

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
(Deliverance from the Power of Sin), 5:1-8:39
 - A. The Fruit of God’s Righteousness: Surety, 5:1-11
 - B. The Basis of Surety: The Triumph of Christ, 5:12-21
 - C. The Consequence of Surety: Union with Christ, 6:1- 7:25
(Three Metaphors: Baptism, Enslavement, Marriage)
- D. The Power of Our Daily Provision: The Holy Spirit, 8:1-39
 - 1. Victory over sin’s power by the Spirit, vv. 1-17
 - 2. For deliverance from sin’s presence in glory by the Spirit, vv. 18-39
Before glory and the crown, there is suffering. As one has said, “There is a final valley to cross before Mount Glory is reached; it is Mount Suffering.” The suffering defined within the broader context is that of struggle with the remnants of sin in the believer’s nature (there is no hint in the book to this point of any threat of physical suffering due to their confession of Christ though we do know it existed in Rome). All believers make their way through it; it is not inconsistent with God’s affection for us.
 - a. Sufferings anticipate glory, vv. 18-30
This section is bound together by a threefold groaning (vv. 22, 23, 26). In comparison to glory, the sufferings of this life are insignificant; there is glory to follow suffering, and the Spirit aids believers in their suffering.
 - 1) The groaning of creation, vv. 18-22
 - a) The fundamental principle, v. 18
The “for” explains the relationship of the sufferings in verse 17 and the glory that is to be revealed. Suffering is the path to incomparable glory. The “sufferings” in context are those that result from the struggle with the reminders of sin’s once triumphal reign over us, the remnants.
 - b) The grand anticipation, v. 19-22
 - (1) The fact of hope, v. 19

The “for” is the beginning of an explanation of the preceding statement. The incomparable glory awaiting the believer is anxiously anticipated by the sub-human creation, animals. Paul personifies the subhuman creation to convey to his readers a sense of the cosmic significance of humanity’s fall into sin and the believer’s restoration to glory.

(2) The need for hope, v. 20

Paul explains this further (“for”) in v. 19; it is his commentary on Genesis 3:17-19. Because of the curse on the creation, it cannot glorify God as it should or will. Creation became twisted and perverse; its original intent seemingly aborted by its grotesqueness. However, someday the curse will be removed.

Also “in hope” relates to “made subject to vanity.” Paul may have in mind Genesis 3:15. Creation waits, as Christians do, in expectation of a better day.

Who is the one who subjected creation “not of its own will?” It seems that it was God who did this (Gen 3:17) who alone has the right (His own divine justice) and power (His omnipotence) to do so.

(3) The reason for hope, v. 21

“Because” gives the reason creation hopes. Creation to will experience redemption, a restoration after the blight of the fall. The destiny of the earth is not annihilation, but transformation.

It is rather amazing that nature will be part of eternity; heaven is coming back to a recreated earth. The “garden of Eden” will return! I bet the animals will be something to behold.

(4) The surety of hope, v. 22

The final explanatory “for” suggests a general truth. Creation agonizes in “childbirth” as people do.

The metaphor of childbirth seems on the surface a little strange. In the Jewish mind, the concept was associated with the dawning of a new age (Mark 13:8). This new “day,” that is yet to come will be without the struggles we now experience.

2) The groaning of God’s children, vv. 23-25

a) The fact of believers’ groaning, v. 23

This section has close parallels to chapter 7, the apostle’s personal experience of agony. The reference to “first fruits” would remind the student of the Scriptures and the barley harvest (Lev 23:9-14). “First fruits” was the promise of a greater harvest to come. In a sense, the giving of the Spirit was the “first fruit” on the new age inaugurated in Jesus’ resurrection. We are the first fruits of the Spirit’s promised

groanings in anxious anticipation of the greater harvest. One has said, "The man who is satisfied with the earth does not know heaven."

Parenthesis: The resurrection of the body

The Bible clearly teaches the resurrection of the body. The physical body of believers will be redeemed in the final day (the idea of redemption is to buy back, to purchase which is what Jesus did for us at Calvary). While we can anticipate a physical existence in eternity; it will not be exactly like our fallen bodies today; it will be a new body (I Cor 15:35-49), not subject to corruption.

b) The confidence in believers' groaning, vv. 24-25

(1) The nature of hope, v. 24

It is interesting that our future redemption is described in verbal tenses that are past suggesting that in the mind of God it is an already completed action. Redemption has tenses (past, present, and future) having one ultimate and conclusion but God, who is timeless, sees it only as present. The unseen is a sure thing to us!

(2) The manner in hope, v. 25

The manner of our waiting until hope is realized is described as characterized by "patience" or perseverance. The expression of hope is continuance in trust and delight in what we have not received yet knowing that someday we will!

(c) The groaning of the Spirit, vv. 26-30

Not only do believers have the promises of deliverance and the reminder that they were saved in the sphere of hope, but believers also have the help of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the infirmity of the body. In a broken environment or world, broken people make broken requests of God. God's people need help!

(1) In intercessory prayer, vv. 26-27

The Spirit aids believers in their struggle with sin. The word "infirmity" is singular, not plural, indicating that the weakness felt in the struggle is the indwelling sin principle (7:21). There are two intercessors: one in heaven and one in the believer. The Spirit labors in prayer when the child of God is too weak to pray adequately for release from sin.

The "groaning" of the Spirit is His intercessory prayer language. When believers do not know the will of God in praying, the Spirit does; and asks properly (that is, in conformity with the will of God).

The word "help" literally means "to be taken hold of by someone." Implied is that believers have a part in appropriating the Spirit's help. The manner of doing so is unclear to me.

(2) In ordering a complete salvation, vv. 28-30

The source of all the blessings believers have are found here; it is rooted in divine action in ages past and will be consummated at the end of time. As one has said, "These are rich cordials for a fainting spirit."

(1) The principle of the purpose of God, v. 28

(a) The objects of God's purpose humanly considered, v. 28a

It is for those "that love God" which, in turn, are described as those called according to His purpose (i.e., redemption).

(b) The nature of God's purpose explicated, v. 28b

It is a plan that proceeds from the heart of a loving Father.

(c) The objects of God's purposes divinely considered, v. 28c

It is those "called according to His purpose."

(2) The program of the purpose of God, v. 29

Five parallel terms describe the process of the realization of God's purpose; it has been called the "golden chain."

(a) The first step: foreknowledge, v. 29a

The "for" introduces the reason that all things work together for good for His children. The term "foreknowledge" means to love or enter a relationship; it means to "to know intimately" (Acts 2:23; Rom 11:2; 1 Pet 1:2, 20). It is not to have a prior knowledge upon which decisions are made. God's decisions rest in His love for the creature, not the creature's love for God. If the latter were the case, God would be obligated to us. God's love is uncaused by us. The words are "for whom he foreknew (loved)," not "what he foreknew" (i.e., faith). Paul's point is to highlight the divine initiative in the outworking of His purposes.

Parenthesis: The biblical meaning of foreknowledge

This is one of the richest terms in the Bible. It tells us the

ground of His elective mercies. It literally means "prior love."

Again, the Bible tells us that this became a reality before

creation of anything. God chose to cast His =affection upon us

before any action on our part; in fact, His love explains the

action on our part. The term does not mean a prior knowledge

of a person's action; that would make God dependent on the

creature. God's prior love cause our love; our love is a response

to God's love revealed in Jesus.

(b) The second step: predestination, v. 29b

Just as "foreknowledge" stresses the past love of God, the word "predestinate" looks at the aim or end of that love.

God's intent is that those He loves might share in His likeness that Christ already enjoys. The term literally means "to point out on the horizon;" it looks at the end, the ultimate destiny,

of the believer. We have been appointed to ultimate redemption someday!

Parenthesis: The biblical meaning of predestination
The term literally means, "to point out on the horizon" or assigning one's end (destiny). It indicates the purpose of God's choosing us as His child. The goal of God's choosing is that we become the adopted sons and daughters of God. It is an action of God in eternity past before our creation. Our appointment is to heaven!

(3) The process of realizing God's purpose, v. 30

The above two steps relate to God's eternal purpose; the initial two below relate to His temporal endeavors and the last to finality.

(a) The third step, calling, v. 30a

The "call" of God is the same as regeneration or the new birth since the next clause states that all the called are justified. There is no failure in the accomplishment of God's intent. The point is that "calling" here is not a generalized beckoning; it is specific, and the consequence is the inauguration of true life.

(b) The fourth step: justification, v. 30b

By divine declaration, believers are given God's righteousness to cover their sins (3:21-4:25).

(c) The fifth step: glorification, v. 30c

The tense of the verb, "glorified," indicates that Paul's sees it as an accomplished fact already; it is certain.

Parenthesis: Why does Paul not include sanctification, the Christian's present experience, in the sequence from eternity to eternity? Paul's emphasis is on completion, not process ("conformed to His likeness"). Sanctification is "glory" begun; glory is sanctification completed. In essence, then, the reason is that Paul is stressing completed action rather than progressive action.

b. The surety of glory, vv. 31-39

The same God who three times is said by Paul in Romans to have given mankind up (1:24, 26, 28) is now said by the apostle to have given up His only Son (8:32). The emphasis in this section is upon the security of the believer. There is no condemnation because we have been freed from the condemning power of the law. We have been freed from servitude to the law because we have been given the Spirit who helps us overcome the bent to wickedness. There is no uncertainty of the divine promises because of the constancy of God's character upon which His promises are based. "What can separate us from the love of God

(v. 35)? What is most interesting is the occurrence of legal terms in this passage (“against,” “charge,” “justifies,” “condemns,” and “intercedes”). The scene presented is that of a formal court proceeding in heaven. There assertions followed by rebuttals.

1) The question posed, v. 31

The “if” states the condition as the basis of the apostle’s argument because it is a first-class condition, a fact,” it would not be wrong to translate it “since.” What an absurdity even to think that the finite can oppose the will of the infinite being. See also, Jer. 29:11.

“Who,” as in “who is against us,” is repeated in vv. 33, 34, and 35. The pronoun refers to Satan, the master accuser of the brethren.

2) The answers posed by more questions, vv. 32-36

a) Can the purchase cost be fruitless (v. 32)?

The argument is one of the lesser to the greater (if the greater, surely the lesser). If God gave His son to us when we were thankless reprobates, would God forsake His promises now that we have been brought by His kindness into His family? The verse seems clearly to be rooted in Genesis 22:12, 16. It was the Father (not Judas, not Pilate, not the Jews) that delivered up His Son, just as Abraham did his son.

b) Can God’s action be reversed (v. 33)?

This verse is composed of two interconnected concepts: God’s election and His declaration of acquittal with the accompanying reality of imputed righteousness. Can the election of God be reversed? Can the divine declaration of our righteous stating be altered? If God will not accuse us, can anyone do so? God’s actions are rooted, limited, and defined by His character: God cannot act out of congruity with His character. God has declared us righteous before Him and that ends the discussion.

Parenthesis: What is the meaning of divine election?

The term itself means “to choose” or “to select out” from a mass of people for the display of God’s grace. The act of choosing took place before the creation, before the Garden of Eden or the Fall of Gen 3 (“before the foundation of the world,” Eph 1:4). From the infinitely perceptive mind of God, He chose out of lost humanity myriads who He would allow to know His Son and experience His grace. The reason for God’s discriminatory action lies in the unsearchable riches of His own sovereign good pleasure. God acted on our behalf before our creation or fall, things the finite mind cannot grasp.

c) Can anyone bring a just accusation of condemnation (v. 34)?

Condemnation is out of the question, not because of the creature stands uncondemnable, but because of the one who secured our acquittal. In Christ, Paul finds four grounds for confidence in this life. They are all about Christ (He died, He rose from the dead, He is with God, and He

intercedes for His people). The enumeration of the actions accomplished by and through Christ occurs in ascending order, with the emphasis falling on the last in the series.

Parenthesis: How do we understand the manner of Christ's intercession for us?

While it is often explained in the courtroom imagery of the master-accuser, Satan, standing in heaven accusing us for our failures, Christ the grand defense attorney stands forth to show the judge of all His hands and side reminding God that by His action our guilt has been atoned. It seems more likely that Christ's presence in heaven itself pleads our case. His presence in heaven is proof that He accomplished mankind's redemption; His presence by virtue of His triumphal entry, the resurrection, is the basis of His intercessor work.

Two plead our case: Christ in respect to our guiltlessness and the Spirit in interpreting and carrying our prayers to the throne of grace. We have two divine advocates!

d) Does anyone or any tragedy have the power to change the mind of God (vv. 35-37)?

(1) The fact of surety, v. 35

Not even death or tragedy can separate His people from God; in fact, it draws us to God. The phrase "love of God" indicates God's love for us, not our love for God.

(2) The surety during contrariety, v. 36

Troubles abound; they always have and always will. Believers' ultimate defeat is impossible. Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 ("For thy sake we are killed all day long").

3) Paul's great persuasion, vv. 37-39

Wow! What an answer the apostle gives us! No condemnation because of the law! No obligation to obey the law (remember the contextual topic is salvation, not sanctification)! No Frustration because of the law! No separation over the law!

The tense of the verb to bring out its proper nuance can be rendered "I have been and continue to be convinced." The passage consists of contrastive pairs.

"Death and life" are states of existence. "Angels and rulers" are inhabitants of the spirit world, either good or evil.

"Powers" is alone without explanation. If it goes with rulers, it may denote supernatural forces. In Paul's writings, "powers" denotes miracles. "Things present or future" are temporal things. "Height and

depth” refer to the spatial world, the entire universe. “Any created thing” means everything and anything that has life.

Paul’s point is that the believer need have no fear that neither circumstances (past, present, or future) nor events will call into question their relationship to God in Christ.

The chapter begins with “no condemnation” (v. 1). It ends with “no separation” (v. 39). God’s people cannot be separated from God’s love!

Applications:

1. We tend to think the greatest battles we fight are those that come from without (the hurt imposed by others, diseases, persecution), but it seems the worse enemy, the one that is most consistent, perseverant, and destructive is from within. It is the remnant of the once universal grip of sin that clings to every faculty of our soul’s resulting in pride, errant desires, and twisted coping mechanisms. Physical death will destroy us but once, and with impermanence. Thus, the normal Christian life has a dark side to it; it is called struggle. How will are you struggling? What do you struggle with the most- fears, memories, inordinate desires?
2. We live our lives in anticipation of what shall be. We are people that fundamentally understand this what we see, what we experience in this world, is shadow of reality; that this world at worse is a picture that will end someday and at best will be improved immensely by quality and longevity. We are a people of hope; this is a grand characteristic of those who are Christ followers. Are you a person who puts more hope in today than in your tomorrows? Has the fire of hope dimmed somewhat by the pressures and pains of daily life? Do you “groan” or long for the next world or does this world offer you all the delights you need?
3. Nothing less than the presence of the Spirit in the believer’s life is genuine Christianity. God is love; Jesus is the love of God revealed through His life death and acceptance by His resurrection; the Holy Spirit is the one through whom the love of God is possessed. Assurance of the presence of the Spirit is evidenced in two ways: the witness of the Spirit within and the expression of truly biblical love to others. The latter is important because it reveals the invisible presence of God. It is not so much how much change has taken place; it’s the fact that change has taken place and the expression of an earnest desire that it increases. Do you know that the Spirit of God is present in the redemption that is through Jesus Christ?
4. I have discovered something as I think about my psychological stability. It is this: what I fill my mind with determines my emotional stability. The afflictions of this life, though real and grievous, take on a different light when the incomparable joys of heaven are contemplated. A mind set on heaven, a mind set on our hope, promotes life and peace. If you fill your eyes and mind with uncomfortable thoughts, they will lead to a life of uncomfortableness. What are you allowing to settle in your mind? Do you consciously delight in the beauty and magnificence of the Lord?

5. I think because of our fallenness and the fact that we live in a world that is cruel at times that God does not have our best interests in mind, that His love is inconsistent at best and inadequate often. Such a notion of God's relationship to us is why we surmise that He seemingly withholds the best and, at times, allows the worst. The point of our passage is that there is absolutely nothing that can drive a wedge between God and His children. God is far more committed to us, more deeply devoted to us, than we to Him. God loves us and nothing can separate Him from us. Does that not bring peace to your soul? Can you rest in the promises and declarations of God?
6. There are basically three potential reasons to express gratitude through obedience to God. Some people obey, or at least seek to, in the hope of manipulating God to extend favors. Another motive for compliance to God is the quest to preserve what God has already given so as not to lose it. Neither of these motives are Christian. So, what is the Christian motive if it is not to acquire to keep? It is because we have already. Biblical obedience is a fruit of thankfulness. If God spared not His own Son to die for us, are there any sacrifices too great for us in revealing our appreciation?