

Romans: Comment and Commentary

“Therefore, accept one another,  
just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God (15:7).”

*Parenthesis: This verse seems to summarize the book.*

*“Accept one another:” the purpose of the book (12-15)*

*“Just as Christ accepted us:” the foundation of the exhortation (1-11)*

- I. Prologue, 1:1-17
- II. The Universality of Human Sinfulness, 1:18-3:20
- III. The Universality of Divine Righteousness for the Jew and Gentile: Justification, 3:21-4:25
- IV. The Assurance of God’s Righteousness: Sanctification, 5:1-8:39

(Deliverance from the Power of Sin)

Scholars vary in their opinion relative to the relationship of Romans 5 to the argument of the book. Does it connect with chapters 3-4 or 6-8, salvation through faith or the wonder of change, surety, and hope because of salvation? I believe the latter is the case for these reasons.

- 1. The phrase, “having been justified” (v. 1) seems to summarize 1:18-4:25. The idea seems to be strengthened by the connective (“therefore”); it indicates a deduction drawn from previous material.
- 2. There is a stylistic change at 5:1 from plainly arguing points to a more personal tone, from the second person plural (“you”) to the first-person plural (“we”).
- 3. There is a shift of focus noticeable by the dominant words (“faith” occurs thirty-three times in chapters 1-4, three times in 5-8) as well as variation of themes (fact to fruit).
- 4. Chapters 5-8 seem to be a unit because of the reoccurrence of the same thoughts framing the beginning and ending of it (certainty, assurance of future glory, amid threat).

A. The Fruit Righteousness: Surety stated, 5:1-11

Paul seems to be answering the question, “While I know you say that salvation is through faith, that we have forgiveness, will it help me today to get through my daily trials? What is the relationship of redemption to the experiences of life since final redemption is future? Will we be able to hold out to the end? Can we stand up to the trials of life?” The answer is found in thinking about the nature of divine redemption; it is a secure gift from God as an expression of His unstinting grace.

What is most clear is that Paul is developing an inference from the discussion of justification through faith (3:21-4:25). The “therefore (v. 1)” is the clue. Because we

have experienced redemption, we now have peace in our new status through the twists and turns of life.

1. Assurance of a new standing before God, vv. 1-2

The “therefore” tells us that what follows rests on what has preceded. Paul tells us in these verses that that result of our standing in Christ, the reckoning of divine righteous, the believer has been given three marvelous things: peace, access, and hope. All three are in Christ; they are possessions apart from circumstances!

There is a question of translation in v. 1. Is it “let us have,” an imperative, or “we have,” a fact? There is not a clear answer in the grammar though the latter seems preferable because of the context. (When the grammar can be taken more than one way, look at the words in the immediate, larger context. A deduction, not a command, seems more natural.) “Having been” looks at a past event; it has been accomplished (the mood of the verb is passive indicating that it has been done for us). In verse 11, Paul ends the paragraph with another fact, “we have now received the reconciliation.” Verses 12-21 seem to be an explanation of why and how believers have been justified and reconciled. The superior accomplishments of the second Adam brought believers into a greater state than the frailties of the first Adam.

Peace (v. 1) in this context is not the feeling of tranquility in turmoil; it is spiritual peace because of being declared in a righteous standing before God, God’s wrath having been assuaged. The paragraph begins with peace and ends with the mention of reconciliation (v. 11). Those who stand justified before the divine judge need no longer fear His wrath since Christ has brought peace between the two parties by His death. In a sense, peace results from the state of unity between God and the sinner (our hostility has vanished because His compassion and love has devoured it; His wrath has been requited by the payment offered to God for us by His dear Son. Jesus inaugurated the era of peace for us, an era long anticipated by the prophets).

A result of the end of hostilities is that we, once excluded, now have access into the very presence of God (v. 2) through grace. This unalterable state of peace has brought us into the presence of God. The point is that believers stand in the presence of grace.

*Parenthesis: The concept of access*

*The term conveys two general ideas: it can mean the initial entry or introduction into something; or it can mean an ongoing, repeated entry. Paul uses it in the first sense in Eph 2:18 and 3:12, but here his use of the past tense (“declared righteous”) and would indicate the second sense. It might be that Paul intended both nuances as in 5:10.*

Spiritual peace and joy are the fruit of the gospel. F.F. Bruce put it this way, "Peace and joy are twin blessings of the gospel: as an old preacher put it, 'peace is joy resting; joy is peace dancing.'"

The word translated "rejoice" can also be rendered "boasting." The object of our boasting, rejoicing, is not our accomplishments but in the new perspective salvation has given us on life, filling us with peace and hope.

"The glory of God" (v. 2) is the manifestation of God's own beauty, His magnificence. It is what every believer will experience when they stand in His presence.

2. Perspective in the presence of trials, vv. 3-8

What Paul has done in the previous verses is to lay the foundation for coping with the trials and pains of life. Our position in the grace of God should cause us to view temporal things from a divine orientation.

a. The positive fruit of trials, vv. 3-5

Trials are not evidence that salvation is insecure; they have an assuring benefit in that they produce within us divine character qualities, strength in anticipation of tomorrows. Patience brings forth character development that in turn produces hope (strength to forego immediate pleasure produces hope, seeing the frailty that we once trusted reorients).

1) The fact of a new perspective, v. 3a

Not only is peace and joy the allotment of life through the Spirit, so is trouble. This is so because of the long-term consequences, not the immediate torment.

2) The fruit of the new perspective, v. 3b-4

Christians, those who have found peace and joy, through divine mercies, recognize the benefits that come from adverse experiences. It produces a trilogy of traits (endurance, strengthening, and hope) in us.

3) The benefit of the new perspective, hope, v. 5

a) The fact of confidence, v. 5a

The phrase "love of God" can be interpreted in two ways: it can mean our love for God or God's love for us. Contextually the latter seems preferable since the immediate discussion is the love of God for us.

b) The ground of confidence, v. 5b

The ground of the believer's hope is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, which is the manifestation in our lives of the love of God.

b. The comfort in trials, vv. 6-8

These verses describe the nature of God's love stated in verse 5. Believers know the depth of God's love ("shed abroad" or "poured out" means unstinting lavishness).

1) A comforting fact, v. 6

The marvel of God's love is that it is toward the ungodly. Four terms in this passage tell us the depth of God's love by explaining the human condition ("helpless [v.6]," "ungodly [v. 6]," "sinners [v. 8]," "enemies [v. 10]"). The

helpless He died for, the ungodly He justified, the sinner He saved, and the enemy He reconciled. That is grace ("Christ died")! It is a love constrained by no uncommendable qualities on our part!

2) A clarifying reminder, v. 7

The statement concerning the willingness of some to give their life for the safety of others prepares the reader for the stark contrast of Jesus' care.

3) A poignant fact, v. 8

The contrastive fact is that Jesus died for the wicked! Christianity is a religion for helpless, hopeless, morally derelict people. Christ died for the unrighteous that they might be clothed with divine righteousness. Wrote Morris, "He loves because of what He is, not because of what we are."

3. Assurance of reconciliation with God, vv. 9-11

The manner of Paul's argument is progress "from the lesser to the greater."

a. The surety of future salvation, vv. 9-10

1) The fact, v. 9

Paul returns to the subject of the believers' future hope. The "then" introduces an inference from the preceding statement concerning the Lord's death.

2) The implication, v. 10

The "for" of verse 10 contains a reason for the assurance of deliverance from wrath. If Christ redeem us through His sacrifice while hostile to Him, He will certainly keep us who are now His friends. (a greater to the lesser argument). There are three antitheses in verse 10 ("enemies" and "reconciled;" "being reconciled we shall be saved" [future tense referring to wrath]; and reconciled "through the death of His Son" and "in [not "by"] His life"). In the latter change, the stress in the verse is on the results of His death (that is, union with Christ).

b. Assurance of a present reconciliation, v. 11

This verse is the climax of the section ("we now"). A triumphant, abundant entrance into glory is assured the saints of God.

As we were reconciled through our Lord's death, we are now sustained in that relationship by His life, not His incarnate existence but His resurrection life today. Mounce makes the point of the nature of His life quite well. Since reconciliation was accomplished by Jesus' death, certainly His life can insure the complete and final salvation of believers. "His life" is His present life (not His life on earth) in which He intercedes (Heb. 7:25) for believers. He died for His enemies; surely, He will save those, His former enemies, who are now fellowshiping in Him. Because Christians, God's reconciled ones, share in Christ's life, they will be saved."

*Parenthesis: Three Great Word (Propitiation, Justification, Reconciliation)*

Propitiation: the Christ-ward aspect of Redemption, the satisfaction of divine wrath.

Justification: the God-ward aspect of Redemption, the declaration by God of acceptance.

Reconciliation: the man-ward aspect of Redemption, the return to God's family.

*All three are the work of God; none are caused by man.*

B. The Basis of Surety: The Triumph of Christ over Adam's failure, 5:12-21

The point of this section is to show the reality of the believer's victory over sin through identity in the second Adam. The strength to endure the trials of life is certain because of the expansive greatness of Christ's accomplishments, triumphing over the tragedy of the consequences of Adam. The first Adam, acting on human beings' behalf, failed; and death with defeat and expulsion from God's presence resulted for all of Adam's kind. Christ, acting on behalf of His people, did not fail, resulting in life, though it was at the cost of His life. Moo has a wonderful summary of the point of the passage before us. "The main connection is with the teaching of assurance of final salvation in the immediately preceding paragraph (vv. 2b, 9-10). The passage shows why those who have been justified and reconciled can be so certain that they will be saved from wrath and share in 'the glory of God': it is because Christ's act of obedience ensures eternal life for all those who are 'in Christ.'"

One of the most significant words in the passage is the word translated "to think" (2:3), "to count" (4:3), or "to reckon" (6:11). There are three great reckonings in the Bible: (a) Adam's sin to the race (2 Cor. 5: 21), (b) believers' sin to Christ who suffered its penalty (Gal 3:13), and (c) the righteousness of Christ declared to be ours because of Christ's sacrifice (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:1-8).

In this paragraph, Adam and Christ are three times related to each other. First in verses 12-14, the origin of death is explained in relation to Adam. In verses 15-17, Adam and Christ are contrasted relative to consequence of action. Christ's accomplishments are described as "not like" or "much more" than Adam's. In verses 18-21, Adam and Christ are compared ("just as ... so also"). So, there is one fact, one contrast, and one comparison.

1. The Fact: the beginning of death in Adam, vv. 12-14

a. The entrance of sin and death, v. 12

1) The source, v. 12a

The "therefore," sometimes "for this cause," explains how death triumphed amid life. It entered the world through the disobedience of one man ("one" is repeated 12 times in this section), Adam (though he is not mentioned by name until later). It did not enter through Eve because she was not the head, the responsible agent, in her family.

2) The fact, v. 12b

The tense of the verb “entered” suggests that sin was in existence before it came into the world (1 Timothy 2:14). Paul gives no details on this issue, but other portions of Scripture suggest some kind of heavenly rebellion against God (John 8:44; Ezek. 28:11-19; Isa 14:12-17), leading to the expulsion of the “serpent,” the devil,” and his angelic minions.

3) The result, v. 12c

The “death” that resulted was spiritual (Gen. 3:3), physical (Gen. 3:19), and eternal (Gen. 3:22-24).

The phrase, “death passed to all men,” has troubled scholars. In what sense may it be said that all sinned in Adam? It seems best to take it in the sense that Adam acted on humanity’s behalf as their representative just as Christ has as the second Adam. Six times in this paragraph, it says “one man’s sin.” We did not exist when Adam sinned so how could we act with him? Verse 14 says some people did not sin according to Adam’s sin. Most importantly, we did not act in Christ when He became our substitute and representative before God on the cross.

“Death...because all sinned” is a much-debated phrase. It would seem best, considering the context of universality of Adam’s action, to take the “all sinned” as “all sinned in Adam.” The result of Adam’s sin was guilt and the corruption of His nature (theologians call this “Original Sin”). Since Adam represented the race, all inherited his fallen nature and guilt from birth. Says Mounce, “...the primary cause of our sinful nature would be the sin of Adam; the result of that sin would be the history of sinning on the part of all who enter the human race and in fact sin of their own accord.”

b. The existence of sin and death before the law, v. 13

1) The fact, v. 13a

The point is that the loss of life in Adam was not a result of the violation of the Mosaic Law (Adam was given instructions about eating with one restriction [Gen. 3:2-3). Death existed from the Garden. For an explanation of the function of the law, see v. 20, “it came beside”).

2) The implication, v. 13b

Since people died before the law was given (Gen. 5, “and he died” occurs ten times in the genealogy from Adam to Noah) and since wrong is only established when a law is broken, Adam must have broken a law (Gen. 2:16-17). The “law” before the Mosaic Law was that written on the conscience (1:32) or spoken directly to him.

c. The universality of death, v. 14

1) The fact, v. 14a

The point is simply that Adam broke “the law” and his race died though they did not participate in his sin.

2) The contrastive illustration, v. 14b

Adam was a type of Christ. Had he obeyed, the race would not have disobeyed. Christ is the “true Adam” because He obeyed, bringing life instead of death.

2. The Contrast: the entrance of life in Christ, vv. 15-17

Six times in vv. 15-21 a comparison is made between what Adam accomplished for the race in sinning and what Christ accomplished through redemption. In vv. 15-17 the pattern is “if A, much more B.”

a. Adam brought death; Christ brought life, v. 15

“But” introduces a contrast between Adam and Christ. One brought death to all, the other life to many.

b. Death by one for all, forgiveness by one for many, v. 16

Paul becomes more specific in this contrast. The judgment came from a single sin, but God’s gift is the answer to many sins, the accumulated sins of centuries since Adam.

c. The explanation, v. 17

The “for” introduces an explanation. Despite the theme of “loss in Adam and gain in Christ,” there is a hint of how the benefits of Christ come to His people, “receive.”

3. The comparison: Adam and Christ, vv. 18-21

The comparison between the accomplishments of Adam and Christ are continued with a change of pattern (“just as A, so much more B”).

One trespass	One righteous act
Condemnation	Justification
All in Adam	All in Christ

a. The comparison between the two representative men, vv. 18-19

Interestingly, Paul returns to the comparison that he started in v. 12 but did not finish.

1) The comparison, v. 18

The “therefore” introduces a formal comparison between Adam and Christ. The text is related to verse 12 forming the conclusion to the negative comparison of Adam and Christ.

The phrase “righteousness of one” is better translated “the righteous act of one,” meaning our Lord’s death on Calvary. The verb tense is definite, suggesting an event.

The two “all[s]” refer to a totality; that is, all in Adam resulting in death, all in Christ causing life. The second is a lesser numeric group.

“Justification of life” means an event that causes or results in something. The righteous state that follows the act of justification is that of entering into spiritual life consequently.

b) The explanation, v. 19

The “for” indicates an explanation. The “so-as” of verse 19 is an analogy: again, Adam’s failure and Christ’s obedience.

c) The conclusion, the function of the law, vv. 20-21

If righteousness is through faith, not law, it is reasonable to raise the issue once again since the relationship of law to grace was one of the dominant issues in the early church. “Does one need to conform to the Mosaic Code to enter into the New Covenant?” is how we would phrase the question perhaps today. It is not surprising that Paul returns to the topic given its prominence in gospel presentation.

(1) The statement of it, v. 20

Paul now tells readers why the Mosaic Law was given. The law was given so that people might know their sin and flee to Christ. It was not meant to save; it was given to help sinners see their deep need of a redeemer.

(2) The purpose of it, v. 21

The law set in motion a purpose that leads to the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life in Christ.

Applications:

1. We live in a world that is hungry for peace and tranquility, but has sought it in psychological, sociological, and political management techniques. Peace is not the absence of disturbance in our lives and relationships. Christians can have peace in the middle of these things because true peace is not the absence of the negative. Peace without the inner presence of God is little more than temporal relief from the pain of anxieties. Peace is in knowing, and being known by the Prince of Peace, the one who brought forgiveness through the suffering of violence for us.
2. Difficulties in life build character that manifests itself in momentary deferrals because of our future hope. We all “run” from difficulties, yet God permits them in our lives because such negatives curb the propensities toward selfish behavior that redemption does not cure. Trials show us that this world is not our home; at best, it is a shadowed representation. They tell us that something is not right in this life. Trials turn us from this world to find our solace in God and the hope we have of being in a better place someday.
3. Present circumstances cannot overturn the certainty of the future for us. The present does not determine the future. Hope is not banished by our pains. Indeed, hope is excited and made more real by them. A clue to life in a troubled world of deception, false advertising, and broken promises is to come to the realization that there is a God, one who created all that we see, who deeply loves us, loves beyond human description. To have more to cling to in this life is to have hope if the object of hope is the Lord Jesus.
4. Assurance of salvation is rooted in the work of Christ for sinners. The Bible’s description of each of us before Christ entered our lives should remind us constantly that salvation is the work of God. Our passage describes each of us before we met Him as “ungodly” and “enemies of God.” We had no love for Him, only animosity and disrespect. In that state, how could we ever think that we could earn our salvation? How can an ungodly person



offer anything acceptable to God in the state of ungodliness, God only accepting what accords with His divine character? Can you and I praise Him enough?

5. It seems inescapable when we think of the apostle that Christ was the centerpiece of His life and message. I am sure that the great change for Him on the Damascus Road when God spoke to a wicked Pharisee from heaven calling Him by his Hebrew name, Shaul. Christ became Paul's passion causing him to accept any sacrifice required to make Him known. We may not have the specific callings, circumstances, and giftedness of the apostle, but His passion for Christ is none-the-less, or should be, our passion. While our lives are vastly different, what are you doing to make the one who redeemed you known? In what sense would you say He has made a difference in your life? In what sense does He stand as your life's centerpiece?
6. There are phrases in our text that should make our heart's leap ("having been justified," "reconciliation"). We have been forgiven, but more than even that; we have been clothed in divine righteousness. We who were ungodly, enemies have been brought back to Him, our estrangement having ended. The prodigal has been returned! Today, regardless of our ethnicity, education, or social standing, we have security in the grace that has been lavishly bestowed upon us. Do you pause to thank God for His undeserved mercies? How has what He has done transform what you are doing?
7. We should all sing:  
    "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
    That saved a wretch like me!  
    I once was lost, but now am found,  
    Was blind, but now I see."

The mind is a complex mechanism, but it can only function with the information it receives; it cannot perceive what its sensory perceptions cannot sense or integrate. Simply put, if God does not act in grace and reveal Himself to us, all that we would have, at best, are shadowy hints to His mercy. God allowed us to know Him by revealing, by His Spirit, the beauty of the accomplishments of His Son. Can we ever praise Him enough?

8. According to our passage there are only two identities in the whole human race; we are either in Adam or in Christ. In Adam we were born guilty before God, separated from His presence, spiritually devoid of life, and self-oriented. We were children bound for death and judgment. In Christ we have been made alive through His death. Christ has triumphed, as demonstrated by His resurrection, and all who know the Savior live in His victory over sin and death. How does an understanding of Adam's failure help you to make sense out of the cruelty we often see about us? How does Christ offer hope that someday it will not be as it is?