

A Practical Look At Where Hope Comes From

Romans chapters 1-4 presents the problem of sin. Just like you were in your father, biologically, before you were conceived, and he was in his father, etc.; every person is born in Adam. We are born in Adam's likeness, meaning we were born spiritually dead. Because Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he inherited a sin nature that has been passed on to every human being who has had a human father (Romans 5:12 *"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* Romans 3:10 says, *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:"* Because of our Adamic nature, our sin nature, we were not born naturally righteous. Romans 3:23 teaches, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* Because we were born in sin, in Adam, we were sinners and come short of glory of God which is God's righteousness.

When the Bible speaks of "sin" in the singular, it is most often referring to our sin nature. Before salvation, we commit sins because it is our nature. We were sinners because of our nature, because we identify with Adam. Sin had to be dealt with. Committing sins is bad, but this is only fruit of our nature. To properly deal with sin, we can't keep picking fruit and expect to deal with the whole tree. We must cut off the root so the tree won't grow back.

Our sin made us the enemies of God. The Bible teaches that before we trusted Christ as Savior, we were the children of Satan (I John 3:10 *"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that liveth not his brother."*

Romans 5 presents a foundational truth: "Justification by Faith". Every Christian has been justified by faith, but we are to live in faith. The Christian life is a life of faith. Saving faith and living faith have something in common, that is trust. Faith is believing in something. Trust= is resting in something. This slight difference makes all difference in salvation and in our lives. If you could imagine going bungee jumping, and you believe the rope will hold you, you have faith in that rope, but do you really trust it to hold you? You can profess to have faith in the rope, but you do not actually trust it until you jump. This matter of faith and trust is important. You may say you believe something, but do you act upon that faith? How do you prove your faith is real? By trusting it. Faith must become action. Faith says, "I believe it." Trust says, "I rest in it."

Faith

Romans 5:1-2 *"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* We find in verses 1-2 that believing in the Lord Jesus Christ results in two things.

Accepted

The first result of faith in God is acceptance (v. 1). We often hear about making peace with God. This peace with God is not made, it has been given to us because Christ died in our place for our sin as the propitiation that would satisfy the holy wrath of God (1 John 2:2 *“And he is the propitiation of our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”*). The word propitiation simply means that when Jesus died on the cross in our place, for our sin, that He satisfied the payment for our sin and that God the Father accepted this sacrifice so that we could have our sin forgiven and be made whole.

The word, “therefore” refers the reader back to chapter 4 which talks about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross for our sin and indicates that having faith and being justified is based on the finished work of Christ (death, burial, resurrection). The word, “justified” is important to understand. Before salvation you were under the control of your sin nature and you were the enemy of Christ. You were set in opposition to God, but justification by faith brought peace with God, not because of my efforts, but by God’s grace. The word “justified” is given to us in a certain grammatical tense that indicates that at a definite time, faith was exercised, and you placed your complete faith and trust in Christ and you were justified in the sight of God. God has declared that you are innocent, you are no longer condemned. This can only take place “through . . . Jesus” it is not by works; but by faith in Christ alone.

God the Father accepted the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as payment for my sin. When you, by faith, trust Christ as your Savior, you believe this to be true, God sees your faith and clears your account of sin. Colossians 1:21 *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”* Ephesians 1:6 *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* By faith, you have been accepted in Christ and now you have access to God.

Access

This word is used in two different ways. Both ways apply to this context. The first meaning of the word “access” refers to the ushering of someone into the presence of royalty. The second meaning refers to the place where ships come in to dock, a harbor or haven. We have this access to God by faith which means we no longer depend on our own efforts to try to earn merit or favor with God. It is all by faith. When we used to be tossed around on the waves of the stormy sea of life, we now have audience with the King of kings by faith.

A story has been told of a little boy standing outside of the gates of Buckingham palace in London. He wanted to talk to the king, but was sternly rejected by the guard at the gate. He wiped away his tears, just as a well-dressed man came up to him and asked about his trouble. When he heard the story, the man smiled and said, “Here, hold my hand. I’ll get you in. Just pay no attention to those soldiers.” The little boy took his hand and to his surprise, saw the soldiers

jump to attention as they approached. Together, they went past the guard, through the door, down the long hall through a great door right into the presence of the king sitting on his throne. He had taken the hand of the Prince of Wales, the king's son. Because of the son, he had gained access to the king. We have access to God because, by faith, we have been accepted in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and have been justified.

Trust

Romans 5:2 says, *"We rejoice in hope."* Those who aren't justified are not living and rejoicing in hope, but believers know the God of all hope, so we rejoice in Him. Many people live their entire lives with little or no hope. How does this hope develop in our lives? In Romans 5:2 the Bible uses the words "rejoice in" in referencing our view of hope and God's righteousness in our lives. In verse 3 the Bible tells us that we are to "glory in" tribulations. The words "rejoice" and "glory" are the same Greek word, therefore they have the same meaning. Just as we rejoice in the hope we have in God and the righteousness He has given us in our lives, we are to rejoice in trials and testings. This may sound counterintuitive, but because we have faith in God and we have trusted Him for our eternity, we can trust Him with our lives and everything that happens during our lifetime. We rejoice in hope and we rejoice in the way hope is developed; trusting our God and resting in His will for our lives.

Rejoicing in tribulations is a mark of genuine faith and trust. The word, "tribulations" means pressure from outside forces. This is pressure that we cannot control. This pressure we face in life is sometimes called a trial or a test to see if our faith is genuine. Most of the time, the last thing we want to rejoice in, is the first thing we try to escape. And that is the fiery trial that our faith goes through to purify, strengthen and grow us. No one actually enjoys going through fiery trials in life, but because we trust God and we know that He will see us through, we realize that the cross and crown go together. James 1:12 *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*

The question still remains, how can we rejoice in tribulations? Romans 5:3 uses the word "knowing" which refers to the fact that we are trusting and resting in the truth. The truth is, hope is only developed in difficult times when our faith can grow, so we trust the process by resting in the Lord. Let's continue with the process. Tribulation produces patience which is another word for endurance. Imagine a long distance runner enduring the entire marathon. It is difficult and he may want to quit numerous times throughout the race but he endures. The idea is that in order for God to accomplish the work He desires to do, we must remain in the trial, because that trial is working for our good. In order for God to do the work He desires to do in us, we must remain under the burden of the trial. We often pray that God would work in our lives, but we don't give Him a chance to do it because we don't like His methods. Remember, this is where trust comes in.

We learn in Romans 5:3 that patience produces experience. “Experience” is the word used to describe when a metal is melted down, purified and totally purged of impurities. This is the idea of getting stronger. Enduring the trials strengthens our faith. Don’t try to escape the hard times, God is working, He has a purpose in the trial. A development is taking place. Give God time to work and accomplish His plan. Growth and strength take time, so endure patiently because the result is worth the heat. Convenience never produces strength. Missing opportunities means you never gain experience. One day, when you can look back at the hard times, and you see how God has brought you through it all, it will grow your faith and that experience will help you endure another trial. You can not stop hard times from coming into your life, but you can determine how you will go through them. Those who do everything possible to escape or avoid a trial will never gain any experience in God’s mercy and provision and they will have no hope for the future.

Experience brings hope. “Hope” carries the idea of confidence, full faith, assurance. The very thing people miss is hope. So many are assured of eternity, they completely rest in their salvation, and yet they live in anxiety, depression, discouragement today. Anxiety often occurs because of the fear of the uncontrollable unknown. Depression is sorrowing without hope. Discouragement comes because they were disappointed in some situation. The very thing we need is found inside the trials and pressures of life that we so often work so hard to avoid or escape. Some of the most depressed, discouraged, anxious people you meet are either trying to escape the pressure or do not respond properly to the pressures of a trial. This is why two people can go through the same situation, one will be driven into despair and the other into triumphant victory. The difference is that one person allowed his faith to develop into a resting trust. He responded in faith allowing him to persevere through trial. The other escaped the pressure God was using to form him as quickly as he could.

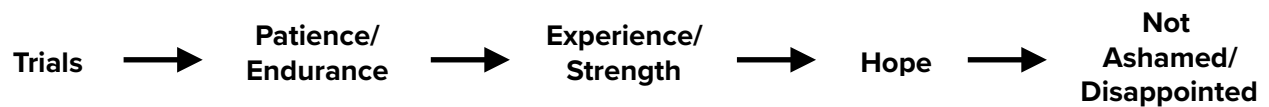
Those who have hope are not ashamed. The word “ashamed” in Romans 5:5 has an interesting meaning; in this context it means to be disappointed or to be a disgrace. Christians who do not trust God are a disgrace to the faith. Christians who do not trust God will feel like a disgrace and disappointment. Pressures from trials purify us and shape us. Those who stay under those pressures and let God do His work in their lives are never disappointed in the result. Many people feel disappointed because though they have faith and are justified by God, they have never lived by faith long enough to let it turn to trust. There must come a time when you stop trying and you start trusting God.

What is the foundation of trust in God? God’s love. Romans 5:5 speaks of the love of God; this love is *agape* love, which is the Greek word that describes the greatest, deepest, most sacrificial love—this is God’s love toward us. The Bible says in verse 5 that God’s love has been “shed abroad” in our hearts. This phrase means to pour out, into a vessel until completely full. The same word used for Christ shedding His blood for our sin. The giving vessel never runs out, but the receiving vessel overflows. This phrase gives the idea that God continually pours His love into us, this is an everlasting flow of God’s love.

Study Questions

1. In your own words, what is the difference between faith and trust?

2. List a few areas of your life where you do have faith in God. Expound upon that and discuss the ways you do or do not trust Him.



3. How can we rejoice in our trials? List 3 trials that when you came out of them you had a biblical hope (notice the progression in the handout).
