

Romans 4:25-5:11

Before proceeding it may be beneficial for us to take peak once again at the road map to see where we are. You're quite familiar now with the diatribe outline beginning with thesis followed by antithesis and then picking up once again the thesis. Chapter 4 serves as the example for Paul's thesis that the righteousness of God is revealed by faith or through faith. Having completed his example Paul now proceeds to expand what he discussed in 3:21 – 26. In other words, 3:26 would be as good an opening to chapter 5 as 4:25. Romans 3:26 states “God is just and justifies those of the faith of Jesus” while Rom 5 begins “having been justified by faith.” From this brief comparison we see that Paul has not strayed far from his target to discuss the righteousness of God that is revealed by faith.

Romans 4:25 discusses specifically the qualities of Jesus, delivered for our transgressions and raised for our justification. It may be important to note that the same preposition is used in the Greek for both of these expressions. As modern readers we frequently want to delineate between deliverance and justification, however Paul never delineates between the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. These are seen as one singular event with multiple ramifications. It might also be useful to recall that the English word justification is from the same Greek stem as the English word righteousness, just as the English word faith is from the same Greek stem as the English word believe. By chance it may be that English is the confusing language rather than Greek!

At the beginning of chapter 5 Paul uses a part of Greek grammar known as a participle and a tense of Greek speech known as the aorist, which when combined results in simply stating, matter-of-factly, that the verb being used describes an activity

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that happened. In other words justification has taken place. That's really all Paul wants to say with his opening verb/participle. He has already talked about justification he now wants to talk about the results. The result of justification is peace! It is peace with the one where there was strife, namely with God. This peace occurs through the one responsible for justification, namely Jesus. Paul is very specific about this point, God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus was raised from the dead for the purpose of justification, and so now, by faith and only by faith, can there be peace with God. The result of this "faith Jesus" is peace with God. Later on in chapter 8 Paul will explore what this relationship actually looks like. But for now he wants to discuss the ramifications of justification and to discuss what has taken place.

The relationship the one justified experiences is not merely defined by peace but is also defined by grace. It is grace that permits us to stand, it is grace that describes this relationship of peace. Paul's focus is not on the present as much as it is on the change that happens in the present. This change is characterized by the last phrase of verse 2, we boast in the hope of God's glory. The term boast, recalls Paul's question at the end of chapter 3, that asks where is boasting? The boasting is not in any work, nor by any law, but the boasting is by faith. So now in chapter 5 the same word is used although sometimes translated differently, since the same Greek word means both to boast and to rejoice. In either case of translation the intent is the same, to recognize that the current state of affairs is not due to myself but is due entirely and completely to that which God has done in and through Jesus Christ.

The glory of God, which is the hope or the object of hope, has been discussed at various times already in Paul's letter. It is mentioned three times in the antithesis, in

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1:23 Paul reports 'they' exchanged the "glory of God" for images that were corruptible because 'they' thought themselves wise. Later he describes the deeds and results God will provide in 2:7. Those who will receive eternal life are to seek for glory, while the others are merely disobedient. The result of those doing good is noted in 2:10; they receive glory, honor, and peace. Although not specific it may be implied, based on 1:23, that the glory some seek and receive is the glory belonging to God. The next occurrence, referring back to 2:10, is in 3:22-23 where there is no distinction for all fall short of God's glory. Thus the deliverance from these negative implications of the sinfulness of man comes in the form of hope of actually achieving what we could not on our own, the glory of God.

The unanswered question throughout this discussion remains, what is this glory? The Old Testament refers to glory when it talks about the abiding presence of God among the people of God. This may be the best way for us to envision 'glory' in our own terms although several words can describe, but not define, glory; honor, splendor, divine radiance, majesty. However, when I read the word "glory", I prefer to understand that word to represent the being and essence of the totality of God which can now be experienced because we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

The other word Paul introduces us to at this point is hope. This word has a stronger meaning and background than we normally associate with it in our age. Today, hope functions as a different form of the word, wish. We use the two words interchangeably. I hope I will do better on an exam, or I wish I could do better on exam. But at the time of writing Romans, hope has a different, stronger connotation. Hope possesses a certainty grounded and rooted in God while realizing that the object of

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hope is not yet fulfilled. An example of this is that many people hope to get married. A few of these same people actually have someone in mind to marry. So while many people wish to get married, some people hope to get married, and many others do not hope to get married at all, because they already are married. In the same fashion we hope for the glory of God, i.e. to experience God's presence fully, because we do not yet do so. Yet in the meantime we are fully confident that we will experience God's presence fully, not based on anything we could do but based solely on the justification available by faith. So Paul introduces hope and then discusses how one achieves said hope.

Paul is not through with his rejoicing, i.e. boasting. In a manner foreign to those of us who now read his writing, Paul boasts in suffering. Suffering is not something we normally associate with rejoicing, indeed we most often wish to avoid suffering totally. But for the ancient reader, suffering was a well-known phenomenon and associated with part of the educational process. In other words, individuals learn because of the suffering that occurs. The suffering Paul describes occurs because we are not yet in the presence of God. At various other points in this letter Paul will address suffering and use Jesus as an example for those who suffer. Paul's reason for introducing suffering has nothing to do with suffering at all, rather suffering introduces the pathway to the type of hope Paul describes. Paul's pathway indicates the result of suffering is perseverance, the ability to sustain one's faith.

One might even think Paul is referencing the faith of Abraham he so eloquently described in 4:18 – 21. Hoping against hope Abraham believed. What did he hope against hope? He hoped in the promise of God that he would be the father of many

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while he was the father of none. In addition he did not become weak or waiver but grew strong by persevering over many, many years. When the child came as promised, Abraham's hope did not stop, but it was partially fulfilled.

The consequence of this perseverance/endurance, according to Paul, is character. The idea behind this word, sometimes translated as "proven character", is the genuineness that results from deep, intense examination. Suffering and perseverance demonstrate the true nature of a person in ways that a comfortable life does not. Another way to look at this is that suffering and perseverance indicate the value of an individual, which might be helpful given the cost of peace with God. The result of this proven character brings everything full circle back to hope, but a hope that does not in the end disappoint. This hope does not disappoint because nowhere is it based on our work or endeavor. The hope that results from this pyramid; suffering, endurance, character, is really the proven character of God and God's faithfulness to us. But the true reason that this hope does not disappoint has to do with God's love, which is present in us through the Holy Spirit abiding in us.

These four verses are jam-packed with meaning and substance. In these four verses Paul is expanding on his thesis that the righteousness of God is revealed. God's character is revealed to us and our response of rejoicing is based on what God has done as well as who God is. In chapter 8 Paul will return to this idea of the Holy Spirit in us, but for now he simply introduces the idea as proof positive that the hope that causes us to rejoice is not empty!

The final word of interest Paul introduces is love. Luke Timothy Johnson describes love, *agape*, as "the willful act to seek the good of the other for the benefit of

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the other” (87). God's love is therefore God's seeking our good for our benefit. Our good is easily understood when we consider the alternative Paul describes in 1:18–3:20. Paul describes our benefit here in Rom 5, namely peace with God. The reason we can hope is because we have the promise of God's full and total presence in the future and experience the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit at the present time. What is sometimes missed in reading through this section is that as Paul amplifies his thesis he includes four potent words of the Christian tradition: faith, hope, love and grace. This combination rarely occurs so close together: only in Galatians 5, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 10. The status of the ones Paul describes in 4:24 who are actively trusting in the one who raised Jesus from the dead is clear: Peace with God and exuberant hope in God's presence among us!

Paul continues in 5:6–11 to clarify exactly what has happened as well as the results of these activities by God. In verses 6 and 8 Paul restates himself, others might say he repeats himself, which is a relative common tactic by Paul. He doesn't repeat himself word for word but we do find repetitions that are clear in the Greek and in the English. Verses 6 and 8 both emphasize “while we were” and “Christ died.” These two elements help us understand Paul rephrases his words. Since we have two opportunities to understand what Paul is saying, we should be able to clarify this segment of the text.

Paul opens with “while we were still weak or helpless” in reference to earlier statements that utilize the same type of language. The phrase ‘we were weak’ calls to mind two passages in chapter 4, verse 4 and 19-20. The first says the one who does not work, which might imply one is weak. This describes the one whose faith is credited

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as righteousness because faith is the activity instead of works. In the second passage Paul uses the verb form of the word, weak. Paul describes Abraham as one who did not become weak in faith. So the contrast being drawn now in chapter 5 is not regarding physical strength or ability, but the lack of faith. Paul discusses weakness and strength on a variety of occasions still to be seen in the letter. He normally uses these words to describe a person's faith. When you look at verse 8 instead of 'being weak,' it says 'while we were sinners.' The parallel statements clarify several issues. First, being weak or without faith is parallel to being a sinner. As we talked earlier while discussing faith in chapter 4, Paul views faith as the opposite of sin.

The second thing we find in these two parallel sentences is that Christ died for the ungodly. This calls to mind much of Paul's discussion in reference to idolatry. This is made even more clear when he introduces wrath in 5:9. Perhaps more importantly this language draws us back once again to 4:4-5, where it says God justifies the ungodly. So even as he is describing Abraham in chapter 4, Paul is setting the stage for the activity of Christ described in chapter 5. The question may be asked of 5:6, "who are these ungodly?" This is made clear in the parallel segment in 5:8: Christ died for us. The ungodly are, in Paul's language, everyone. This is clear because of his discussions about the lack of righteousness among Jew and Gentile and various statements about the status of humans with regard to sin. So we find here in verses 6 and 8 that Christ is strong and does what the weak and ungodly simply cannot do!

So we have talked about our status, i.e. helpless and sinners, and we have discussed what Christ did, i.e. he died. But there is a phrase in verse 8 that is not yet paralleled in verse 6, 'God demonstrates his own love.' What does this mean? Well it

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functions as an expansion of 5:5 where 'God's love is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.' But as an expansion it has more information than just simple repetition. It notes that the death of Christ is the "demonstration" of God's love for the weak and the helpless and the sinners. It is this word, demonstrates, that is often missed in its importance. There are two things important about it: the verb tense and the word itself.

The verb tense is a present tense in the Greek. This says something more than the aorist verb in 5:1, having been justified. What the verb tense tells us is that God is actively and continually demonstrating this love, or more precisely that the singular death of Jesus continues to demonstrate this love well after the fact. But more importantly than the verb tenses the word itself. We find the word, or at least the root of the word, in 5:2 where it says 'this grace in which we stand.' Basic to the English word demonstrate is the Greek verb to stand. But added to this Greek verb is a preposition, the preposition with or beside. An English translation that best approximates the Greek verb is to say "God stands behind his love." When someone stands behind their word, promise, or action then observers note that they are reliable and dependable. One also knows that the end result is assured. When we magnify that concept whereby in Paul's language the creator of the universe is the one who stands behind an action like love, which we defined as "the willful act to seek the good of the other for the benefit of the other" then the benefits of the other is fully assured.

Since we know that Paul likes to repeat himself it becomes no surprise that verses 9 and 10 also have repetitive features. This repetition is seen in the very innocuous phrase, "much more." Paul uses two phrases, "having been justified" and "having been reconciled" in these two relatively parallel passages. We know that they

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are parallel because they refer to "his blood" and "death". The third element of parallelism is the phrase "we shall be saved". It is important to begin to understand the ancient pattern of writing and/or speaking that is different and distinct from a modern pattern. By rephrasing and restating his key ideas in 5:6 and 5:9, Paul is able to build upon and explain more precisely exactly what has taken place in this process that God has undertaken.

It should definitely be noted is that Paul is not always precise, in a modern theological fashion, in his descriptions. One may have noted that in 4:25 Paul says Christ was raised for our justification and here in 5:10 Paul says Christ's blood justifies. There are some who view Romans as a well developed, theological treatise but for those who read Romans with a close eye and ear for first century patterns it is not a systematic theology. Paul is describing various elements of his proclamation. Unfortunately for us today some of those descriptions have multiple correspondences.

What is clear in 5:9 is that justification delivers from God's wrath. God's wrath is revealed because people fail to acknowledge God; faith acknowledges God with the result of justification and its corresponding deliverance. At the same time, in 5:10 reconciliation results in deliverance; deliverance that comes through the resurrection life of Jesus. If one attempts to draw distinctions between 5:9 and 5:10 they are purely splitting hairs. Paul concludes this segment in verse 11 with another reference to boasting, i.e. rejoicing. This boasting we know is not about anything we should do or have done and that is clear in 5:11. We boast in God and we have received reconciliation through Christ. We have now come nearly full circle from 5:1 where it says we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The result of this reconciliation

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is peace with God. Yet 5:1 indicates that the result of justification is peace with God. The only way to make sense of what Paul is saying is that justification and reconciliation are corresponding terms not distinct terms. This means that these two words are like two sides of a coin; what you see determines on where you're looking from. When one stands under the power of sin one sees the side of the coin that says justification because one understands that necessity. When one stands under the power of God's righteousness one sees the side of the coin that says reconciliation because one understands that this activity is what has actually occurred. Paul's use of language in 5:10 helps us understand when he says, "while we were enemies." This is the third time he has used this phrase, "while we were," to describe humanity's former situation: weak, sinners, and enemies. You might expect by this time on our journey through Romans that Paul will return to this language and imagery later on in this letter.

The roadmap of thesis, antithesis and thesis is not complete. Paul has introduced his thesis in 1:18, described the opposite of what he wants to talk about in 1:19–3:20, expanded his thesis in 3:21–26, provided an example of his thesis in chapter 4, and now described how the righteousness of God is revealed by faith in 5:1-11. These 11 verses are the apex, the climax, the high point of Paul's proclamation. By faith we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, we are not disappointed because God's love is in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we know all this because Christ died for us to demonstrate that God stands behind his love. Consequently knowing that this happened gives us overwhelming confidence that we are delivered by God from the wrath demonstrated by idolatrous living. There is no comparison or concern regarding God's deliverance because it is solely and completely God's activity. When we finally

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acknowledge, i.e. faith, God who is the Creator of the universe and has revealed himself from time eternal, then God works to accomplish the reconciliation that results in peace between us and God.