

Why Are We Left Here?

Why doesn't God just take us home to Heaven once we trust Christ? Life can be really tough down here. While this is true, we can confidently trust God. He has a wise and worthy, two-fold purpose for leaving us in this challenging world. **God's will:** 1) "Who will have all men to be saved, 2) and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4)

First, in immeasurable love, God wants everyone to trust Christ's blood. Why? This reconciles them to Himself, enabling saints to receive the Spirit to comprehend Scripture and move forward in faith and maturity. (Romans 1-5/1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

Second, He desires all "...to come unto the knowledge of the truth..." to grow, live godly, and deal with life challenges wisely, affecting eternity. (Grace doctrine) Paul admonishes those who had regressed from that knowledge: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19)

God longs to form 'Christ the Word' in us so we can have 'His mind.' Then, we are privileged to hold forth the 'Word of life' so others can believe and grow. (Philippians 2:16) Maturing in this way occurs as we realize Christ the Word is speaking to us directly/personally and when we seek wisdom "...as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures..." (Proverbs 2:4)

The instruction: "...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Rom. 12:2) As we lay aside the flesh, with all its fears, and yield to Christ, we can bring forth pleasing fruit unto God; "...yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." (Galatians 2:20)

God deeply loves us, **freely** offering what is needed to mature. Now that you know 'why' you are left here, what will you do? In thankfulness, you **can** 'choose' to pray, read/study, and meditate, using your earthen vessel for Him, 'bought in love with Christ's own blood.' You **can**:

1) Manifest 'Christ's life,' exercising the doctrine (His wisdom) in life situations.

2) Function as a living sacrifice and ambassador, working in unison with God's goals.

This is 'just a glimpse' of God the Father's purpose for leaving us on earth.

A Perfect Plan

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Just A Minute! With Scripture

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Coping With Despair and Depression Part II

II Corinthians 4:8 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed..."

Some dear saints may wonder if they are depressed or just 'focused on' or 'immobilized by' their circumstances. A definition may help: ****Depression varies in degree from occasional sadness to severe symptoms, interfering with daily functioning. It can be one episode or persistent depression over many years. Indications can include a continuous sad, empty, & anxious feeling, with pessimism about the future. Other symptoms may involve loss of interest, appetite/weight changes, and body pain/fatigue, often with the inability to think or function normally.**



This Is God's Job

Even if you're a Bible-believing Christian, you can become discouraged and lose hope. You may feel like you're literally 'carrying the weight of the world.' However, God is your true provision; you don't have to manage life's burdens alone. "...If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32) You actually have a real and powerful hope, "...which is Christ in you, **the hope of glory.**" (Colossians 1:27) He is a wondrous hope indeed!

Whether you focus on the negative, have periodic episodes of depression, or have a more serious condition, you need Christ the Word **daily** in your life. Last month's articles directed individuals to 'tap into God's resources.' Pray, read, & meditate on the Scripture. Also, realize God created members of the Body of Christ to be His ministering hands, personal support for you. Decide to put all these in your life today!

A few additional coping strategies (*Determine to reread last months issue*):

-**A plan with goals:** Get a wise, trusted spiritual friend/coach to help assess where you are and how to proceed. Look to him/her to help you set a few short-term, 1-3 week goals. (For some, it may mean to contact a professional or even move to a safer living arrangement.) Pray/yield to wise counsel. Review/update your goals as you go.

-**Regular fellowship:** Meet with your mentor regularly, with calls in between, to provide opportunities to share feelings/thoughts, get wise feedback, and for accountability. You do need a regular outlet to express feelings, yet don't let them overwhelm your thought life! 'Close the door' to **overly** focusing on unwise/unproductive thoughts.

-**What are you minding:** Begin to change you're thinking; replacement is a key! Concentrate on God, His Word, and your goals; don't **overly** focus on problems or circumstances. Yield your mind unto God; get off the 'unhealthy path' of thinking to walk in God's wisdom. Read/reread Romans-Galatians. Pray and stay in the Word.

-**Emergency Card:** Keep a list of 'functional resources' and ideas on what to do if you're in a bad place/need to refocus (i.e. friend's number, a walk, breathing exercises, Scripture references, spiritual music, etc.). If needed, ask your coach to help with this emergency card.

-**Care for yourself:** Develop healthy new habits: Exercise, eat well, relax, meditate, plan a few fun activities, & even focus on others, ministering to their needs. Realizing God can work through you is uplifting. (Consider a natural remedy if medication is indicated, but do your research. Depending on symptoms, think about getting a physical to rule out medical issues.)

****Call a professional today if you seriously consider hurting yourself.**



Paul's Roman Epistle: Designed to Establish the Body of Christ

Romans 5: Student Study Insights

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

***The goal each month will be to address one successive chapter in the book of Romans and relay a few helpful study insights for application.**

Use to teach others!

Give this to a friend!

Romans 5 is the final chapter in the first section of this epistle, 'Justification.' It condenses and goes on to enhance key aspects of how God views the believer: being justified, at peace, a grace standing, able to rejoice in hope, saved from wrath, but also the power of sin, reconciled, and having received the atonement. The transitional verses of Romans 4:24-25 clarify who a 'believer' is, as this is who is being addressed from this point forward in Romans-Philemon. The issue of justification is judicially settled at the close of Chapter 5; it is complete assurance.

Study using 2 or 3 insights below to explore new possibilities:

- 1. Read with Purpose:** a) Prayerfully, let the Spirit lead: Read through Chapter 5 several times and make a note of things that catch your interest. Use a concordance/dictionary to search and seek. b) Plan to be open: As you read, view verses in a new way, as progressive teaching; each builds onto the one before, but also prepares for verses that come after. Think on this!
- 2. The opening verse is highly significant:** a) Why are the terms 'therefore' & 'being' used in Verse 1? b) Meditate on 'justified by faith.' Is this phrase understood? If not, students ought to 'look back' at things taught in Chapters 3-4 for clarification, so the information in Romans 5:1-2 & onward can be understood.
- 3. A 'glory in tribulation process' (Verses 3-5):** What are the steps of this 'process'? Is it a 'circular process?' Does it work in the physical realm as well as the spiritual? How does the new resource from God maintain our attitude? In what way is the Holy Ghost involved; can this be a new aspect of His ministry?
- 4. Look at comparisons and contrasts:** a) Notice helping phrases: Much more, not only so, but not as... so also is, etc.

See how many you can find in the chapter; then study/think on their meanings. b) Focus on what is compared/contrasted and make a side-by-side list to reflect on what you find.

5. Observe the details: This chapter introduces a new operating system, while clarifying the old. a) Keep notes on things learned to simplify the complexities. Romans 5 is teaching you 'how to study,' so observe key words and phrases. b) Notice the fruit of each controlling system: Adam brought one into the world, the other was by the Lord Jesus. What's reigning in each? (Competing systems: World/Satan's realm of functioning rivals God's. From here on, Paul builds awareness about these systems, teaching how to let grace reign as you live in God's realm & His power, rather than being controlled by sin as the 'natural man.')

6. Word Studies: a) Grace: Notice how often this term is used in Chapter 5. Write out what it teaches you about grace. Use a concordance and see how many times it is used in surrounding chapters. Study the context of each; add to your notes as you gain insight. b) Atonement: Take the time to define/study this term. What brings us into this unity with God? Could it be another aspect of the ministry of the Spirit? Prove all things as a Berean. c) "Might" is a highly significant helping word. Study the meaning of the term. Also, realize how often it is used in Scripture; it's found about 92 times in Paul's epistles alone. (Use your resource books.) Find where it is used in Chapter 5 and assess what it is teaching about grace reigning.

7. Find the transitional verse for Chapter 6: Skim through Romans 5 and 6, then see if you can find the verse at the end of Chapter 5, which logically sets up the next chapter.

8. Reflection: Make time to consider what you discovered so far in your studies of Romans 1-5: Justification. Be sure to realize new study tools learned too. **Thank Christ Jesus the Lord!**

Firmly Established: Fit & Prepared for the Warfare

Many recent 'Just A Minute' articles targeted the importance of Romans 6-8, encouraging how to live in grace, having an intimate relationship with God. Recall and meditate upon a few key changes in our new identity: 1) The old man crucified, 2) Alive unto God, 3) Delivered from the law, 4) Able to serve in newness of the spirit, 5) The inward man is separated from sin, 6) Able to mortify the deeds of the body, and 7) Adult son position, led by the Spirit.

Saints have the opportunity to learn and grow up from a 'babe in Christ' (not knowing who they are) to an 'adult believer' (maturing in Romans 6-8 and onward). There is often a long adolescence as saints mature and learn to apply these principles. It's a slow, fluid process, letting go of 'childish things' to gain trust in the Father and a mature perspective in wisdom. Choices are key; will we yield to our flesh or be led by the Spirit? At any given decision and challenge, we're somewhere on this growth continuum. Knowing 'how' we're functioning, as a child or adult, helps us pray, be motivated, and know how to progress. There are many obstacles. Are you heading in the right direction?

As we see ourselves 'in Christ,' we're empowered to walk by faith, wisely negotiating the details of life and the spiritual warfare. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh..." (II Corinthians 10:3) There is a 'glory in tribulation process' in Romans 5:3-5, which uses 'tribulation' to sustain and increase 'hope.' Hope is essential in order to navigate through trials. Romans 8:24-28 progresses us in this hope: "For we are saved by hope...But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it...all things work together for good..." Our new identity and provisions enable us to "...cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light...put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." (Romans 13:12, 14) **Be Firmly Established, Ready!**

Progress Onward in Your Faith to Study and Live!

Hebrews 5:14 "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

God desires for you to 'grow up' in the faith. Wisdom would teach that God is a god of organization; He is not teaching in a superstitious or chaotic manner. (Some open the Bible and randomly pick a chapter and verse, thinking this is what God meant for them to know today.) God's design is for you to progress through a 'form of doctrine' the Lord Jesus delivered to Paul, his epistles for this time of Grace. Roman saints progressed in this precise manner, and therefore Paul writes, "...ye have obeyed from the heart **that form of doctrine** which was delivered you." (Rom. 6:17)

In order to mature, reading the Word **is** critical to place Scripture in your brain. However, the goal is for it to '**dwelling**' in your heart and soul by faith to become your way of thinking, developing Christ's mind in you. (Romans 8:9) This produces a love-motivated life and ministry. It's accomplished by reading and studying, with meditation and prayer, progressing in the 'deep things of God' for conviction and application. (I Corinthians 2:10)

Study is defined as exerting oneself; to endeavor diligently. It is labor and a personal, active process to "...study to shew thyself approved..." not passively listening and reading. (II Timothy 2:15) As you come to the Bible, allow it to provoke interactive study, with thought-producing questions, prompting the 'seeking & searching' of Proverbs 2:1-5.

The Bible is not a dead, dry book; it has an eternal, spiritual impact. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) Read with purpose and to apply it!



Let the Spirit stir and inspire you; study with a goal to learn and trust the Lord Jesus Christ and develop an intimate relationship with God, maturing in faith. Then, as your mind is renewed, you can yield to function in God's realm, seeing 'grace reign' in your mortal body, living it out in the details of life. How amazing! (Romans 5:21) This is not head knowledge; it has moved to become heart conviction and life itself, for "...we have the mind of Christ." (I Corinthians 2:16)

How to Study

Progress onward in your faith, realizing it is individualized teaching, in God's way and timing, "...to be conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29) Stay focused, pray, read, study & reflect on spiritual things. Learning is a lifelong process, so prepare yourself for wisdom to be imparted slowly, in the inner man; "...when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (I Thessalonians 2:13) This teaching is directly from God, through the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit. The Trinity is involved in our powerful, wise training. Intimacy is developed with us in this way. What's more glorious? **Choose to Grow Up in the Faith!**

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There is 'Much More' To Be Learned in Romans Than What is Seen

The book of Romans builds the fundamentals of the faith for the dispensation of grace, teaching us how to be just before the Living God. It also goes on to teach us about our identity in Christ and how to be holy, with godly service and worship. However, there is so much more to be learned than what is concretely seen and read in the verses on the page. Many *underlying* spiritual teachings are taught through Romans. Some become obvious as you think about them; others manifest in time through study and growth. Reflect upon a few unseen things that God is teaching:

- How to access God's power and mind
- A relationship with the Father
- Realize our weakness and need for God
- Know how to read/study/think in new ways
- Learn how to walk by faith, applying what's known
- Become aware of selfless love/how it functions
- Realize sin starts in one's thought life
- Learn/function in our identity in Christ
- See the sowing/reaping of decisions
- Confidence/determined focus to read, study, and live what we know, doing all unto the Father.
- Come to trust that God is always right and is always for us, desiring to teach us intimately as an adult son/daughter.
- Prioritize life and time in new ways, to empower the inward man focus.
- Obtain faith/trust in God's ways, even if it is against hope/what's seen... being fully persuaded.
- Trust in God, the Word, and the Spirit as our true provisions
- Learn two-way communication with God
- Build a thankful heart attitude: learning about God/man's character
- See/live in invisible, spiritual realm, more than physical
- Appreciate the progressive nature of Paul's epistles
- Acquire desire to please God
- Understand and use 'the godly thinking/living path' for decisions
- Aware of the spiritual battle and the purpose of suffering
- Attain personal hope, patience, life, & glory

Consider, therefore, as you are reading and studying the Scriptures that the amazing God of the Universe has a loving master plan that is *far above* what we know. Can we trust this and walk in faith, knowing there are some invisible, spiritual things at work within us as we just 'do what God tells us to do?' **Read, purpose to study, and pray!**



Brian's View:

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE IMPORTANT-part II

Our Heavenly Father has had a purpose for man since before he put Adam in the garden of Eden and began to educate him. Psalm 8:6 says that God created him "...to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet...". God has always patiently dealt with an ungodly world, as He has held forth His wisdom and power. Trusting in God and His wisdom will produce, in the inner man, the qualities man needs to reign over the works of His hands.

As we progress through Romans, the doctrines of our justification and sanctification will establish and stabilize us. We have the privilege to function on godly love and being members of one body, according to Romans 12:3-11. Verses 12-14 tell us we will face opposition and the response God wants us to have: "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." Satan opposes saints functioning as adult sons today, because he knows it will accomplish God's purpose in the local assembly and in the ungodly world that 'he' controls. Satan also knows that our functioning as sons will accomplish our Heavenly Father's goal in eternity: to reign in heavenly places with Christ.

The question may yet arise, 'Why does God need us to go through suffering to accomplish His purpose and produce godliness in our inner man?' When we experience tribulation or persecution, it will teach us to rely upon God, who is "...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort..." (II Corinthians 1:3) When we go through affliction, we know that it will produce comfort through us, for other saints, "...it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." (II Corinthians 1:6)

When we go through distress, we realize that God has told us some things in advance: the doctrines of His grace produce godly conduct and labor. If we reach the point of having 'the sentence of death,' we know how our Father wants us to respond: "...we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead..." (II Corinthians 1:9) The goal of being a son and going through suffering is that we trust our Father implicitly and rely on His wisdom.

When we understand God's purpose and its grandeur, it will teach us to labor in Christ's stead, with our Father's wisdom working effectually in our inner man. **Suffering is needful to produce the virtues our Father desires.**

God Loves Us Immeasurably And Could Not Be More 'For Us'

As our loving Father, God freely offers the glorious gift of salvation so all will forever be with Him in heaven, but also to live in His wisdom and power. "...If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)

As His children, we **can** turn away from these wonderful Truths, as we do have free will. Yet, God experiences a father's heartbreak when we choose this path, being unwise, walking contrary to Him. Where are you in your walk? Maturity helps us live in a hard, evil world, to avoid grievous mistakes/pain, and more, to abundantly bring forth functional spiritual life, with fruit that will last eternally! Determine to read, study, meditate, and pray in order to live a pleasing life; thankful. **Think on this!**

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be underlined, numbered, or made bold for emphasis.



'On A Personal Side'

Please forward testimonials, praises, personal growth or feedback about this newsletter, 150 words or less. We will print all we can.

From Saints Who Attended the Florida Retreat...

"I wanted to thank you again for your wonderful teachings at our women's conference last weekend. It was truly a blessing to fellowship with like-minded women as our focus was directed toward a deeper spiritual understanding of daily issues and challenges, while learning how to apply that knowledge. Your ministry is a blessing to our fellowship." (Kathleen Lloyd-Geraci Bekemeyer - FL)

"I especially liked the workshop where we brainstormed together in the Scriptures to find and understand the focus in the chapter or verse. What unity of thought and purpose it brought about. As we each brought insight from God's Word, we were helping each other to grow in our knowledge of Him. I also want to thank you for bringing your books. I just finished part one, 'What to Appreciate as We Approach God's Word.' It was so well laid out and easy to read and study. I can't wait to dig into the other one. (How the Bible is Practical And Able to Mature Believers) Keep them coming. You are a good asset to the Body." (Robin Scott - FL)

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Things To Do Be a Berean (Acts 17:11)

1. Think about the reasons God left you here on earth and let them direct your time and energy.
2. If needed, put into practice suggestions given for depression. Decide if further help is needed.
3. Are you firmly established in the faith and on a path to continue growth? Any changes indicated?
4. Do sufferings in this life scare you or are you seeing God's purpose in them? Search these things.

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