



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Just What We Need

Romans 5:1-11

Introduction

1. A few years ago, Dolly Parton wrote and recorded the song, "Hello God." In it, she asks whether, in light of the mess humanity has made of things, God will still hear and respond.

This old world has gone to pieces / Can we fix it, is there time? / Hate and violence just increases / We're so selfish, cruel and blind / We fight and kill each other / In your name, defending you / Do you love some more than others? / We're so lost and confused.

Hello God, are you out there? / Can you hear us, are you listenin' any more? / Hello God, if we're still on speaking terms / Can you help us like before? / Oh, the free will you have given / We have made a mockery of / This is no way to be livin', / We're in great need of your love / Hello God.¹

2. Parton captures a longing of many who have noticed the state of the world and cry out in despair. Much that ails us is that many feel they are "left with no reason for being, no morality to espouse, no meaning to life, and no hope beyond the grave." This despair "has an amazing capacity to reach into the present and eat away at the structure of life, as termites would a giant foundation."²
3. In light of this, our world needs to hear two great truths.
 - a. People have been here before, as Paul illustrates in Romans 1:18-3:20.
 - b. God did care, did respond, and continues to offer the hope humanity needs.

Body

- I. God's Initiative (5:5-8).
 - A. Our text continues Paul's larger argument.
 1. We are all guilty: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23).
 2. The obvious need is for a righteousness that we've proved we cannot attain.
 - a) We need acquittal; our past cannot be changed.
 - b) Even knowing we should be better, we fail (2:17-29; 7:14-25).
 3. But, because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the righteousness we need can be paid to our account, for both past and new sins (4:23-25).
 - B. Verse 5 of our text goes to the heart of the matter.
 1. God gives us a way to have "hope [that] does not put us to shame."
 - a) "Shame" (καταίσχυνω, *kataischunō*) means "dishonor, disgrace, put to shame."

¹ www.dollyon-line.com/archives/lyrics/hellogod.shtml. Accessed August 22, 2012.

² Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 102.

- b) It leads to “disappointment” (NASB) or being “let down” (NJB) because the thing we thought we could believe in “is shown to be in vain.”³
- 2. We can escape such shame and disappointment because “God’s love has been poured (ἐκχέω, *ekcheō*) into our hearts,” a word suggesting a widespread outpouring, like a cloudburst on parched land. The perfect passive verb form used here points to something done for us in the past with an ongoing result.
- C. Verses 6-8, 10 marvel at what God did to give such hope.
 - 1. Paul used four words in vv. 6, 8, 10 to show our desperation.
 - a) “Weak” (ἀσθενής, *asthenēs*), a present participle showing our condition.
 - b) “Ungodly” (ἀσεβής, *asebēs*), the essence of all sin (see 3:23) as we seek to make our own way.
 - c) “Sinners” (ἁμαρτωλός, *hamartōlos*), failing to hit the target of God’s nature and law.
 - d) “Enemies” (ἐχθρός, *echthros*), a state of hostility, deserving God’s wrath.
 - 2. In response, “God shows his love for us.”
 - a) He did this when “Christ died,” a verb repeated four times with emphasis in vv. 6-8.⁴
 - b) Such action is rare even when a man is (relatively) good; God did it for all, including the most evil (which is there is hope even for a person like Jeffrey Dahmer, the cannibalistic serial killer who reportedly was immersed into Christ while in prison).

II. Hope Realized (5:9-11).

- A. As verse 5 did in the previous section, verse 9 goes to the heart of things here.
 - 1. Paul restates the essential fact of the book and text: we have been justified (acquitted) (δικαίω, *dikaioō*) (4:25; 5:1).
 - a) In both vv. 1, 9, the verb is in the aorist tense, indicating a fact completed.
 - b) The acquittal is “by his blood,” the necessary “sacrifice of atonement” (3:25, NRSV; the word is ἱλαστήριον, *hilastērion*).
 - 2. He declares the significance of the act relative to sin: “we are saved . . . from the wrath of God” (see 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15).
- B. Verses 10, 11 show the enduring result of God’s act.
 - 1. We are “reconciled” (καταλλάσσω, *katallassō*; 3x in vv. 10, 11), i.e., “friends again,” back in the close relationship sin severed (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:8, 9).
 - 2. We also have the expectation that we will continue in the state of reconciliation.
 - a) Paul emphasizes this with the word “much more” (πολλῷ μᾶλλον, *pollō mallon*) in v. 10 and “not only this” (NASB; οὐ μόνον, *ou monon*) in v. 11.
 - b) This results from the completion of Jesus’ work in the resurrection (v. 10).
 - 3. “. . . the ground of hope is not simply a past event (Jesus’ death) understood as a martyrlike sacrifice, nor simply the experience of divine power understood as Jesus’ risen

³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 517.

⁴ The emphasis is seen in the fact that each use of the verb “die” appears at the end of the respective clauses where it appears. More literally translated, the verses read, “For while we were still weak, at the right time for the ungodly Christ died. For scarcely for a righteous person will one die — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, for us Christ died (ESV adapted).

life, but the cohesion of these two as completely continuous with each other and equally manifestations of God's love. . . ."⁵

III. Satisfaction for the Despairing (5:1-4).

- A. Verses 6-11 give the reason for the blessings in 1-4 ("... now that we are justified...").
 1. We have (present tense) "peace with God" (εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*), in the Jewish background more than cessation of strife (v. 1).
 - a) Peace is "all that makes for total well-being and harmony" (Dunn, 246, 262). See Pss. 72:1-7; 85:8-13; Isa. 32:17; 54:10; Ezek. 34:25-31; 37:26.
 - b) It's an objective state that permits the peaceful feelings.
 2. We have "access by faith" (προσαγωγή, *prosaḡōgē*), a position of status (Bauer, 876), as suggested by the imagery of "the royal chamberlain leading the suppliant into the presence of the king" (Dunn, 263), a solemn privilege.
 3. Because of this, we can "boast" (NRSV, better than ESV's "rejoice"), καυχάομαι (*kauchaomai*) (see 5:2, 3, 11; also 2:17, 23; 3:27; 4:2).
 - a) This boasting is in God, the proper object, not in ourselves or anyone (or anything) else (see Dunn, 264).
- B. These status-centered benefits allow us to live differently: we can "boast in our sufferings" (v. 3), knowing that they "produce endurance" which in turn produces "character" and then the "hope [that] does not put us to shame" (vv. 3-5).

Conclusion

1. Ultimately, the things for which Dolly Parton expresses longing in "Hello God" are found in the truths Paul presented in Romans 5:1-11.

Hello God, can you grant us / Love enough to make amends / (Hello God) Is there still a chance / That we could start again / Hello God, we've learned our lesson / Dear God, don't let us go / More than ever . . . we really need you / We can't make it without you / (Hello God) We beseech you / In the name of all that's true / Hello God, please forgive us / For we know not what we do / Hello God, give us one more chance to prove ourselves to you / Hello, God; hello, God.

2. Romans 5 declares God's answer: he gives peace, access, and hope to all who will accept acquittal through Jesus. Will you receive his grace?

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⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38_A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1988), 268-269.