

Romans 5: 1-21: The Justice of the Messiah

Paul now transitions to his argument for how justice comes into the world, and thus into our common lives, through the messiah, whom Paul understands to be the crucified and risen Jesus.

Romans 5:1-2

“Therefore, since we are justified [made just] by faith [faithfulness], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace [generosity] in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”

“The point is the access to divine favor comes through the messianic mission/event. It is through this mission/event that divine favor or generosity comes apart from the law (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 82).”

Romans 5:3-5

“And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

“The very existence of that fierce courage itself produces something like hope. This at least seems to have been the experience of those who call themselves Christians in the first three or four centuries. For it was the fearlessness of Christians in the face of the ‘afflictions’ of persecution that served as the proof of the truth of the gospel and thus played an essential role in persuading others to align themselves with that movement of martyrs (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 83).”

“For now Paul offers the reader only a glimpse of where is headed: the idea that somehow the justice that is coming arrives now in the form of love. We have already heard of at least two possible ways of attributing something like love to the divine: the divine patience that forestalls destruction, and the divine generosity that offers away outside the law to constitute justice (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 84).”

Romans 5:6-11

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous (just) person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified (made just) by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

“We can approach in somewhat a different way. If there is nothing on our side that could motivate the messianic act, Paul does say that there is something on God's part that does motivate a faithfulness or loyalty to the death on the part of the messiah. It is **God's love toward us**. This, and not [pace Anselm] the desire to save God's honor or justice, is the ultimate ground of this death - a death that, because it is outside the law and exposes the violence of the law, will deliver us from the law or, rather, from the condemnation of the law. We are therefore coming closer to understanding what it might mean to speak about justice that is an ‘outlaw justice’ (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 86).”

“**Reconciliation** is what has already happened, and being made just is what is now happening as a consequence (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 87).”

“Thus, somehow the death of the son overcomes our hostility toward God by demonstrating the utter limitlessness of divine love. This reconciliation then serves to make possible our becoming just. If we are or have been reconciled to God, then we are already being made just. Presumably we are being made just because this reconciliation is awakening the faithfulness that is counted as towards justice (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 87).”

“Perhaps the most difficult concept, from a modern perspective, that Paul employs is precisely this notion of humanity as a unitary entity. Modern individualism finds it hard enough to conceive of socio-historical totality's like Judean or pagan. Already here it is necessary to think of human beings as determined by their embeddedness in national and social totality's in such a way that each is infected by the corruption of the society of which they [or, rather, we] are apart. All the more difficult is the idea that humanity may be thought of as a single entity— but that is precisely what Paul invites us to think (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 89).”

Romans 5:12-14

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.”

“Paul does not give us anything like a doctrine of original sin but of universal sin. While death enters the world through one human, it is the case that all sin. In fact, the entry of sin is such that all sinned, and the effect is that all die. This may also be reversible: death or the fear of death makes us sin, makes us seek to preserve our life, at the expense of the other (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 90).”

“God had warned Adam about death as a consequence of sin. Of course, neither Adam nor Eve actually dies as an immediate consequence of sin. Death may, however, be implicit already in the blame shifting that offers up the other to death in order to deflect blame [and death] from oneself. Actual death comes into the story, however, not as an act of God but as an all too human act (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 90).”

“For sin is not simply the violation of a statute; it is the violation of the other, and so is violence. Indeed, because this is so, Paul will be able to conclude that the law is fulfilled not by compliance with the statutes but by love of the neighbor which does no wrong to or does not violate the neighbor (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 91).”

“Thus, it is not the case that all are guilty of Adam's sin [as notions of original sin have typically maintained] but that all are implicated in the universal history of violation and violence (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 92).”

“A shorthand version is that Paul is beginning to show that gift is the basis of justice that is outside the law. The discussion of trespass or violation has linked it to death; what is now to be seen has a gift or unconditional generosity bears upon life or produces life [without forgetting that justice is necessary to life] (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 93).”

Romans 5:17

“If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness [justice] exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

“What rules over or governs Adamic humanity is precisely death. But even more certain than the fact that death rules all humanity considered as a Adamic is the fact that the life that is the result of the justice produced through gift will rule over all, considered now as encompassed within the messianic (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 95).”

“The gift is effective precisely insofar as it is received. There is no *ex opera operato* [by the work worked] in the medieval sacramental sense. The gift must be recognized as gift. Reception is not a condition of the gift being given but rather of its efficacy (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 95).”

Romans 5:18-21

“Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness [justice] leads to justification [making just] and life for all. 19 For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous [made just]. 20 But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased [abounded], grace abounded [hyper-abounded] all the more, 21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification [the making just] leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“The messiah is best characterized by a faithfulness and a justice that is outside the law, hey faithfulness that makes him an outlaw with respect to the law to Judeans and of the Romans (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 96).”

“Abounding versus hyper-abounding. Excess is the mark of gift or grace again. The law somehow makes injustice abound [Paul will soon try to explain how this is so], but the gift or generosity makes justice abound—even hyperabound—and abundance that is or leads to undiminished, unlimited, overflowing life. Violence begets violence, propagates, and multiplies this death. But gift begets justice; it to propagates, multiplies, not as the law somehow aids the propagation of violence it seeks to curtail but has hyper-abounding, producing that more and more death but limitless life (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 97).”