

Romans 5

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 10 August 2009 12:11

The old Celtic church in Britain, though under a number of kings, was unified in its beliefs, albeit in a kind of rough-shod way. It arose well before the first Roman Catholic official tried to impose Rome's beliefs on it (through Augustine of Canterbury), and began life as an independent order of Christians. Some claim they were the original 'Protestants'. Sadly, it veered slowly towards Catholicism, but loosely. However, until well into the 600s, the indigenous church ran its own affairs and adhered to a more or less single set of doctrinal teachings, without having to pay allegiance to Rome.

Even earlier, the first churches, around the Mediterranean, were unified in their beliefs. This was helped in part by the writings of Paul, and also by the travelling nature of preachers, who all taught the same things, giving the Church immense authority.

But, today, every man thinks he can believe as he wishes. This is true, but only in the psychological sense, for all of God's word is unified. Only one meaning can be given to scripture, because, when God gave His word to men, it only had that one meaning. But, arrogant men try to claim their own interpretations, that have no likeness to the truth. That is why Paul took great pains to explain the Gospel and its implications in much detail. This is why reading this letter is unlike reading most others. Its detail prevents us from sitting easily and just skimming over the top!

We do well to study what he says, with similar attention to detail. It is a case of mastering what is taught, and being a true student of scripture. Anyone can read words, but few press on to study in depth. And so only a few understand in truth, applying it to their everyday lives. Theirs is a superficial existence, without honour.

Verses 1 - 5

1.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2.

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

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3.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4.

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5.

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Because we are “justified by faith” we have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Please note the order: first we are justified, *then* we have peace. There can be no peace with God, or with ourselves, unless we are justified. And we cannot be justified or have peace unless we know Jesus Christ.

Let us break that down more:

To be ‘justified’, *dikaioō*, is to be made as we ought to be – acceptable to God. It is to be pronounced acceptable by God. The word is rooted in *dikaio*, meaning to observe divine laws, to be upright in one’s life, virtuous, keeping God’s commands. In ordinary language it is to be free of guilt, innocent; to conform wholly to God’s will. We can see from this, that to be ‘justified’ is not just a word used in hymns, or fleetingly referred to in sermons. It is something that is dynamic and wholesome, speaking of a man or woman whose entire life is spent pleasing God. This state is essential if we are to be at peace with God.

We reach this state through “faith”, *pistis*. Do you have faith? Then do you, and others, see evidence of it in your life? Do they see you are truly justified? The ‘faith’ that brings about justification is far more than simply saying you believe in God. Satan believes in God totally! Anyone can say they believe in God! No, genuine faith is the unwavering belief that God is true, that He saves, that you are personally saved, that everything God says is true, regardless of what men say. It places belief in divine things far higher than anything we believe about human theories and claims. It is so strong that we trust God implicitly, without question, and this in itself gives us a holy fervour for everything from and in God.

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It does not stop there. It means we accept and believe fully that God created everything, that this was done in six literal days (and man and everything else was created as we know them now); that God rules everything; that only He provides salvation, through Jesus Christ. It means believing Jesus is the Messiah and the only One through Whom we may have salvation; it means showing complete loyalty to God; and it also means that, as those who follow the Christ, we display the same kinds of characteristics. Now, is any of this present in YOUR life?

This faith or trust leads to our salvation, by way of repentance, after we have experienced the enlivening of our spirit, regeneration. Thus, we are justified by faith, through (dia – by the means of) Jesus Christ, because He is the One Who saves us.

This is all a lot to live up to. Do we live up to it? Every moment of every day we live? If we have been saved and are justified; acceptable to God, then we will also know peace with Him. 'Peace', eirēnē, in this text, means we will have salvation. But, it also means we will be secure in Him, safe in the knowledge we are kept by Christ, and tranquil because our salvation is assured. This, in turn, leads us not to fear circumstances but to accept whatever our earthly situation is with calm and inner balance. Do YOU feel this security at all times, no matter what happens?

Verse 2 tells us that once we know Christ, He will give us access to the grace of the Father. That is, the many blessings He wishes us to have by His free gift. We can rejoice, too, that this is so, and that we will enter heaven. It shows we have a direct path of communication with God (because we are justified), and that He is pleased to give us what is pure, good, kind, wonderful; joy pleasure, and even graceful words... so missing in our modern society, even amongst Christians. We will praise God for hope (that is, the expectation of everything good, including our eternal salvation).

Only recently I came across a man who thinks he is a Christian, and yet he does not believe in eternity. What kind of hope is that? It is not the hope of a Christian, but the non-hope of an unbeliever. The true believer sees only wondrous things in the Lord, together with thoughts of His magnificence.

Not only do we trust God in things we perceive to be good, but also in those things that we see as being troublesome. Thus, we "glory in tribulations also", things that put us under immense

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pressure, including oppression and dire straits. I know that many Christians think this is 'over the top' – why should we praise God if we are sorely troubled? This is not holy thinking, but evidence of unbelief. We praise God for tribulations not because we like them, or that we want them, but because in them God will show His might. It is through tribulations that we are given patience.

Patience, hypomonē, is the gift of endurance. It is when we will not be moved away from belief and divine purpose; it is to remain trusting no matter what happens, even if we die. It is to always be steadfast. Ever been in a situation you wished would end, because it seems to go on forever? How did you cope? Did you 'crack'? Or, did you believe utterly? Patience is the weakest link. When our life is under extreme pressure from trials, is when we see our worth, when we see whether or not our faith is genuine. If we can last through these trials then we can last through anything.

And when we have this patience, we get experience. That is, a 'tried character', proof that we are worthy. And when we get this approval from God, we get hope, elpis, the sheer confidence of being in God's hand. Do each one of us match up to this great and marvellous definition of being a Christian?

It is very easy for a Christian to lose sight of this testimony, whether it is caused by extensive pain, illness, oppression, emotional upsets, financial problems, or some other earthly impediment. But, we can rise above it all, through faith. This is not theory, but reality.

So:

Justified by Christ through faith.

Tribulations → patience → experience → hope.

Because the Holy Ghost is given to us.

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We have hope, the expectation of good from God, and so we can know, without doubt, that we will not be 'ashamed'. In everyday language, this means we will never be let down or deceived by our faith in God. This is because our faith and love is given to us by God, through the Holy Spirit, and God cannot lie or deceive.

Many moan that God does not honour their love or faith, and does not answer their prayers. This is a self-deception, not a deception from God! If we had true faith and love we would not blame God nor think He has let us down! The failure is in us, not God, Who gives us His love and faith in abundance.

Verses 6 - 9

1.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

2.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

3.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

4.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

This is proved by the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Even though we were dead in sins, He died so that we might live. What better proof of God's love than that Jesus died for those who had nothing good in them? As Paul points out, one man may die on behalf of another man who was totally worthy and good; he might even die if the man was just good. But Christ died for men who were unworthy and vile (all of us who are saved)! So, if Christ died to save us when we were still vile sinners, He is not going to hand us over to hell and the Father's wrath at the end of time. This, of course, is not an excuse for any of us to sin, without conscience.

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Verses 10 - 13

1.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

2.

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

3.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

4.

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Every person ever born is an enemy of God. But, when Jesus died for those who were elect, we were reconciled to God. To be reconciled means to be accepted by God, to be treated with friendship and love. Because God's Son made a sacrifice on our behalf, God accepts us into heaven ('saved by His life')... we died to sin and will be raised again to enter heaven, because Christ rose again on the third day.

It is important to understand that our acceptance by God relies solely on what Christ did on the cross. When He died for us, it meant that He bought us for the Father. He atoned for our sins; that is, he made sure that, by His death, those who are elect are able to be restored to God's favour. Thus, the atonement is only effective for the elect, who, because they are elect, will repent and be saved, accepting the death and resurrection of Christ as true, and as effective in their own lives. No man can reach heaven except by this means, and this is a reason for great joy.

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Adam was created perfect but he sinned. Because he was the father of mankind, all his offspring, no matter how diverse they are today, were tarnished by sin and deserve death. That is why we all die... every person ever born is conceived and born in sin. Sin was always in the world, after Adam's sin, but it took the declaration of the Law to cause men to realize it.

Verses 14 - 17

1.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

2.

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

3.

And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

4.

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Whether or not men realize their sin, they remain sinners. Men died from Adam to the present day and will continue to do so to the end of time. Even when Moses brought the tablets of law from the mountain, men died, because of sin, even though, in terms of human thought, many of them had not sinned so greatly as Adam (who was a type of Christ).

Everyone dies because of the one sin committed by Adam. Yet, the sacrifice of Christ gave many salvation, despite their multitude of sins. One man caused us all to die and to be guilty, but the gift of salvation, also by one Man, gives us even greater effects and benefits.

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It is right for me to remind all readers that this is so. There is nothing in any of us to warrant us to be saved. There is nothing in us to warrant God allowing us to live at all. Yet, he does, and He has elected, predestinated, some to know salvation, through Jesus Christ. We have this new life ONLY through Jesus and ONLY by grace. To even hint that we can choose life or Christ is to dishonour the Lord and to blaspheme His name, because salvation is then made out to be human caused or partly-caused, attainable by our own efforts, enquiry and decision.

Verses 18 - 21

1.

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

2.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

3.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

4.

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

One man, Adam, by his sin, brought condemnation upon all people thereafter, a condemnation that could never be lifted by human means. But, Christ came to give men a free gift, the gift of life, because it made them just or acceptable to God. Only Christ was righteous in His own right, and so only He could be the sacrifice to God, for our sins. The very fact that it is called a "free gift" proves that we cannot get salvation in any way, except by it being given by God.

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Because Adam was disobedient, he brought us all into condemnation as sinners. The obedience of Christ to His Father's will made many righteous. Yes, even Christ had to be obedient. This is why Satan attempted to make Christ turn away from His inevitable end on the cross. Just one lapse of obedience, and all would have been lost.

Because of sin, and the way men loved to be corrupt, God brought in His law, to highlight the fact that we were all bound for hell as guilty sinners. But, though sin was everywhere, the work of Christ on the cross was even greater in magnitude and effect... "grace did much more abound"! Sin takes us to death and is supreme in all who are unsaved. God's free gift, grace, not only makes us righteous and acceptable to God, but it also leads us through death to eternal life. All made possible by God's will and the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul spells out in detail what belief is, and how we obtain it. Nevertheless, many who are foolish and arrogant think they can better what God has done, by twisting His word to suit themselves. I am said to be rigid in my insistence on God's word alone. This is because only God's word has the answer, and what I teach is God's word! Do not fall to theory. Believe only what God says in His word.

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