

Justification Plus Faith Equals Grace

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Bi 606 Survey of Romans

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Romans stands out as one of the most thorough treatises in the Christian Bible. The Apostle Paul systematically outlines Christian truths intertwined with the Torah, the Law and the Gospel. This letter is written to the churches in Rome with the intent to be passed around and read aloud to the different congregations. A total of sixteen chapters make up the epistle. Chapter 5 is selected for discussion. Romans 5:1-21 expounds on how justification plus faith equals grace.

According to Moo, Paul explains and defends his gospel to the Roman Christian community of Jews and Gentiles for the purpose of gaining support of his evangelistic campaign to western Mediterranean.¹ He had neither founded nor visited any of the churches, but, yet he felt compelled to share his gospel in a logical structure. The letter is opened with a brief introduction of himself as the one set aside for the Gospel with plans of bringing the Good News to Rome. Paul rationalized his commitment to the Gospel because it transmits God's power that brings salvation (1:16). He further explains that the Gospel has such power because it reveals God's justifying activity. All who responds to that activity in faith becomes just before God (1:17).² This teaching of justification by faith becomes a basic tenet to Paul's gospel which can be experienced only by faith. Chapter 5 may be viewed as a transition between the first section (Chapters 1-4) and the second section (Chapters 6-8).

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations, also knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not

¹ Moo, Douglas, The Epistle to Romans, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 1996, pages 290-325.

² Ibid.

ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."³

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The Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, a strong figure in the 19th century Reformed tradition, offered the following commentary on Romans 5:1-5:

“If you are indeed justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore, know it and feel no disquietude as a dear child might to a loving Father Draw near to God. When someone is justified he has the right to draw near: So that, being justified and having peace, we have access to faith and this is not a transient privilege. Beloved, it is a mark of great grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord’s hand. But it is a sign of a still higher state of grace when we glory in tribulation. We welcome it and say, ‘Now, the Lord is about to elevate me to the upper class in His school to teach me some deeper truths than I have hitherto learn; to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of His kingdom than I have previously had ----- to work in my heart some new grace which has never been there before. You cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure. There are some who think that they will get expert experience through tribulation. They do in a certain sense, but, not experience the right kind. The middle term, patience, keeps its right place. Some people who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience now than they had when they begun. They are just as foolish, untaught in the things of God. Experience of the Lord’s goodness in the past leads on to hope for still greater things in the future and thus, experience worketh hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”⁴

³ Holy Bible King James Version

⁴ <https://studylight.org/spurgeon/sverses>

Romans 5:6-11:

*For when we were ye without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*⁵

The renown 17th century English minister, Matthew Henry, gives forth his thoughts on the verses 6-11 in Romans chapter 5:

“Christ died for sinners, not only such as were useless but such as were guilty and hateful; Such that their everlasting destruction would be the glory of God’s justice. Christ died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins and we were yet sinners when He died for us. But God designed to deliver from sin, and to work a great change. And that for such as this. Christ should die, is a mystery; no other such an instance of love is known, so that it may well be the employment of eternity to adore and wonder at it. But from what are believers in Christ released by His death? Not from bodily death. The evil from which the deliverance could be effected must be more dreadful than natural death. And if by Divine grace they were bought to repent and to believe in Christ and thus were justified by the price of His blood shedding and by faith in His atonement. Having such a pledge of salvation in the love of God through Christ, the apostle declared that believers not only rejoiced in the hope of heaven and even in their tribulations for Christ’s sake.”⁶

⁵ Ibid, #3.

⁶ <https://www.christianity.com/matthewhenry/sbiblecommentary>

According to Moo, Paul highlights the benefits given to the eternally justified believer. He extends an invitation to celebrate such marvelous things. To be justified is a legal term meaning to be acquitted. Christians should rejoice in their new status. For now they have been reconciled and can look forward to being glorified.⁷

The following verses, Romans 5:12-19, make easy comparisons and contrast that even the youngest of Christians could understand. Paul utilized this literary device, as did many Greek philosophers, to make a clear connection between Genesis and the Resurrection and to unite Christian Jews and Gentiles.

*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, (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 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. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For it 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. And not as it was by one that sinned; so is the gift for the judgement was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 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. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*⁸

The author Moo shed light on the passage with his own perspective as being corporate rather individual. To him, Paul teaches everyone will line up with one or the other whose actions dictate the eternal finality forever. "Either one 'belongs' to Adam and is under the sentence of death because of his sin and disobedience or one belongs to Christ and is assured of eternal life

⁷ Ibid, #1.

⁸ Ibid, #3.

Because of His righteous act of obedience.⁹ Both are significant, but unequal. Christ obedience is completely able to overcome the effects of Adam's disobedience. Everyone who accepts Jesus Christ receives the free gift of grace God offers and has completely and definitely overcome by the reign of grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Paul displays his genius throughout the passage with clarity and simplicity. Another source makes commentary about the same verses (12-19), "By the obedience of Christ here is plainly not meant more than what divine call His active obedience as distinguished from His suffering and death, it is the entire work of Christ our Lord Himself represents even in His death as His great act of obedience to the Father.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.¹⁰

Then law could not justify believers. The law makes sin loud and clear when contrasted with God's holy standard. The law makes sin abound, the law makes sin big because the law draws clear lines between right and wrong. Wherein, the law made the individual want to sin more, not because anything is wrong with the law, but only because something is deeply wrong with the human condition. Even though sin abounded under the law, grace became available and abounded much more under Jesus. The phrase "abounded much more" literally means "super abounded." God makes His grace super abound over abounding sin. Sin reigned in death. Grace reigns in righteousness and eternal life through Jesus Christ.¹¹

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⁹ Ibid, #1

¹⁰ Ibid, #3.

¹¹ www.bibleref.org

Romans chapter 5 may have been written to a specific audience that lived many years ago, however, the message has significant purpose of audiences of today. In order to operate in the fullness of God's will, believers have to understand the enormity of being justified. Justification sound like sophisticated legalese, but the meaning is simple: In God's court, every Christian believer is made free. In a regular court of law, because of sin, everyone for sure would be found guilty. Yet, for God's good pleasure, He made believers free because of what Jesus did. The guilty sentence is changed into a sentence of not guilty. Paul makes it clear that it is important for the believer to have faith in His justification and receive the benefits and rewards from God in His Goodness. The believer is rewarded with peace. Not only the peace of God, the believer can find peace with God. Much of humanity spend a lifetime seeking and searching for someone or something they do not even know. Christians seek God for whatever their needs are. Believers have reason to rejoice in knowing that they now have the ability to take part in the unsearchable riches and mysteries of God. Christians have the reward of God's grace which is unmerited favor. It is not something that has to be earned. The Grace of God is free, accessible and joyfully given by God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther lived long ago. He was correct when he said, "In the whole Bible is hardly another chapter which can equal this triumphant text (Romans chapter 5).¹² Romans Chapter 5 teaches endurance, patience, experience in the faithfulness of God. It clearly defines the role of Christ in setting free by His obedient act of the propitiation of sin. Justification plus faith equals grace puts forth an equation for attaining everlasting life.

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¹² Ibid.

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