

LESSON 6

THE BLESSINGS OF GOD'S GIFT

Romans 5:1-21

Introduction

God's promise to Abraham included:

1. A land extending from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18);
2. A great nation composed of multiple descendants through Isaac, the son of promise (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:4; 17:2); and,
3. A blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:3).

God's promise was based on Abraham's faithfulness to worship only Yahweh and his not turning aside to idols. As the promise was more fully expanded into a covenant, Yahweh required Abraham to "walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1), and "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7—NASB).

Paul had shown that the requirement for Abraham to be blameless or perfect before Yahweh was reckoned on the basis of his faith rather than his accomplishment. The Old Testament set forth God's way of justifying sinners through faith. The person who is reckoned righteous receives the blessings of God's promise. Faith continues to be the attitude required of man to become righteous. The statement that Abraham was justified by faith "was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:23-24). God's promised blessings to us are available on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 4:25). Following the example of Abraham's belief in God, who makes unbelievable promises, results in great blessings. Paul enumerated those blessings in Romans 5.

God's gift which is bestowed upon the person made righteous by faith is salvation. Paul discussed

God promised Abraham an extensive _____, a great _____, and that he would be a _____ to all nations of the earth.

The requirement for Abraham to receive the promise was that he walk before the _____ and be _____.

(land, nation, blessing, Lord, perfect)

Abraham's descendants are sinners justified by _____.

The blessings of God's promise are received by those who are reckoned _____.

(faith, righteous)

this subject in Chapters 5-8. Nygren suggests that these four chapters could be outlined as salvation from four hostile powers: wrath (Ch. 5), sin (Ch. 6), law (Ch. 7), and death (Ch. 8).¹ Dale Moody chooses to speak of the aspects of salvation set forth in these chapters as reconciliation, sanctification, liberation or freedom, and sonship or adoption.² Sin establishes a barrier between man and God. Being reckoned righteous by faith removes that barrier and permits reconciliation. Salvation includes both the negative and the positive aspects: redemption from sin and restoration to fellowship with God.

The Establishment of Peace

Romans 5:1-5

The sinner is not at peace with God, but he is alienated and disturbed. He is under God's wrath. Even though a person performs religious ceremonies, he knows inwardly that his life has not met God's requirements; therefore, he has not been accepted by God. Peace comes only when man is assured of his acceptance by his Creator. He is never secure in peace as long as he depends on his own performance instead of God's gift through faith. When a person is justified by faith, he is assured of acceptance with God and experiences peace in his troubled soul. His acceptance is made possible through the Lord Jesus Christ (v.1). As long as man attempts to gain God's acceptance through his own performance, he is never assured that his righteousness is sufficient to please God. He must continue to live with the disturbance that his righteousness may be inadequate; therefore, he has no assurance of God's promise of eternal life.

It is through the work of Christ in His death and resurrection that we have been given access to God's grace (undeserved favour). Through faith man is removed from the realm of God's wrath and into the new life provided by His grace. Salvation is passing from the old life into the new; from the wrath of God to peace with God.

Just as Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith (4:20), so the Christian who lives by faith is not left uncertain concerning his relationship to God. By faith he is established in God's grace (v.2). His new assurance brings rejoicing in the hope of the glory of

¹Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), pp. 191ff.

²Dale Moody, Romans, p. 191.

State the negative and positive aspects of salvation.

Negative: _____

Positive: _____

(redemption from sin, restoration to fellowship with God)

Faith brings peace to a person because through faith man is justified and assured of _____ by _____. This assurance brings _____.

(acceptance, God, peace)

God (v. 2). Man in sin falls short of God's glory (3:23), but man in the grace of God will participate in it in the age to come. God's glory is the divine life, and the Christian is made to share in it through faith. The new life in the Kingdom will come to its fullness in the consummation of the Kingdom; therefore, the full glory of the life through Christ is future and is possessed in hope which rests on confidence or faith in God who promises. God's glory is the end for which He created man. This end will be accomplished through the redemptive work of Christ.

Through faith the believer is established by God's grace to the extent that suffering or tribulation is no longer defeating. (v. 3). Afflictions are viewed as the normal experience of Christians. Affliction and tribulation are not regarded as a failure of Christian faith but as a feature of it. Since tribulation cultivates endurance and steadfastness of character, it aids the believer in preparing for God's future glory. Suffering purges and strengthens moral character. Suffering does not defeat and destroy but leads to greater faith in God in place of confidence in the flesh.

Christians must pass through tribulation in the present age as the children of God. Tribulations are defeating to those who live only in the flesh and have not been born into the Kingdom. They prepare kingdom citizens for fuller glory and cause Christians to trust patiently in God. Tribulations test man's faith and mature his character (experience means "testedness" or "the temper of the hardened veteran"). The tested and tempered person puts more emphasis on future hope than present struggles. Life comes to focus more on what God has promised than what man can accomplish. Present actions are controlled in the light of the hope of God's glory (v. 4).

Man will not be disappointed for living his life on the basis of hope. Christians have been accused of stressing future hope rather than facing up to present distress and failure. Such a shift in the focus of life appears foolish to the person who has not experienced the faithfulness of God and His love (v. 5). Paul did not share the pessimism of many modern day existentialists who believe that the meaning of life centres in the immediate experiences of joy and sorrow. He believed that experiences must be understood in the light of the future hope which a faithful God has promised. It seems foolish to the natural man that Christians can be sure of the future. For the person who has already experienced the indwelling Spirit given to him in the new birth, future hope is not an unrealistic fantasy but a reality promised by God and possessed by faith.

God's glory is the divine life, and the Christian is made to share in it through _____.

The full glory of the life through Christ is _____ and will come to its fullness in the _____ of the _____.

(faith, future, consummation, Kingdom)

Are these statements true or false?

One who becomes a Christian no longer experiences tribulation. _____

Christians experience tribulations but are no longer defeated by them. _____

Tribulations test man's faith and mature his character. _____

(false, true, true)

Nygren points out that if there were no suffering, hope would never have opportunity to attain its full strength. Hope is tested and strengthened by suffering. The purpose of Christian suffering is to develop endurance, "and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."³

The Source of Blessings

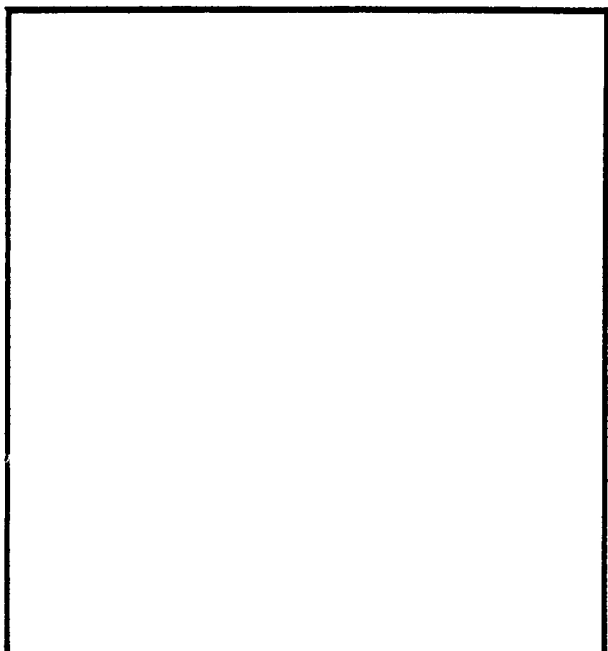
Romans 5:6-11

How is it possible for those who were God's enemies and were under His wrath to come by faith into the new life in which they are recipients of His blessings? Paul's mention of God's love which is the basis of hope for sinners led him to give a fuller explanation of God's act of love in Christ.

God's love cannot be understood in terms of human love. Human love contains an element of selfishness. It desires to possess the object of love for self-satisfaction. At most, human love responds only to the lovable in a mutual giving and receiving relationship. God's love does not possess its object for self-satisfaction nor is it reserved for those who respond favourably or who deserve it. Earthly love requires an object worthy to be loved. The degree of love bestowed on the object by the subject depends on the value of the object. God's love does not depend on the value of the object, but it focuses on the lover instead of the worth of the beloved. God loves because God is love and not because man deserves to be loved.

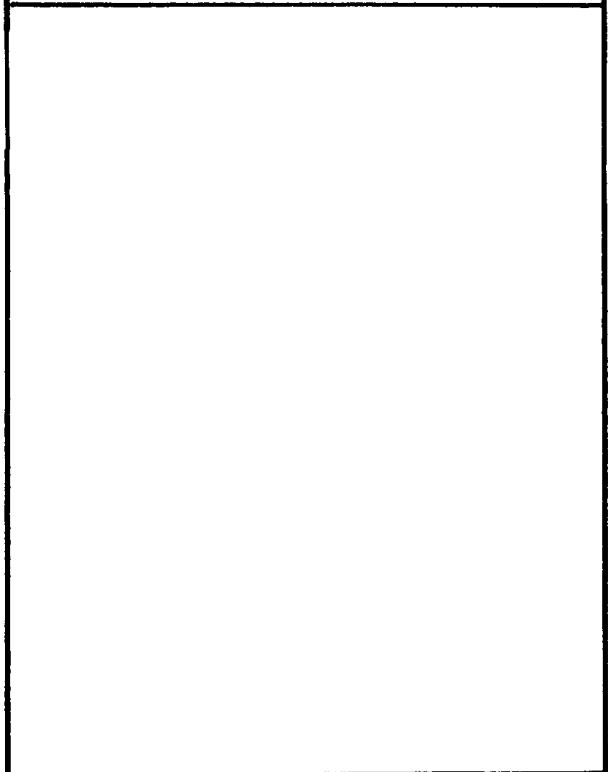
Man who is loved is described as helpless ("without strength"—v.6), as ungodly (v.6), as a sinner (v.8), and as an enemy (v.10). These descriptions emphasize that God's love does not depend on the value of its object. His love seeks the welfare and contentment of its object regardless of its unworthiness. God's love puts no limits on the sacrifice made in meeting the need of the object: "In due time Christ died for the ungodly" (v.6). At the appointed time in history, Christ died. His death marked the turning point of history. Until Christ's death, man was subject to the power of the old age or dominion and without hope because of the power of sin. Christ's death initiated the new age of the Kingdom. Through faith in the crucified and resurrected Lord, sinful man is redeemed from the old age of God's wrath and is transferred into the new age of His love and grace. Because of his

³Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, p.196.



God's love cannot be understood in terms of human love because human love contains an element of _____.

(selfishness)



ungodliness, man deserved God's condemnation which is death. Christ died for the benefit of the ungodly which explains how God justifies the sinner.

Divine love is hardly comparable to human love. The most noble expression of human love will hardly cause one to die for a righteous man (v. 7). A righteous man might appear to be worthy of such a sacrifice because of his justice in dealing with others. A good man adds deeds of kindness and mercy to justice. Only under unusual circumstances would one be motivated to die for a person who appears worthy. God's love is inadequately described by an illustration of human love, because God sent His Son to die for the undeserving and unworthy, not the deserving and worthy. God's love is not earned or deserved, but it springs forth spontaneously from His nature. It is not called into action by a good character or worthy deeds of man. It is commended or expressed towards us as undeserving sinners (v. 8). God's love is expressed in response to human need and helplessness; it reaches out with a sacrifice of highest value: "Christ died for us" (v. 8).

Paul's understanding of justification by faith was based on God's nature of love instead of man's accomplishments and merits. In pride, man continues to believe that in some way he actually deserves God's expression of love in Christ. Salvation by grace through faith is based on the understanding that sinful man in no way deserves redemption, nor is God in any way obligated to forgive him. Grace is God's undeserved gift to undeserving, sinful man.

This type of love and grace appears unbelievable. If man has no claim whatever to salvation, how can he be sure of receiving the hope of glory which God has promised? Paul pointed out that if sinful man has been made right at the cost of the suffering and death of the Son of God, it is illogical to conclude that redeemed man will stand in danger of God's future wrath (v. 9). Man who has become righteous through faith is approved and accepted by God and no longer is the object of His wrath. If God's nature causes Him to sacrifice His Son for His enemies who deserve His wrath, there can be no threat to the future hope of those who have been reconciled as God's sons (v. 10). God's wrath rested upon man because of man's sins. God's love reached out to man in sin and made provision for his punishment. Redeemed and forgiven man is no longer under God's wrath, but he is reconciled to fellowship with God by the death of His Son (v. 10).

God's wrath is a reality. Paul spoke of it as the "day of wrath". That day will reveal that God is a righteous Judge who will render to every man according to his works. Since every man has sinned, his works have earned the wrath of God. Although God's

God's love is not selfish and is expressed to man regardless of his _____.

(worth)

Use the following words to fill in the blanks below:

faith, accepted, object, righteous, approved, wrath

Man who has become _____ through _____ is _____ and _____ by God and no longer is the _____ of His _____.

(righteous, faith, approved, accepted, object, wrath)

wrath is presently revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, a day will come when it reaches its fullest expression against sin and will consume all that is evil. When that day of judgement arrives, all will be without hope except those who are "saved from wrath through him" (Jesus Christ—v. 9).

Because of the future Judgement Day, Paul spoke of salvation as future (vv. 9-10). Salvation is both a past experience and a future event. God's redemptive event which began with the death of Christ on the cross extends into the future to the Judgement. Sinners who have received salvation through faith and have been reconciled to God will have no fear of condemnation as they stand before God in that Day. This hope and assurance refers back to the first verse which states that since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

Verse 10 states why both the death and resurrection of Jesus are important to salvation. We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. The shedding of His blood or His death was necessary to provide for the removal of our sins. The person whose sins are remitted is reconciled to God. "Being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (v. 10). The living, ascended Lord makes continuous intercession for redeemed sinners. The resurrected, living, indwelling Lord brings the new life of the Kingdom to the believer. This union with Christ, the Son of God, means to be free from the wrath of God. It also means to be delivered from the power of evil.

What God has done for us in Christ gives those who have received atonement (reconciliation) reason to boast. The love that provided the Cross for our redemption will see us safely through the Judgement. If Christ's crucifixion for us as God's enemies made us God's friends, how much more will the living Christ, the Son of God, save us as God's friends from His wrath?

A Résumé of Salvation by Faith

Romans 5:12-19

Introduction

The first five chapters of Romans, except for Paul's salutation, relate to the doctrine of justification by faith. First, Paul presented the needs of both Jews and Gentiles to be justified (1:18-3:20). Second, Paul presented God's provision for justification through Christ (3:21-31). Third, Paul supported his doctrine with Old Testament Scriptures and examples (4:1-25). Fourth, Paul spoke of the

Match "death" and "resurrection" with the significance of each as related to salvation.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| <u>death</u> | 1. continuous intercession for redeemed sinners |
| <u>resurrection</u> | 2. reconciliation to God |

(2, 1)

The first five chapters of Romans relate to the doctrine of _____ by _____.

(justification, faith)

blessings of God's gift of salvation through faith (5:1-11).

Romans 5:12-19 presents a résumé of what has gone before. Paul contrasted the fall into sin by Adam, which created the need for salvation, to the redemption provided in Christ. From Adam came sin and death for his descendants; from Christ comes righteousness and life through faith. Men must live by faith! Through one man sin entered the world and death passed upon all men because "all have sinned". Through the second man, righteousness entered the world and life came through righteousness.

Man's need of God's gift (5:12-14)

Paul continued to support his doctrine of living by faith by appealing to the Old Testament. In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave to Adam a specific commandment: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Paul's argument was based upon a distinction between sin, the power of evil which causes man to sin, and specific transgression. God gave Adam one specific commandment, and he broke it. There were no more specific acts of transgression from Adam to Moses since God had given no other specific law; however, the power of sin entered the world through Adam and caused much evil-doing with consequent disaster.

Paul thought of sin almost in personal terms. The word means literally "missing the mark," but Paul at times spoke of it as a ruling power. Sin—

came into the world (Rom. 5:12).

reigns there (Rom. 5:21).

has made subject all things (Gal. 3:22).

has enslaved men (Rom. 6:6, 17, 20).

has imprisoned men (Rom. 6:22).

is a principle which controls life (Rom. 7:23; 8:2).

dwells in man as a personal principle (Rom. 7:17, 20).

The earthly body is the realm of sin's operation. When the body is under the control of sin and in opposition to God's will, man is described as being in the flesh or being carnal.

In presenting a summary of what has gone before in Romans 5:12-19, Paul stated again the need for _____ and the provision of _____ through Christ.

(salvation, redemption)

Paul spoke of sin as a ruling _____.

(power)

Sin also refers to wrong acts. It is transgressing God's specific commandments (Rom. 5:14). Paul had already shown that the Gentiles were guilty of committing sins (wrong actions) as well as the Jews who taught the Law but did not keep it.

With reference to Genesis 3, Paul pointed out that sin brought death, and universal sin brought universal death. The ruling power of sin entered the world through Adam when he committed the specific act of transgressing God's special commandment (v.12). The ruling power of sin has brought death upon all men because it has caused every man to commit specific acts of sin.

Romans 5:12-14 has been wrongly interpreted to teach that sin is inherited. The Catholic Church teaches that the original sin of Adam was transmitted to his descendants; therefore, every infant is already condemned at the time of his birth because of Adam's sin. Appeal is made to Romans 5:12-14 to support this doctrine.

Paul did connect the universal reign of sin and death with the transgression of Adam. He did not, however, state that all men are condemned to death because of guilt inherited from Adam's sin. God had instructed Adam that if he transgressed the commandment he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). Paul pointed out, therefore, that death came through sin (Rom. 5:12). Death spread to all men not because all inherited the guilt of Adam's sin but "because all sinned" (v. 12—NASB). The reason all have sinned and have come under the condemnation of death is because of the power of sin which entered the world through Adam's sin. Paul's argument in verse 12 was that the fact that every man dies reveals that every man has sinned.

Paul's reasoning in verses 13 and 14 is not easy to follow. His purpose was to point out that men were condemned to death because of sin before the Law was given through Moses. Many centuries separated the time of Adam and his transgression of a special commandment and the time of Moses who was given the Ten Commandments. Paul reasoned that it is evident that sin was in the world before the giving of the Law to Moses (v.13). His logic for concluding that sin was in the world is that sin's punishment, death, passed upon every man. Even though sin is not imputed when there is no law, the fact of universal death from Adam to Moses indicates that men were guilty of sin (vv.13-14).

Paul recognized the fact that although a person does wrong he is not accountable for that wrong if there is no rule or law to point out that the act is wrong. Since God is righteous, He would not condemn men for sin if they had no law to enable

According to the Catholic Church, every infant is already condemned at birth because of _____.

(Adam's sin)

Paul pointed out that everyone is condemned not because all inherited the guilt of Adam's sin but "because _____."

(all sinned)

Paul wrote that men were condemned to death because of sin before the _____ was given through _____.

Is this statement true or false?

The fact that death, sin's punishment, is upon every man indicates that all had sinned. _____

(Law, Moses, true)

them to know they were sinning. Verse 14 argues that the fact that men have been condemned to death reveals they were guilty of sin even though their sin was not transgression of a specific commandment as was Adam's. Before the Law was given to Moses and apart from the special commandment given to Adam, men knew right and wrong through nature and through conscience. They had some kind of law which enabled them to know right and wrong even though it was not a commandment specially given like the one given to Adam: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (v. 14). Abraham lived in a land of idolatry. Paul had already stated in Chapter 1 that men could know the invisible God through creation, but they chose to ignore God and to change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man (1:20-23). "These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves" (2:14).

Paul's purpose in 5:12-14 was not to set forth his doctrine of sin. He had already stated that doctrine in the first three chapters. His purpose was to set forth Adam as a type in contrast to Christ as a type. Paul's interest in Romans 5:12-14 was to show that through the one man sin entered the world and engulfed every one in death. In contrast, through the one Man God's gift of grace entered the world by which every man, both Jew and Gentile, can be redeemed.

Paul's understanding of death as a result of sin should not be limited to spiritual death. Physical death and spiritual death are not strictly separated; however, some distinction is made. Spiritual death is a separation of the person from God, and physical death is a separation of the spirit and the body. The two are related in that both physical and spiritual death are results of sin and separation from God. Paul spoke both of those who "were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and of death passing upon all men for all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). God's redemption in Christ reverses the direction established by Adam: (1) Through Adam, man trespassed. In Christ men are forgiven. (2) Through Adam, man was condemned to death. In Christ men are made alive through regeneration and resurrection.

The greatness of God's gift (5:15-19)

Dale Moody points out that Adam has to his credit sin (transgression, trespass, disobedience), condemnation, and death; while Christ's gifts are described in the terms of abundance, justification, and life.⁴ Adam stood at the head of the old age

⁴Dale Moody, Romans, p. 196.

Before the Law of Moses, man knew right and wrong through _____ and _____.

(nature, conscience)

Death as a result of sin includes both _____ and _____ death.

(spiritual, physical)

and was the source of its primary characteristic—sin which caused death. Christ is the head of the new age and is the source of its primary characteristic—God's gift by grace. Through one act of disobedience, Adam introduced sin and condemnation to everyone in the old age. The free gift through Christ is not like the transgression through Adam but must be contrasted to it (v.15). In contrast to the one transgression which brought destruction to many, God's grace and gift by grace through the one Man Jesus Christ superabounded to the many (v.15). Apparently "the many" means all men.

Next, Paul contrasted condemnation as a result of Adam's act and justification as a result of God's righteous act in Christ (v.16). Condemnation came because of one transgression, but God's one free gift is adequate to cover many offences unto justification. God's free gift is adequate to overcome not only the one trespass of Adam but the many trespasses of those who repeat the sin of Adam. The condemned are acquitted through the righteous act in Christ. A third contrast is between death and life (v.17). Death reigned in the age of Adam as a result of his offence, but life reigns in the new age of righteousness through Jesus Christ.

In verse 18, Paul picked up the thought of the unfinished sentence in verse 12. The contrast is between death and condemnation upon all as a result of one man's sin and the acquittal from death to life for all because of one Man's act of righteousness (v.18). Verse 19 repeats the parallel statement of the one man's disobedience resulting in many being made sinners and the one Man's obedience resulting in many being made righteous. Sin as transgression of law existed before the Law of Moses, but when the Law of Moses was given transgressions increased (v.20). But where sin as transgression increased, grace was much more than the Law and abounded sufficiently to remit even the increased sin (v.20).

Conclusion

Romans 5:21

Paul summed up the previous arguments in the statement, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." If the dominion of sin which brings death was powerful over Adam's race, the dominion of grace which brings life shall be much greater for those who belong to Christ. Adam's race is characterized by sin and death; Christ's race is characterized by righteousness and eternal life. The Law is assigned to Adam's age; therefore, it results in condemnation and death

After reading the first two paragraphs on this page, label the following contrasting characteristics of Adam and Christ by placing one of their names beside each statement.

- _____ Age of sin which caused death
- _____ New age characterized by grace
- _____ Act brought justification
- _____ Act brought condemnation
- _____ Death reigned as a result of sin
- _____ Life reigns as a result of act of righteousness

(Adam, Christ, Christ, Adam, Adam, Christ)

The Law brings condemnation and _____ rather than righteousness and _____.

(death, life)

rather than righteousness and eternal life. New life is attained by righteousness through faith and not by self-attained righteousness through the works of the Law.



Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Name three elements included in God's promise to Abraham and the requirement for Abraham to receive the promise. _____

2. Who are Abraham's descendants and what is required to receive the fulfillment of the promise?

3. Why does peace come through faith? _____

4. What does it mean to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2)? _____

5. What is the relation of Christians to tribulation? _____

6. How is God's love different from human love? _____

7. On what does the believer base his assurance of future acceptance by God? _____

8. Why are both the death and resurrection of Jesus important to salvation? _____

9. What subjects in Romans 1:18-5:11 are repeated in Romans 5:12-19? _____

10. How did Paul use the word 'sin'? _____

11. What was the purpose of Paul's argument in Romans 5:13-14? _____

12. How did Paul know that all had sinned before the Law was given through Moses? _____

13. How did man know he was sinning before the Law of Moses? _____

14. What does death as a result of sin include? _____

15. List three contrasts between Adam and Christ. _____

16. Why is the Law assigned to Adam's age? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 55-62 in The Epistle to the Romans by Hunter.
2. How do Nygren and Moody outline Chapters 5-8?
3. Do Adam's descendants inherit a debt of sinfulness from Adam? Explain.
4. What difficulty did Paul encounter in Romans 5:13-14?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Read pages 119-133 in The Epistle of Paul to the Romans by Bruce.
2. What is the glory of God?
3. Explain the Christians' response to tribulations.
4. How has the Catholic Church misinterpreted Romans 5:12-14 and how should it be interpreted?

Seminar Discussion

1. What elements of God's promise to Abraham and his descendants are fulfilled in the Kingdom of God?
2. Compare and contrast human love and divine love.
3. How are tribulations different for a Christian and a non-Christian?
4. What did Paul teach about "original sin" in 5:12-14?
5. What is the basis of "the security of the believer" in 5:9-11?
6. Why do Christians suffer?