What the meaning and goal of Rom 5, 1-11
(Rhetorical analysis)

Peter Dubovský

**Rhetorical figures**

The argumentation itself advances in the short units which develop the principal theme of the passage. The different rhetorical figures employed along the lines of the paragraph are not only ornaments embellishing Paul's speech but sometimes also the sign of the shift from one argumentative unit to another.

**Micro unit I (vv. 1–2).**

Analysing the first two verses, one can easily individuate the different syntactical and rhetorical substructures. Consequently, the division based on syntactical elements does not correspond absolutely to that based on the rhetorical figures. From the syntactical point of view the concatenation can be outlined as follows:

- **Δικαιωθῆτες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως** (Participial causative relative clause)
- **Εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** (The main clause enlarged on the modifier of agent)
- **Διὰ οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχάτωμεν εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην** (The first adjectival relative clause)
- **ἐν ἧ ἐστήκαμεν** (The second adjectival relative clause developing the modifier of the first adjectival relative clause).

For the last hemisticho of v. 2 we can offer two solutions which depend on the meaning of the conjunction **καί**:

- **Καὶ [ἐν ἡ] καυχῶμεθα ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ.**
- **In this case the clause would develop the modifier of the first adjectival clause and would be on the same syntactical level as ἐν ἧ ἐστήκαμεν. The conjunction is understood in the responsive sense.**

The second solution intends the conjunction **καί** as the copulative particle introducing a new aspect of the Pauline thought and then the clause would be understood as a main clause. Syntactically, it would be on the same level as:

---

εἰρήνην ἐχομεν [...] The preference for this solution is based on the following reasons:

- The verbs of two preceding relative clauses are in the perfect tense, while the verbs εχομεν and καυχώμεθα are in the present. The correspondence of tenses could be a syntactical basis for this preference.
- The position of particle καὶ, at the beginning favours the copulative meaning of the conjunction.
- The thematic reasons: there are two dimensions of the Christian’s status as a consequence of the justification. The first is the level of being and the second is the level of inner engagement or the level of the Christian response.

From the rhetorical point of view, Paul unfolds his thought by means of the double anadiplosis.\(^5\) The particularity of Pauline use of the anadiplosis in these verses is not the repetition of the same word at the beginning and at the end of the phrase, but the use of the relative pronoun in the second element of the hemisticho. The anadiplosis is the basis of another rhetorical figure called *reversio*\(^6\) or „turning back“ which links two rhetorical concatenations:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(A)} & \quad \text{εἰρήνην} \quad \text{ἐχομεν} \quad \text{πρὸς} \quad \text{τὸν} \quad \text{θεὸν} \\
& \quad \text{διὰ} \quad \text{τοῦ} \quad \text{κυρίου} \quad \text{ἡμῶν} \quad \text{Ἰησοῦ} \quad \text{Χριστοῦ} \quad \text{(B)} \\
& \quad \text{δι} \quad \text{τὴν} \quad \text{καὶ} \quad \text{(B')}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(A')} & \quad \text{τὴν} \quad \text{προσαγωγὴν} \quad \text{ἐστήκαμεν} \quad \epsilonις \quad \text{τὴν} \quad \text{χάριν} \quad \text{ταύτην} \quad \text{(C)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(A'')} & \quad \text{ἐστήκαμεν} \quad \text{ἐν} \quad \text{ἡ} \\
\text{(C')} & \quad \text{δι} \quad \text{τὴν} \quad \text{καὶ} \quad \text{δοκιμή} \quad \text{ἐλπίδα}.
\end{align*}
\]

Micro unit II (vv. 3–4)

A new figure of speech, climax or *gradatio*\(^7\) distinguishes a new rhetorical unit from the precedent one.

Εἰδότες ὅτι η θλίψις υπομονήν κατεργάζεται,
η δὲ υπομονή δοκιμήν,
η δὲ δοκιμή ἐλπίδα.

---

3 From the syntactical point of view, the author uses the intensive perfect: „The perfect may be used to emphasize the results or present state produced by past action.“ Cf. D. B. WALLACE, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics. Grand Rapids 1996, pp. 574–576.

4 DENNISTON, *Particles*, p. 325.


6 GARAVELLI, *Manuale*, p. 247

7 Climax „ha la struttura di un’anadiposi continuata (...x/x...y/y...) e consiste nel procedere per scalini, fermandosi su ognuno, prima di salire lo scalino seguente.” Cf. GARAVELLI, *Manuale*, p. 197.
It is the inductive syllogism which forms the basis of this argumentative process called „proprietà transitiva“.

Therefore, it can also be described with the language of combinatorial logic:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{if } \left( (A \land B) \land (B \land C) \right) \text{ then } (A \land C)
\end{align*}
\]
or in Paul’s terminology:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{if } \left( \text{θληψις} \land \text{υπομονή} \right) \land \left( \text{υπομονή} \land \text{δοκίμη} \right) \land \left( \text{δοκίμη} \land \text{ἐλπίς} \right) \text{ then } \\
(\text{θληψις} \land \text{ἐλπίς})
\end{align*}
\]

Micro unit III (vv. 6–8)

A new epanadiplosis opens and closes the third rhetorical micro unit which describes Christ’s death for us sinners. The argumentation progresses through a series of parallelisms constructed as a symploce (x...y/x...y/...).

"ΕΤΙ γὰρ Χριστὸς ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπέρ ἀσβῆν (genitive) ἀπέθανεν.
7 μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δυκαλίου (genitive) τις ἀποθανεῖται ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἁγαθοῦ (genitive) τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾶ ἀποθανεῖν.
8 συνίστησιν δὲ τὴν έαυτοῦ ἁγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς οτι ετὶ ἀμαρτωλῶν ὑπὸν ἡμῶν Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (genitive) ἀπέθανεν.

Micro unit IV (9–10)

A new couple of parallelisms, constructed as a symploce, determines the last rhetorical micro unit. An attentive reader can notice a shift in position in the second part of the hemisticho:

x: πολλῷ οὖν μᾶλλον δικαιωθέντες (aor. pass. 1. pl.)
y: νῦν ἐν τῷ αὕτῳ αὐτῷ (dative + genitive) σωθρούμεθα
x’: πολλῷ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες (aor. pass. 1. pl.)
y’: σωθρούμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτῷ (dative+genitive).

The rhetorical figure of verse 11, correctio, functions as the conclusion of the whole paragraph.
The analysis of arguments

Using the results of the rhetorical analysis, we can now approach the analysis of the argumentation itself. The arguments are usually in the service of proving or disproving the main idea of the paragraph. But what is the main theme of these verses, has been the object of the heated exegetical discussions. On the whole, opinions can be summed up in three principal directions: blessings and justification (Barrett and Wilckens), reconciliation (Martin, Dupont), and hope (Dunn, Moo, Eichholz, and Watson).

- **Hope** "provides not only the link word in vv. 2–5 but also characterises the eschatological tension which is a feature of the passage as a whole."\(^\text{10}\) The enumeration of the benefits brings Paul’s presentation to its climax, v. 2b. Then, vv. 3–4 form a kind of excursus, meanwhile in vv. 5–8 the author returns to the main theme and demonstrates that hope is based on God’s love. V. 11 discusses, from another point of view, the idea of boasting which is connected with hope as well.\(^\text{11}\)

- **Reconciliation.** The promoter of this idea was Martin. Reconciliation is considered the main theme of Pauline teaching and thus the presence of „καταλλάθει μιας καταλλαγή“ in vv. 10 (2x) e 11 warrants the presence of this idea also in this paragraph.\(^\text{12}\)

  - According to the last opinion the main themes of this paragraph are blessings and justification. The idea is founded on the fact that Paul starts his discourse by mentioning justification; furthermore it can be sustained by the fact that most of the concepts used belong to the forensic semantic field.

  The divergence among exegetes concerning the principal idea of the paragraph corresponds to another problem of this passage: that of establishing its place and its rhetorical character in regard to the rest of the letter to Romans. One must firstly start with Pauline rhetoric to understand better his way of proceeding and consequently how to individuate the main idea of these verses.

  The passage opens with a participial causal relative clause which forms a principal premise (PP): Δικαιώθητες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως Such a premise tends to resume the main argument of the precedent chapters.\(^\text{13}\) The resuming character of PP is also signalled by the conjunction οὖν. Without long preliminaries Paul

---

10 J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*. WBC 38A; Dallas 1988, p. 246.
13 "Per l’esistenza di un sommario sintetico della precedente sezione all’inizio di una nuova sezione si può confrontare per esempio 3,22 (che riassume 1,18–3,20) etc." Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *La Lettera di Paolo ai Romani (Capitoli 1–8)*. Torino 1998, p. 130. This resuming character and numerous semantical links with the rest of chaps. 5–8 bring many commentators to conclusion that vv. 5,1–11 belongs to what follows (Fitzmyer, Moo, Dunn, and Aleotti).
immediately passes to the logical conclusion drawn from PP:  εἰρήνην ἐξημερωμεν.\textsuperscript{14} This principal sentence (PS) constitutes the point of departure for the following verses. The author twice returns to this sentence adding complementary pieces of information or altering the expressions (expolitio).

The understanding of the argumentative concatenation of first two verses could go better in the light of the preceding rhetorical and syntactical discussions. Their results, such as the rhetorical figure reversio, diverse tenses, and different function of conjunction „καὶ“ (vv. 2\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{15} and 2b), allows one to suggest the following logical sequence:

First step:
[if] PP >> [then] PS.\textsuperscript{16}

The argument is constructed like an enthymema. The validity of the PP is taken as proved enough in the preceding chapters. In other words we can put it as follows: the justification from faith puts a Christian in the state of peace with God.

Second step:
The first relative clause which functions as a commemoratio explains the PS from another point of view and uses a different vocabulary. One of the aspects of having peace with God is to have had access to grace.\textsuperscript{17}

The second relative clause develops the idea of grace presenting it as an operative horizon of the Christian’s life: „ἐν ἐστήκαμεν“.\textsuperscript{18}

Third step:
A new main clause, using again the present tense, shifts the argumentation from the description of status to the Christian’s inner engagement or in other

\textsuperscript{14} „Peace is to be understood, not in the sense of peace of mind or conscience about sins forgiven, nor only in the negative sense of the absence of war, but in the positive OT sense of shalom, the fullness of right relationship that is implied in justification itself and of all the other bounties that flow from it.“ J. A. FITZMYER, Romans, AB 33. New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland 1993, p. 395.

\textsuperscript{15} The conjunction „καὶ“ is often used with a relative pronoun to indicate the independence of a proposition; cf. F. W. BLASS, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament. Cambridge 1961, § 393b.

\textsuperscript{16} PP is the premise resuming the arguments of the preceding chapters, PS is the first main conclusion.

\textsuperscript{17} In the commentaries one can see a discussion about understanding the expression „to have the access to grace“: Küsemann thinks that „τὴν προσεγγισθην ἐσχάτηςμεν“ has a cultic connotation linked with the entrance into the temple; cf. E. KĀSEMANN, Commentary on Romans. Grand Rapids 1980, p. 133. DUNN, comparing the texts of LXX, expresses his doubt about such an idea; cf. DUNN, Romans, p. 247–248. We will not take position to this problematic because it does not influence directly our analysis.

\textsuperscript{18} The vocabulary employed by St. Paul belongs to the forensic semantic field; cf. Ps 1; Gal 1,6. With Christ’s salvific intervention, we have been freed like an alleged person at the trial.
words to the description of natural reaction to such a great intervention of God: καὶ καυχῶμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. From the rhetorical point of view, one may attribute to this argumentation the name expolitio. Thus, to have peace with God, understood like to have an access to grace which so forms the Christian’s operative horizon, permits a Christian to boast. But Christian boasting, as most of Paul’s statement, enjoys a paradoxical character. The objective genitive ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ directs Christian boasting towards his final destiny which, according to v. 3,23, is God’s glory. The possibility of reaching one’s own final end, God’s glory, by means of grace permits a Christian to boast, but in hope.

At this point the author resorts to a digression: vv. 3–4. The digression number one (D1) is introduced by means of a correctio (οὐ μόνον δὲ ἄλλα καὶ καυχῶμεθα) and additionally developed in the form of a climax (vv. 3b–4). Its role is to extend the object of Christian boasting: a Christian can boast not only in joyful hope but nonetheless in hope coined by difficulties and sufferings. The argumentation of climax, maybe deeply marked by Paul’s personal experiences, lets the reader/hearer understand that hope: if it is real hope, it does not fail even in suffering, but they are in fact afflictions themselves which prove the veracity of Christian hope.

But if Paul wants to convince his audience, then he must prove that so great a claim as boasting in hope as well as in sufferings is not only an illusion of Christians. To dispel any doubt, he resorts to one of the most impressive affirmation of these verses: ἢ δὲ ἐλπὶς οὐς κατασχύνει ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. Some of older commentators (Augustine, Luther) took it as a subjective genitive: God is the loving subject and people are the object of his love and they translate it: God’s love for us. On the other hand, most of the modern exegetes (Dunn, Käsemann, Kuss, Lagrange, and Nygren) understand this genitive as an objective genitive where God is the object of love, the subject are people: Lamour que nous avons pour Dieu...” M. J. Lagrange, Saint Paul: Epître aux Romains. Paris 1950, p. 102. There are good reasons to accept both solution. The subjective genitive is sustained by the context: the passage speaks about what God did for human race and not what the people did for God. The people are the object of God’s salvific action. On the other hand, God’s love has been poured out into our hearts and it is the guarantee of our boasting. The sparkle of love assimilated by human hearts becomes the subject of our living in and for Christ. Comparing v. 5 with vv. 2 Cor 5,14; Jn 5,42 and 2 Thes 3,5, one can see that they try to express the similar idea of God’s love. Some of the grammarians, aware of the complexity of the New Testament theology, propose the compromise sustained also by such a great scholar as Vanhoye: plenary genitive (the terminology can vary). The noun in the genitive position has both subjective and objective notion. Usually the subjective meaning of the noun produces the objective notion. The idea would be: God’s love (subjective genitive) is poured out into our hearts. This part of action clearly belongs to God. Once God’s love has reached the human hearts, it happens a certain assimilation between both of them. Thus, the human being touched and transformed by

---

19 Fitzmyer, Romans, p. 397.
20 Moo describes the digressive character of these verses in terms of excursus: „The paradoxical boasting in tribulations of vv. 3–4 is something of an excursus, although it contributes to the central theme by showing that even the sufferings of the Christian lead on to hope.” Moo, Epistle, p. 298.
21 Some of older commentators (Augustine, Luther) took it as a subjective genitive: God is the loving subject and people are the object of his love and they translate it: God’s love for us. On the other hand, most of the modern exegetes (Dunn, Käsemann, Kuss, Lagrange, and Nygren) understand this genitive as an objective genitive where God is the object of love, the subject are people: „L’amour que nous avons pour Dieu...” M. J. Lagrange, Saint Paul: Epître aux Romains. Paris 1950, p. 102. There are good reasons to accept both solution. The subjective genitive is sustained by the context: the passage speaks about what God did for human race and not what the people did for God. The people are the object of God’s salvific action. On the other hand, God’s love has been poured out into our hearts and it is the guarantee of our boasting. The sparkle of love assimilated by human hearts becomes the subject of our living in and for Christ. Comparing v. 5 with vv. 2 Cor 5,14; Jn 5,42 and 2 Thes 3,5, one can see that they try to express the similar idea of God’s love. Some of the grammarians, aware of the complexity of the New Testament theology, propose the compromise sustained also by such a great scholar as Vanhoye: plenary genitive (the terminology can vary). The noun in the genitive position has both subjective and objective notion. Usually the subjective meaning of the noun produces the objective notion. The idea would be: God’s love (subjective genitive) is poured out into our hearts. This part of action clearly belongs to God. Once God’s love has reached the human hearts, it happens a certain assimilation between both of them. Thus, the human being touched and transformed by
The proof of such assertion is realised by means of the second digression (D2), vv. 6–8, charged with high doses of emotion: “Ετι γάρ Χριστός άντων ήμών άσθενών ἐτι ... ύπέρ άσβηδών ἄπέθανεν. Christ’s death for sinners triggers the existential dubitatio: For whom is one ready to die? For a righteous man? Hardly. For a good person? Perhaps. The chain of question marks leaves room for the final question: and for an evildoer, for a sinner, for an insignificant or weak person? Surely nobody! On this background Paul affirms the superiority of God’s love towards us:

Συνιστημεν δε την ίαυτου άγαπην εις ήμας ο θεος δι’ ἐτι άμαρτωλων άντων ήμων Χριστός ύπερ ήμων ἄπέθανεν.

It is up to the reader to complete the argumentation. God did it. And this is a ground of Christian boasting. Is it possible that so great a love could fail in fulfilling its promise? Paul’s deliberation not to draw any conclusion from it, the rhetoric of silence, leaves room for the reader/hearer to formulate his/her own answer.

With v. 9 the author resumes the initial premise (PP) as well as the conclusion of the dubitatio (D2) and as a result he presents his first conclusive enthymema (E1):

πόλλῳ οὖν μᾶλλον ... (resumption of PP e D2) ... σωθησόμεθα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀπό τῆς ὀργῆς.

The conclusion in the form of litotes paraphrases the principle sentence (PS): to have peace with God = will be saved from his anger (antonyms).

The second conclusion (E2) resumes dubitatio (D2) and the result of the precedent verse (E1) and then positively describes the outcome of the syllogism:

God’s love becomes the subject and the true protagonist of human love. Such idea underlines the reciprocal connection of God’s love for us and our answer expressed in our love for God. For the entire discussion see: WALLACE, Greek, pp. 112–121.

The description of the presence of God’s love in our hearts is strongly marked by the Old Testamentary background: cf. Is 44,3; Sir 1,9; Ps 45,3; Joel 3,1–2.

Our option to call these verses with the term „digression“ is based on the fact that their elimination does not influence very much the development of the discourse. The similar observation was also done by many commentators among whom we will mention only: L. E. KECK, „The Post-Pauline Interpretation of Jesus’ Death in Rom 5:6–7“, in: Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis. FS Dinkler E. [edd. Andersen C. – G. Klein], Tübingen 1979, pp. 237–248.

Rhetorically this impressive chain of question iscostructed by means of the stereotypic ripetitions of sympleco which step by step graduates tension.

The figure of epanadiplosis not only creates a logical link with the opening argumentation (v. 6) but also separating the stereotypic chain of sympleco loses the tension of preceding question marks and thus concludes the argumentation of the second digression (see Micro unit III).

The author uses the rhetorical figure called anastrophe which is „un invertimento nell’ordine abituale o normale.“ cf. GARAVELLI, Manuale, p. 229: συνιστημεν δε την ίαυτου άγαπην εις ήμας ο θεος.

„Paul argues a minori ad matus.“ cf. FITZMYER, Romans, p. 400.
Therefore, one of the first experiences of being a Christian is the clear awareness of his/her already realised redemption and the guaranty of his/her future salvation.

The third conclusion (E3) has the form of *correctio* of the second grade of comparison which makes raise the privilege of boasting on an one-step higher level: οὐ μόνον δὲ ἄλλα καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δὲ οὖν τὴν κατάλλαγήν ἐλάβομεν.

In brief, the author has reached the third and the last level of boasting as an appropriate expression of reconciliation and justification which encompasses both preceding levels: to boast of hope and sufferings is equivalent to boasting about God.

**Conclusion**

The goal of whole argumentation can be summarised in few words:

- Once having been justified ἐκ πίστεως we may obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ. He is also a mediator through whom we have access to grace and finally it is grace which forms the operative environment of a Christian (the Christian’s being).

- A new relationship with God opens to a Christian even a new dimension of his life: he/she may boast of hope which is further extended in boasting of sufferings. Such a statement is proved in the first digression (D1) by means of a climax (the Christian’s reacting).

- The guarantee of Christian boasting has its foundation in God’s love poured out into our hearts, therefore it does not disappoint. The basis of proof lays in Christ’s paradoxical death for sinners, rhetorically realised in the digression (D2) by means of *dubitatio*.29

- Having in mind these observations, we can draw with Paul the following conclusions:

28 There is a discussion among the scholars about the understanding of „ἐχθροί δύνατον“. Its principal directions are as follows:

- „ἐχθροί δύνατον“ should be understood in the passive sense: God is the subject of the enmity, so his enmity is addressed against people; (BULTMANN, MURRAY).

- „ἐχθροί δύνατον“ should be understood in the active sense: the subjects are human beings who project their enmity towards God; (KASIMANN, KUSS, WILCKENS).

- „ἐχθροί δύνατον“ should be understood in the sense of reciprocal enmity; (CRANFIELD, DUNN, FITZMYER). The various solutions do not influence our analysis too much and therefore it is not necessary to take a position on this problem.

29 FITZMYER, Romans, p. 394.
i) we will be saved\textsuperscript{30} from God’s anger (litotes of PS);  
ii) we have been reconciled\textsuperscript{31} with God. This is the aspect of salvation which  
has already been realised;  
iii) we can boast of God through Jesus Christ.

If up to now our reflections are correct, then we can conclude that St. Paul’s  
main theme was to demonstrate the status of a new Christian as a natural  
consequence of justification and reconciliation. The complexity of so difficult a  
theme pushes the author to resort to the use of the rhetorical figure \textit{expolitio}, and  
thus to “retouch” the main theme from various points of view: such as hope,  
peace with God, reconciliation, and boasting.

\textsuperscript{30} The concept of salvation introduces an idea of „deliverance or rescue from evil or harm, whether physical, psychic, national, cataclysmic, or moral.“ \textit{Fitzmyer, Romans}, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Fitzmyer} understands reconciliation as a restoring of the relationships and of intimacy that failed because of sin. This restoration contains the change in relationships: a person passes from hostility, furore, and enmity to friendship and mutual love; cf. \textit{Fitzmyer, Romans}, p. 119–120.