

Romans Study Part 4: The Basis for Our Assurance (5:1-21)

Covenant Presbyterian Church

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“Up to this point in the letter [Paul] has presented justification as a matter of the standing of the individual before God. In [Romans 5:12-21] he sets it in the context of human history, which he defines in terms of divine judgment in Adam and grace in Christ. Indeed, a single act of transgression and a single act of obedience determine the entire course of human history.” - Mark Seifrid

- I. Peace with God through Jesus Christ (5:1-11)
 - A. “Therefore” refers back to the previous section (v.1)
 1. To all that Paul has just said about justification by grace through faith
 2. Especially 4:24-25, which serves as a sort of summary
 - a) Here the resurrection of Christ is linked to our justification in a powerful way
 - b) “God, through suspending the forces of death operating on Him, declared that the ultimate, the supreme consequence of sin had reached its termination. In other words, resurrection had annulled the sentence of condemnation.”¹
 - B. Our justification brings us **peace** with God (v.2)
 1. Strictly speaking it does not bring a relationship with God, but rather it brings a peaceful relationship with God. Previously we had a relationship with God marked by wrath, now we have one marked by peace.
 - a) This is why Paul will later speak of us being **enemies** of God prior to being justified (5:10)
 - b) “[O]ur relationship with God determines the content of our entire existence.”²
 - c) This is conveyed strongly with the repetition of reconcile/reconciliation in vv.10-11
 - (1) Reconciliation is a restoration of favor; a healed relationship
 - (2) His wrath has been exchanged for favor (v.9)
 2. This has past, present, and future realities
 - a) It’s not just that my past sins were forgiven, but I am now and forevermore right with God.
 - b) We **stand** in grace
 - (1) “[B]y the word *stand*, he means, that faith is not a changeable persuasion, only for one day; but that it is

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1994), 151.

² Adolf Schlatter, *Do We Know Jesus?*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 122

immutable, and that it sinks deep into the heart, so that it endures through life.”³

C. Rejoice in sufferings

1. Similar to 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 and James 1:2-4
2. We do not rejoice in the suffering itself (we’re not masochists), but rather we rejoice because of what God is doing in and through our sufferings
 - a) In other words, we know that present trials/difficulties/pain is not all that there is - it is not the end. Rather, God is using this life, with all of its pain and suffering to prepare us for something greater.
 - b) “By saying that the saints glory in tribulations, he is not to be understood, as though they dreaded not, nor avoided adversities, or were not distressed with their bitterness when they happened...but as in their grief and sorrow they are not without great consolation, because they regard that whatever they bear is dispensed to them for good by the hand of a most indulgent Father...”⁴
3. Even in our suffering we are not ever put to shame, because our hope is not in vain. Our hope in Christ will be vindicated, and all will be made right. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a down payment on this future reality (v.5).

II. Our Two Heads: Adam and Christ (5:12-21)

- A. There is a complex parallelism developed here that contrasts Adam and Christ
 1. It also contrasts the outcome of being *in Adam* and being *in Christ*
- B. The parallel **structure in vv.12-17**

- A - Sin and death entered the world (v.12)
- B - Sin and death spread to all (v.13)
- C - Death reigned (v.14)
- A* - Justification enters the world (v.16)
- B* - Grace abounds (vv.15, 17)
- C* - Life reigns (v.17)

³ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XIX*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 189.

⁴ *Ibid*, 190.

C. The contrast **structure of vv.18-19**

- A -One trespass (v.18)
- B - Condemnation for all (v.18)
- A* - One act of righteousness (v. 18)
- B* - Justification and life for all (v.18)
- C - Disobedience (v.19)
- D - All made sinners (v.19)
- C* - Obedience (v.19)
- D* - All made righteous (v.19)

D. It can also be expressed this way:

What we receive in Adam	What we receive in Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sin (v.12) ● Death (v.12) ● Transgression/trespass (v.14-15) ● Judgment/condemnation (v.16) ● Disobedience (v.19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Justification (v.16) ● Life (v.17) ● Righteousness (v.17) ● Grace (v.17) ● Obedience (v.19)

E. Federal Headship

1. In this parallelism we see the representative or federal headship of Adam and Christ.
 - a) In the garden, Adam was acting on my behalf. On the cross, Christ was acting on my behalf.
2. Here, Christ is shown to be the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49).
 - a) “Adam and Jesus are representative men. None stands between the first man and the last Adam. And none follows Jesus, the second man. Every human being in every time and place of the world, Paul tells us, stands in representative relation either to Adam or to Jesus...It is in the context of this relationship that what the representative has done comes into the possession of the represented.”⁵
 - b) “Paul’s point in this verse is neither that Adam’s sin transforms us into personally sinful people, nor that Jesus’ obedience transforms us into personally righteous people. His point here is that, in light of Adam’s disobedience, those whom Adam represents belong to a new legal category (sinner). In similar fashion, it is because of Jesus’ obedience that His people are granted entrance into a new legal category (righteous).”⁶
3. The word translated “made” in v.19 (kathistemi) means “appoint”

⁵ Guy Prentiss Waters, <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2019/04/federal-headship/>

⁶ Ibid.

- a) In other words, *imputation* (counted, reckoned)
 - b) Just as the sin of Adam is imputed to me, so is Christ's righteousness imputed to me
4. The imputed sin that I receive from Adam is often called "Original Sin"
- a) "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation." (WCF 6.3)
 - b) "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." (WCF 6.4)
 - c) "Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal." (WCF 6.6)
5. An objection: "That's not fair!"
- a) We may be tempted to look at original sin and the headship of Adam and protest, "That's not fair!"
 - b) Adam was put in perfect circumstances and still fell - would you have done differently?
 - c) More importantly: headship is the way in which we are saved. If we denounce it with Adam, we denounce it with Christ.
 - (1) Rather than objecting to it, we should be thankful for it. In fact, we should boast in it (Gal. 6:14)

F. Assurance of Salvation

1. Paul's argument here is intended to provide us with assurance of salvation.
2. This assurance has two important aspects
 - a) I am made right with God
 - b) Nothing can undo or take away my right standing with God
3. God has reconciled us to himself by uniting us with Christ
 - a) We are no longer *in Adam*, we are now *in Christ* and we receive all the blessings and benefits that come with that
 - b) The fundamental character of our relationship with God has been permanently altered.
 - c) This reconciled relationship with God shifts my entire outlook on this life and the life to come
4. Just as we can be sure that Adam acted on our behalf in the garden (evidenced by our sinful state), so we can be sure that Christ acted on our behalf on the cross
 - a) Federal headship is actually part of our assurance, because it reinforces that Christ can and does act on our behalf on the cross