

Gamma

Romans 5a

Study 8 What justification brings

Case 1

Lai Mooi Hun was a member of the 2nd Baptist Church and attending one of the Life groups where a prominent leader was involved in adultery and was in the process of divorcing his wife. Mooi Hun tried to speak to him but he was angrily turned away and told to mind his own business. He has left the church and is now deeply in debt to loan sharks and runs a pub in the middle of KL.

Mooi Hun is very up set and shared with his friends in the church wondering that if such a strong leader in church can fall to sin what chance is there for a young Christian like him? What if persecution comes or temptation will he be able to ensure and how do one have any confidence of this?

1. Looking at Romans 5 can you explain to him how God will keep him secure in Him eternally?

Look in verses 9-10, Paul assures us that Christ's work for our salvation not only gives us hope for our ultimate future, but for our immediate future. We are assured that we will be preserved as "saved" throughout our life and through the very day of judgment.

The argument of Paul is very strong. He intertwines two arguments in these two verses. First, if Jesus stayed on the cross and saved us "when we were God's enemies" (v.10), then "how much more" will he keep us saved now that we are his friends ("justified by blood" – v.9)? If he succeeded to save us when we were hostile to him, could he fail to prevail now that we are friends? If he didn't give up on you when you were at war with him, what could you do to make him give up on you now that you are at peace with him? (The God's wrath of v.9 must be his future judgment day wrath, because Christians have already had God's wrath turned aside. See Romans 3:25-26). Further, if Jesus effected our salvation when he was dead, "how much more" will he keep us saved since he is alive (v.10b)?

It is not until the end of Romans 8 that Paul confronts the issue of "losing

salvation” more fully. But here he virtually answers the question indirectly. He says that it is inconceivable that Christ should fail to save us to the end.

- 2. Can you share with the group what this verse Romans 5: 9-10 means to you personally how it affects your life and your feelings?**

Case 2

Nora was an active Christian who recently suffered a stroke and was now confined to a wheel chair and was dependant on her family to feed and provide for her every needs. She is undergoing physiotherapy and hopes to walk one day. There was a lot of pain over her spine as well causing more misery.

She gets increasingly bitter about her lot in life. She was an orphan and lived a life of poverty and now this. She was a faithful Christian.

Her pastor shared with her Romans 5 and told her that she should not wallow in her pain and self pity but instead she should learn to rejoice. She was told to ignore her pain and disability. Smile and just imagine that she can walk. Have faith in God, He will heal her and meanwhile while she waits for healing she must exhibit faith by believing that she is already healed.

When she gets her pain she is to smile and say it's all good. I rejoice!!!

Then only God will heal her and bless her.

Her brother Boon Ping has also suffered. He used to be a loan shark before he became a Christian and even as a Christian he struggles to living a godly life because he has a temper and has difficulty controlling it. He suffers from chronic pain over his left leg due to complex nerve disease for which there is no cure. When his friends who are wealthy try to help him with finance and introducing specialists he rejects them looking down on them. The pastor counseled him and told him he was suffering because of his sins committed as a loan shark in the past and his current sins. He should rejoice in his suffering because he is atoning for his past sins and in suffering he makes himself more acceptable to God.

- 1. Do you think that her pastor has correctly applied Romans 5:1- 5 what's wrong with what he has said?**

Paul says but we rejoice in suffering.” He says in effect, “Not only do we have these joys, but these joys stay joys in our sorrow, and even help us to find joy in our sorrow.”

Christians, rather, rejoice *in* suffering. That means there is no joy in the actual troubles themselves. God hates the pain and troubles of this life and so should we. Hence we should not pretend as if the suffering is enjoyable to keep a façade in the face of others as if everything is fine as this places more pain and suffering. We express our pain in suffering but the expression of pain is not the pain of total anguish as those who have no hope. Rather, a Christian knows that suffering will have beneficial results. A Christian is not a stoic that faces suffering with just gritting of teeth. Christians “look through” the suffering to their certainties and rest in the knowledge that our troubles will only serve to increase our enjoyment and appreciation of them.

2. What about what the pastor has said to Boon Ping is it correct and is it what Paul meant by saying we are to rejoice in our suffering?

The pastor is telling Boon Ping to rejoice for his suffering as it atones for his sins in the past and the ones he is currently struggling with.

Paul does not say we rejoice *for* our sufferings, what the pastor is suggesting is masochism. It actually is possible to rejoice for suffering. Some people need to feel punished in order to deal with their sense of unworthiness and guilt. Others actually get a superior attitude toward people who have had an easier life. They see them as superficial or ungrateful. It is possible to use suffering as a “work,” another form of justification by works! Some feel that God owes them his favor and acceptance because we have had such a hard life. People who do not “process” their suffering through the gospel of grace can become proud and superior or deeply cynical.

3. Why is Boon Ping rejecting his friend’s help?

He has a superior attitude toward people who have had an easier life which are his friends who are rich and healthy. God looks favourably on him compared to them because he is able to endure suffering.

4. Nora feels very far from God because of her suffering and feels God does not even love her and is very far away. How does she know that this is a just wishful thinking. How do we use Romans 5: 5-8 to reassure her?

The Christian's ground of assurance is two-fold: one is internal and subjective, while one is external and objective. Both are necessary.

First, v.5 tells us that we can know that God loves us because of the experience of his love. "This hope does not disappoint us, for God poured out his love into our hearts." It comes through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every Christian has some inner experience of the love of God. Paul's language shows that this can be quite a strong experience, though it can be mild and gentle too, which is more common. The greater your inner experience of love, the greater the assurance and hope and power you have. Generally the people who have the most of this are those who are very experienced and disciplined in prayer, meditation, life-balance, obedience. Some Christians have experienced this assurance very powerfully. For example:

Sometimes our spirits cannot stand in trials. Therefore sometimes the immediate testimony of the Spirit is necessary. It comes saying, "I am thy salvation!" and our hearts are stirred up and comforted with joy inexpressible. This joy hath degrees. Sometimes it is so clear and strong that we question nothing--other times doubts come in soon.

– Richard Sibbes

It is no audible voice, but it is a ray of glory filling the soul with God as life, love and liberty. It is like the word to Daniel that said, "O man greatly beloved!" Or like the word to Mary. The Lord only said her name MARY, and filled her soul so she no longer doubted she was his! Oh, how glorious is this manifestation of the spirit!

– William Guthrie

Second, vv.6-8 tell us that we can know God loved us because of the death of Jesus. Paul makes an argument which we should all have in our minds clearly. It goes like this:

v.7a – "It would take a very loving person to die to save another."

v.7b – "But even a very loving person would not die for an evil one--a very good one, yes, but an evil or wicked one? No."

v.8 – “But that is what Jesus Christ did, by the will of the Father. *While we were rebelling, and while we were resisting him, he died for us.*

Therefore — God loves you.

Case 3 Application

Now consider some specific difficulty or trial you have experienced as a Christian. Did you see it doing in you what Paul describes in Romans 5:1-4? Why or why not?

Here are some things to consider as you are analyzing your own “case study.”

- A. Did it lead you to focus, to *single-mindedness*? Did it help you sift out the unimportant from the important? Did it help you focus attention more on prayer and on what God has done for you?
- B. Has your suffering produced *testedness*? Did you follow through despite fears? In other words, did it bring a kind of maturity and confidence that comes from having been through it all? Are you a less jittery person, a less fearful person?
- C. Did it lead you to actual deeper experience of his presence and his love? Did you find a greater closeness, a sense of nearness?

If your suffering did not lead to this, analyze why:

1. Was it a failure of the will? Did you simply fail to spend time with God in worship and reflection? Or did you disobey him in some way to escape the hardness of the situation?

Was it a failure of understanding the gospel? Did the suffering make you doubt God’s love? That is a natural response, but did you eventually shake that off? The speed with which you do that is an indication of the degree of your understanding of justification. Remember that God can use suffering to “awaken” a person to some sin — as a kind of “intervention.” But interventions are only done by people out of love. God can and will treat you roughly if you need it, like a loving parent will do with a wayward child — but all out of deep concern. If you are a Christian, God has sent all your punishment on to Christ. All his wrath for you fell into the heart of Jesus and was swallowed up and absorbed there — it disappeared forever. He has no wrath left for you.

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