

Exposition

This exposition of Romans ch. 5 is contributed by the Revd. J. R. W. Stott, Rector of All Souls Church, London, a Chaplain to the Queen, and well known as a University Missioner in many countries of the world. This exposition is a slight abridgement of the first chapter of the author's new book *Men Made New* (I.V.F., London, 1966), and is reprinted here by kind permission of the author and publishers.

Peace with God

by John Stott

Romans 5 divides clearly into two distinct paragraphs. The first eleven verses portray the fruits or results of our justification, while verses 12-19 show us the Mediator of our justification, the One through whom justification has come to us - namely Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

I. THE FRUITS OF OUR JUSTIFICATION (5:1-11)

a. The fruits described (verses 1, 2)
Here we have a summary of the results of justification in three sentences. First, 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'

(1). Secondly (2a), we have 'obtained access (through the same Christ and through the same faith) to this grace in which we stand'. Thirdly (2b), 'we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God'. Here are the fruits of our justification: peace, grace and glory. Peace with God (which we have), grace (in which we stand), and glory (for which we hope).

On a closer examination these appear to relate to the three tenses or phases of our salvation. 'Peace with God' speaks of the *immediate* effect of justification. We were 'enemies' of God (10), but now the old enmity has been put away by God's forgiveness and we are at peace with Him. The immediate effect of justification, then, is that enmity has given way to peace.

Secondly, 'this grace in which we stand' speaks of the *continuing* effect of justification. It is a state of grace to which we have obtained access and in which we continue to stand. This is how the NEB puts it: 'We have been allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace'. And, of course, having entered it we continue in it. We stand in it today.

Thirdly, 'the glory of God' for which we hope speaks of the *ultimate* effect of justification. 'The glory of God' here means heaven, because in heaven God Himself will be fully revealed ('glory' in biblical language is the manifestation of God). We are going to see God's glory in heaven, and even share in it (since then we shall be like Christ, I Jn. 3:2). 'Hope' is our sure and certain confidence or expectation. This is 'the hope of glory'. Indeed, so sure is this hope (what J. B. Phillips calls this 'happy certainty') that we can rejoice in it

now already. 'We rejoice in our hope (that is, in our certain confidence) of . . . the glory of God'.

These three phrases paint a balanced picture of the Christian life in relation to God. There is nothing here about our relation to our neighbour, but as far as our relation to God is concerned they constitute a beautiful summary of the Christian life: Peace, grace, and glory. In the word 'peace' we look back to the enmity which is now over. In the word 'grace' we look up to our reconciled Father in whose favour we now continue to stand. In the word 'glory' we look on to our final destiny, seeing and reflecting the glory of God, which is the object of our hope or expectation.

b. Suffering, the pathway to glory (verses 3, 4)

This does not mean to say, of course, that after justification the narrow way is carpeted all along with moss and primroses. No; brambles grow on it, too, and brambles with sharp thorns. 'More than that', says Paul in v. 3, 'we rejoice in our sufferings'. Peace, grace, glory - yes, but suffering as well.

Now these sufferings, strictly speaking, are not sickness or pain, sorrow or bereavement, but tribulation (*thlipsis*), the pressure of a godless and hostile world. Yet such suffering is always the pathway to glory. The risen Lord Himself said so. He declared that, according to the Old Testament, the Christ must suffer and so enter into His glory (Lk. 24:26). And what is true of Christ is true of the Christian as well, since the servant is not greater than his Lord. Paul himself says so later, in 8:17: 'provided we suffer with him

(Christ) in order that we may also be glorified with him'.

Note carefully the relation between our present sufferings and our future glory. It is not just that the one is the way to the other. Still less is it that we grin and bear the one in anticipation of the other. No. According to the text the relation between the two is the element of rejoicing: we rejoice in both. If we 'rejoice' in our hope of glory (2), we 'rejoice' in our sufferings as well (3). And the verb is a strong one (*kauchometha*). It indicates, as the NEB renders it, that we 'exult' in them. Present suffering and future glory are both objects of a Christian's exultation. How is this? How can we possibly rejoice in our sufferings? How can we find joy in what causes us pain? Verses 3-5 explain the paradox.

It is not that we rejoice in the sufferings themselves, so much as in their beneficial results. We are not masochists who enjoy being hurt. We are not even Stoics who grit their teeth and endure. We are Christians, who see in our sufferings the outworking of a gracious, divine purpose. We rejoice because of what suffering 'produces'. That is the word the RSV chooses: 'Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character'. It is because of what suffering *produces* (*katargazetai*) that we rejoice in it. Well, then, what are the outworkings of tribulation? The process is given us in three stages.

Stage 1: suffering produces endurance. That is, the very endurance we need in suffering is produced by it, much as antibodies are produced in the human body by infection. We could not learn endurance without suffer-

ing, because without suffering there would be nothing to endure. So suffering produces endurance.

Stage 2: endurance produces character (AV 'experience'). 'Character' (*dokime*) is the quality of someone who, or something which, has been put to the test and come through it. It is the quality which David's armour lacked, when he said he could not wear it because he had not 'proved' it; he had not put it to the test. Can we not usually recognize the mature character of a Christian who has gone through suffering and come out triumphant? 'Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character'.

Stage 3: character produces hope. That is, confidence of the final glory. The maturity of character born of past endurance of suffering brings with it a hope of future glory. What the apostle means is surely this, that our developing, ripening Christian character is evidence that God is at work upon us and within us. The fact that God is thus at work in our lives gives us confidence that He is not going to give up the job uncompleted. If He is working in us now to transform our character, He is surely going to bring us safely to glory in the end. The apostle is back, you see, to the indissoluble link between suffering and glory. The reason why, if we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we rejoice in our sufferings also, is that our sufferings produce the hope of this glory. If the hope of glory is produced by sufferings, then we rejoice in the sufferings as well as the glory. We rejoice not only in the end (glory), but in the means to the end (suffering). We rejoice in them both.

c. Assurance grounded in the love of God (verse 5)

Someone may well ask – and Paul anticipates the question – ‘How can you know this hope of glory has any substance to it? How can you know that it is not just wishful thinking? It is all very well to say you are going to heaven – to glory – but how do you know?’ Paul says, first of all, ‘Hope does not disappoint us’. That is, hope will not disappoint us. The NEB reads: ‘Such a hope (of glory) is no mockery’. It is a true hope. ‘Yes, Paul’, the questioner goes on, ‘that is what you say, but how do you know? How can you be so sure that your Christian hope will never disappoint you?’ Paul’s answer is in the rest of v. 5, where he says we know that hope will never disappoint us ‘because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us’ (literally). The solid foundation on which our hope of glory rests is the love of God. It is because God has set His love upon us that we know, beyond any question or doubt, that He is going to bring us to glory. We believe that we are going to persevere to the end, and we have good grounds for our confidence. It is partly because of the character God is forming in us through suffering that we can be confident (‘suffering – endurance – character – hope’). If He is sanctifying us now, He will surely glorify us then. But it is chiefly because of ‘the love that will not let us go’.

This is the argument: We have a Christian hope that we are going to see and share the glory of God. We believe this hope is a sure hope; that it is ‘no mockery’; that it will never disappoint us. We know this because

God loves us – He will never let us down; He will never let us go. ‘Ah, but’, somebody says, ‘how do you know that God loves you like that?’ Paul gives us the answer to this question, too. We know God loves us like that because we have an inner experience of it, because (NEB) ‘God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us’. The Holy Spirit has been given to every believer, and one of the works He does is to pour out God’s love – not our love for God, but God’s love for us – like a mighty flood into our hearts, to make us vividly and inwardly aware that God loves us. Or, as Paul expresses the same truth later, in 8:16, ‘it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God’, and that He is our heavenly Father who loves us. The Holy Spirit delights to pour into our hearts the love of God.

The change of tense in the verbs of v. 5 is worth noting: the Holy Spirit was given to us (*dothentos*, an aorist participle, referring to a past event); but God’s love has been poured out into our hearts (*ekkechutai*, a perfect tense, referring to a past event with abiding results). So we learn that the Holy Spirit was given to us the moment we believed and were converted. At the same time He flooded our hearts with the love of God. He still does. The flood remains. The once-given Spirit caused a permanent flood of divine love in our hearts.

We come now to verses 6-11, in which the fruits of justification are further revealed. In verses 1-5 Paul joined peace and hope, justification and glorification, making our suffer-

ings the link. In verses 6-11 he does it again, this time, however, making Christ’s sufferings and death the link.

d. Christ died for the ungodly (verses 6-8)

Let us consider what Paul tells us about the death of Jesus. He reminds us that Christ died for the utterly undeserving. This is the emphasis of these verses. Just see the unflattering terms in which we are described. First of all, we are depicted as ‘helpless’ (6), unable to save ourselves; secondly, we are called ‘ungodly’ (6), because of our revolt against the authority of God; thirdly, we are called ‘sinners’ (8), because we have missed the mark of righteousness, however carefully we may have aimed at it; and fourthly (10), we are called ‘enemies’, because of the hostility between us and God. What a fearful, devastating description of man in sin! We are failures, we are rebels, we are enemies, and we are helpless to save ourselves.

Yet the thrust of these verses is that it is for such people that Jesus Christ died. We ourselves would ‘hardly die for a righteous man’ (7) – somebody coldly upright in his conduct – ‘though perhaps for a good man’ – warm and attractive in his goodness – some people would ‘dare even to die’. ‘But God shows his love for us (and “his” is emphatic in the Greek: He shows His own, His unique love) in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us’. Not for the coldly upright, nor even for the warmly attractive and good, but for sinners, unattractive, unworthy, undeserving.

This provides the setting for the argument which follows in verses 9-11. It is an *a fortiori* argument, which reaches up to a new truth by

standing on the shoulders of an old one. What Paul does is this. He contrasts the two main stages of our salvation – justification and glorification – and he shows how the first is the guarantee of the second.

e. Justification and glorification contrasted (verses 9-11)

It is important to grasp the details of the comparison Paul makes.

First, he contrasts what they are. ‘Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God’ (9). The contrast in this verse is plain. It is between our present justification and our future salvation from the outpoured wrath of God on the Day of Judgment. If we have already been saved from God’s condemnation because we are justified, then how much more shall we be saved from His wrath on that day? This is the first contrast.

Secondly, he contrasts how they are achieved.

Verse 10 reads: ‘If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life’. Here the emphatic contrast concerns the means adopted to accomplish the two stages of salvation, namely, the death and the life of the Son of God. The ‘life’, of course, means the risen life of Christ. The risen life of Christ is going to complete in heaven what the death of Christ began on earth. I think the best commentary on this truth is found in 8:34, where we are told that Christ not only died but was raised; that He sits at the right

hand of God and makes intercession for us, bringing to perfection by His life what He accomplished by His death.

Thirdly, he contrasts the people who receive them. Look at v. 10 again: 'If while we were enemies who were reconciled to God. . . , much more, now that we are (no longer enemies but) reconciled, shall we be saved. . .' If God reconciled His enemies, He will surely save His friends.

There is therefore in vv. 9 and 10 a powerful argument that we are going to inherit a full and final salvation. There is a strong presumption that we shall never be allowed to fall by the way, but shall be preserved to the end and glorified. This is not just sentimental optimism; it is grounded upon irresistible logic. The logic of it is this: if, when we were enemies, God reconciled us through giving His Son to die for us, how much more, now that we are God's friends, will He finally save us from His wrath by His Son's life. If God performed the more costly service (involving His Son's death) for His enemies, He will surely perform the less costly service now that His erstwhile enemies are His friends. Meditate on this until you see the irrefutable logic of Paul's argument.

But there is more to the Christian life than this. Christianity is not just a matter of looking back to justification and on to glorification. The believer is not preoccupied always with the past and the future. He has a present Christian life to live as well, and so we read in v. 11, 'we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. We rejoice in hope. We

rejoice in sufferings also. But above all we rejoice in God Himself; and we do it through Jesus Christ.

As we have already seen, it is through Jesus Christ that we have peace with God (1); it is through Jesus Christ that we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand (2); it is through the blood of Christ that we have been reconciled (9); it is through the life of Christ that we are going to be finally saved (10); and it is through the same Lord Jesus Christ (11) that we received (*elabomen*, aorist) our reconciliation. So we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through the One who has achieved these priceless blessings for us.

Looking back over the first half of ch. 5, we see that in both its paragraphs (vv. 1-5 and 6-11) the apostle's thought moves from justification to glorification, from what God has already done for us to what He is still going to do for us in the consummation. It comes out clearly in vv. 1 and 2, 'Since we are justified by faith. . . we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God'; and again in v. 9, 'Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God'.

Further, in both parts, vv. 1-5 and 6-11, Paul writes of the love of God and bases our assurance of final salvation upon it. There is no other assurance. In v. 5 he declares that God's love has flooded our hearts, and in v. 8 that 'God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us'. If we Christians dare to say that we are going to heaven when we die, and that we are sure of final salvation, as we do

dare to say, it is not because we are self-righteous or self-confident; it is because we believe in the steadfast love of God, the love that will not let us go.

Then, next, both parts provide some *ground* for believing that God loves us. These grounds are two, objective and subjective. The objective ground for believing that God loves us is historical. It concerns the death of His Son on the cross: 'Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love towards us' (8, NEB). The subjective ground for believing that God loves us is experimental. It is not in history but in experience. It concerns not the death of Christ, but the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. So we see in v. 8 that God proves His love at the cross and in v. 5 that He has poured His love into our hearts. This is how we know that God loves us. We know it rationally as we contemplate the cross, where God gave His best for the world. And we know it intuitively as the Spirit floods our hearts with a sense of it.

In each case the apostle links to this knowledge our assurance of final salvation. V. 5: 'hope does not disappoint us'. That is, we know that our expectation of final salvation will be fulfilled; it is well grounded and will not deceive or disappoint us. How do we know? Because the love of God has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Vv. 8-10: we know that we are going to be saved from the wrath of God. How? Because God proves His love for us by having given His Son to die for us while we were enemies and sinners.

Is there a Christian reading these

pages who is full of doubts about his eternal salvation? Are you sure that you have been justified, but not at all sure that all will be well in the end? If so, let me stress again that final glorification is the fruit of justification. 'Those whom he justified he also glorified' (8:30). If this is your problem, I would urge you to trust in the God who loves you. Look at the cross and accept it as God's own proof that He loves you. Ask Him to go on flooding your heart with His love through the indwelling Spirit. And then away with gloomy doubts and fears! Let them be swallowed up in the steadfast love of God.

II. THE MEDIATOR OF OUR JUSTIFICATION (5:12-19)

In the first section Paul has traced our reconciliation and our final salvation to the death of God's Son. His exposition immediately prompts this question: but how can one person's sacrifice have brought such blessings to so many? It is not, in Sir Winston Churchill's famous expression, that 'so many owe so much to so few'. It is that so many owe so much to *one person*, Christ crucified. How can that be?

The apostle answers this anticipated question by drawing an analogy between Adam and Christ the 'second Adam'. Both Adam and Christ demonstrate the principle that many can be affected (for good or ill) by one person's deed.

a. The history of man before Christ (verses 12-14)

The first three verses concentrate on Adam. 'As sin came into the world through one man and death through

sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—' (12). This is a very important verse, summing up, as it does, in three stages the history of man before Christ. It tells us first, that sin entered into the world through one man; second, that death entered into the world through sin, because death is the penalty for sin; and third, that death spread to all men because all men sinned (this is explained later). These are the three stages – sin, death and universal death; so that the present situation of universal death is due to the original transgression of one man.

In vv. 13 and 14 this progression (from one man sinning to all men dying) is further explained. Death is visited on all men today, not just because all men have sinned like Adam, but because all men sinned *in* Adam. And this is plain, Paul argues, because of what happened during the time between Adam and Moses, between the fall and the giving of the law. During that period people certainly sinned, but their sins were not reckoned against them because 'sin is not counted where there is no law' (13). Yet, although there was then no law, these people still died. Indeed (14), 'death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam'. So Paul argues, logically, that the reason why they died is not because they deliberately transgressed like Adam and died for their transgression, but because they and the whole of humanity (Christ only excepted) were included in Adam, the head of the human race. This embraces us. In biblical terminology (*cf.* Heb. 7:10) we were 'still in the loins of' Adam, and therefore in

some sense involved in his sin. We cannot point the finger at him in self-righteous innocence, for we share in this guilt. And it is because we sinned in Adam that we die today.

b. The analogy between Adam and Christ (verses 15-19)

So far Paul has concentrated on Adam. At the end of v. 14, however, he calls Adam 'a type of the one who was to come.' That is, Adam was the prototype of Jesus Christ. And in v. 15 he begins to unfold the analogy between Adam and Christ. It is a fascinating and enthralling analogy, in which there is both similarity and dissimilarity. The similarity between the two lies in the pattern of events: the fact that many people have been affected by one man's deed. That is the *only* similarity between them. There are three differences: of motive, of effect and of nature, between Adam's one deed and Christ's one deed. The motive of the deed, the reason *why* Adam sinned, is different from the motive behind Christ's death. The effect of the deed, the result of Adam's sin, is different from the effect of Christ's death. The nature of the deed, what Adam did, is different from the nature of what Christ did. Let us look at these three separately.

1. *The motive.* At the beginning of v. 15 we read that 'the free gift is not like the trespass'. The trespass, or offence, was a deed of sin (*paraptoma* means a fall or deviation from the path). Adam knew the path well enough. God had told him what path he should walk along, but he deviated from it and went astray. The free gift, on the other hand, is *charisma*,

which indicates that it was a deed of grace. We may therefore say that Adam's deed was one of self-assertion – that is *why* he did it; he wanted to go his own way. But Christ's deed was a deed of self-sacrifice, of free and unmerited favour. That, then, is the contrasting motive between the two deeds: self-will in the one instance and self-sacrifice in the other.

2. *The effect.* This we see in vv. 15b-17. The reference to the contrasting results of the work of Adam and Christ is already anticipated at the end of v. 15, where we are told that the sin of one man brought to many the grim penalty of death, whereas the grace of God and of the one Man Jesus Christ abounded to many in bestowing a free gift, which (according to 6:23) is eternal life. So death is contrasted with life, and the next two verses (16 and 17) elaborate the opposite effects brought about by the deeds of Adam and of Christ. 'The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ'. Now, without spending time on detail, let us just mark quite clearly the contrasting effects of the deeds of Adam and of Christ. The sin of Adam brought condemnation (*katakrima*); the work of Christ brings justification (*dikaioma*). The reign of death is due to Adam's sin; a reign of life is made possible through Christ's work. The contrast

could not be more complete. It is in fact absolute: between condemnation and justification; between death and life. It is worth noting in passing, however, the precise way in which the apostle contrasts life and death. It is not simply that the reign of death is superseded by a reign of life, for (17) it is not life which reigns, but *we* who are said to 'reign in life'. Formerly death was our king. Death reigned over us and we were its subjects, slaves under its totalitarian tyranny. We do not now exchange death's kingdom for another kingdom, so that we remain slaves and subjects although in a different sense. No; once delivered from the rule of death we begin ourselves to rule over death and all the enemies of God. We cease to be subjects and become kings, sharing the Kingship of Christ.

3. *The nature.* We have seen that Adam's deed and Christ's were different in their motive (what prompted them) and in their effect (what resulted from them). Now the apostle contrasts the two deeds themselves. The parallel here (vv. 18 and 19) is similar to what has gone before, but the emphasis now is on precisely what Adam did and what Christ did. According to v. 18, what led to condemnation for all was one man's offence, whereas what led to justification and life for all who are in Christ is one man's righteousness. Adam's 'trespass' was a failure to keep the law. Christ's 'act of righteousness' was a fulfilment of the law. V. 19 follows on from this: 'as by one man's disobedience (*parakoe*) many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience (*hupakoe*) many will be made righteous'. There is the contrast, quite clearly, between the

nature of the two deeds: Adam disobeyed the will of God and so fell from righteousness; Christ obeyed the will of God and so fulfilled all righteousness. Cf. Matthew 3:15 and Philippians 2:8.

We may thus briefly summarize the analogy drawn between Adam and Christ. As to the motive for their deeds, Adam asserted himself, Christ sacrificed Himself. As to the effect of their deeds, Adam's deed of sin brought condemnation and death, Christ's deed of righteousness brought justification and life. As to the nature of their deeds, Adam disobeyed the law, Christ obeyed it. So then, whether we are condemned or justified, whether we are spiritually alive or dead, depends on which humanity we belong to – whether we belong to the old humanity initiated by Adam, or to the new humanity initiated by Christ. And this, in its turn, depends on our relation to Adam and Christ. We need to get this quite clear: *all* men are in Adam, since we are in Adam by birth, but not all men are in Christ, since we can be in Christ only by faith. In Adam by birth we are condemned and die. But if we are in Christ by faith we are justified and live.

This brings us back, in conclusion, to the privileges of the justified with which the chapter began, because these are ours only in and through Jesus Christ. V. 1 declared: 'We have peace with God *through* our Lord Jesus Christ', and v. 2: '*Through him* we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand'. Peace, grace, glory (the three privileges of the justified) are not given to those who are in Adam, but only to those who are in Christ.