

THE RELEVANCE OF PAUL'S CONCEPT OF DIKAIOSUNE IN ROMANS 5:1-11

Mercy Uwaezuoke Chukwuedo, PhD

Trinity Theological College,

Umuahia

mercychukwuedo@gmail.com

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33912.11529

Abstract

Human beings have become estranged from God as a result of their godlessness and wickedness. The solution to human's frailty is justification. The concept of Justification is a very important topic in Christianity. Scholars have variously defined "Diakosune" which is a Greek word as righteousness and justification. Justification means the removal of injustice, the prevailing of mercy, the restitution of the sinner, and the imperative of justice for the oppressed. Man stands condemned before God who is the Chief Judge but justification acquits and justifies him. Christians are declared righteous on the premise of justification. This paper adopted a theological approach in studying the relevance of justification. The pericope of the concept of justification reveals the relevance of Justification to the Christian faith. Justification earns a believer peace with God, access by faith into the grace of God, joy in the hope of the glory of God, joy in tribulation, the indwelling Holy Spirit and the love of God. This paper recommends that every Christian should strive to make peace with God and be reconciled to him. As a believer, through justification one can have joy in the midst of trials because God will use those trials in order to make him or her stronger in faith.

Keywords: Justification, righteousness, reconciliation, grace, faith

Introduction

The concept of justification is one of the basic Christian doctrines and tenets of the Christian faith. Biblical scholars have defined justification in various ways. Paul uses the Greek word for justice, *dikaiosune* and its various forms, thirty-six times in Romans. It is translated as "righteousness" most often and as "justice" (or "justification") less frequently. But the two are the same in Paul's language. The primary use of *dikaiosune* is in the court of law where people are seeking justice to restore a situation that is not right.

In Mahoney's words, "Justification is the act by which God moves a willing person from the state of guilt and God's wrath into a place of innocence before

God and into a loving relationship with Him.¹ God is the judge and He declares us "not guilty" because Jesus has done all that is necessary. In the secular court of criminal law, to be justified means to be acquitted, declared innocent and not guilty. In Romans 3, Paul's point is that the whole human race is in the dock, guilty before God, "justification" will always then mean "acquittal," the granting of the status of "righteous" to those who are guilty on trial—and which will then also mean, since they were in fact guilty, "forgiveness." In the same vein, Egbujor opines that "Justification is a positive declaration by God of the sinner as righteous"² since He sees him as "in Christ." Bruce Milne defines Justification "as an act whereby God remits the sins of guilty men and women, accounting them righteous on the basis of Christ's representative obedience and redemptive death."³

Justification is an act whereby God remits the sins of guilty men and women, accounting them righteous on the basis of Christ's representative obedience and redemptive death. N. T. Wright says:

the first English/ American root gives us (a) an adjective ("just"); (b) a verb ("justify"); (c) an abstract noun denoting an action ("justification"); (d) another abstract noun denoting a quality or virtue ("justice"); and (e) some related double-word phrases ("just decrees," "just requirements" and the like) which can be offered as translations of single words in Paul. The second root gives us (a) a different adjective ("righteous"); (b) an abstract noun ("righteousness"), denoting, variously, (i) a status, (ii) the behavior appropriate to that status and (iii) the moral quality supposed to underlie that behavior; and (c) another abstract noun denoting "that which is appropriate or correct" ("right," as in "upholding the right"). The last of these can also function as an adjective, as in "right behavior," and a verb, as in "to right the wrong," i.e., "to put right" or, in English, "to put to rights." What the second root does not have is a verb corresponding to "justify."⁴

Having set out God's way of justifying sinners, and established it on a scriptural basis, Paul lifts up his heart in an outburst of joy and thanksgiving for the implications of faith-righteousness. Justification is for him not merely a cup of blessing that runs over into his whole life. He lists the blessings which accrue to those whose faith has been counted to them for righteousness. In Matthew Henry's

¹R. Mahoney. *The Shepherd's Staff*. (Chennai, India: Indian Bible Literature, 2005), 43

²Godson Egbujor. *Tips on Earliest Christianity*. (Owerri, Nigeria: Wilderness Voice Press, 2014), 206

³Bruce Milne. *Know The Truth* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 211.

⁴ N.T. Wright. 2009. *Justification: God's plan and Paul's Vision*. Downers Grove Intervarsity Press

Commentary “The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification is such as should quicken us all to give diligence to make sure that we are justified”⁵. The benefits of justification are exceedingly precious.

The Need for Justification

In [Romans 1:1-17](#), salvation begins with reconciliation to God. People have become estranged from God because of their “godlessness and wickedness” ([Rom. 1:18](#)). “Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him” ([Rom. 1:21](#)). Man was created to walk in intimacy with God among the creatures of the Garden of Eden ([Gen. 1-2](#)), but his relationship with God has become so broken that he no longer recognizes God. Paul calls this state a “debased mind” ([Rom. 1:28](#)). We have “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and four-footed animals or reptiles” ([Rom. 1:23](#)). Our relationship with God is so thoroughly damaged that we cannot tell the difference between walking with God and carving an idol. When our real relationship with the true God is broken, we create fake relationships with false gods. Idolatry, then, is not merely one sin among others, but the essence of a broken relationship with God. When our relationship with God is broken, our relationships with other people also break down.

Paul lists some of the broken aspects of human relationships that ensue. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, and ruthless ([Rom. 1:29-31](#)). We experience nearly all these forms of broken relationships at work. Covetousness, strife, and envy over others’ positions or paychecks, malice and rebellion toward those in authority, gossip and slander of co-workers and competitors, deceit and faithlessness in communications and commitments, insolence, haughtiness, and boastfulness of those who experience success, foolishness in decisions, heartlessness and ruthlessness by those in power. All of us suffer from them. All of us contribute to causing them. We may even compound the problem by making an idol of work itself, devoting ourselves to work in the vain hope that it alone will bring us meaning, purpose, security, or happiness. Perhaps this seems to work for a time, until we are passed over for promotion or are fired or laid off or retire. Then we discover that work comes to

⁵Matthew Henry’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. (United State of America: Hendrickson, Thirteenth printing – 2002), 2204

an end, and meanwhile we have become strangers to our family and friends. Like “mortal men and birds and four-footed animals and reptiles,” work was created by God ([Gen. 2:15](#)) and is inherently good, yet it becomes evil when elevated to the place of God. Sadly, this brokenness extends even to Paul’s own workplace, the Christian church, and in particular the Christians in our contemporary times. Despite being God’s own people (Rom. 9:25), “called to be saints” ([Rom. 1:7](#)), the Christians in Rome were experiencing a breakdown in their relationships with one another. Specifically, Jewish Christians were judging Gentile Christians for not conforming to their own peculiar expectations, and vice versa. “You say, ‘We know that God’s judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with the truth,’ Paul notes ([Rom. 2:2](#)). Each side claims that they know God’s judgments and speak for God. Claiming to speak for God makes their own words into idols, illustrating in miniature how idolatry (breaking relationship with God) leads to judgment (breaking relationship with other people).

The truth is that both Gentiles and Jews have strayed from God. Gentiles, who should have recognized the sovereignty of God in the creation itself, have given themselves over to the worship of idols and to all the destructive behavior that follows from this basic mistake (Romans 1:18-32). Jews, on the other hand, have become judgmental, hypocritical, and boastful that they are the people of the Torah. Paul summarizes both situations by saying, “All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law” (Rom. 2:12). But the crux of the problem is not that each side misunderstands God’s expectations. It is that each side judges the other, destroying the relationships that God had brought into being. It is crucial to recognize the role of judgment in Paul’s argument. Judgment causes broken relationships. The specific sins noted in [Romans 1:29-31](#) are not the causes of our broken relationships, but the results. The causes of our broken relationships are idolatry (toward God) and judgment (toward people). In fact, idolatry can be understood as a form of judgment, the judgment that God is not adequate and that we can create better gods on our own. Therefore, Paul’s overarching concern in chapters 2 and 3 is our judgment of others. You have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. You say, “We know that God’s judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth.” Do you imagine, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom. 2:1-3). If we wonder what we have done that puts us in need of salvation, the answer above all is judgment and idolatry, according to Paul. We judge others, though we have no right to do so,

and thus we bring God's judgment on ourselves as he works to restore true justice. To use a modern metaphor, it is like the Supreme Court overturning a corrupt judge in a lower court who didn't even have jurisdiction in the first place.

The Significance of Justification

1. Peace with God: The result of the process of Justification is that the believer is made just and righteous (*dikaios*). He or she is no longer under the wrath of God. Justification brings peace between a Christian and God⁶. Peace (*eirene*) is derived from the verb *eiro* which means "to bind together that which has been separated." Literally, it gives the picture of the binding or joining together again of that which had separated or divided and convey the sense of an inner rest, well-being and harmony. The ultimate peace is the state of reconciliation with God, effected by placing one's faith in the gospel. Egbujor notes that an enmity exists between man and God (Ephesians 2:13-16). It was the existence of this wall of partition which made man to be considered an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). There is no peace between man and God (Colossians 1:20) but God desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1Timothy 2:4). Hence, this barrier of enmity must be removed through reconciliation. Romans 5:10 signifies that until a change of attitude takes place, men are under condemnation and exposed to God's wrath. Further, the death of Christ is the means of removal of this condemnation. Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 that God has taken the initiative to remove the wall of enmity, with Christ being the agent of this reconciliation. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf; so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Again, God's grace is shown in His dealings with man, unmerited and undeserved.⁷

Peace with God speaks of the fact that we are no longer God's enemies but objects of His favor, an objective (in contrast to subjective) truth which is based on our position, something that is true forever because believers are now (positionally) in Christ, the prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). Peace with God is a fact not a feeling. According to F. F. Bruce "Peace here is not an inward feeling but the relationship of reconciliation with God."⁸ It is sin that breeds the quarrel between us and God, creates not only a strangeness, but an enmity; the holy righteous God cannot in honor be at peace with a sinner while he continues under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such are the

⁶ Timothy P. Palmer, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Bukuru, Jos: ACTS, 2014) 99

⁷Egbujor. *Tips on Earliest Christianity*. (Owerri, Nigeria: Wilderness voice. 2014), 167

⁸F. F. Bruce. *The International Bible Commentary*. With the New International Version (Michigan, USA: Grand Rapids, 1986), 1325.

benignity and good-will of God to man that, immediately upon the removing of that obstacle, the peace is made. By faith we lay hold of God's arm and of his strength, and so we are at peace, Isa. 27:4, 5. There is more in this peace than barely a cessation of enmity, there is friendship. Abraham, being justified by faith, was called the friend of God (James.2:23), Christ has called his disciples friends, John 15:13-15. And surely a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God as his friend! But this is achieved through our Lord Jesus Christ- through him as the great peace-maker, the mediator between God and man. Michael Welker summarizes this popular reception as follows:

God requires a compensation for human being's deficiency. Since no sinful human being is in a position to produce this atoning compensation, the sinless Son of God, the Lamb of God, must be sacrificed. Only this sacrifice can pacify God's anger. This has propagated a latent image of God that is deeply unchristian, indeed demonic: This God is always seeking compensation; it takes a sacrificial victim to calm and pacify this ultimately merciless and vengeful God.⁹

Men and women who were formerly in a state of rebellion against God have now been reconciled to him by the death of Christ. It was the purpose of God, to reconcile to himself all things through Christ, but pre-eminently to reconcile those who once were estranged and hostile to him at heart (Col. 1:20-22). And the fact that the death of Christ has accomplished this, reconciliation has been a matter of plain experience in the lives of successive generation of believers. F.F. Bruce notes that "reconciliation is something that God has already effected through Christ, and men and women are called upon to accept it, to enter into the good of it, to be at peace with God."¹⁰

2. Access by faith into the grace of God

The standing of the believer is in grace, as all of salvation is by grace. It should be noted that the Scripture states that our access is by faith into this grace wherein we stand. When all the great revisions are consulted, we discover that they agree with the Greek original in omitting the words "by faith," and in stating simply that "By Christ we have access into this grace wherein we stand" Donald Grey added that "God has taken the believer out of Adam and placed him in Christ."¹¹ This is

⁹Michael Welker. *What Happens in the Holy Communion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 109

¹⁰F.F. Bruce. *The Letter of Paul to the Romans. An Introduction And Commentary.* (Leicester, England: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 114

¹¹Donald Grey. *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a point of Departure.* (Philadelphia, USA: Hendrickson, 2013), 44

entirely by grace, and we have nothing to do with it, either in the conception of the idea, the execution of the method which makes it possible, or the transaction which brings salvation and standing to us, or, more properly, which brings us into salvation and standing. Through Christ we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we stand.

This is an additional privilege, not only peace, but grace, that is the happy state of the saints. It is a state of grace, God's loving-kindness to us and our conformity to God; he that hath God's love and God's likeness is in a state of grace. Now into this grace we have access which implies that we were not born in this state; we are by nature children of wrath, and the carnal mind is enmity against God; but we are brought into it. According to Dirkie Smith:

The work of Christ is, quite simply, to give us access to a gracious, fatherly God. The point of the doctrine is to move us out of the legal domain into the world of family relationship, and it is just this point that so often gets lost in the theological controversy over satisfaction, substitution and imputation. Calvin certainly held that God is a just judge who cannot cast aside his governance of the universe. And yet he also held that it is not God's judicial person but God's fatherly person that determines the life of a piety.¹²

Paul speaks of those that have been already brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Paul, in his conversion, had this access; then he was made nigh. Barnabas introduced him to the apostles (Acts 9:27), and there were others that led him by the hand to Damascus, but it was Christ that introduced and led him by the hand into this grace. By whom we have access by faith. By Christ as the author and principal agent, by faith as the means of this access. Not by Christ in consideration of any merit or desire of ours, but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him. "Justification opens the door to God's dealing with men on the basis of grace and not on the basis of works. We are taken out of the arena of our performance and placed in the arena of divine grace."¹³ It denotes not only our admission to, but our confirmation in, the favour of God. It is not in the court of heaven as in earthly courts, where high places are slippery places: but we stand in a humble confidence of this very thing that he who has begun the good work will perform it, Phil. 1:6.

¹²Dirkie Smith. *What is Justification about? Reformed Contributions to an Ecumenical Theme*, (Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 100.

¹³ Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Benefits of Justification (Romans 5:1-11)*, Retrieved from <https://bible.org/seriespage/8-benefits-justification-romans-5-1-5> (April 18, 2022).

3. Joy in hope of the glory of God

The true believer in Christ has been accepted in the Savior and placed in a position of all grace. Because we have been given eternal life we look forward even now to its glories. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). Johnston opines:

In Romans 5:1-8, 38, Paul explains that the new situation of the justified person brings peace, hope, freedom and life. Believers have a sure hope of final salvation; have been set free from sin as an enslaving power and from law as a condemning power, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who leads them onward to a life of righteousness.¹⁴

It is significant that the hope of the glory of God is the first to be set before the believer in considering the blessings that flow from grace. Besides the happiness in hand, there is a happiness in hope, the glory of God, the glory which God will put upon the saints in heaven, glory which will consist in the vision and fruition of God. Those and those only, that have access by faith into the grace of God now may hope for the glory of God hereafter. There is no good hope of glory but what is founded in grace; grace is glory begun, the earnest and assurance of glory. He will give grace and glory, Ps. 84:11. Those who hope for the glory of God hereafter have enough to rejoice in now. It is the duty of those that hope for heaven to rejoice in that hope.

4. Joy in tribulation

In the New Testament, suffering is viewed as the normal experience of a Christian. New converts were warmed that the kingdom of God could be entered only through many tribulations (Acts 14:22); and when tribulation came their way as it regularly did, they could not complain that they had not been prepared for it. But suffering was not only regarded as an inevitable feature of the Christian lot; it was looked upon as a token of true Christianity, as a sign that God counted those who endured it worthy of his kingdom (cf. 2 Thess. 1:5). Bob Deffinbaugh¹⁵ says "proven character produces hope. Seeing that we can endure, and that our character has been strengthened in the process of facing life's trial, we become more and more certain of the future."

¹⁴ Philip Johnston, *IVP Introduction to the Bible, Story, Themes and Interpretation*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015) 223.

¹⁵ Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Benefits of Justification (Romans 5:1-11)*, Retrieved from <https://bible.org/seriespage/8-benefits-justification-romans-5-1-5> (April 18, 2022).

Paul says (Romans 5:3, 4) “we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience, experience; and experience hope.” “Nevertheless the fact we have peace with God and a relationship with Him, with assurance of standing before Him acceptable, enables us to view present difficulties with joy. We can rejoice in tribulation because God has revealed that He uses them to produce steadfast endurance and proven character in those who relate to their suffering properly.” Nowhere does the Bible teach that when you come to faith in Christ everything is going to be just perfect. As a matter of fact, it is actually more difficult to live as a believer than it is to live as an unbeliever. The truth is, trials and tribulations will come. It does not matter who you are, we all go through times of suffering. Jesus never said that He would take the trials away; however, He will go with us through the trials. As believers, we can have joy in the midst of the trials because we know that God will use those trials in order to make us stronger and in order to strengthen our faith. This does not mean that God necessarily and purposefully puts trials in our lives. However, He uses the various circumstances of our life in order to mold and shape us into what He wants us to be. Therefore, we should respond to the trials with joy, knowing that God will use the trials for our good and for His glory. This is why we can be thankful in all things. He did not say to be thankful “for” all things but “in” all things. In other words, we may not be thankful

for the trials that we are going through, but we can be thankful in it and through it because we know that God is working in our lives.

5. The indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5)

The love of God is experienced in our hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The very moment that one comes to faith in Christ, he or she is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Hinkle Shore¹⁶ says that God’s Spirit has been poured into our hearts. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer for several reasons.

The Holy Spirit indwells the believer as a guarantee of salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says. “In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” There is a key point to be made here and that is that the Holy Spirit is given to us after we

¹⁶ Hinkle Shore, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God’s Righteousness*, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity-3/commentary-on-romans-5-1-5> (April 18, 2022)

believe on the Lord Jesus. He is given to us as a down payment to heaven. The indwelling Holy Spirit is our seal. Once we are sealed by God, the seal cannot be broken. It is a guarantee.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer to comfort him. John 14:16-18 says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." As believers in Christ we are never alone. We can have joy in the midst of trials because of the Holy Spirit within us who is our comforter.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer to convict him of sin. As we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit will convict us of those areas of our lives that we need to work on. He reveals our sin to us in order that we might confess and repent. He empowers us to live holy lives by showing us our weaknesses and those areas that we need to work on and repent of.

The Holy Spirit also indwells believers in order to empower them to witness. Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, we can change the world. He gives us the boldness and the confidence that we need to proclaim the Gospel to the world. When we don't know what to say, He gives us the words to say. He empowers us. He speaks through us.

6. The love of God

One of the greatest benefits of being justified by faith is the love of God that we experience. In Romans 5:5-8, Paul says: "And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commands his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We have a hope, a confidence in God, because of the love that God has for us. The action of God demonstrates the love of God, because Christ is God. His love is demonstrated in his atonement and in our justification.¹⁷ We can confidently expect that we will get through the trial because God loves us and enables us to get through those times

¹⁷ Grace Communion Seminary, *Studies in Romans : Romans 5:1-11*, <https://learn.gcs.edu> (April 18, 2022).

of testing. The love of God is beyond anything we can imagine. It is because of His great love for us that He sent Jesus to die so that we may live. God proved that He loves us by having Jesus die for us even while we were still lost in our sin. Some scholars have raised the question of the kind of love that is been referred to in this text says Hinkle Shore¹⁸

In the midst of our sin, in the midst of our road to hell, Jesus died in our place. God's love stretches to the lowliest of sinners. It does not matter what you have done or how far you have gone, Jesus loves you. He desires for you to come to Him and receive Him and accept His gift of grace. God's love is so awesome and amazing; it is beyond what words can describe. We have the privilege of experiencing the great love of God because we are justified by faith. You can never fully enjoy God's love for you until you come to Him by faith. When you do, you will understand what love really is. You will experience a love like you have never known.

Christian's Response to Justification by Faith

The opening verse of Romans announces Paul's own vocation, the work that God has called him to do, proclaiming the gospel of God in word and deed. So what is the gospel of God? Paul says that it is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jews first and also to the Greeks. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17, NRSV). For Paul, the gospel is more than words – it is the power of God for salvation. He emphasizes that this salvation is not for one group of people only but is intended to help anyone on earth to be among the people of God, by faith. Romans, then, is above all about God's salvation. What is salvation? Salvation is the work of God that sets human beings in right relationship with God and with one another. For salvation is first of all the healing of broken relationships, beginning with the healing that reconciles the Creator and the created, God and us. Our reconciliation with God leads to freedom from sin and a newness of life that is not limited by death.

Salvation cannot be reduced to a single moment in time. Paul says both that we "were saved" ([Rom. 8:24](#)) and that we "will be saved" (Romans 5:9). Salvation is an ongoing process rather than a one time event. God interacts with each person in a dance of divine grace and human faithfulness over time. There are decisive

¹⁸ Hinkle Shore, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness*, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity-3/commentary-on-romans-5-1-5> (April 18, 2022)

moments in the process of being saved. The central moments are Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son," Paul tells us ([Rom. 5:10](#)), and "He who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also" (Romans 8:11). Each of us might also regard the first time we said we believe in Christ as a decisive moment in our salvation. Romans, however, never speaks of a moment of personal salvation, as if salvation happened to us in the past and is now in storage until Christ comes again. Paul uses the past tense of salvation only to speak of Christ's death and resurrection the moment when Christ brought salvation to the world. When it comes to each believer, Paul speaks of an ongoing process of salvation, always in the present or future tenses. "One believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (Romans 10:10). Not "believed" and "confessed," past tense, but "believes" and "confesses," present tense. This leads directly to, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved," future tense (Romans 10:13). Salvation is not something that was given to us. It is always being given to us.

If salvation were something that happened to us only in the past, then what we do at work (or anywhere in life) would be irrelevant. But if salvation is something going on in our lives, then it bears fruit in our work. To be more precise, since salvation is the reconciliation of broken relationships, then our relationships with God, with other people, and with the created world at work (as everywhere in life) will be getting better as the process of salvation takes hold. Just to give a few examples, our salvation is evident when we take courage to speak an unpopular truth, listen to others' views with compassion, help colleagues attain their goals, and produce work, products that help other people thrive. Does this mean that we must work—and keep working—to be saved? Absolutely not! Salvation comes solely through "the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of one man, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:15). It "depends on faith" (Romans 4:16) and nothing else. As N. T. Wright puts it, "Whatever language or terminology we use to talk about the great gift that the one true God has given to his people in and through Jesus Christ, it remains precisely a gift. It never is something we can earn. We can never put God into our debt; we always remain in his." We do not work to be saved. But because we are being saved we do work that bears fruit for God (Romans 7:4).

As can be seen in Romans 1–3, the cross of Christ brings salvation to all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. In Christ, God puts all people back into right relationship with God and one another without regard to the provisions of the Jewish law. For this reason, Paul's principal focus throughout Romans is helping the divided and

quarrelling Christians in Rome to reconcile their broken relationships in order to live faithfully into what God has accomplished in Christ.

This interpretation of Christ's death raises a problem for Paul, however, since he is writing not only to uncircumcised Gentiles but also to circumcised Jews, for whom the law still matters. Further, Paul's interpretation seems to ignore the story of Abraham, understood to be "father" of the Jews, who was in fact circumcised as a sign of his covenant with God (Romans 17:11). Doesn't the story of Abraham suggest that entering the covenant of God requires male circumcision for all peoples, whether Jewish or Gentile? "No," argues Paul in Romans 4. Interpreting the story of Abraham from Genesis, Paul concludes that Abraham had faith that God would honor his word and make the childless Abraham the father of many nations through his barren wife Sarah. Consequently, God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness (Romans 4:3, 9, 22). Paul reminds his readers that God's acknowledgment of Abraham's righteousness took place long before Abraham was circumcised, which came later as a sign of his already-existing faith in God (Romans 4:10-11). In other words, at the time God reckoned Abraham's faith as putting him in right relationship with God, Abraham shared the same status as an uncircumcised Gentile in Paul's world. Thus, concludes Paul, Abraham became the father of both Jews and Gentiles through the righteousness of faith rather than righteousness under the Jewish law (Romans 4:11-15).

The example of Abraham in Romans 4 provides Christians with great hope for our work and workplaces. Abraham's example of trusting God's promises – despite adverse circumstances and seemingly impossible odds – emboldens us not to waver in trust when we face challenges at work or when God does not seem to be present. God did not immediately fulfil the promise to Abraham, which further encourages us to be patient in waiting for God to renew or redeem our circumstances in life. Those who have been justified by the blood of Christ will be saved from God's wrath on the last day¹⁹

Conclusion

Justification brings deliverance from future condemnation. A day is coming when God's wrath will fall on this sin cursed world. A day is coming when all those who fail to receive God's free gift of grace will experience the awesome and terrible wrath of God. But for those who are justified, the wrath of God is nothing to fear.

¹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Magnifying God in Christ: a Summary of New Testament Theology*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010) 99.

Romans 5: 9-10 says, much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."We are saved from the wrath of God, because we are at peace with God. We have been reconciled to Him. We were once enemies of God. We were once estranged from God. Yet, through the blood of Jesus, when we believe on Him by faith, we are reconciled to God. We are no longer an enemy of God. We are made to be in right standing with God. The bottom line is; you do not have to go to hell. If you end up in hell, it is your own fault. God does not send anyone to hell. He has given and offered the gift of salvation to everyone. Those who accept His free gift are reconciled to Him and will escape His wrath. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Bibliography

Deffinbaugh, Bob, *The Benefits of Justification (Romans 5:1-11)*, Retrieved from

<https://bible.org/seriespage/8-benefits-justification-romans-5-1-11>
on 18/04/2022.

Dirkie, Smith. *What is Justification about? Reformed contributions to an ecumenical theme*, Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans, 2009.

Donald Grey. *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a point of Departure*, Philadelphia, USA: Hendrickson, 2013.

Egbujor, Godson. *Tips on Earliest Christianity*, Owerri, Nigeria: Wilderness Voice Press, 2014.

F. F. Bruce. *The International Bible Commentary*. With the New International Version, Michigan, USA: Grand Rapids, 1986.

F.F. Bruce. *The Letter of Paul to the Romans. An Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester, England: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

Grace Communion Seminary. *Studies in Romans: Romans 5:1-11*. Retrieved from <https://learn.gcs.edu> on 18/04/2022.

Michael Welker. *What Happens in the Holy Communion?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Milne, Bruce. *Know The Truth*. Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013.

Palmer, P. Timothy. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Bukuru, Jos: ACTS, 2014.

R. Mahoney. *The Shepherd's Staff*, Chennai, India: Indian Bible Literature, 2005.

IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities. Vol. 8. No. 2, (2022)

ISSN: 2488- 9210 (Print) 2504-9038 (Online)

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya

Schreiner, Thomas R. *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010.

Shore, Hinkle. *The Story of Romans: A Narrative.*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity-3/commentary-on-romans-5-1-5.](https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity-3/commentary-on-romans-5-1-5)