of the miraculous gifts, but not all of them – compare 1:11 & 12:6); they knew that these signs only came by the Holy Spirit; that the signs confirmed the things that were spoken (and written) by the apostles and prophets, and it was through such an action and teaching that they learned about the love of God. But there is another action that the Holy Spirit fills within us in making intercession between our spirit and God (8:16). Most of chapter 8 deals with the Holy Spirit, and we will elaborate further in that study.

How did God show His love for us?

God’s love is complete and boundless. He did not give us the gift of salvation because of our merit – because we earned it – rather the contrary applies. There might be some people who have such great respect and love for others that they are willing to lay down their own life for them. Our war memorials are full of the statement “greater love has no man, that he should lay down his life for his friends”. But the thing with God is that He gave his life not because we had any degree of *worth*, but rather that we were so worthless – as sinners – that Christ gave his life for us.

Through Jesus blood – through his sacrifice – we have been made righteous – we have been made right with God – we have had our sins forgiven. We will be saved from wrath through Him – “...*blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin...*” (4:8). It is through Jesus – and only through Jesus – that we have our sins forgiven so that we can escape the righteous judgement of God. We escape only because we have been made right by His sacrifice.

Paul next uses the contrast of death and life. “...*we were reconciled to God by His death, and saved by His life...*” (5:10). It is a parallel of what has happened to us. We were *dead* in our sins, but have been *made alive* by Jesus sacrifice. It was likewise through Jesus death and resurrection that we are saved. The death of Jesus was so that He could suffer death for every one of us. Whist Jesus died and accomplished the sacrifice through His death, if that was all there was, then all we would be able to say was that Jesus was a good man, lived a good life, and went about doing a lot of good. But it was through the resurrection – His new life – that he was proven and declared to be the Son of God (1:4). In the context of the letter, it is the second (new) life of Jesus that Paul has in mind. We are “...*saved by His life...*”. Only when Jesus was resurrected did He fulfil all of the prophecies and sit down at God’s right hand to become the living sacrifice. In such a way, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice back to God (12:1). It was only in the resurrection and His new life that He was crowned King, and became our High Priest and Mediator to God on our behalf.

How is Jesus compared to Adam?

Paul enters a profound contrast between Christ and Adam. Adam is presented as the first man with all of the *problems*, and Jesus is presented as the first man with all of the *solutions* to the problems. The contrasts that Paul makes here are spiritual contrasts (unlike the contrast he makes in 1 Cor 15 where they are physical contrasts).

Paul makes and applies the contrasts very plainly to the individual. It applies to everyone because all have sinned (5:12).

“In each case we must remember the universality of death is “for all have sinned”; and the universality of life is in its provision for “whosoever will” come to Christ. But we have missed the point if we fail to notice that the end of Adam’s way is justly due to the sinner...”¹.

	ADAM	CHRIST
Death	Many died	Many are offered abundant pardon
Sin	Sin brought condemnation	Grace brought justification
Consequences	Death reigned	Saints reign in life
	Universal condemnation	Universal justification
	Disobedient made sinners	Many made righteous

What place does the Law have in all of this?

Paul has already spent quite a long discussion on the Law, and has argued that justification did not come by the Law, but through faith. So, a natural question is “*Well, if Adam was the problem (and all of us who do the same acts of disobedience that Adam did), and Jesus is the remedy – then what was the purpose of the Law?*”

Paul answers this question in the Galatian letter (Gal 3:19, 24). But the Romans would not have read the Galatian letter (yet) as they were both written about the same time and sent off in different directions.

He has already made the point twice, that without law we could not know right and wrong (4:15; 5:13). One of the purposes of the Law was to establish right and wrong, so that we might know that we have offended God by our actions.

Whilst it might seem strange that God would put in place something that would cause us to show up as offensive to Him, the other side of the coin is that God provided a remedy in Christ, and that where sin flourished, so God’s grace flourished even more.

The next (natural) question that they would ask is well – if we get God’s grace when we sin, then let’s sin even more and get more grace! Paul addresses this in the next chapter.

¹ Turner: Robert F “Reading Romans” p 48