

# ROMANS: THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING

## WEEK 5 – WHAT JUSTIFICATION BRINGS

**QUESTION 1)** The first 4 chapters of Romans were about “Justification” – how God declares us “not guilty” of our sins through the work of Jesus Christ. The natural response of the flesh to that information is to say, “Well, if my sins don’t deter my salvation and my good works don’t contribute to my salvation, then they must not matter.” How would you respond to that logic?

(This question is the major topic that Paul addresses in chapters 5-7. It's tricky in the sense that our sins and good works *do not* factor in to the *cause* of our salvation. The cause of salvation is clearly the grace of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9) which is received through faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

The problem with the logic, however, is that it assumes eternal life is a checklist of tasks to perform, rather than a relationship to receive. The best definition of heaven is the blessing of being in the full relational presence of God. Hell then is the complete absence of God's presence. If heaven is primarily a relationship generated, not a task accomplished, then even if our failure in obedience doesn't compromise our salvation, it nonetheless negatively impacts the relationship. Obedience to God's commands is 1) in accord with our design for human flourishing and therefore brings inherent blessing, 2) expresses gratitude to Jesus for all that he's blessed us with, 3) yields eternal rewards in heaven, though not the gift of heaven itself, and 4) reciprocates and deepens the relational love that was established by God toward us.)

**BACKGROUND:** The Apostle Paul spent 4 chapters explaining God's solution to mankind's problem of brokenness, lostness, and sin. God sent his Son, Jesus, to switch places with us at the cross. There, everything bad we've done was transferred to him, and everything good he did was credited to us through faith (Rom. 1:17). This “good news” is the gospel that the pagans, who struggle with sinful self-indulgence, need to hear. It's the gospel that religious people, who struggle with sinful self-righteousness, need to hear. It's the gospel that even the “heroes” of God's people like Abraham and David needed. And this gospel is freely offered to all. But now what? Justification changes our life eternally, but how should it transform our lives presently?

## PEACE AND HOPE (ROM. 5:1-11)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much

more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**QUESTION 2) Paul says that justification brings “peace with God” and “access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” (vs. 1 and 2) What does peace with God mean to you? Does anything make you doubt that you will reach glory? If so, what – and how do these verses encourage you?**

(“Peace WITH God” is actually different from the biblical phrase “Peace OF God.” The “Peace OF God” is a supernatural gift that provides calm in the midst of chaotic circumstances in your life. That might be something to clarify for participants. The “Peace WITH God,” what Paul is speaking of here, is the issue that human beings are hostile to God by nature, enemies of God, and deserving of nothing but war, wrath, and separation from God. Because Jesus took the wrath of God in our place, we are now able to have peace WITH God.

While most modern people don’t struggle a lot with the idea of a loving God who could accept them, some do, perhaps especially when they’ve committed a major mistake. At this point, it’s important to remind ourselves that *grace* is not a beam that we balance on, but a state that we live in. We are not teetering in and out of God’s favor or acceptance, and shouldn’t have that as a regular concern.

This may provide an opportunity, after meeting together for 4 weeks already, for someone to confess something. Perhaps they’re at least comfortable sharing a past mistake that really bothered them, but which they came to appreciate was already paid for in Christ.)

**QUESTION 3) Paul says that justification brings glory in suffering. Specifically, his line of logic is that suffering → perseverance → character → hope. Can you explain his logic of how one leads to the next? And why do you think “hope” is the ultimate goal of a Christian in this life?**

(Admittedly, the train of thought is a little tricky. But it’s nonetheless clear when you slow down and process. The end goal Paul mentions here in this world is **hope**. Biblical *Hope* is certainty of positive future circumstances. The only way you will possess that certainty is if you have Christian **character**. Christian *Character* is an outlook/attitude that proves someone trusts the truths and promises of God. You can only demonstrate character if you have **persevered**. *Perseverance* is displaying fight, patience, and grit when circumstances aren’t the way you’d like them to be. And therefore, in order to show perseverance, you need to experience **suffering**. When you are in rough circumstances and you **STILL** demonstrate hope – certainty of positive future circumstances – it brings a glory to the name of God. When the rest of the world would assume you should be cursing God, your hope for a positive future makes your witness incredibly vibrant.

The reason “hope” is the pinnacle of the Christian life is because no matter how good things may get in this world, the Christian is always convinced they will be better in heaven. On the other hand, despite how rough the circumstances in this world, the Christian is confident that pain will soon come to an end when we pass to the next life. Hope does not mean present circumstances are perfect, and they certainly won’t be in a sinful world. Hope means we’re certain the future will be better due to Christ.)

**QUESTION 4) Verse 8 is one of the Bible's best statements for defining "love." Also read 1 John 3:16. Between these two passages, what would you say is the biblical definition of love? How does the world tend to get this wrong?**

(Rom. 5:8 tell us that that God loved us "*while we were still sinners.*" In other words, before we had had any inkling of coming to God to praise him, worship him, or love him, when we would rather have him on the cross than have him inconvenience our lives, Jesus loved us.

Typically we love things because of how they make us feel. This is a love that comes from the good of the object. So we love certain foods, or music, or shows, or people, because of how they make us feel. But this is not how God loves us. He doesn't love us because we are lovable, but because he is simply so full of love.

1 John 3:16 further adds that this love drove Jesus to "*lay his life down for us.*" In other words, sacrifice is a necessary part of any definition of biblical love. Not only did Jesus do it for us, but we are now moved by the Spirit to love others the same way. Consequently, a biblical definition of love would have to include something about undeserved, sacrificial acts of kindness that seek the best interest of the other person ahead of self.

The world does not understand grace. It understands feelings of affection, compassion, romance, and reciprocated love. But undeserved love is foreign. Grace is otherworldly, and it only came into the world through Jesus Christ.)

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#### DEATH THROUGH ADAM, LIFE THROUGH CHRIST (ROM. 5:12-21)

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12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned —

13 To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**QUESTION 5) In verse 14, the Apostle Paul makes a very interesting point about how death (and sin) reigned over mankind even from Adam to Moses, when they had no written Law. How does this shape your understanding of “sin” as more than rule-breaking?**

(Sin clearly cannot simply be a violation of the 10 Commandments, because the 10 Commandments, in the form we know them, did not exist until Moses received them on Mt. Sinai. And yet, there was still death and sin from Adam to Moses. It was still wrong for Cain to kill his brother. It was still wrong for Abraham to have sex with his maidservant. It was still wrong for Jacob to deceive his father and brother. All of this tells us that sin is so much more than rule-breaking.)

It wouldn't hurt to refer participants here back to what Paul wrote in chapter 1:18-32, about the pagans. There he said that they exchanged the glory of God for the pursuit of created things. They loved and pursued these created things ahead of God (i.e. idolatry) and this then led to all of their negative emotions and bad behaviors. Ultimately then, sin is the love and pursuit of anything or anyone ahead of God. These things we pursue are often not inherently wrong, and may very well be good pursuits. The problem is that they have become mis-prioritized pursuits and disordered loves.

As a Christian grows in maturity, sin must become much less about rule-breaking and much more about hurting our relationship with God.)

**QUESTION 6) In verses 15-19, Paul is obviously making a comparison between what happened to humanity through Adam and what happened through Christ. Explain the point that he's making in your own words.**

(Paul's logic is that all humanity was impacted by Adam's sin. Adam decided with his free will to defy God. This then brought a sickness into the world that contaminated all people moving forward. Because of the impact of his one sin, many died. And this should open our eyes to the wide-ranging impact of our personal sins.)

However, similar to Adam, all humanity was impacted by Jesus' righteousness. Jesus decided with his free will to obey God the Father. This then brought a medicine into the world that is freely available to heal all people. Because of the impact of his obedience, many will be saved. And this should open our eyes not only to the gratitude we should have for Jesus' sacrifice, but also to the impact that our obedience to God can have on this world.)

**QUESTION 7) When Paul says, “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.” (vs. 20), it almost sounds like he's saying that God's holy law caused the sin. We already said in Question 5 that this wasn't the case. So what is Paul saying? What was the purpose of God giving the Law?**

In a postmodern era that denies universal truth, some churches have very intentionally stopped talking (at least overtly) about “sin.” When you read literature from the early “seeker sensitive” churches of the 1980s & 90s, it becomes very clear that this was a key strategy to making church more palatable to more people. To what extent do you think we need to continue to talk about the Law today? Why? At what point would we be dwelling too much on it?

(Paul is saying that the giving of the Law reminded people that they were, in fact, sinful. For instance, Paul says in Romans 7:7-8 that he didn't realize he was guilty of coveting until he meditated on the Law. The Law serves as a mirror that shows us the wrong which exists in our lives. The only way for us to progress as humans is to admit fault and turn away from it. The only way to become aware of fault is through a studying & meditating on a perfect Law. Since sin makes us delusional, we need a perfect standard to remind us how far we are from perfection. The Law was that perfect standard and continues to be beneficial in that way.

The teaching of the Law continues to be an essential part of spiritual development. Jesus *primarily* came to earth to be a Savior to mankind. Without the Law, we lose a consciousness of sin. Without a consciousness of sin, we lose the need for a Savior. Without an awareness of that need, Jesus becomes irrelevant. At that point, the hope for eternal life is lost.

If the goal of teaching the Law is ever simply behavior modification as a means to an end or as a pathway to earning favor with God, it's obviously gone too far. The joyless, hollow lifelessness that sometimes exists in churches (and Christians) is sometimes the result of falsely equating Christianity with moral performance. This is an overemphasis of law, and a failure to recognize the cause for celebration that we have in Christ Jesus.)

**SUMMARY:** *Justification makes a difference. When God declares us "not guilty" of our sins through the work of Jesus, this changes our eternity from hell to heaven, but it also changes our present from selfishness to selflessness. If we believe Jesus has truly done everything necessary for our salvation, then we are free to stop concerning ourselves so much with ourselves and start concerning ourselves more with the glory of God through the service of others.*

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## CLOSING PRAYER (GATHER PRAYER REQUESTS)

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