

The Book of Romans Study Guide

Chapter 5

Paul now moves on to discussing the benefits of our justification by faith.

5:1-5

- v 1 The Greek verb translated as “justified” is *dikaioō* (*dikayōō*). It is based on the noun, *dikē*, which was predominately a judicial term that described a right outcome in a trial. So it could convey the meaning of an equitable settlement or a ruling that punishment is proper for a crime. Either way, justice would be served.

In the way of further background, the Greek mythological goddess named *Dikē* was said to administer divine justice. The Greeks believed that Dike was the daughter of Zeus and she had the responsibility of punishing all wrong and rewarding virtue. So she was invariably depicted as a young woman carrying a scale, representing her ability to make a determination of right and wrong, and then causing that verdict to be carried out respectively in the lives of humans.

The same understanding of justification applies to the biblical text. All human beings are judged by God, and there will be a right or equitable verdict based on evidence. Paul has already shown that no matter how many works we do, the scale of justice will not tip in our favor. But, here in this verse, our faith is our evidence. And that faith, according to the previous verse in 4:28, is in Yeshua being delivered up or punished for our transgressions.

Thus, the penalty has been paid, which establishes equity, and our faith, however tiny in the moment we believe, tips the scale in our favor. And that makes us justified.

Then, we receive a series of **results of our justification**.

- v. 1 **Peace with God** – meaning we are no longer at war with Him because of sin. By defeating sin in our lives, we do become His slaves or servants, but He is a very good Master and that enables us to live with Him in peace. This is a theme that Paul will develop further in this chapter.

- v 2 **Access to stand in grace** – the word translated as “access” (KJV, NJV, CJB) or “introduction” (NASB) is *prosagōgē*, which literally means “bring towards.” This is a description of the freedom to approach and stand or remain in a state of grace, where God continues to receive and love us, because all of our sins – past, present and future have been forgiven and are covered by the blood of Yeshua. This verse is similar to Hebrews 4:16 –

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Exult in hope and the glory of God – these are both positive expressions of what lies ahead for believers when life in this world comes to an end.

- v 3-4 **Exult in tribulations** (*thilipsis*) – only the person who has been justified by God and is at peace with Him can truly see how God uses the great difficulties of life to shape us into the

kind of person He desires to spend eternity with. It is a shaping that begins with a motivation to persevere through those tribulations, then proves (*dokimē*) our character.

- v 5 **Hope that does not disappoint** – without tribulations that require perseverance and lead to proven character, we would have literal reason to hope in something better. And the really good news is that our common hope as believers in Yeshua will not disappoint, not just in an eternal sense, but in this present world where we can already experience God’s love and the blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The next verses expand on the implications of the pouring out of God’s love in our hearts.

Read 5:6-11

- v 6-7 Paul uses our common awareness of the reluctance of humans to die voluntarily instead of another person. And he magnifies that point with a Hebraic technique called *qal v’chomer* that is used to argue that if something is true in a light context, it will also be true in a heavy context (or simple and complex). Here, the light concept is dying for a righteous man, and the heavy concept is dying for the ungodly, yet that is what Messiah has done for us.
- v 8 This verse, to a great extent is what separates the Messianic faith from other religions of the world that are based on people becoming worthy of God’s forgiveness and appeasement of divine wrath before He shows them any favor. Adonai didn’t wait for that because reaching the point of true worthiness through good deeds never actually happens. Instead, Yeshua came and died for us while we were yet sinners, in the greatest act of love that there could ever be.
- v 9 Paul employs another *qal v’chomer* argument that expands from the justification from the blood of Yeshua to the heavier issue of being saved from the wrath of God.
- v 10 He establishes a parallel between Yeshua’s death in v 8 that occurred “while we were yet sinners” and now “while we were enemies.” Paul’s use of the Greek word *katallassō*, translated as “reconciled” helps us to understand why humans could be considered as enemies of God. In the Greek literature, *katallassō* is generally used in circumstances with parties involved in some form of dispute, where enmity or hostility is exchanged for peaceful relations

Here, in Romans 5:10, we are given a picture of people being enemies with God because of sin. But that status is changed to the state of peace described in verse 1 by virtue of justification being provided through the death of Messiah in verse 9. Another way of saying that is instead of being God’s enemies because of sin, we are now His friends because our sins are forgiven. And that is consistent with Yeshua’s words in John 15:13 –

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

- v 11 Because we have received this great blessing of reconciliation with God, we have also received the freedom to exult or find joy.

A related aspect of this concept of reconciliation is found in Ephesians 2. In this chapter, Paul says some very similar things to the book of Romans, including verses 8-9, where he declares:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

But then, in verses 11-16, he shows that concurrent with our reconciliation with God, meaning turning enemies into friends, we receive the blessing of reconciliation between estranged Jews and Gentiles.

At the time of this letter, a state of enmity existed between Jews and Gentiles related to the Law that kept them separated. In the first-century context, Jews often viewed Gentiles with contempt as being “far off” from God because they did not obey the Torah, while Gentiles viewed Jewish laws with scorn as being legalistic formality. It is the power of Yeshua’s death that breaks this division because He took upon Himself the consequences for all sins described in the Law, thus removing the enmity between the two people groups over the Law.

The ultimate result of our reconciliation to God, then, is the formation of an entirely new identity for redeemed humanity, expressed by the phrase, “one new man” (v. 15). And later, in verse 19, he describes believing Gentiles as being “fellow citizens” and part of God’s household, just as believing Jews are. This new identity is consistent with the meaning of *katallassō* being a change from hostility to a friendly relationship.

Returning to Romans 5, Paul, then, presents an argument based on a parallel between the impacts of one man—Adam and another man—Yeshua on the world.

5:12-21

v 12 Sin entered the world through one man—Adam, resulting in death, and both sin and death spread throughout all humanity. This is evidence that all humanity has inherited a nature that is corrupted and invariably results in sinful behavior.

This understanding is very different than what is taught in rabbinical Judaism. According to the Rabbis, every person possesses two inner inclinations that are in a continual conflict—*yetzer ha-tov* (“the good inclination”) and *yetzer ha-rah* (“the evil inclination”). Humanity is said to be drawn in these two directions, and when the evil inclination gets the upper hand, sin is the result.

The way that they came up with that conclusion is worth noting. In Genesis 6:5, the condition of humanity is described this way before the flood:

“Then Adonai saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

The Hebrew word translated as “intent” is יִצְרָה (*yetzer*), which can also be rendered as “inclination.” And, the text describes it as being “evil continually.” This understanding is consistent with Paul’s description here in Romans 5:12 of the nature of humanity being corrupted by sin. But the rabbis came up with an additional concept of the good inclination – *yetzer ha-tov* that originates outside the Bible. They said that when God was finished creating humanity on the 6th day, and we are told in Genesis 1:31 – “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good,” that included the *yetzer ha ra* – the evil inclination.

The rabbis employed a fanciful interpretation on that verse in the ancient commentary *Bereishit Rabba*, saying, “‘Behold, it was good’ refers to the Good Desire; ‘And behold, it was very good’ refers to the Evil Desire.” That kind of farfetched reasoning bases a major theological principle on complete mental gymnastics. So, when this new way of thinking in Judaism became normalized, it served as the basis for the works-oriented teachings that

followed, in which people try to overcome the evil inclination by exercising the good inclination. This unbiblical understanding is in great contrast to Paul's description in v. 12, that is in full harmony with the message of the book of Genesis and the rest of Scripture.

- v 13-14 He shows that there is no distinction between the time before and after the giving of the Torah/Law because people have always sinned and died. And the common denominator is that all people descend from one man who sinned first—Adam. Paul presents Adam as a type or a symbolic representation of Yeshua. For both of them came into this world as completely sinless men. And both of them did things that had an impact on all humanity. So, this is an issue of inclusive reckoning that is common in the Hebraic culture, where the part represents the whole.
- v 15 Paul then uses a series of *qal v'chomer* (light and heavy) arguments to show the differences in what they did and the resulting impact. First the act of transgression by one man—Adam brought death to the world, but the act of grace by one man—Yeshua brought abounding grace to many. And he calls that act of grace a gift.
- v 16-18 He states three slightly different ways the same comparison, namely that one sinful transgression by one man—Adam, resulted in the judgment and condemnation of all humanity, while one act of righteousness by one man—Yeshua, resulted in the righteousness and justification of all humanity
- We have to realize that the Bible does not teach universalism, meaning that all people are saved whether they know it or not. And the context of verse 18 is the recurring description of God's work on our behalf being a gift, so this gift of righteousness and justification must be received.
- v 19 He summarizes all of these parallels by saying that the disobedience of Adam made all people sinners, while the obedience of Yeshua making it possible for all people to be made righteous.
- v 20 Then he explains that the Law was not given to save people or even to stop them from sinning, but rather to magnify and expose the reality of sin, which is consistent with his statement in 3:19 that through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But that reality also magnifies the extent of God's grace.
- v 21 And then he makes one final *qal v'chomer* (light and heavy) argument that in the same way that sin reigns in death, meaning life that ends, grace reigns in righteousness to eternal life through Messiah Yeshua our Lord.