

Expounding the **Faith**

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1, 2, NKJV).



Introduction

The Peace Child

Jer. 23:6

In my country, there is a famous legend about Magere, an ancient warlord who could not be killed by spears during the tribal wars because he possessed a spear-proof body. Because of this, he was a champion for his tribe.

Over time, opponents of Magere and his tribe tried to discover the secret behind his spear-proof body. They offered him one of their best daughters for a wife, and Magere accepted. In the meantime, peace was restored for quite a while. But Magere's new wife was busy trying to learn her husband's secret. One day, Magere fell sick, and his wife discovered that her husband's strength resided in his shadow. This solved the mystery, and a few weeks later, Magere was killed by his opponents in a bloody battle.

“All were silent except the Sawi chief's wife.”

This story reminds me of Don Richardson, an American anthropologist and missionary who spent several frustrating years in New Guinea, hoping to bring the Christian message to the tribes of that country. His appeals, however, always fell on deaf ears, and having grown tired of his fruitless efforts, he decided to return home.

“Just before Richardson left, the Sawi and their deadly enemies, the Haenam tribe, staged an elaborate ceremony in front of his home. It was their final effort to convince him to stay. The entire village gathered to watch the event. All were silent except the Sawi chief's wife. She screamed loudly as the chief seized their six-month old baby from her arms and held him high in the air. The chief then carried his son to the enemy chief and gave him to his enemies. A member of the tribe explained to Richardson that the Haenam tribe would rename the baby and rear him as one of its own.”* Now that the child from the Sawi tribe lived with the enemy, there would be peace between the two tribes, because both tribes loved the child and would not want him to be killed in a war. Because peace was restored through this child, he was their peace child.

Christ is the peace child between heaven and earth. God gave to our sinful world His only Son to bridge the gap brought about by sin. When we believe in Jesus' sacrifice for us, we gain forgiveness and pardon for our sins along with eternal life and peace. Such is the faith we will learn more about this week.

* “A Modern Peace Child,” *Insight*, 2000.

Luke 7:9

Evidence

Faith That Brings Hope

In the aftermath of post-election violence that recently rocked my country, it was recommended that those who planned, funded, and initiated anarchy should be taken to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague in the Netherlands. Once there, it was hoped by many that these people might receive a death sentence, because their actions led to the loss of many lives.

The thought of appearing before the ICC must have sent chills down the spines of the top-level government officials who perpetrated the violence. For fear of ending up on death row, they expressed a desire to go before a local tribunal whose members might give them a lighter sentence.

Now we must have faith in Christ that He will heal us. . . .

In Luke 7:1–10, we read about a top-ranking government official whose servant was sick unto death. The official quite possibly had checked all the available options for healing within his reach as an important person. However, nothing helped. Then he must have heard about how Christ was healing people and wondered if He would do the same for his dying servant. The official's faith so impressed Christ that Christ said to those around Him, "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Luke 7:9, NKJV).

When sin entered the perfect order of God's creation, it brought sickness and death. There was nothing in the world that could put us right again. "The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. . . . Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven."*

Now we must have faith in Christ that He will heal us both physically and spiritually. Only He can redeem us from sin and give us peace again with our heavenly Father. When we accept Him as our personal Savior, Christ becomes the bridge over which we cross from death to life. When He justifies us, and when through the process of sanctification we become like Him, He makes us eligible for the rewards of heaven. We must choose to accept Him and live or to reject Him and die forever.

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

Logos
*The Problem and the
Solution*

Romans 5

Justification by Faith (Deut. 32:4; Rom. 5:6–8)

Paul's letter to the Romans explores why we continue to exist after sin entered the world. Adam and Eve could well have died the very day they sinned. However, God in His mercy devised a plan by which fallen humans could be saved.

Pardon for the human race could be made only through a righteous member of the Godhead. So "God was to be manifest in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19, NKJV). In faith and repentance, "the fallen children of Adam might once more become 'sons of God.' 1 John 3:2."¹

"The love of God the Father was displayed in the death of Christ. This vital

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fact must be recognized for a correct understanding of the atonement. . . . Christ did not die to appease His Father or to induce Him to love us. It was divine love that conceived the plan of atonement and salvation in the beginning, and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have all worked together in perfect harmony to effect it."²

Death and Life Contrasted (Rom. 5:12–14)

The original environment God created for us to live in was perfect. In writing to the Romans, Paul discusses how sin changed this perfect beauty and order. Before sin, Adam and Eve enjoyed face-to-face communion with God. This communion was the most beautiful of all. That ended, however, when Satan succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve. But because God's love did not end, He chose His only Son to become a human and to live and die on earth so that we might be delivered from the penalty of death. When we accept this sacrifice, we are put on a new footing with God. In Romans 5, Paul explains that through Adam, death reigned, but that through the death of Christ, humans could experience new life through faith in Him.

Also in Romans 5, "Paul is emphasizing . . . that as sin and death, as a principle and power, proceeded from Adam to the whole human race, so righteousness and life, as a counteracting and conquering principle and power, proceed from Christ to all mankind. And as death has been passed on to all men who

participate in Adam's sin, so life is passed on to all those who participate in the righteousness of Christ."³

Marvelous Union (Rom. 5:15–21)

The coming of Jesus Christ to live and identify with sinful humans in a sinful world is an indication of God's perfect love. Had Christ not come, there would be no pardon and thus no hope. The chasm between sinners and God could have existed forever or until sin simply destroyed everything in its path.

Paul ends Romans 5 by emphasizing "the position that Christ holds as the mediator in the work for man's redemption. Through His death the believer is justified, and through union with Him from then onward the Christian receives that vitalizing and sanctifying power that transforms his present life and assures him of eternal life to come."⁴

REACT

1. Think of a time when you felt far from God. How did your faith in Christ bridge that gap?

2. What do you think would have happened if Christ had not come to die for us?

3. The world is full of so many different cultures. Are we all saved by grace through faith in the same way? Explain.

4. Put your name in the blanks of the following quotation that appeared in the last section of today's article: Paul ends Romans 5 by emphasizing "the position that Christ holds as the mediator in the work for _____ redemption. Through His death _____ is justified, and through union with Him from then onward _____ receives that vitalizing and sanctifying power that transforms [his or her] present life and assures [him or her] of eternal life to come."

How did putting your name in this quote make you feel, and why?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 527.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 529, 530.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 533.

Testimony
*The Plan of
Redemption*

2 Cor. 5:19

“The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption, for they saw that man’s salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. In grief and wonder they listened to His words as He told them how He must descend from heaven’s purity and peace, its joy and glory and immortal life, and come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure its sorrow, shame, and death. He was to stand between the sinner and the penalty of sin; yet few would receive Him as the Son of God. He would leave His high position as the Majesty of heaven, appear upon earth and humble Himself as a man, and by His own experience become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations which man would have to endure. All this would be necessary in order that He might be able to succor them that should be tempted. Hebrews 2:18. When His mission as a teacher should be ended, He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire them to inflict. He must die the cruellest of deaths, lifted up between the heavens and the earth as a guilty sinner. He must pass long hours of agony so terrible that angels could not look upon it, but would veil their faces from the sight. He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father’s face, while the guilt of transgression—the weight of the sins of the whole world—should be upon Him. . . .

“All this would be necessary. . . .”

“Christ assured the angels that by His death He would ransom many, and would destroy him who had the power of death. He would recover the kingdom which man had lost by transgression, and the redeemed were to inherit it with Him, and dwell therein forever. Sin and sinners would be blotted out, nevermore to disturb the peace of heaven or earth. He bade the angelic host to be in accord with the plan that His Father had accepted, and rejoice that, through His death, fallen man could be reconciled to God.

“Then joy, inexpressible joy filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed, outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of life.”*

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 64, 65.

Ps. 27:1

How-to
Steps to Salvation

This week we have been studying Paul's words concerning how Christ's sacrifice on the cross brings justification to those who accept Him as their personal redeemer. The repercussions of Adam's sins are deadly, but by faith in Christ, we can be forgiven and forever pardoned. Our salvation and peace with God is guaranteed as long as we accept Christ's blood that was shed at Calvary. "When the tide of iniquity overspread the world, and the wickedness of men determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth. But in the final restitution, when there shall be 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning."*

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All who are justified look forward to the day of final liberation. However, it all depends on the steps we take toward salvation. Following are some of these steps, which, when taken, deliver us from sin.

Suffering. From the very first instant it happened, sin brought suffering. Sin continues unabated to this day. However, Christ our Redeemer is able to give us power through the Holy Spirit to help us withstand pain and suffering while we wait for His second coming.

Perseverance. As much as we may experience pain and suffering in this world, we are called to endure in the footsteps of the disciples and of Christ Himself. Pain and suffering are a test of our faith, and our ability to persevere is a measure of our faith and Christ's ability to save. As we wait for the final day, perseverance against pain and suffering will be a part of our Christian life.

Character. Perseverance helps us develop a Christlike character. This is a life-long process that occurs as we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts.

Hope. Hope strengthens our faith. A life full of hope is one full of service for others. Our salvation will ultimately come in proportion to the faith and hope we exert to obtain it.

REACT

1. What other steps can you think of that one must take to be delivered from sin?
2. Which steps are the most difficult for you to take, and why?
3. Which steps are you taking right now? What part of Christ's character are these steps developing in you (see Galatians 5:22, 23)?

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62.

Judging by what is happening in society today, we would do well to pay less attention to much of the news. With each passing day, around the entire world, corruption is on the rise as are moral and spiritual decadence. Which direction do we take as children of God? Satan would like nothing better than to get us to make our own decisions without involving Christ.

However, the Bible assures us that by leaning on Him who is our Redeemer, we are able to overcome sin. “There are not many ways to heaven. Each one may not choose his own way. Christ says, ‘I am the way: . . . no man cometh unto the

Let Christ take control of our lives.

Father, but by Me.’ Since the first gospel sermon was preached, when in Eden it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, Christ had been uplifted as the way, the truth, and the life. . . . Christ was the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God.”¹

This assurance should make us strong in our stand against sin. Sometimes, I feel miserable and hopeless when I imagine what it would be like to face life without the mercy of Christ. However, at the thought of Him as a Redeemer for the whole world, I receive strength, courage, and hope. With Christ surrounding me, I am strengthened not to follow the deceits of my human heart. It’s time for us to acknowledge the justification given to us by Christ and to learn that we cannot succeed in our own righteousness. Let Christ take control of our lives, because it is only through His sacrificial intervention on the cross that we can be justified.

“From the days of Adam to our own time, our great enemy has been exercising his power to oppress and destroy. . . . All who are actively engaged in the cause of God, seeking to unveil the deceptions of the evil one and to present Christ before the people, will be able to join in the testimony of Paul, in which he speaks of serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations.”²

Today it is our privilege to join Paul in proclaiming the saving grace of our Savior, who has brought justification for all who accept Him regardless of color or national origin.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 510.

Rom. 6:23

Exploration

Bridging the Divide

CONCLUDE

God created us in His image. This must have been an intensely personal project for Him. The existence He desired for us was one of perfection—free of pain, full of joy, and in constant communion with Him, our Creator. Yet when we introduced sin into the world, a chasm was formed between our Designer and us. The sickness of sin infiltrated all aspects of humanity. Now we are doomed to a life of suffering and inevitable death. Thankfully, God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, had another plan. He stretched out His hand and, with incomprehensible grace, bridged the divide sin had created. The sacrifice of His Son paid the price for our transgressions. And through faith, we are justified/saved.

CONSIDER

- Listing examples of times in your life when the assurance of salvation gave you hope and strength to endure through a trying time.
- Painting Jesus' second coming as you imagine it.
- Celebrating your relationship with Christ with other church members.
- Envisioning life in heaven without sin.
- Observing examples of God's grace in nature.
- Memorizing your five favorite Bible verses about salvation.
- Studying another denomination's understanding of redemption and comparing it to the Adventist interpretation.

CONNECT

Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 396–398.

Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Justification in Romans 3:21–24." <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/justificationRom%203-21-24.htm> (accessed August 14, 2009).