

Romans Chapter 5 - John Karmelich

Title: Understanding how the big picture affects our daily lives!

I suspect if I woke any devout Christian out of a deep sleep and asked what's the good news? We'd say something like "We don't have to earn God's love but just accept the free gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Savior". We may not say it that well, before we are fully awake, but I realize that I'm preaching to the choir, so I opened with that thought! The logical question is why is that such a big obsession for devout Christians? Again, if we're wide awake we'd say something like, we do it as we want to be a good witness for God. We think it'll earn us "points" with God. Paul, the author of Romans spent a good four chapters arguing in effect: none of us are good enough for God. I'd argue the only answer to the salvation question after all that is, "the good news". I like to assume I'm preaching to born again believers, so why "pound the pulpit" here? Because we each have moments where we think God is proud of what we're doing right now! As I said in the last lesson, after we mess badly or think we've blown it beyond repair, it's necessary to realize His plans and desires for our life and why "The Good News" is something we veteran Christians need to keep in mind!

Let me try this another way: To use some fancy "seminar words" we're moving in this chapter from an ideological discussion of gratification (how we are "just as if we never sinned") to "sanctification". The idea of that big word is how should we act once we accept His free gift of salvation! My favorite two words in these studies are, "Now what?" As in I'm saved, now what? In Chapter 5, Paul ends his "gratification" lectures that covered the first four chapters and the first part of Chapter 5, as he jumps to "sanctification" in the second part of this chapter and that goes through Chapter 7. A few lessons back I said that the first seven chapters of Romans is an uphill climb, and the good news is we can see the top. I'm going to avoid those "seminary words" and try to get practical as I cover this chapter!

Chapter 5 opens with the benefit of trusting in Jesus for our salvation, as opposed to trying to earn it by how we live! The danger is if we can earn it, how do we know how much is enough, or how much sin is enough to lose it, or what about babies who die? Realize "peace with God" doesn't mean life always is going to go well. It means no matter how much we mess up, if we trust Jesus is God and He died for all our sins, the peace will be there, and we don't have to worry about it! Paul then gives a "this leads to that" set of points: It's usually translated we rejoice in our suffering (still working on it), and that suffering produces endurance! (Since God got us this far, why do we worry about what we have to deal with at the moment?) How we act as a Christian produces character (a reputation for trusting God through trials). That leads to hope! To put it another way, since we're still alive, we see how God has guided us through our life to date! That leads us to be the believer God wants us to be by trusting Him! Finally, that hope makes us realize the Holy Spirit (His first mention in Romans) is working in our lives! Let me put it another way: Is my life messed up? Have I made recent mistakes and sinned? Of course! Still God is guiding me and teaching me from all those bad things. I know this simply because I'm still alive and He's still using me.

What about people who die young? There's no guarantee of how long we'll live. Some people die at an early age and as tough as that is to accept, God is "finished with them" in this life! Bottom line, Paul is writing this to those are believers in Jesus, who are alive and reading this!

Verse 6 has one of my favorite discussions: Did Jesus die at the right time? Why didn't he die at some other point in history? Why not "today" when the resurrection could be broadcast all over the world?

I'll argue He died at a good time in history. I'll explain: When Jesus died on the cross, He was pretty much unknown over the vast Roman Empire. In a few centuries, Christianity dominated that empire! Since one empire dominated a large area, plus the Israelites were in their land, that was the right time for Jesus to die and rise again!

Paul then states in effect a good person may say, "fall on a grenade" for another good person! Yet, who would die for a bad one, especially for those not born yet! In verses 6-11, Paul finishes his argument that Jesus as God, wanted to pay the price for all who chose to believe in Him! I know this is old news for us, but we need to remind ourselves of that, as it's easy to think we've sinned too much to be saved!

Then Paul gets into a discussion comparing Adam and Jesus. The essence of the argument is since one man (Adam) brought sin in the world another man was needed to pay the price for sin. Let's begin with Adam. Why is it fair that we are judged if Adam caused all of us to sin? (First everyone who puts their trust in Jesus is "exempt" as He paid for our sin.) The issue here is we are all born "sin-positive". The classic joke is we do not have to teach our children how to throw a tantrum or lie, they just do it! Since we're accountable to God we must deal with the fact we sin! Bottom line, we can't blame our ancestors for our nature, nor can we blame Satan! To put it another way, God created the world, so He decides the "ground rules". If God's perfect and He requires perfection to be with Him forever, who are we to argue with His rules? That's why Christians are obsessed that Jesus must be fully God as well as fully man! If He's not God, He can't pay for our sins. If He's not fully human, then another human can't be a sacrifice for our sins. The sad truth is a lot of people don't want to submit to Jesus simply because they want to prove their worth to God!

Still why didn't Jesus come right after Adam sinned? Notice God held Adam accountable for Eve's sin even though she was deceived, and he was not! God did punish both of them! By the way, Paul argues that Adam and Eve had to be literal people for this to be true! Back to the "when" question: In short, it is to prove Jesus is God by having hundreds of predictions about His coming through Israel's history as recorded in the Old Testament. I can argue every aspect that we read of Jesus First Coming is stated or implied in the Old Testament. My simple point is the perfect time of Jesus coming wasn't just when the time when the Roman Empire was at its peak, God orchestrated history to be His perfect timing.

Bottom line of Chapter 5 is Paul's "pounding the point" that whether we like it or not, sin is a part of our "DNA make up" and we're stuck with that fact. After all God could just say, "when you die that's it, so enjoy it while you can because that's all there is!" Jesus even argued what a waste of a life it is to think this life is all that there is! (See Luke 12:19-20). God decided that He wanted people as an instrument to show how loving He is, but ONLY for people willing to accept that free gift of salvation. To me, a good way to express it is, "The free gift of salvation is like a check. The check is good, but we must cash it! It is done by accepting that Jesus paid that price for our sins.

With that said, Chapter 6 and 7 will get more into "now what do we do". The first step was to grasp the fact we can't earn our salvation. I know that's old news for most of us, but the danger is when we mess up or think God loves us more because look at what we're doing for Him at the moment. I realize that I pounded that point in the last lesson, but Paul is building the case that if we accept it, here is what God desires of us after that. We'll get to that in the next lesson!

Hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!

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