

### **Why does Paul say that hope 'does not make us ashamed'?**

Why might hope make us ashamed anyway? Tom Wright says: "I think the answer is that the Christian, like Abraham, is called again and again to 'hope against hope' (Romans 4:18). We look foolish in the world's eyes, waiting for something we can't see (Romans 8:25). But we don't appear foolish to ourselves, because we are sustained by something far deeper, something which grows directly out of the gift of 'peace with God', out of the reconciliation which Paul describes a few verses later."

### **How can we be sure God will make us OK?**

Paul argues that when people believe in God's good news about Jesus, they are assured in the present that they already belong to the covenant family, the people whose sins are forgiven. They have already received the verdict of 'in-the-right' from God's court. But we still have the rest of our lives to live, and we might do all sorts of appalling things. How can we be sure that the future verdict is already known? Tom Wright says: "A good deal of Romans 5-8 is written in reply to this question ... But the answer begins here: that the Christian hope, for the verdict issued in the present to be reaffirmed in the future, is based securely on what God has already done in the death of Jesus.... The argument takes the form, familiar in various systems of logic, not least Jewish ones, of a '*how much more*'. If God has done the difficult thing, how much more is he likely to complete the job by doing the easy bit? If someone has struggled up a sheer rock face, against all the odds, to get to the top of the mountain, they are not likely to give up when, at the top of the vertical wall, they are faced with an easy stroll on a grassy path to get to the summit itself. If someone has driven to the other end of the country, through rain and snow and freezing fog, to see a friend in need, they are not going to abandon their quest when they arrive at the house, the skies clear, the sun comes out, and all they have to do is walk up the garden path and ring the doorbell."

**What does Paul mean by 'eternal life' in verse 21?** Tom Wright has changed the normal translation of this phrase to 'the life of the age to come'. He believes it gives a wrong impression, as Paul is not talking about spending 'eternity' in a world beyond space, time and matter, in 'heaven'. "Paul never mentions such an idea. What he has in mind, here and elsewhere, is the bodily resurrection of God's people to share in the new earth and new heavens which will result from God's liberation of the present world from decay and corruption. If there is any doubt about this, chapter 8 will remove it."

We hope to get there by June 2013!

### **A VERSE TO MEMORISE THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO YOU ONE DAY:**

**We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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.**

Romans 5:3-5

### **Who or what is a 'Messiah'?**

The Hebrew word means literally 'anointed one', hence in theory either a prophet, priest or king. In Greek this translates as **Christos**; 'Christ' in early Christianity was a title, and only gradually became an alternative proper name for Jesus.

In practice, 'Messiah' is mostly restricted to the notion, which took various forms in early Judaism, of the coming king who would be David's true heir, through whom YHWH would bring judgment to the world, and in particular would rescue Israel from pagan enemies. There was no single template of expectations. Scriptural stories and promises contributed to different ideals and movements, often focused on (a) decisive military defeat of Israel's enemies and (b) rebuilding or cleansing the Temple.

The Dead Sea Scrolls speak of two 'Messiahs', one a priest and the other a king. The universal early Christian belief that Jesus was Messiah is only explicable, granted his crucifixion by the Romans (which would have been seen as a clear sign that he was not the Messiah), by their belief that God had raised him from the dead, so vindicating the implicit messianic claims of his early ministry.

### **To Think About:**

1. What sort of things should we be doing or thinking when we find we seem to have lost our peace with God?
2. What does the story in Genesis say that Adam did wrong? Do you ever think like Adam did?
3. How would you summarise a Christian response to suffering?

### **St Andrew's Book Club**

These Studies are based on Tom Wright's 'Paul for Everyone' Series.  
You can get a copy of Romans 1-8 for £2.50 from Jim Thornton to use in your daily time with God.