

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ROM. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

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

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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

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

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

NOTES

Justification by Faith

Lesson Text: Romans 5:1-11

Related Scriptures: I John 4:7-21; Ephesians 2:13-18;
Romans 8:32-39; Titus 3:3-7

TIME: A.D. 56

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Lesson Exposition

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST— Rom. 5:1-5

Peace (Rom. 5:1). As Abraham was justified by faith, so are we. It is not about what we have done, but about what Christ has done. Faith in Christ is the means of our justification. The Greek word for "justified" was a legal term equivalent to a "not guilty" verdict in a court of law.

Because we have been justified, that is, put right with God by faith, we now enjoy "peace with God." Instead of being the enemies of God because of sin, we enter into a relationship of peace with Him, which also affords us an inner peace unknown before (cf. John 14:27; Phil. 4:7). This is made possible "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

Grace (Rom. 5:2). As believers, we are privileged to have access to the grace of God. This, however, is not because we deserve it. Otherwise, it would not be grace. By its very nature, grace is unmerited favor. Though underserved, it is not totally unconditional, as our means

of access to God's grace is "through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Though not everyone is automatically saved, God will save anyone who has faith in Christ by His grace. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace" (Rom. 11:6).

All this leads us to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (5:2). If justification were something we earned or deserved, we could be proud of our achievement, but since it is by grace, we can only rejoice in the hope given to us through Christ.

Tribulations (Rom. 5:3-4). The word translated "tribulations" comes from a word that means "pressure" or "to squeeze." It could be translated "troubles," "afflictions," or "suffering." There are, of course, many kinds of tribulations that people, both believers and unbelievers, face in life. Some are simply the result of living in a fallen world where everyone experiences death, disease, and disaster. Some problems are self-inflicted, meaning they arise out of bad

choices we have made. Other things happen for no apparent reason, but God has ordained a purpose for every trial.

What Paul probably has in mind here are tribulations that come upon believers because of their faith in Christ. He had personally suffered persecution and tribulation because he followed Christ and preached the gospel. But these tribulations are not limited to people in full-time ministry. All of us can expect persecution (II Tim. 3:12).

Paul nevertheless could “glory in tribulations” (Rom. 5:3) because the fruit of his ministry glorified Christ. “Patience” means “endurance” or “perseverance.” Those caving in to the pressures of persecution fail to bear fruit (Matt. 13:21), but those who endure trials in faith will become stronger.

Patience, or endurance, will produce “experience” (Rom. 5:4). This particular Greek word means “strength of character.”

Ultimately, hope will be the end result of enduring trials and tribulations. While it may seem paradoxical, those who suffer the most are often the most hopeful people. Giving up quickly may avoid some suffering, but it also eliminates the possibility of developing abundant hope and deep faith.

Hope (Rom. 5:5). The kind of hope Paul was talking about will not disappoint us. To be sure, people often put their hope in that which is unreliable.

We must not therefore put our hope in anyone or anything other than the Lord, who never disappoints (Ps. 25:20).

There is good reason our hope is secure: God’s love is in our hearts, implanted by His Spirit. From the very first time we heard God’s Word, the Spirit was at work, convincing

us of the truth of Christ (John 16:7-8). When we receive Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts and bodies (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 6:19-20).

JUSTIFIED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST—Rom. 5:6-9

Powerless (Rom. 5:6-7). When Paul writes, “We were yet without strength,” the words do not apply just to himself or the people of his day; rather, they apply to all believers. He pointed out earlier that all are sinners (3:23), and he now declares that as such, we are powerless to remedy the situation. Simply put, we need a strong, powerful Saviour.

God knew we would not be able to save ourselves, so He had a plan from the beginning.

Part of that plan was to send Christ “in due time” (5:6), meaning “at the right time.”

In coming to earth, Christ died for ungodly individuals. Had human beings been able to redeem themselves, the death of Christ would have been completely unnecessary (Gal. 2:21). If we were inherently good or could somehow perform a sufficient number of meritorious works to save ourselves, the Son of God could have remained in heaven instead of taking on human flesh and suffering to redeem us as He did (Phil. 2:7-8).

Exactly what Paul means in using the term a “righteous man” and then a “good man” (Rom. 5:7) is a matter of nuance. It seems that a “righteous man” simply means a man who is just. We can infer that a “good man” is someone whose kind, amiable, and tender character would appeal emotionally to others (Barnes, *Notes on the Whole Bible*, www.studydrive.org). Paul’s point is that very few people are willing to die for others, even though they might be described as “righteous” or even “good.”

Pardoned (Rom. 5:8-9). The greatest demonstration of God's love for sinners was the sending of His Son to die for us. God did not wait until we had sufficiently straightened up our own lives—as if that were possible—before sending Christ to earth. He took the initiative in the beginning and planned to send His Son to rescue us from the power and penalty of sin. Eventually, believers will be delivered from sin's every influence.

We have, in fact, been "justified by his blood" (vs. 9). As mentioned earlier, "justified" was a legal term referring to the acquittal of a criminal. In spite of the fact that we have all broken God's law (Jas. 2:10), He has declared believers "not guilty" on the basis of Christ's atonement.

Interestingly, in the New Testament, salvation is depicted as being past, present, and future. We have been saved from past sins. We are also being saved, as the blood of Christ continues to cover us as we grow in holiness, that is, in sanctification. And ultimately we will be saved from the wrath of God poured out on the world when Christ returns.

JUSTIFIED BY THE LIFE OF CHRIST—Rom. 5:10-11

In our unsaved state, we were God's enemies. We rebelled against Him by refusing to trust and obey Him. But through Christ, we have been reconciled, put right with God "by the death of his Son."

Paul now adds another dimension to our salvation: "we shall be saved by his life." Since many of us have heard much about being saved by Christ's death, it may come as a surprise that we are also saved by His life.

Being saved by the life of Christ refers to the fact that He is the risen, liv-

ing Lord. It also refers to the ongoing work of Christ as our High Priest, who intercedes on our behalf in heaven (Heb. 7:25).

Because of God's grace in salvation, we can rejoice. When the Ethiopian confessed Christ and was baptized (Acts 8:35-39), "he went on his way rejoicing." So it is with all who truly trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Through the Lord Jesus, "we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5:11). No longer God's enemies because of our sinfulness, we can now take His message of love to others.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the source of our peace with God?
2. If grace is undeserved, why does it not automatically come to all people?
3. What kind of tribulations come upon both the saved and the lost?
4. How can we "glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3)?
5. What is the ultimate benefit of tribulation?
6. How does Christ's death for the ungodly prove our inability to save ourselves?
7. How did God show His love toward us? Are we worthy of His love? Explain.
8. In what way is salvation past, present, and future?
9. How are we saved by the life of Christ?
10. What is the proper response to salvation by grace?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Peace, grace, and hope are accessible to us through faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1-2).
2. Difficult times strengthen our faith through hope in Christ (vss. 3-5).
3. Placing our hope in Jesus guarantees victory (vs. 5).
4. It is human to help those who deserve it. It is divine to save people who do not deserve it (vss. 6-7).
5. Jesus gave us life when we deserved death (vs. 8).
6. We are indebted to Jesus for paying the cost of our salvation (vss. 9-11).

—Valante M. Grant.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is justification by faith essential to experiencing peace with God (Rom. 5:1)?
2. What should be the response of a true believer when faced with adversity (vss. 3-5)? How do unbelievers deal with adversity differently from believers? Discuss.
3. If God had withheld salvation from us until we became worthy, would we be saved today? Explain.
4. What do we learn about Jesus when we consider that He died for us while we were still sinners (vss. 8-9)?
5. How can we apply the example of God's love when evangelizing the darkened world that we live in today?

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Being justified through faith in Christ means that we can approach God's throne with confident assurance (cf. Heb. 4:16). Because of Christ's work, God does not view us as being guilty. Instead, He sees us as perfect in righteousness. Christ's sacrifice makes us justified; we do not have to fear God's wrath (Rom. 5:18-19), for we are at peace with Him (vs. 1). Christ has taken us, sinners that we were, and made us acceptable to God.

As sinners declared righteous through faith in Christ, the “love of God” has truly been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (vs. 5). There could be no greater demonstration of God's love than Christ's death on the cross on our behalf. He died for us and in our place so that we could be justified and saved from the wrath of God. What makes Jesus' sacrifice even more amazing is that He died for us “while we were yet sinners.” While some might be willing to give their lives for a “good” person, Christ died for us when we had nothing good to offer Him. In fact, we were His enemies.

This is a wonderful truth we need to keep in mind. He loved us enough that He was willing to die for us when we were sinners so that we could be saved. Now, when we as His children fall into sin, He certainly loves us enough to forgive us and restore us when we confess our sin and repent.

—Jennifer Francis.