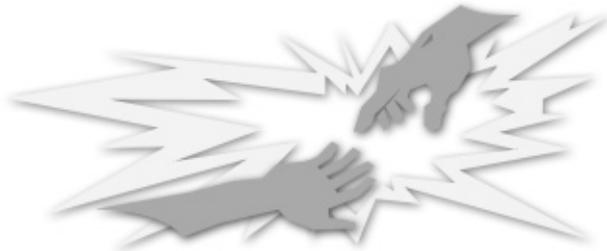


Expounding *the* Faith



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Romans 5.*

Memory Text: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (*Romans 5:1, 2*).

Paul has established the point that justification, or acceptance with God, comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, for His righteousness alone is enough to give us the right standing with our Lord. Building on that great truth, Paul now expounds more on this theme. Showing that salvation has to be by faith and not by works, not even for someone as “righteous” as Abraham, Paul in a sense steps back and looks at the big picture—at what caused sin and suffering and death and how the solution is found in Christ and what He’s done for the human race.

Through the fall of one man, Adam, all humanity faced condemnation, alienation, and death; through the victory of one man, Jesus, all the world was placed on a new footing before God, one in which, by faith in Jesus, the record of their sins and the punishment due those sins could be remitted, could be forgiven and forever pardoned.

Paul contrasts Adam and Jesus, showing how Christ came to undo what Adam did and that by faith the victims of Adam’s sin could be rescued by Jesus, the Savior. The foundation of it all is the cross of Christ and His substitutionary death there—which opens the way for every human being, Jew or Gentile, to be saved by Jesus, who with His blood brought justification to all who accept Him.

Surely this is a theme worth expounding upon, for it’s the foundation of all our hope.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 7.*

Therefore, Being Justified

Read Romans 5:1–5. On the lines below summarize Paul’s message. What can you take from that for yourself now?

“Being justified” is literally “having been justified.” The Greek verb represents the action as completed. We have been declared righteous, or regarded as righteous, not through any deeds of law but through our having accepted Jesus Christ. The perfect life that Jesus lived on this earth, His perfect law-keeping, has been credited to us.

At the same time, all of our sins have been laid on Jesus. God has reckoned that Jesus committed those sins, not us, and that way we can be spared the punishment that we deserve. That punishment fell on Christ for us, in behalf of us, so that we never have to face it ourselves. What more glorious news could there be for the sinner?

The Greek word translated “glory” in verse 3 is the one translated “rejoice” in verse 2. If it is translated “rejoice” in verse 3 also (as in some versions), the connection between verses 2 and 3 is more clearly seen. Justified people can rejoice in tribulation because they have fixed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. They have confidence that God will work all things for good. They will consider it an honor to suffer for Christ’s sake. (*See 1 Pet. 4:13.*)

Notice, too, the progression in verses 3 through 5.

1. *Patience.* The Greek word *hupomone* means “steadfast endurance.” This is the type of endurance that tribulation develops in the one who maintains faith and who does not lose sight of the hope he or she has in Christ even amid the trials and suffering that can make life so miserable at times.

2. *Experience.* The Greek word *dokime* means literally “the quality of being approved,” hence, “character,” or more specifically, “approved character.” The one who patiently endures trials can develop an approved character.

3. *Hope.* Endurance and approval naturally give rise to hope, the hope found in Jesus and the promise of salvation in Him. As long as we cling to Jesus in faith, repentance, and obedience, we have everything to hope for.

What is the one thing in all your life that you hope for more than anything else? How can that hope be fulfilled in Jesus? Or can it? If not, are you sure you want to be putting so much hope in it?

God Seeking Humanity

Read Romans 5:6–8. What do these verses tell us about the character of God, and why are they so full of hope for us?

When Adam and Eve shamefully and inexcusably transgressed the divine requirement, God took the first steps toward reconciliation. Ever since, God has taken the initiative in providing a way of salvation and in inviting men and women to accept it. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (*Gal. 4:4*).

Romans 5:9 says that we can be saved from God’s wrath through Jesus. How do we understand what that means?

As the blood on the doorposts of the Israelites in Egypt on the eve of their departure protected the firstborn from the wrath that befell Egypt’s firstborn, so the blood of Jesus Christ guarantees that one who has been justified and retains that status will be protected when God’s wrath finally destroys sin at the end of the age.

Some folk struggle with the idea of a loving God having wrath. But it’s precisely *because* of His love that this wrath exists. How could God, who loves the world, not have wrath against sin? Were He indifferent to us, He would not care about what happens here. Look around at the world and see what sin has done to His creation. How could God not be wrathful against such evil and devastation?

What other reasons are we given to rejoice? (*Rom. 5:10, 11*).

Some commentators have seen in verse 10 a reference to the life that Christ lived on this earth, during which He wrought a perfect character that He now offers to credit to us. Though this is certainly what Christ’s perfect life accomplished, Paul seems to be emphasizing the fact that whereas Christ died, He rose again and is alive forevermore (*see Heb. 7:25*). Because He lives, we are saved. If He had remained in the tomb, our hopes would have perished with Him. Verse 11 continues with the reasons that we have to rejoice in the Lord, and that’s because of what Jesus has accomplished for us.

Death Swallowed Up

Death is an enemy, the ultimate one. When God created the human family, He designed that its members should live forever. With few exceptions humans do not want to die, and those who do, do so only after the greatest personal anguish and suffering. Death goes against our most basic nature. And that's because, from inception, we were created to live forever. Death was to be unknown to us.

Read Romans 5:12. What is Paul describing here? What does this explain?

Commentators have argued more over this passage of Scripture than over most others. Perhaps the reason is, as noted in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 529, that these commentators “attempt to use the passage for purposes other than Paul intended.”

One point they argue over is, in what way was Adam's sin passed on to his posterity? Did Adam's descendants share the guilt of Adam's sin, or are they guilty before God because of their own sin? Though folk have tried to get the answer to that question from this text, that's not the issue Paul was dealing with. He had a whole other object in mind. He is reemphasizing what he already stated, “for all have sinned” (*Rom. 3:23*). We need to recognize that we are sinners, because only that way will we realize our need of a Savior. Paul here was trying to get readers to realize just how bad sin is and what it brought into this world through Adam. Then he shows what God offers us in Jesus as the only remedy to the tragedy brought upon our world through Adam's sin.

Yet, this text tells only of the problem, death in Adam—not the solution, life in Christ. One of the most glorious aspects of the gospel is that death has been swallowed up in life. Jesus passed through the portals of the tomb and burst its bonds. He says, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (*Rev. 1:18*). Because Jesus has the keys, the enemy can no longer hold his victims in the grave.

What has been your own experience with the reality and the tragedy of death? Why, in the face of such a relentless enemy, must we have a hope in something greater than ourselves or greater than anything this world offers?

Law Awakens Need

“Until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come” (*Rom. 5:13, 14*).

What is Paul talking about here? The phrase “until the law” is paralleled with the statement “from Adam to Moses.” He is talking about the time in the world from creation to Sinai, before the *formal* introduction of the rules and laws of the Israelite system, which included, of course, the Ten Commandments.

“Until the law” means until the detailing of God’s requirements in the various laws given to Israel at Sinai. Sin existed before Sinai. How could it not? Were lying, killing, adultery, and idolatry not sinful until then? Of course they were.

What are some texts that reveal the reality of sin before Sinai?

It is true that prior to Sinai the human race generally had only a limited revelation of God, but they obviously knew enough to be held accountable. God is just and isn’t going to punish anyone unfairly. People in the pre-Sinai world died, as Paul here points out. Death passed upon *all*. Though they had not sinned against an expressly revealed command, they had sinned nevertheless. They had the revelations of God in nature, to which they had not responded and thus were held guilty. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen . . . ; so that they are without excuse” (*Rom. 1:20*).

For what purpose did God reveal Himself more fully in the “law”? *Rom. 5:20, 21.*

The instruction given at Sinai included the moral law, though it had existed before then. This was the first time, however, according to the Bible, that this law was written and widely proclaimed.

When the Israelites began to compare themselves with the divine requirements, they discovered that they fell far short. In other words, “the offense” abounded. They suddenly realized the extent of their transgressions. The purpose of such a revelation was to help them to see their need of a Savior and to drive them to accept the grace so freely offered by God. As stressed before, the true version of the Old Testament faith was not legalistic.

The Second Adam

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18, 19). What contrast is presented here to us? What hope is offered us in Christ?

As humans, we received nothing from Adam but the sentence of death. Christ, however, stepped in and passed over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in humanity’s behalf. He redeemed Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall, and, thus, as our Substitute, He placed us on vantage ground with God. Hence, Jesus is the “Second Adam.”

“The second Adam was a free moral agent, held responsible for his conduct. Surrounded by intensely subtle and misleading influences, He was much less favorably situated than was the first Adam to lead a sinless life. Yet in the midst of sinners He resisted every temptation to sin, and maintained His innocency. He was ever sinless.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

How are Adam’s and Christ’s acts contrasted in Romans 5:15–19?

Look at the opposing ideas here: death, life; disobedience, obedience; condemnation, justification; sin, righteousness. Jesus came and undid all that Adam had done!

It is fascinating, too, that the word *gift* occurs five times in verses 15 through 17. Five times! The point is simple: Paul is emphasizing that justification is not earned; it comes as a gift. It is something that we don’t merit, that we don’t deserve. Like all gifts, we have to reach out and accept them, and in this case, with this gift, we claim it by faith.

What was the best gift you ever were given? What made it so good, so special? How did the fact that it was a gift, as opposed to something you earned, make you that much more appreciative of it? Yet, how could that gift even begin to compare with what we have in Jesus?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Help in Daily Living,” pp. 470–472, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “Christ the Center of the Message,” pp. 383, 384, in *Selected Messages*, book 1; “The Temptation and Fall,” pp. 60–62, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Justification,” pp. 712–714, in *The SDA Encyclopedia*.

“Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They wrap themselves about with their own righteousness, and are satisfied in reaching their own human standard of character.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 320.

“There is great need that Christ should be preached as the only hope and salvation. When the doctrine of justification by faith was presented . . . , it came to many as water comes to the thirsty traveler. The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, seemed a precious thought.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 360.

“Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God’s children from the dross of earthliness. It is because God is leading His children that trying experiences come to them. Trials and obstacles are His chosen methods of discipline, and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their weaknesses better than they themselves can know them. He sees that some have qualifications which, if rightly directed, could be used in the advancement of His work.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 524.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How has your faith sustained you through some terrible trials? What things did you learn from these trials about yourself and about God? Also, what have you learned that might be of assistance to others who might be going through some hard times themselves?
- 2 Think about the reality of death, of what it does not only to life but to the *meaning* of life. Many writers and philosophers have lamented the ultimate meaninglessness of life because it ends in eternal death. How do we as Christians respond to them? Why is the hope we have in Jesus the only answer to that meaninglessness?
- 3 Just as Adam’s fall imposed a fallen nature on all of us, Jesus’ victory offers the promise of eternal life to all of us who accept it by faith, no exceptions. With such a wonderful provision right there for us, what holds people back from reaching out and eagerly claiming it for themselves? How can each of us help those who are seeking to better understand what Christ offers and what He has done for them?

Conquered by Love

by BASIL BYVALTS

I grew up in Siberia, Russia, during a time when talk of God and religion was forbidden. Although I hadn't thought much about whether God existed, in the depths of my soul I sensed that He must exist. Then one day I heard His voice and I knew.

One evening as I walked from my work to my home, suddenly I felt an overwhelming sense of love fill my body. It was so clear that it almost stopped me in my tracks. I wasn't married at the time and had no special girlfriend. *Who are you?* I wondered. This wonderful feeling had to be from a girl, I reasoned. But I couldn't think of any girl who could give me the kind of love I was feeling. It was more like a yearning.

The love was so strong that I wanted to be with this person forever. *Whoever you are, I thought, I will find you and I will love you forever. But who are you?* I asked myself.

And then I heard the answer, not as a voice, but as a clear understanding in my mind. *It is I, God.*

No! I thought. I thought of God as a judge, an enforcer of laws. Then fearful that I might insult this God, I said in my heart, *I don't deserve Your love.*

And God answered, *I know you; I know everything about you. And I love you.*

Don't love me so much, I argued in my mind. *Love me just one day a week—or less.*

But God's voice answered, *I love you every moment; I will always love you because I am God.*

I couldn't help myself. I was conquered by God's love. That night on the street in Siberia, with tears rolling down my cheeks, I gave myself to God. *Here I am, God,* I prayed. *I am Yours.* Once more that wonderful warmth swept through my body. *I am in love—with God!* I thought.

The next day a friend invited me to attend some evangelistic meetings. I went, and there I learned about the God who swept me away by His love. Later, I learned that on the evening God spoke to me, the evangelist and other Christians in that city were praying that the Holy Spirit would touch the hearts of the people in my town. I was an answer to their prayers, one of almost 200 who found God at those meetings.

Our mission offerings help send word of God's incredible love to those who still don't know Him. Thank you for sharing.

BASIL BYVALTS *shares God's love with others in Siberia, Russia.*



In the Trans-European Division many churches are struggling to stay alive. So a vibrant and growing new church is exciting. The Division is home to a growing number of immigrants—workers, students, and refugees. Some have been Adventists for years; others are just learning about the hope that Jesus brings to their lives.

Such a group crowds into a classroom in an Adventist school in Copenhagen, Denmark. They want to invite others who are searching for God to join them, but they have no room. The potential for growth is enormous; they just need a larger place to meet.

I'm glad that my church sees the potential for growth in this new segment of Europe's population. I'm glad that part of my Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help this new congregation to reach out to others. For me it's personal.



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