

PROLOGUE TO PRISON

Paul's Epistle to the ROMANS

by Richard C. Halverson

- 1954 -

Cowman Publishing Company, Inc. California

Chapter 10

PEACE WITH GOD

Romans 5:1-11

"**Therefore**," with which Paul opens chapter 5 refers back to the beginning of the second major division, the 21st verse of the 3rd chapter. Having shown in 1:18-3:20 that man's dilemma is sin, he presents GOD's solution beginning at 3:21, "**But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets**," a theme which he amplifies through chapter 4. The substance is stated in the last two verses of the 4th chapter; righteousness "**shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up JESUS our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification**." Everything that Paul says in chapters 5 through 8 is the application of these redemptive acts, CHRIST crucified for our transgressions, raised for our justification. The arguments in 5:1-11 can be summed up in three phrases, *the provision of justification, the permanence of justification, and the proof of justification*.

To begin with, Paul sees justification as an accomplished work, "**Therefore being justified**," or "since we are justified." Justification is not hypothetical, not just a vague possibility, but a present reality for him who trusts in JESUS CHRIST. What are the provisions of justification; what is included in this profound reality? First of all, it means to be made guiltless. It means to be absolved as if one had never sinned. It is to have the burden of guilt lifted and removed.

To be sure, there are those in the Church who do not enjoy this experience for the same reason that the Pharisees did not because pride will not allow them to admit failure. JESUS reasoned with them, "**They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick**" (Mark 2:17). "**I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance**" (Luke 5:32). Obviously, the man who will not acknowledge his sin is not receptive to forgiveness. Guilt will persist however much he may try to ignore it or squelch it. One of the serious self-deceptions in life is the attempt that is made to explain away guilt without dealing with the disease of sin itself, a practice which is deadly inasmuch as guilt suppressed is infectious, poisoning personality after sensitivity to it has ceased.

One effect of this is illustrated by the occasion when JESUS was dining with a Pharisee and his guests, and an infamous woman came to the dinner - a common enough occurrence in those days when the rabble gathered on the periphery of a feast to take the crumbs. This woman, you will

recall, bathed the feet of JESUS with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and smothered His feet with her kisses. The Pharisee in his self-righteousness and hypocrisy grasped this incident as an opportunity to discredit JESUS. After pointing out to the Pharisee that the woman had observed the proper amenities he, as host, had neglected, JESUS made this penetrating observation; her love is great for she has been forgiven much, **"to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little"** (Luke 7:47).

Some love JESUS little because they have been forgiven little; not because they do not need forgiveness, but they would rather endure guilt, try to cover it, than walk in the light, acknowledge their sin, and receive the forgiveness and cleansing of GOD. They love little because they have been forgiven little.

But justification means more than the removal of guilt. Justification does not leave a man morally neutral; it is to be made righteous, to have the righteousness of CHRIST added. Israel's King David apprehended this profound truth, Paul reminds us (Romans 4:6) quoting from Psalm 32:1-2, where David speaks of righteousness of GOD being imputed. This is an accounting term; GOD's righteousness is added to the credit side of the ledger more than balancing whatever be the debt on the other side. In the words of II Corinthians 5:21, **"For he hath made him (CHRIST) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** *Thus it is to be justified*; not simply to be absolved from guilt but literally to be made righteous by JESUS CHRIST, to be seen by GOD in the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. When the Father looks at the justified man, He sees him clothed in the perfection of the Son of GOD. **"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels"** (Isaiah 61:10).

But justification means more than the removal of guilt and imputation of righteousness. It means to be at peace with GOD! This is more than peace of mind, which may be very shallow, like a tranquilizer, simply numbing one to reality as though drugged or anesthetized. Paul is concerned with something infinitely greater than peace of mind; he is speaking of peace with GOD! ***The war is over between man and GOD, and hostility has ceased; there is no longer alienation and estrangement; reconciliation has taken place.*** Man, now reconciled to GOD, is *at one* with Him. In the last verse of this message Paul says, **"by whom we have now received the atonement."** Atonement is to be made *at one* with GOD.

Something more, justification is through JESUS CHRIST. Paul will never let us forget this, He **"was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"** (Romans 4:25). Also in verse 9, **"being now justified by his blood . . ."** Paul never takes this for granted. GOD did not justify us simply because He loved us! He would have been less than just. Sin must be dealt with. The penalty must be satisfied. Justice demands it! So the Son bore the penalty; justice and mercy, righteousness and love met together in His crucifixion. **"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

In verse 2 Paul declares, **"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."** This too is included in justification; we have been granted a position of favor. Grace is unmerited favor, the operation of which Paul discusses in verses 6 through 10. We have been

given a position of unmerited favor in which we stand! Firmly, immovable. Notice that Paul says that we have peace with GOD, we stand in grace; this is a fact, not a theory. In other words, GOD has introduced into our lives a new relationship which guarantees perpetuity.

This leads to the second phase, the performance of justification, verses 2 through 4. It has been noted that the word "faith" does not occur again in Romans until the 9th chapter, the 30th verse, and then it is used in the same way it has been used up to now, in terms of righteousness through faith. All that follows from the 5th chapter, 1st verse to the end of the 8th chapter describes the fruit or results of justification, the inheritance of those who are justified. Having been justified by faith, that which Paul now discusses, chapters 6, 7 and 8, shall be true of us.

Implicit in justification is the total redemptive work of GOD; that is, justification having taken place, the completion of the work of salvation is absolutely certain. (Philippians 1:6) Hence, we **"rejoice in hope of the glory of God!"** This is an accepted fact, a deferred fact to be sure, but nevertheless absolutely certain. We glory, or exalt, in a future which is assured, the justified one will share the glory of GOD. This is inevitable.

Notice that hope is a noun, not a verb. Hope is something we have, not something we do. Christian faith is not a hope-so proposition. We rejoice in the absolute certainty of sharing GOD's glory. Nothing less could satisfy a man who was made in the image of GOD who was made to live forever. Eternity has been written in our hearts; only eternity will suffice; eternity with the Lord is certain because we have been justified.

Nor is that all, for justification has more than future implications. **"And not only so,"** he says, **"but we glory in tribulations also."** Thus the down-to-earth realism of Christian faith, which is relevant here and now. It turns out that the only rational way to face the realities of life - the tragedy, the discontinuity, the catastrophic - is by faith in GOD. The justified have the only answer to the imponderables, the inexplicables, the confusions and perplexities, the two-horned dilemmas that confront modern man - war, suffering, disease, misery, starvation. Walk through a children's hospital; how can one believe in a GOD of love when little babies suffer? Well, the suffering is a fact, is it not? Reject the GOD of love, does this make the suffering make sense? You do not eliminate the fact of misery by rejecting faith in GOD; you only compound the predicament. Suffering has a ministry in life; we rejoice in suffering, in affliction, because we know that suffering produces endurance.

The Bible has much to say about endurance, the quality of lasting. What a difference between the man who crosses the finish line and the one who drops out of the race ten yards from the tape, between the fighter who fights until the bell rings and the one who throws in the sponge. What a contrast between the man who finishes what he begins and the man who is always starting something and never finishes anything. **"tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience."** Experience is the product of suffering; the man of quality is the tested man.

Finally, experience produces hope. You see what Paul is saying, the very difficulties in life argue for the Christian's hope. Think of the poetry, the art, the music, the architecture, the wondrous beauty that has been born out of suffering. Think of the poverty of art museums and libraries if men had not suffered. How often men and women remain nominal and casual in their church, perfunctory in worship, bobbing on the surface of faith until tragedy galvanizes devotion, sets

faith on fire and CHRIST becomes a living reality. Suffering is a servant of the justified man - a very efficient, fruitful servant.

In these eleven verses Paul has given what might be called the three phases of redemption. Though indivisible, this three-fold distinction is justification, freedom from guilt, imputation of righteousness; sanctification, the operation of righteousness received when justified, or in other words, Christian growth; and glorification, the resurrection of the body. Justification, the beginning of the Christian experience; sanctification, the development of the Christian experience; glorification, the consummation of the Christian experience. Justification, verse 1; sanctification, suffering which produces experience, verses 3-4; glorification, sharing the glory of GOD, verse 2.

Verse 5 introduces the proof for justification. "**And hope maketh not ashamed.**" Why? Because GOD's love becomes a personal reality, for "**because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**"; experiential, not just profession or performance, but literally possession. Paul says in his chapter eight, "**The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God**"; something, someone within proving that one is a child of GOD, the confirmation of the HOLY SPIRIT. Do you have this confirmation? Is your Christianity an experience, or simply a performance?

One woman testified to the fact that she had been a church member for forty years but had known JESUS CHRIST only seven weeks. She was on the church rolls; she believed everything, I suppose, that a Christian is supposed to believe; she went through the motions of being a Christian without knowing JESUS CHRIST as a reality in her heart. One great evidence of justification is personal experience, the reality of the HOLY SPIRIT in one's own life. Is JESUS CHRIST real, or is your religion just form, just external? The LORD, addressing the Church at Sardis says, "**Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead!**" Church members at Sardis, having the name but not the reality; Christian in name only, nominal Christians. Is this the extent of your religion, or are you alive unto GOD in CHRIST?

But the proof of justification is more than a subjective experience. Justification is rooted and grounded in objective historic fact, and so Paul sets forth in verses 6 through 10 the logic of grace. He says in verse 8, "**God commendeth his love toward us,**" GOD shows His love to us, GOD proves His love toward us. How does He prove it?

Paul argues from the greater to the lesser, from the maximum to the minimum; verse 9, "**being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him**" We have been justified; therefore we have no fear of wrath. Justified, no fear of future wrath; acquitted, no fear of GOD's future anger or judgment. Having been made righteous, there is no fear of final retribution, so runs the logic.

One recalls the words of JESUS, "**He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,**" no fear of future condemnation because of present fact, he is passed from death to life!

Paul reinforces the proof of justification with three strong propositions: Verse 6, "**For when we**

were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Verse 8, **"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** Verse 10, **"When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."** We were incapable of helping ourselves. He helped us. We were breakers of GOD's law, men with a record, He died for us! We were hostile to GOD, enemies, He laid down His life for us! If GOD did this for us when we were hostile enemies, how much more now that we have been made friends can we be absolutely certain of eternal life and glory? Having been justified there is no longer the possibility of condemnation. We have been absolved from the guilt of past sins. We, the justified, are absolutely secure in JESUS CHRIST by virtue of His sacrifice on the cross!

It is interesting to note that Paul uses the word rejoice or exalt three times. Three things he says in which the Christian, the justified one, rejoices. He rejoices in the hope of sharing GOD's glory. Secondly, he rejoices in suffering. You try it. Rejoice in suffering, and see how the grace of GOD can turn tragedy into triumph. It will not eliminate the suffering; it will transform it! And finally, rejoice in GOD! That is the ultimate joy, rejoicing in GOD Himself, not in His gifts, nor in His benefits, nor in His blessings, but in Him.

We are the bride of CHRIST. What sort of bride is she who loves her husband only for what she gets out of him? Pity the husband whose wife's love is so commercial. This makes sense in marriage, but how many of us are more interested in GOD's gifts than in GOD the giver; in the benefits rather than the benefactor? This is the supreme Christian joy; rejoice in the Lord!

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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