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**The Assurance and the Reality of Salvation as Motivation for
Righteous Living in the Epistle to the Romans**

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Abstract

The assurance and the reality of salvation as motivation for righteous living in the epistle to the Romans argues and critique salvation as an established counsel of God as a fulfilment of His heart's desire, and promise from the Old Testament times. Hence, salvation is real, though insubstantial but experiential for individual who chose to subscribe to it. Such individual enjoys dividends which serve as motivation to live righteous life to qualify for eventual reward at the consummation of His agenda.

Introduction

The ancient city of Rome was perhaps the greatest city in the world. It was the capital of the greatest Empire the world had ever witnessed. Paul had not been to this city; but, he was very much aware of the sophistication of the city. He was well aware of the damage that such things like: wrong ideas, twisted notions, and misguided conceptions of Christian belief, could cause in the church. He thought it might be expedient to send a letter to the centre of the whole world, to build up the faith of the brethren there, in Rome. However, if any virus of heresy should infect the church, his letter would then serve as an anti-virus that would provide a powerful, but effective defence for the truth.²

Paul had ever been driven by a desire or vision to preach in Rome. That was one of his dreams. From Ephesus, he planned to go through Achaia, and Macedonia (Acts 19:21). In Acts 23:11, he had a vision, at the peak of threatening situations in Jerusalem, saying "Take courage, Paul: 'For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome.'" That was why the desire to see Rome is noticeable in the epistle to Romans 1:11; 1:15. He wrote the letter to them around A.D. 58, perhaps "the fourth year of Nero",³ when he was in Corinth, making effort to complete a scheme that was very dear to his heart; to raise money for the poor mother church at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-5; 2 Cor. 9:1-5).

² William Barclay, *The Letters to the Romans* revised edition. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 1-2.

³ Handley C.G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 5th edition. (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., n.d), 1.

That contribution was to serve as practical Christian charity for the Corinthians, yet it was to be a clear sense of solidarity, for the saints in Jerusalem, to know that they were not alone; but rather, they were members of the “isolated church, each part of which, had a responsibility to all the rest.”⁴ (Barclay, *The Letters to the Romans* 3). Paul was ready to go with the gift to Jerusalem, when he wrote to the Romans (Rom. 15:25).

Paul’s journey to Jerusalem was nothing, but a risk. He knew it that his life and liberty were at stake on the journey to Jerusalem; hence, he appealed to brethren to pray for him (Rom. 15:30-31) before he set out on the journey. He was also pre-occupied by the desire to preach the good news, of the cross, to men across the seas. He wanted to be in Rome as well as in Spain. His itinerary reveals that, when he would have delivered the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, he would go by the way of Spain (Rom. 15:28), so that he will see the Romans as he passed (Rom. 15:24).⁵

Paul had a desire for Spain, because Rome had opened up the land of Spain with magnificent buildings, and Romans’ trunk “A” roads, which gave a signal of the greatness of the city. The great figures whose names were written on Roman history and literature were Spaniards, coupled with the Martial, the master of the epigram. The epic poets Lucian, Columella, and Pomponius Mela, great figures in Roman literature were there with Quintilian, [the master of Roman oratory], Seneca, [the greatest of the Roman Stoic philosophers], the tutor of Emperor Nero, and the Prime Minister of the Roman Empire. Paul, himself, being a seasoned philosopher, thought that the land of Spain would be a fertile soil to win men for Christ, having planned to make Rome a base like Antioch. But, he never got there, because he was arrested in Jerusalem, and he was never free again. His layout strategies came to a halt by his arresters.⁶

That was the total survey of his mind, when he wrote to the Romans, hoping that Rome could serve as his base of operations, to reach out to the world. Moreover, he wrote to deflate the slanders and false accusations, which his opponents might have spread against him,

⁴ Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

as far as to Rome. “He had many adversaries, not only among the Jews and Gentiles, but also in the Christian Church itself.”⁷ Hence he wrote to spell out the whole essence of his belief so that he might find a sympathetic church that will support his mission, when the time comes, to advance the mission to Spain.⁸ Apparently, this was done to smooth the way for his anticipated missionary tour to that part of the world.⁹

The environmental condition in Rome was peculiar, and un-circumstantial. Paul’s writing to them was not in response to a particular theological problem, [a pressing situation, a current error, danger or a menacing church administrative problem], but, rather a sharing of his ethics and his dogma, among which are ethical codes on issues that boils down to salvation of God for mankind. Paul’s passion had become an obligation, which he expressed in chapter 1:14-16 in the words: “I am bound...”, “I am eager” and “I am not ashamed.” According to John Stott, Paul’s affirmations are so striking that it gives a direct antithesis to the attitude of many in the Romans church community.¹⁰ Against this backdrop this write-up shall examine the assurance and the reality of salvation in the epistle to the Romans using it as basis, dividends that serve as motivation for the believers to live righteous life.

I. The Assurance of Salvation in the Epistle to the Romans

The epistle to the Romans begins with a theme of salvation for mankind (1:16-3:20), and it runs throughout the entire epistle. To this, Apostle Paul was committed in the word: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*” In other word, this thematic statement presupposes that the righteousness of God is obtained by faith as a criterion for man’s acceptance in the presence

⁷ Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans*. Translated by D.H. van Daalen 2nd edition. (Bloomsbury Street London: SCM. Press Ltd., 1963), 10.

⁸ Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, 4.

⁹ Floyd F. Hamilton, *The Epistle to the Romans: An Exegetical and Devotional Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1958), 15.

¹⁰ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans with Study Guide*. (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 58.

of God. This is in fulfilment to the OT promises of God come true. It is not just a human idea, but His own.¹¹

It is stated in the section on 1:18-3:20 that all men are under God's condemnation. The Gentiles are die-hard for vice and idolatry, an indisputable evidence of their rebellion against the author of their existence 1:18-32. The Jews on the other hand are not better because they held on tenaciously to self-righteousness, yet they had no charge with being idolatry.¹² They disobey the voice of special revelation, while the Gentile disobeys the plea of the conscience, all amounts to guilt before God. There and then God provided universal solution for man's deplorable condition in the final revelation (3:21-5:21).¹³

Pardon is granted freely to man through the propitiatory sacrifice in Christ. This is the doctrinal key that open the door of righteousness, hereinafter referred to, interchangeably, as justification, reconciliation, salvation, to man. Man attains to salvation by faith only through God who has made provision for the sacrifice of atonement. It follows then that man has no ground on which to make a boast either as a Jew or Gentile, because salvation by faith is open to all. It is a free gift of God for which no man has worked.¹⁴

In the case of Abraham, as referenced by Paul, he was reckoned to be righteous not on the basis of his works, but on the basis of his trust in God. That is to say, Abrahamic covenant cannot be attributed to circumcision since the pact was made before the circumcision. However, believers in Christ enjoy the blessings of justification in terms of peace, joy, perseverance, and hope because they have the indwelling Spirit of the Lord through whom they become aware of the magnitude of God's love reconciling the world to himself through the death of Jesus Christ (5:1-11).¹⁵

The effective nature of this free gift to man is best described with a comparison between Adam and Christ. This is against the backdrop

¹¹ Leslie C. Allen, "Romans," *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version* ed. F.F. Bruce and others. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1317.

¹² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 427.

¹³ Guthrie, 428.

¹⁴ Guthrie, 428.

¹⁵ Dale Moody, "Romans," *The Broadman Bible Commentary* v. 10 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970), 191-193.

that the universality of sin through the first Adam is outmatched by the abundance of grace through the second Adam as stated in Romans 5:12-21. The assurance of this accomplishment is elucidated in chapter 6ff on how this fit applies to the individual life.

Faith only; not works that matter. That spells the wherewithal of justification influencing character by means of the symbolism of the baptism with which the believer becomes united with Christ, die to sin and also resurrect with him to live a new life positioned at the right hand of God where Christ is seated. That nullifies any indulgence to sin in spite of the abundance of grace. Sin is rendered impotent for it has no dominion anymore for those who are in Christ. Only those who have been freed from the slavery to sin enjoy the benefit of being a servant of God.¹⁶ That relationship of being in Christ nullifies the old bond to the Law, which is in serious conflict with the law of Christ, for the believer to experience freedom in the new union with Christ himself in a loving service to God.¹⁷

The believer in Christ has a life that is powered by the Holy Spirit who is constantly at war with the law of the flesh. The law of the Spirit set free from guilt and provides liberation to the body (8:1-13). Hence believers enjoy a new status of being sons of God through adoption, so that he becomes joint heirs with Christ (8:14-17). The redemptive action is so encompassing that it covers the entire creation. It provides opportunity for future hope as well as the present help needed through the Spirit's intercession on behalf of the believer, who are inherently positioned for victory on account of salvation.¹⁸

Against this background salvation comes not by the works of righteousness but by faith. Israel's rejection stands firm, because they sought a righteousness through self-effort. Salvation has been made available for all men irrespective of race, gender or colour. On account of this the conversion of the Gentiles has been precipitated by the fall of Israel's race until the fullness of the Gentile comes. That is clearly illustrated by the allegory of the olive tree in chapter 11 of the epistle to the Romans. In the magnanimity and wisdom of God, Israel shall be saved, but after the fullness of the Gentiles might have come.

¹⁶ Guthrie, 429.

¹⁷ Barclay, The Letter to the Romans, 77-81

¹⁸ Guthrie, 429.

Then no one has what it takes to boast since it is by grace.¹⁹ Notwithstanding, the blessing of salvation is secured for all men irrespective of the race or nationality all on the basis of grace and not of works, except when the individual is rejecting the offer by wilful disobedience.

II. The Reality of Salvation in the Epistle to the Romans

The reality of salvation in the epistle to the Romans is best described in the words of Paul himself that says there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (8:1ff). This is against the background of the blessedness of becoming sons of God through salvation.²⁰ In chapter one, Paul asserted that “he was not ashamed of the gospel of salvation.”

In the second half of the chapter, he used “they” to address the depraved pagan world; while the moralists were addressed as “you” in chapter 2. The “they” in chapter three is figuring the whole world being held accountable to God, and the first half of chapter four showing those who believe the gospel as children of Abraham “the father of us all” in verse 17.²¹ The pronoun “we” continues through chapter four; while in chapter five, the sequence turns to the affirmation of “we” having peace with God through the access gained, by grace. The plural “we” is a joint designation of both, himself, Jewish or Gentile, who have been justified by faith as a solidarity of faith in the common salvation for all.²² The reality of salvation is authenticated in the union of believers with Christ.²³ That will corroborate the submission of the song writer saying: “Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race, Ye ransomed from the fall,...Hail Him who saves you by His grace and crown Him Lord of all..”²⁴ That race

¹⁹ Guthrie, 430.

²⁰ J. Mark Lawson, “Romans 8:18-25 – The Hope of Creation,” *Review and Expositor*, v. 91, No. 4, Fall, 1994, 469.

²¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans with Study Guide*. (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 138.

²² Stanley J. Grenz, “Salvation and God’s Program in Establishing Community,” *Review and Expositor*. V. 91, No.4, Fall, 1994, 514-515.

²³ Sott.

²⁴ Edward Personet, 1726-1792; translate by John Rippon, 1751-1836 “Diadem CM” *Baptist Hymnal*, 1956 edition, no 138.

become an essential community of God's people raised in a peculiar to serve the common purpose of God on the earth.²⁵

MOTIVATION FOR RIGHTEOUS LIVING IN THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

In the analysis of John Stott on the Romans, motivation for righteous living in the epistle to the Romans is discernible in the reality of salvation and its dividends expressed and enumerated by the apostle in the epistle namely: peace with God (vs. 1); standing in grace (vs. 2a); rejoicing in hope of the glory of God vs. 2b); rejoicing in sufferings (vs. 3-8); saved through Christ (vs.9-10); also rejoice in God.²⁶ Let us discuss this one after the other.

A. Salvation Brings Peace with God

Peace is invaluable for human existence, hence it is a universal pursuit that has preoccupied human race overtime, both in personal, domestic, industrial or international strata; peace has no substitute. It is fundamental. It is joy therefore, to find that, that which man pursues so vigorously is a bye product of justification by faith, a blessing of salvation in Christ Jesus. His salvation is simultaneously a conferment of divine friendship which establishes peace between the two parties through our Lord Jesus Christ, who made it possible by his obedience to death and rose up from death to make this peace a reality! (4:25). Now we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Some have read the indicative verb to be subjunctive, so that it is interpreted: "let us have peace" instead of "we have" which should mean: "let us maximise the fullness of the peace that we have in Him." Most grammarians have resorted to the indicative reading of the verb due to the strong consecutive affirmations contained in the periscope.²⁷

²⁵ Marvin E. Tate, John R. Sampey, "The Comprehensive Nature of Salvation to Biblical Perspective. *Review and Expositor*, v. 91, No 4, Fall, 1994, 469.

²⁶ Stott, 139-146

²⁷ Ibid, 138.

B. Salvation Positions Believers to Stand in Grace Continually (vs2a)

“Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” Through Christ, we obtained access,²⁸ or introduction, like somebody who is not qualified, but had to be introduced for acceptance to stand before Him in grace, and by grace. That is the import of the perfect tense: (προσαγωγήν) *prosagoge*. This is unmerited, unsolicited, underserved, unconditional favour. Having been introduced into this grace, we have then taken our stand firmly in and on this grace into which we have been granted access. So those who are justified enjoy a blessing far outweighing a periodic approach to God like an occasional audience with the king. That places us in the advantage to live in the palace, as well as in the temple. It is a continual process not sporadic, but secured standing in His grace in which nothing can separate (8:38f).²⁹

C. Salvation Brings Rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of God

It is evident that believers will share in the glory of God. This is the Christian hope *elpis* that is certain just like every day human hopes e.g. about the weather conditions or our wellbeing etc it is a joyful and confident expectation, which rests on the promises of God: like it happened in the case of Abraham, who had hope but God made it materialized. So the object of the hope we have in Christ Jesus is the Father Himself, who has made possible, the realization of this hope in Christ, (Jh 1:14; 2:11) who will ultimately disclose the glory of God and at the same time translate us into that glory.³⁰

The joy shall be encompassing in the sense that even the groaning creation, bounded to decay, shall be brought into that glory and be liberated by the manifestations of the sons of God (8:17, 21). The whole agenda of the glory of God shall therefore precipitate the new universe fused with glory of its creator. In this, we rejoice and we are stimulated to rejoice.³¹

²⁸ Moody, 101-102

²⁹ Ibid, 139-140.

³⁰ F. W. Beare, “The Letter to the Romans” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* ed. G.A. Buttrick and others. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 115-116.

³¹ Allen, 103.

D. Salvation brings rejoicing even in sufferings

The word translated suffering in verse 3 is (θλιψις) *Thlipsis* which gives an import of tribulations. It refers to pressure as a result of opposition, persecution from the hostile world. It is the kind of suffering, which believers should expect if actually they are standing for the Lord. Against this backdrop, Jesus warned his disciple in Johanne gospel (16:13), where (θλιψις) *thlipsis* is also used: “in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Similar word is used by Paul, warning disciples in Acts 14:22. This is on the ground that suffering is a pathway to glory, believer therefore rejoices in tribulation just like apostle James exhorted: “count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptation. Correct attitude is not simply to endure like in stoic philosophy, but rather to rejoice in the tribulation. Notwithstanding, this should not be rendered synonymous with masochism, a sickness of finding pleasure in pain, but rather seeking divine reason behind every tribulation, since it leads to ultimate productivity in several ramifications like maturity, perseverance and endurance.”³²

E. Salvation Brings Rejoicing in God

There is an intriguing corollary between the attitude of the Jews in 2:17 “You boast in God” which was condemned by Paul; and 5:11 which reads: “we boast in God.” The verb in 2:17 and 5:11 which reads: “we boast in God,” has similar verb which have been rendered boasting while that in 5:11 is rendered rejoicing or exuberating. Believers rejoice in God is not the same with bragging like one who has the monopoly of God. The implication of the joy in God, such that has no claim on God, hence it prompts a natural submissive worship of those who have experienced salvation by grace. Hence the joy is not that of right but of mercy. So we rejoice that we are privilege to share his (God) glory and God himself through the Lord Jesus through whom we receive salvation.³³ “Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” So, joy is an essential property motivating, and propelling the saved to live a righteous life.

³² Stott, 141-142.

³³ Stott, 147-148.

F. Salvation Comes through Christ

Hitherto, we have been listed for justification, peace, right standing in grace, and rejoicing in the hope and in our sufferings. The dividend of salvation does not end there. There is much more in stock to motivate believers into holy living. These dividends are wrapped in the “already” and the ‘not yet’ i.e things already accomplished by Christ on behalf of believers and things that are remaining to be fulfilled in the future, second coming. It is like talking about the past and the future. In other word, we have been saved from our sin, but our body shall wear a new man when he gives us a new body in the new world at his appearing.³⁴

Against this background, Paul expresses that “we shall be saved from God’s wrath through Christ in verse 9. That is already done in part in the sense that he has delivered us via the cross, hence, we have peace with God, but on the day of God’s wrath, judgement shall come over the rebellious, which rejected the salvation of the Christ (2:8). Believers shall be saved from that judgement, because he had crossed over from death to life. Then they shall be saved through his life. Therefore, according to John Stott, “our present ‘half-’saved’ condition’ is motivating us to live a holy life with eagerness, looking forward to our full and final salvation. This motivation is real on the ground of past achievements namely: we have been saved, justified, reconciled to him through his blood, we are pronounced discharged and acquitted, even when we were his enemies, he reconciled to become friend. The most complex part of the exercise! The concluding part of it should be considered simple. It is therefore assumed here also that believers will not mess up himself before his Lord; he will rather be motivated to remain qualified before the Saviour to be eligible for the final salvation.³⁵ This is why Paul may have exhorted in Philippians 2:13: “work out your own salvation...”

Conclusion

In this paper, the assurance, reality, and motivation for righteous living have been examined in the epistle to the Romans. The theme of salvation due to justification, reconciliation, and righteousness

³⁴ Allen, “Romans”, 1325.

³⁵ Stott, 146-147.

permeate the pages of the epistle. The apostle was not ashamed of it because it was for all men on the platform of free gift of God, who graciously granted the pardon, not as that which was achieved through human effort. With this men are freed from condemnation, guilt and death to which sin has sentenced them.³⁶

This salvation is real on the ground that it is experiential. When a man receives forgiveness of God in Christ Jesus, he has personal blessed experience and testimony to confirm the renewal that is personally taken place. Taking toll from Paul the apostle, it is best substantiated in the eight chapter of the epistle: “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Further on the reality of salvation is the demise of the monopoly of God by the Jewish nation. Salvation prepares children for God across the globe, so that the Kingdom of God is no more bound to a territorial land! The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof...

Against this background, Paul agonized in prayers passionately so much that he wishes to become accursed for the salvation of Israel. They held on tenaciously to the Law, which is contrary to knowledge not knowing that Christ is the (τέλος) *telos* of the Law (Romans 10:1-4). While they are busy with the Law, grace has recruited another set of children for the glory of God, yet Israel shall be saved!

The above analogy has broken the wall of partition between those who were once an enemy of God to enjoy friendship with God through the grace of salvation which brings peace with God, positions believers to stand in grace continually, brings rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, brings rejoicing even in sufferings, brings rejoicing in God through Christ the producer of salvation.

³⁶ J.D.G. Dunn, “Letter to the Romans,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* ed. G.F. Hawthorne and others. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 846-847.

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