

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Lesson 12, Chapter 5

As we study Romans Chapter 5 today we should pause to remember just who Paul is addressing his thoughts to: it is to the gentile and Jewish Believers living in the capital city of the Roman Empire: Rome. To put a finer point on it: this was not an open letter to all Believers where ever they might live. What he was teaching them certainly could apply to all Believers everywhere as the conditions arose, but that was not the intent of this letter.

While all sections of his Letter to the Romans are meant for both Jewish and gentile Roman Believers, some sections are more carefully aimed at Jewish Believers, and other times more at gentile Believers. Just how Jewish Believers might understand what Paul had to say could be quite different from how the gentile Believers perceived it. This is because Jewish Believers had a fairly in-depth understanding of Judaism and their Hebraic heritage, and so grasped the many nuances of their religion and history that would not have been realized by gentiles. Much of what Paul had to say in the Book of Romans would have flown over the heads of gentile Believers. Their only hope was that knowledgeable Jewish Believers would explain it to them.

It is ironic that today's gentile Believers are in the same boat as the Roman gentile Believers of Paul's era. The difference is that back then it seems that gentile Believers sought out and were happy to have the tutoring and insight of Jewish Believers to help them understand Scripture. But today (and for many centuries, actually) that is not the case; gentile Believers usually think that we can understand the Old and New Testaments with little or no knowledge of Judaism or of Jewish history or culture. Christians have typically shunned any thought of turning to Jews for some answers. And if we are honest we can see where that mindset has led the Christian faith. So let us determine to first admit to ourselves that the Bible is an ancient Hebrew document, written in the context of various stages of ancient Hebrew culture, and that until we take the time to learn the nuances of their culture and their religion we will have a skewed or incomplete understanding of what the Hebrew writers of the Bible meant by what they said.

As we get ready to read Romans chapter 5 recall that chapter 4 was mostly a Midrash on Abraham that ended with Paul comparing Yeshua to Abraham. Paul's conclusion was that while Abraham is indeed the biological father to the Jewish people (more accurately, the Hebrew people), Abraham is also the spiritual father to gentile Believers in Christ. Thus gentile Believers are as much legitimate seed of Abraham as are Jews; just in a slightly different sense that doesn't involve membership in the Jewish nation. Paul's words would have thrilled the gentile Believers of Rome; but it would have had a different effect upon the Roman Jews. Some Jews would have had mixed feelings about such a notion, while others would have been downright furious at the thought and disagreed vehemently with Paul.

So what we will see is that Romans chapter 5 (when taken as a whole) can only be taken as a summation of all that Paul has discussed in chapters 1 – 4, and what it means for Believers, even though new information is added. Open your Bibles to Romans 5.

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 5 all

The reason that most of you are studying with Seed of Abraham Torah Class is because you want a better understanding of who God is and what His Word to us is intended to impart. I'm hoping that you also are seeking to better understand certain terms and expressions that are in common, if not daily, use among Christians. Terms like sin, death, and even "through Christ" (such as "I can do anything through Christ"). We seldom stop and ask ourselves some basic questions about exactly what those terms mean, and equally seldom do we hear them defined in the Church or Synagogue setting; the terms are used and we're expected to know. The result is that Believers have a somewhat hazy understanding of those terms and expressions that are so central to our faith, or we have our own understanding of their meaning unaware that to other Christians (or to the un-Believing population in general) those terms can mean something quite different. We'll work on remedying that but you'll need to be patient and attentive. As important as understanding these Biblical terms is, they are not necessarily easy to explain.

Thus right off the bat in verse 1 we see Paul say that since we have indeed become righteous by our trust in God, then we need to maintain our newly found "peace" with God "through our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah". Our CJB uses the word **shalom** instead of peace; English Bibles most often translate **shalom** as meaning peace. But what does peace (**shalom**) mean, Biblically? Typically peace with someone (in this case peace with God) is thought of in military terms; as in peace instead of hostility. However because that kind of peace is seldom spoken of in Scriptures (especially when speaking from a spiritual aspect) then we need to expand the meaning from peace to well-being because that more closely approximates the meaning of the Hebrew concept of **shalom**. Peace is not meant in verse 1 as only a cessation of hostilities; it is meant as our receiving overall well-being from the Lord. This is a type of well-being that can only come from God and it gives us a lasting comfort, a sense of protection and devotion, a return to wholeness, and it also involves aspects of grace.

Many commentators will argue that indeed the term peace is meant as a cessation of hostilities between God and man because this peace is the result of reconciliation. But that doesn't entirely dovetail well with the character of God. The Father is not a hostile God; and reconciliation doesn't always have to be between enemies. He is a God who loves His creatures even when we don't love Him and might even be hostile towards Him. Otherwise, how does one account for God giving up His Son for the sake of those who are against Him? Even when He punishes humans it is not with a sense of hostility but rather with a sense of justice. God's wrath is much less about hostility and more about the just consequence of rebellion. In a court of law when a person commits a crime, is judged guilty and goes to prison, that is not about judicial hostility; it is about proportional justice. Therefore it cannot be that **shalom** with God (peace with God) in this context means only that enmity between man and God is over (for the Believer, anyway); it must also mean that upon God righteousing us we receive the divine gift of **shalom** provided we continue to abide in Him.

But then we are told that this **shalom** with God happens “through our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah”. What does that mean? “Through our Lord” is a kind of New Testament shorthand that Paul in particular favors. Back in Romans 3:25 we were told that Yeshua is our Mercy Seat “through His (Yeshua’s) faithfulness”. We have already defined faithfulness as the tangible good works and deeds of a person who has faith. So the phrase “Through our Lord” or “Through Christ” more means: we can now access God the Father by means of our trust in the perfection, works and deeds, and the willing sacrifice of Yeshua that atoned for our sins. Since that is certainly too many words to remember or use when speaking about how we obtained our peace with God, then perhaps we could reduce that to simply: “Through the works and deeds of our Lord, Yeshua”. That better captures Paul’s meaning.

Verse 2 proves this definition that I’ve given you to be the case because what we have is Paul providing a little more information about what “through Yeshua” means and what it provides. And since it is our trust in the works of another (Christ) that has given us this **shalom** with God, then the only boasting that we ought to do is in the expression of our hope of experiencing God’s glory. Here we have two more terms that need some definition: boasting and God’s glory. The CJB use of the word “boast” here is dubious. The Greek word it is attempting to translate is **kauchaomai**. Many English versions translate it as rejoice, others as exult. In fact, it is often translated as glory. However when we see the term “glory of God”, the Greek word that is translated as glory in this case is **doxa**. **Doxa** means splendor or an exalted state. So since we have two different Greek words that both can translate into English as glory, translators do not want the passage to read “So let us glory about the hope of experiencing God’s glory”. That sounds odd and confusing so they usually choose a different construction and replace the first “glory” with the word exult or rejoice. The CJB chose to use boast.

So as used here; to say that we should rejoice in God’s glory means that we should celebrate or have a great rejoicing in God’s splendor. Yet what is Paul actually getting at in this passage? What **is** God’s glory or splendor? Paul is not speaking about splendor in the sense of how a human king appears in all his regal clothing and aristocratic bearing. He is saying that as Believers we are to look forward to the divine illumination of the wholeness, the perfection, of our humanity that comes only from the divine radiance of being in God’s presence. Do you recall in the Book of Exodus what happened to Moses after spending time in God’s presence? He literally radiated light (or better, illumination) when he came down from Mt. Sinai. The radiance emitting from his face so confused and frightened people that Moses took to wearing a veil when he was around the Israelites. So God’s glory in relation to humans involves a recovery of the original destiny of mankind before Adam fell from grace. All wrapped up in the concept of God’s glory, this passage speaks of the restoration of human beings that will even be immeasurably enhanced beyond the original state of Adam into something that more resembles Yeshua’s exalted state as He ascended to Heaven.

But in verse 3 Paul says something that is troubling because, honestly, what he is saying usually doesn’t turn out that way. He says that we should rejoice in our tribulations because we know that tribulation produces endurance, and endurance grows our character, and our growing character produces hope. Really? Folks, not very many who experience great tribulation wind up with more hope. In fact Job, as one of the Godliest men who ever lived, gave up hope and mischaracterized God once his troubles overwhelmed him. It is more likely

for humans who experience great tribulation to speak against God, or even abandon Him. A sad revelation for me has been that as I have met a number of Holocaust victims over my years of traveling to Israel, most have given up belief in God due to their horrific experiences.

Of course what Paul is speaking about is the outcome of tribulations with those who have a true, abiding trust in God through the faithfulness of Messiah Yeshua. Without that trust the sad result that I just spoke of is far more likely. But with that trust in God then indeed for a confident Believer tribulation **will** achieve endurance; endurance **will** achieve character; and character **will** produce hope. But what is the “hope” that Paul speaks about? Is it that our trials and tribulations will be overturned, or solved, or ended? Is it the happy ending that we all want in our novels and movies? In the Book of Acts when Paul spoke about hope it always had to do with resurrection from the dead and there is no reason to think that he means something different here.

Death has always been a terrifying and unavoidable prospect for humans. That is why many cultures invented elaborate death cults; cults like the Egyptians who built pyramids and furnished them with lavish items for the Pharaohs to enjoy in the Land of the Dead. This of course was a pagan fantasy. But the Lord God solved this dilemma through Yeshua, the firstfruits of the resurrection, by promising that all humans will be resurrected from the dead at some point in the future. The problem is that most will be resurrected to face God as the judge who will condemn them for all eternity. But for those who trust God through Yeshua’s faithfulness, we will be resurrected into eternal life and **shalom**. That is the hope that Believers possess that no one else does or can, and that is the hope that Paul is speaking of here. Paul’s kind of hope is essentially the end result of a chain of events in the life of a Believer.

Please notice in verse 6 how Paul speaks of when “we” were still powerless that Messiah died on the behalf of ungodly people. So Paul is not only including himself, the “we” includes all Believers (he makes no distinction between Jewish and gentile Believers in this regard). But we must also notice that he essentially makes synonyms of the terms “we” and “ungodly”. There is something hidden deep here that we must acknowledge: Paul is saying that “belief” in God doesn’t keep us from being ungodly. Before Paul accepted Christ, he believed in the God of Israel. Before the Believing Jews of Rome accepted Christ, they believed in the God of Israel. We can believe in God and still be helpless, powerless, sinful, and (by Paul’s definition) ungodly. For Paul “ungodly” doesn’t mean you don’t have some level of belief in God; it means that your behavior proves that you don’t obey Him. It means that you live a lifestyle as though you don’t know who God is. And as unlikely as it might sound, says Paul, this is exactly the kind of people that Messiah died for. That thought might sound a bit radical to us except that Paul’s Master said the same thing many years earlier.

Luke 5:30-32 CJB

³⁰ *The P'rushim and their Torah-teachers protested indignantly against his talmidim, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax-collectors and sinners?"*

³¹ *It was Yeshua who answered them: "The ones who need a doctor aren't the healthy but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the 'righteous,' but rather to call sinners to turn to*

God from their sins."

Paul acknowledges that it sounds entirely unlikely that one person would give up his life for another even if that person who is in danger is a decent person (is righteous), although it is slightly more imaginable if that good person was very special. But by allowing His own Son to die on behalf of sinners (ungodly people, bad people), God demonstrated a love that is unheard of among humans. This validates my contention that God is not a God of hostility so we need to be careful how it is that we characterize Him. So, as a result of this fact Paul says the following in verse 9 that can be best explained by the words of Douglass Moo in his Commentary on Romans: ***"If God has already done the more difficult thing.....to reconcile and justify unworthy sinners....how much more can He be depended upon to accomplish the easier thing.....to save from eschatological (End Times) wrath those who have been brought into such a relationship with Him."***

That is, it was a monumental undertaking by God to bring about redemption for evil mankind by giving up His perfect Son's life in exchange for theirs. So now that He's done that, it goes without saying that since the purpose for Yeshua's death was to save, then those who have benefited from this awesome act will be protected from God's wrath. Thus redemption through Christ and being saved from God's wrath come as a package deal. Aren't you glad? I know I am.

Verse 10 is parallel to verse 9 and demonstrates one of the two most fundamental characteristics that identify God's nature. We talked about these characteristics a couple of lessons ago: 1) God creates everything from nothing, and 2) God brings life from the dead. Here Paul emphasizes that the way God brought new and eternal life to sinners was by means of the death of Yeshua.

Paul now moves to a section of Chapter 5 that begins in verse 12 and ends in verse 21. While Chapter 5 can be said to be, as a whole, a conclusion and summation for Romans chapters 1-4, verses 12 -21 of chapter 5 can be said to be a conclusion of what Paul has just said in verses 1 – 11. And these 10 verses lead us into a theological minefield that we could probably spend a month dissecting (but we won't). One of the most controversial aspects of this section is that it approaches the subject of what theologians call "the Doctrine of Original Sin". And while Christianity has several different viewpoints on this subject that spills over into the even more basic concept of "what is sin?" the Jewish viewpoint is altogether different and so Judaism and Christianity have been at odds on this delicate matter since Paul's day. In fact, since the issue of sin and where it came from was already well formulated within Judaism by Paul's era, I can assure you that when some of the Jews of Rome read this part of the letter they probably read no further, so sensitive is the subject and so at odds was Paul's statement against what Judaism traditionally believed.

And yet, we won't hear Paul using the terms Jews and gentiles in these verses; rather the scope of Paul's comments is universal. Paul is dealing with **all** of mankind in general without distinction of any kind. Everyone simply falls under the category of "Human Being"; the way the world was before Abraham was set apart for God. Further, after speaking about how Christ's death brought hope to the Jewish people, and how that occurred even while they were

yet sinners, Paul now begins to explain the positive effect that this would have on the entire world. And to flesh this out he points towards a similarity between Yeshua and Adam. So Paul first used Abraham and now He uses Adam to explain the Gospel: why it was needed and how it works. So much for the Gospel being a New Testament innovation.

Without doubt the theme that pulls these 10 verses together is that Christ's faithfulness to die on the cross was needed to counteract Adam's unfaithfulness that first sent humanity into the abyss of sin. Thus, says verse 12, it was that one person (Adam) brought sin into the world and with this sin came death. And once sin and death appeared on earth it propagated itself throughout every Human Being from that time forth. Everyone would sin and so everyone would die. This verse is so enormous in its theological implications that perhaps the only comparable verse is Genesis 1:1: ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*** The impact of the first words of the Torah is incalculable and no doubt debate about the precise meaning of these words will continue until Yeshua returns. It is that same way with Romans 5:12 (at least among Christians). This verse enters us into the realm of the Doctrine of the Original Sin. How one interprets these words has a great deal to do with how a person might understand redemption, and it certainly affects our understanding of how sin and death entered this world in the first place.

Most Christians are caught off-guard when they hear that there is no such thing as one universally accepted Doctrine of Original Sin within Christianity. Whichever one of the several original sin doctrines one might choose, it in no way lines up with Jewish thought on the matter. I'm going to rely mostly on the fine work that Dr. David Stern put together in order to give you a Reader's Digest version of explaining the various views of original sin not because it is necessarily the best but rather because Dr. Stern explains it in an organized and concise way that doesn't go too deep or get too technical, and so it is suitable for our purposes.

I hope you're ready to focus on this important issue because what happened in the Garden of Eden with Adam is about as foundational of a faith issue as it gets when it comes to both Judaism and Christianity. Depending on what one believes actually happened in the Garden it has a significant effect on how we might view sin, redemption, death, and salvation. So the first thing we must do is to define some terms so that we're all on the same page. I'll define those using familiar Evangelical Christian words and definitions as a baseline.

The Doctrine of Original Sin is exactly that: it is the title of a manmade doctrine. You will not find the words "original sin" in the Bible. In fact it isn't until the 4th chapter of Genesis that the word "sin" is used in the Torah. As attributed to Adam, original sin consists of two pieces: the first piece is called **original pollution** and the second piece is called **original guilt**. Don't get too hung up on the titles of those two pieces; I didn't choose them. Rather they are the standard terms that theologians have long used to deal with the subject. Original pollution refers to the sinful state and condition into which every human is born. This sinful state of everyone also gives everyone a sinful nature that makes it utterly impossible for us to follow God faithfully and to do what is good and right in His eyes.

Therefore original guilt is what makes condemns us all. Original guilt is what makes every human ever born fully deserving of God's wrath and our death. And this is so from the second

we are born; we are all born guilty. We can call infants innocent but they are not. Infants have not yet had a chance to commit behavioral sins, but they are still guilty of original guilt because they are born with original pollution stemming from Adam.

Why are these sin terms called “original”? Because 1) we all share the same original root of humanity, Adam. 2) It is also original since pollution and guilt are present in every human at our personal **origin** (at our birth, perhaps even at our conception). And finally, 3) it is original because this pollution and guilt themselves are the **origin**, the root cause, of our evil inclinations and our sinful deeds that ultimately defile us as a human person. So the term original applies in three different, but complementary, senses.

However original sin and original guilt are not so “original” that they can be traced all the way back to God, the Creator, the ultimate originator. That is, God did not build pollution and guilt into human DNA or into the spirit of life that He breathed into Adam. Man, Adam, is responsible for that. So pollution and guilt were not passed on from God to man because God has no pollution or guilt in Him.

So what, exactly, was the so-called original sin? The standard answer is that Adam (encouraged by Eve) ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. However the underlying essence of that act was siding with Satan in rebellion against God. Just as Satan suggested he do, Adam substituted his own personal will for God’s will. Adam did this from pride, from unbelief, and he shared Satan’s desire to put himself on the same plane of being as God. It is this sin, or perhaps better this bent to apostize from God, which has been passed along to every human from Adam and for which we are all held accountable by God. But at the same time we do not share the responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit; only Adam did that.

What does sin mean in the Bible? Sin has 3 basic meanings. 1) It refers to our wrong deeds and actions; our bad behavior and immoral thoughts and actions. 2) It also refers to our sinful inclination; that is, sin is a moral defect that urges us to choose that which we know is morally wrong. And 3) sin refers to our sinful natures. That means that our very nature as humans, right down to our DNA, is corrupted with evil. Thus an evil inclination in all humans is inevitable, and thus so are the evil deeds that our evil inclinations demand us to do.

So how do we all inherit this original sin? Propagation of the species. If you are a descendant of Adam (and we all are), you have received the original sin in your genes and so you will transmit the same to the genes of whatever children you spawn and so on and so on, forever. There is no fix for it in human terms.

What is the consequence of our inheritance of the original sin? Death. So death should not be seen or talked about as the natural, God ordained, end of life. Death is unnatural and it is divine punishment. But death is more than the physical death of our bodies; it also includes spiritual death and eternal death. Spiritual death means our separation from God. Spiritual death that is present at the time of our physical death brings on eternal death. On the other hand a person (while still living) can be in a state of spiritual death but can repent and turn from his or her sins and trust in God through Yeshua. And then at his or her physical death they will

not suffer eternal death.

There are other versions of the doctrine of original sin within Christianity. We'll not discuss them all, but briefly here are 6 more (this ought to give you some idea just how fractured Christianity is even at its core beliefs).

- **The Augustinian version.** This says that we are born with both original pollution and original guilt. But more, we are all participants in Adam's original sin of eating the forbidden fruit. Therefore we die because we actually and personally sinned the original sin.
- **The Mediate Imputation version.** This claims that we have original guilt only because of the original pollution of Adam. But we do not share in Adam's original pollution or in his sinful act of eating the forbidden fruit. We die because we have a sinful nature.
- **The Federal version.** We are born with original pollution but NOT with original guilt because we did not share in Adam's original sin of eating the forbidden fruit. It is not that we are born with a sinful nature, but rather it is at the age of accountability that sin becomes imputed to us, reckoned by God upon us, because Adam was our representative in the Garden of Ed
- **The Uncondemnable vitiosity version.** This says that the original pollution that we are all born with doesn't also make us guilty, and that we are certainly not guilty of Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit. We have guilt before God only when we commit sinful deeds. Death is not the result of sin, but rather it is the natural end of a human life span as always intended by God.
- **The Arminian-Methodist version.** This says that even though a person is born physically and intellectually depraved, we can choose another way and actually be obedient to the Holy Spirit as-is. We become guilty before God only when we cooperate with our sinful nature, and commit actual sinful deeds. Therefore death happens not because death has been passed on to us by Adam, and not as the penalty that Adam received for his sin, but because the death penalty has been imputed upon us by God.
- **The Pelagian version.** This says that man is born as an innocent infant, and that from birth we are able to obey God. However due to the bad examples we see all around us, we eventually commit sinful deeds. We then die because we sin, and we suffer spiritual and eternal death not because of anything Adam did but because we all imitate Adam by sinning and so we suffer the same consequence as Adam; death.

So what does Judaism believe about the original sin? Generally it does not accept a doctrine or concept of original sin. That is, there is no such thing as the original sin. Judaism believes that what Adam did in the Garden was Adam's sin alone and has no bearing on his billions of descendants. Jews believe in free will to the point that a Jew rejoices when he can prove his ethical moral fiber in his personal battle against temptation and sin. In fact Jews are taught to see themselves as stronger than their evil inclinations and thus able to avoid sin altogether if they sincerely strive for righteousness. Thus the Jewish view is that humans are created essentially good, like Adam, in the image of God. There is no sin nature woven into our DNA. But in order to give us free will and free choice, every human is born with an evil inclination and a good inclination, and it is up to each human to choose which they shall serve.

Some of the argument that Judaism uses to deny the Christian doctrine of an original sin is that the word sin isn't even used in the Bible until Genesis 4:7.

Genesis 4:1-7 CJB

^{CJB} **Genesis 4:1** *The man had sexual relations with Havah his wife; she conceived, gave birth to Kayin [acquisition] and said, "I have acquired a man from ADONAI."*

² *In addition she gave birth to his brother Hevel. Hevel kept sheep, while Kayin worked the soil.*

³ *In the course of time Kayin brought an offering to ADONAI from the produce of the soil;*

⁴ *and Hevel too brought from the firstborn of his sheep, including their fat. ADONAI accepted Hevel and his offering*

⁵ *but did not accept Kayin and his offering. Kayin was very angry, and his face fell.*

⁶ *ADONAI said to Kayin, "Why are you angry? Why so downcast?"*

⁷ *If you are doing what is good, shouldn't you hold your head high? And if you don't do what is good, sin is crouching at the door- it wants you, but you can rule over it."*

Notice the words that say: "Sin is crouching at the door-it wants you, **but you can rule over it**". So Judaism certainly acknowledges that committing behavioral sins is a danger lurking around every corner. But they see it as possible, and even expected by God, that humans rule over that sin. Thus Jews do not accept the idea of an original sin from which humanity is held universally captive.

My point in this little excursion is not to recommend to you a precise version or doctrine of original sin, or to dissuade you from any particular view, but rather to acquaint you with one of the major reasons that it can be so difficult to convince especially the religious Jews to accept a Savior to pay for their sins, and to save them from their sin natures. They believe that they do not have a sin nature stemming from Adam, and also that they have every ability to not sin if they work hard enough at it. So their fate is, in essence, in their own hands.

My purpose is also to show you that Paul's version of original sin as many of us interpret it is not the only one within Christianity. So don't be surprised when you encounter other Believers who disagree with you over this issue. But then also don't be surprised when because of their view of original sin, how they think of Christ and salvation will also be different.

We'll continue with Romans 5 next time.