

ROMANS 5:1-10

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^a have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we^b boast in the hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only so, but we^c also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! **10** For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

IT IS SAID THAT SAINT PATRICK WAS VERY OPEN WITH HIS TESTIMONY THAT THE ONE TRUE GOD IS FOUND IN THREE PERSONS: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

THE BELIEF IN THE TRINITY WAS NOT UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED IN HIS TIME BY EVEN MY MANY IN THE CHURCH.

WHEN HE WAS CHALLENGED BY OTHERS, PATRICK WOULD PLUCK A SHAMROCK FROM THE GRASS AND ASK THE ONE WHO CHALLENGED HIM HOW MANY SHAMROCK LEAVES DID THEY SEE.

INEVITABLY THE RESPONSE WAS THAT SHAMROCKS HAD BOTH ONE AND THREE LEAVES.

PATRICK THEN EXPLAINED THE SAME IS TRUE WITH GOD, THERE IS ONE GOD WHO IS FOUND IN THREE PERSONS.

HIS EXPLANATION IS BUT ONE OF A VARIETY OF WAYS CHRISTIANS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EXPLAIN AND UNDERSTAND THE BLESSED TRINITY WHO IS GOD.

UNLIKE MANY CHRISTIANS, SCRIPTURE MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN THIS REALITY.

INSTEAD, IN VARIOUS WAYS, IT PROCLAIMS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD WHO IS ONE AND YET IS ALSO KNOWN AS: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

A PORTION OF A POEM WRITTEN ABOUT THE TRINITY OFFERS THESE WORDS OF PRAISE FOR GOD'S TRIUNE NATURE.

“THE HOLY COMMUNITY, WORKING, LIVING, BEING AS ONE, HARMONIZED IN LOVE AND PURPOSE, SHAPING, FORMING, GIFTING LIGHT AND LIFE.

BEFORE TIME, THROUGHOUT TIME, WHEN TIME HAS RUN ITS COURSE. DAYS WITHOUT NUMBER, LIFE WITHOUT END. LOVE WITHOUT LIMIT.

THREE AND ONE, ABOVE US, BEYOND US, BESIDE US, WITHIN. MYSTERIOUS AND MAJESTIC...”

THE PASSAGE HEARD FROM ROMANS 5:1-10 IS ONE OF THOSE PLACES IN THE BIBLE THAT PRESENTS GOD'S HARMONIOUS WORK FOR OUR BENEFIT.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PASSAGE IS FOUND IN HOW THE VERSES DESCRIBE THE WORKING COMMUNION OF GOD'S PERSONS TO PROVIDE THE BLESSING OF SALVATION.

AND BY THIS, I MEAN BLESSINGS BEYOND THE OBVIOUS ONE OF ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH CHRIST.

THERE IS MUCH ABOUT THE COLLABORATION OF GOD, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT THAT IS AIMED TOWARDS OUR EARTHLY LIVES.

THE FIRST BLESSING WE HAVE IS ACCESS TO GOD'S GRACE AND PRESENCE, MADE POSSIBLE BY JESUS.

THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPECIAL PASSES AT A SPORTING OR MUSICAL EVENT.

SUCH PASSES GRANT THEM ACCESS INTO THE LOCKER ROOM OR BACKSTAGE. SIMILARLY, EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS A PASS INTO GOD'S PRESENCE.

WE ALSO HAVE THE SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE OF BEING WELCOMED BY GOD IN SPITE OF OUR SINFULNESS, BECAUSE WE SHARE IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GLORY OF JESUS.

CHRIST SHINES HIS GLORY THROUGH US BY THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, MAKING US RIGHT WITH GOD BY HIS MERITS.

WE ALSO HAVE HELP IN OUR SUFFERINGS BECAUSE OUT OF THEM WE CAN GROW THROUGH ENDURANCE WHICH BUILDS OUR CHARACTER, AND OPENS US UP TO HOPE.

THIS HOPE, IS NOT LIKE WISHFUL THINKING, OR WHEN WE TOSS COINS IN A WISHING WELL.

INSTEAD, CHRISTIAN HOPE ORIGINATES FROM GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE THAT IS IMPLANTED WITHIN US.

NOW, WHEN PAUL WROTE ABOUT SUFFERING, HIS PRIMARY FOCUS WAS TO ADDRESS BEING JOYFUL OR EXULTING BECAUSE CHRISTIANS WERE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH.

WE MIGHT CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND HOW THIS CAN BE TRUE EVEN TODAY AMONG CHRISTIANS SUFFERING PERSECUTION OR EVEN THREAT OF DEATH IN SOME PLACES IN THE WORLD.

HOWEVER, IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REJOICING BECAUSE WE SUFFER FROM A TERRIBLE ILLNESS OR PERSONAL TRAGEDY, WAR OR THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE- SOUNDS A LITTLE TOO MEDIEVAL FOR MANY CHRISTIANS.

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY WE CAN LOOK AT PAUL'S WORDS AND THE MESSAGE THEY PROVIDE FOR US TODAY.

IT CONCERNS THE KINDS OF SUFFERING IN LIFE ALL PEOPLE MAY ENCOUNTER.

SCRIPTURE'S PROCLAMATION IS THAT SUFFERING NEED NOT BE IN VAIN, BECAUSE GOD CAN BRING SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF IT.

HERE IS A STORY THAT OFFERS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT PAUL SAID: A VERY WEALTHY KING POSSESSED A LARGE RUBY.

HE WOULD SIT FOR HOURS ADMIRING THE GEM AND ITS DEPTH OF COLOR AND SPARKLE.

ONE DAY HE NOTICED A LARGE SCRATCH ACROSS THE MIDDLE OF HIS PRECIOUS STONE.

HE SENT OUT A DECREE THAT HE WOULD GIVE 1/2 HIS KINGDOM TO THE PERSON WHO COULD RETURN HIS GEM TO ITS ORIGINAL BEAUTY.

AFTER MANY VIEWED IT AND CONCLUDED THEY COULD DO NOTHING, A SCULPTOR CAME AND TOOK THE STONE AND WITH DELICATE TOOLS WORKED ON IT FOR HOURS.

WHEN THE GEM WAS RETURNED, THE KING SAW THAT THE SCULPTOR HAD USED THE SCRATCH AS THE STEM FOR BEAUTIFUL ROSE CARVED INTO THE STONE.

NEVER HAD THE RUBY SHONE FORTH SUCH BEAUTY AS AFTER THE SCULPTOR COMBINED THE BEAUTY OF THE STONE WITH THE TRAGEDY OF THE SCRATCH TO MAKE SOMETHING UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL IN A DIFFERENT WAY.

THIS IS HOW GOD CAN TAKE THE "SCRATCHES" OF OUR LIVES AND USE THEM, TO TURN US INTO A THING OF BEAUTY AS WELL.

BUT CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT DESPAIR OR THINK LESS OF THEMSELVES OR OTHERS IF THEY CANNOT SEE ANY VALUE, BEAUTY, OR GOOD BORN OUT OF THE SCRATCHES IN LIFE.

THE ASSURANCE OF OUR LIFE IN CHRIST REMAINS TRUE EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING THAT SEEMS POINTLESS.

INDEED, IN THE MIDST OF ANY KIND OF SUFFERING, EVEN WHEN WE HAVE NO AWARENESS OR CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SOMETHING BENEFICIAL, GOD'S TRINITY OF GRACE, LOVE, AND HOPE IS IMBEDDED DEEPLY IN OUR SOULS.

THIS IS ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE PEACE THROUGH CHRIST WE RECEIVED ALONG WITH OUR SALVATION.

THIS IS WHY WHAT PAUL WROTE ABOUT HIS WAY TO VIEW SUFFERING BECAUSE OF OUR FAITH, CAN ALSO BE APPLIED TO ANY KIND OR SOURCE OF SUFFERING.

WHETHER THAT CAUSE IS FROM AN OUTSIDE SOURCE, OR SOMETHING WRONG WITH OUR BODY OR MIND, OR SPIRIT GOD'S GRACE, HOPE, AND LOVE ARE PRESENT.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE MUST WELCOME SUFFERING OF ANY KIND, BUT THAT THROUGH CHRIST WE CAN FIND REASON FOR JOY IN OUR VICTORIOUS LIFE IN HIM.

THIS VICTORY WAS WON FOR US, WHEN JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS AND WAS RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN.

ROMANS 5:8 DECLARES: "BUT GOD PROVES HIS LOVE FOR US IN THAT WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS CHRIST DIED FOR US."

HERE, PAUL REMINDS CHRISTIANS THAT SALVATION IS GOD'S GIFT, ONE WHICH NO ONE CAN EARN, BUT CAN ONLY BE RECEIVED.

THE APOSTLE FURTHER EXPLAINS THIS EXTRAORDINARY GIFT WHEN HE WRITES ABOUT OUR JUSTIFICATION THROUGH CHRIST.

ROMANS 5:9 PUTS IT THIS WAY: "MUCH MORE SURELY THEN, NOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE WILL BE SAVED THROUGH HIM FROM THE WRATH OF GOD."

THE WORD "JUSTIFY" HAS THREE DIFFERENT MAJOR DEFINITIONS, AND EACH ONE CAN BE APPLIED TO CHRIST'S WORK ON OUR BEHALF.

FIRST: IT MEANS TO PROVE THE CORRECTNESS OF DECISIONS OR BEHAVIORS OR TO GIVE A SATISFACTORY LEGAL REASON FOR HAVING DONE SOMETHING.

SECOND: IT'S A PRINTING TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF LINING UP BOTH EDGES OF THE TEXT AND SPACING THE LETTERS CORRECTLY.

AND THIRD: IT'S A THEOLOGICAL TERM WHICH MEANS TO MAKE ONE RIGHTEOUS THROUGH FREEING THEM FROM THE BLAME OR GUILT OF SIN THROUGH FORGIVENESS.

AND ALL THREE APPLY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THIS WAY:

FIRST, OUR LIVES AS MEN AND WOMEN ARE JUSTIFIED BECAUSE WE ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. WE ARE FURTHER JUSTIFIED BY GOD'S LOVE FOR US AS PROVED THROUGH CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION,

SECOND, IN THE PROCESS OF SALVATION, GOD STRAIGHTENS UP ALL OUR RAGGED EDGES AND LINES UP OUR LIVES BY MAKING US A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST.

THIRD, WE ARE SET FREE FROM THE GUILT OF OUR SIN AND OFFERED US FORGIVENESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH JESUS.

HERE IS A STORY THAT OFFERS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE FORGIVENESS JESUS PROVIDES.

A WOMAN WENT TO THE BEACH ONE SUMMER'S DAY WITH HER YOUNG GRANDDAUGHTER. WHILE THEY WERE THERE A PLANE FLEW OVERHEAD AND WROTE A MESSAGE IN THE SKY.

THE LITTLE GIRL HAD NEVER SEEN SKY WRITING BEFORE AND WAS DELIGHTED AT FIRST, BUT THEN AS THE SMOKEY WORDS QUICKLY FADED, SHE GREW DISAPPOINTED.

SHE STOOD STARING AT THEM AND AS THEY DISAPPEARED, AND THINKING ABOUT WHAT SHE WITNESSED FOR ANOTHER MINUTE OR SO, THEN SHE SPOKE TO HER GRANDMOTHER.

THE CHILD SAID SOMETHING SIMPLE AND YET ALSO PROFOUND: "MAYBE JESUS HAS AN ERASER."

YES, JESUS ERASES OUR SINS IN THE SENSE THAT GOD DOES NOT HOLD THEM AGAINST US, BUT INSTEAD FORGIVES US WHEN WE REPENT.

OF COURSE, THE MEANS BY WHICH OUR SINS ARE BLOTTED OUT IS NOT SIMPLE OR EASY, IT CAME AT THE COST OF CHRIST'S WILLING SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS.

OUR ONLY ROLE IN THE PROCESS IS ADMITTING THAT WE ARE SINNERS IN NEED OF GRACE, AND BY FAITH ACCEPTING THE GIFT OF SALVATION JESUS OFFERS.

PART OF THIS ACCEPTANCE AND FAITH INCLUDES US EMBRACING GOD'S EXTRAVAGANT LOVE.

THE CHALLENGE OF THIS FOR US IS THAT OUR AWARENESS OF THE LOVE POURED INTO OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OFTEN SUPERFICIAL.

GOD'S LOVE IS PRESENT WITHIN US, BUT WE DO NOT EXPERIENCE IT FULLY OR CONSCIOUSLY A LOT OF THE TIME. THE PROBLEM IS NOT WITH GOD, BUT US.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS OR DESIRES, DAILY ACTIVITIES IN OUR BUSY LIVES, OR THE MANY DISTRACTIONS WE ENCOUNTER, CAN INHIBIT OUR AWARENESS OF GOD'S LOVE.

THIS IN ONE REASON PRAYER, SCRIPTURE READING, AND WORSHIP ARE IMPORTANT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

THOSE ACTIONS NOT ONLY HELP US FOCUS ON GOD BUT OPEN OUR HEARTS AND SOULS UP TO A GREATER AWARENESS OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US, AND PRESENCE WITHIN US.

AND EMBRACING THE FACT GOD LOVES US, FULLY, DEEPLY, AND ETERNALLY IS ANOTHER WAY THE PEACE OF CHRIST IS MADE REAL TO US.

THEREFORE, WE HAVE MANY REASONS TO BE THANKFUL FOR THE GRACE AND HOPE AND LOVE GOD OFFERS TO US.

LET US PRAY:

WE COME TO YOU O LORD OUR GOD, IN HUMILITY AND GRATITUDE FOR YOUR MANIFOLD BLESSINGS.

GRACIOUS FATHER, GIVER OF ALL GOOD THINGS: FOR OUR HOME ON EARTH AND FOR YOUR UNFAILING MERCY, WE GIVE YOU THANKS AND PRAISE.

CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER: FOR YOUR SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS AND RISING FROM DEATH THAT WE MIGHT LIVE, WE GIVE YOU THANKS AND PRAISE.

HOLY SPIRIT, GIVER OF LIFE: FOR YOUR ABIDING PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES AND FOR COMFORTING AND GUIDING US, WE GIVE YOU THANKS AND PRAISE.

O TRIUNE GOD: TO YOU BE GLORY AND HONOR AND PRAISE NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN.

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