

Romans: Chapter Five

Romans 3.21-5.11: SALVATION (Righteousness Received & Reckoned)

The Character of Justification (5.1-11)

After introducing the **basis** of justification in Romans 3, Paul has emphasised man's *responsibility* in the matter of salvation in Romans 4. Justification is by faith **alone**. Now he elaborates on the **blessings** that are secured by justification. Romans 5 presents the principle of the trespass offering. When a trespass was committed, the Israelite had to make amends for the wrong they had done and pay a fifth part more by way of compensation to his fellow Israelite (Leviticus 5.16). Christ has done the same. **Leckie**: *He has made amends for Adam's sin, and paid to God a fifth part more compensation, which we enjoy! Note the expression 'much more' and the verb 'abound'*. Romans 5 therefore concerns the vast extent of the work of Christ in relation to *individuals* (5.1-11) and the *whole human race* (5.12-21).

Note the *sevenfold* blessing of justification:

- **v.1: Peace**. Having been once and for all justified at conversion (aorist), the believer has peace *with* God. Sins are forgiven and there is no fear of divine judgment. *Eirene* (peace) comes from a primary verb meaning to *join* or *bind together* what had once been separated. It contains the thought of security, harmony, rest and contentment.
- **v.2: Access**. Justification has brought us into a standing in divine grace. The word 'access' (*prosagoge*), lit. 'to lead forward' or 'bring toward' was used of ushering someone into the presence of royalty or a ship entering a harbour to shelter from a storm. Justification has brought us into the heavenly haven of grace (Divine favour). We stand in grace, clothed in the best robe (righteousness), with a ring on the finger (sonship) and shoes on our feet (standing).
- **v.2: Rejoice in hope of the glory of God**. The Christian has the sure and steadfast hope of 'glory' (Hebrews 2.10). In God's reckoning we are already glorified and nothing can thwart divine purpose (8.30). 'Glory' involves fitness for divine presence (3.23), conformity to the image of His Son (8.29), and manifestation as sons to the world (8.18).
- **vv.3-4: Glory in tribulations**. Christians rejoice, not so much in the tribulations *themselves* (which can cause sorrow and pain, Hebrews 12.11) but what they *produce* in our Christian experience. We must look at trials and difficulties as assets to develop Christian character. 'Tribulation' (*thlipsis*) means a 'pressing together' or 'pressure'. In Paul's day, a *tribulum* (Latin) was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for separating the wheat from the chaff. Thus, tribulations 'work'! They produce or generate 'patience' (endurance, James 1.3) – a capacity to 'remain under' trials in a God-honouring way, rather than seeking a way of escape. **Barclay**: *This is not the spirit which lies down and lets the floods go over it; it is the spirit which meets things head on and overcomes them*. 'Patience' produces 'experience' (*dokime*), a 'proving' of one's character and faith. Tribulation will soon detect the unreality of any profession (Matthew 13.21). The experience of life's storms (and Divine help in them) strengthens our 'hope' and longing for the heavenly haven.
- **vv.5-8: Love of God**. Our hope will never be disappointed. Of this we are assured by the love of God *in* us and *for* us. **IN US**: The Holy Spirit permanently 'floods' our hearts (affections) with a deep appreciation of the love of God. **FOR US**: God continuously 'manifests' and 'declares' (commends) His *own* love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. As far as human estimation is concerned, it would be rare to find someone willing to die for a *good* man (kind and benevolent), rarer still for a *righteous* man (just and upright) but totally impossible for a heinous criminal (sinner). Man's love would not stoop to so unworthy an object. But, whilst we were without strength (no power to *please* God), ungodly (no desire *for* God or likeness *to* God) and **sinners** (rebellious *against* God), Christ died for us. *Never was there love which fixed itself upon an object so much below the Lover, so far from loving Him*. Such love wrought *in* us by the Spirit and manifested *for* us by Christ brings *assurance* in the trial and *assurance* of the heavenly hope.
- **v.9: Saved from wrath**. Since we are the objects of so great love, poured out at such great cost, we can be sure that we will be saved away from (*apo*) wrath through Him, i.e. the One who shed His blood at Calvary is alive in heaven and seated at God's right hand. *He* is the assurance of salvation from Tribulation wrath (1 Thessalonians 1.10; 5.9).
- **vv.10-11: Reconciled**. 'Reconciliation' basically means to 'change from hostility to friendship' (at-one-ment, v.11). Once we were enemies *of* God, hostile *to* Him and at distance *from* Him (Romans 8.7). But, *Christ took upon Himself everything about me that was offensive to God and in His death removed me, as the enemy, from before God*. Now, being reconciled, we shall be 'saved by His life'. The salvation in view is not from the *penalty* of sins (past), but the *power* of sin (present) and *presence* of sin (future). 'His life' is not a reference to His life on earth, but His resurrection life at God's right hand. He ever lives to sustain us through the wilderness and bring us safe to glory (Hebrews 7.25). This is beautifully illustrated by Moses who saved Israel from Amalek as he interceded from the mountain top (Exodus 17). No wonder we 'joy (glory) in God' – not just what He has *done*, but who He *is*.

Romans 5.12-8.39: SANCTIFICATION (Righteousness Realised)

The Comparison of Adam and Christ (5.12-21)

In this third main section of the epistle, Paul is taking another journey from guilt through grace to glory. However, on this occasion the emphasis falls on **sin** (what I *am*, the root) rather than **sins** (what I have *done*, the fruit). My individual guilt has been met by the **blood** of Christ shed at Calvary (Christ died for me). Now the theme is deliverance from a present state through the **death** of Christ at Calvary, and my identification with Him in it (I died with Christ). My *sins* have been forgiven and removed, but the *sin* principle is very much alive and 'dwelleth in me'.

The effect of the work of Christ is now considered *universally* (5.12-21) rather than *individually* (5.1-11). The use of the terms 'as' and 'so' contrast the *sin* and *death* Adam brought into the world with the *righteousness* and *life* that Christ provides. Adam and Christ are unique individuals. Adam was the 'first man' who, having sinned, brought **condemnation** upon the entire human race. Christ, the 'second man', has introduced a new order of manhood. He brings **justification** to all those who belong to Him. The apostle is thus presenting our new position in Christ in contrast to our old position in Adam. **Hamilton Smith:** *As natural men we are connected with Adam and involved in the fall and its consequences. As believers we are connected with Christ, and share in the blessings that belong to His line. We have been identified with Christ in His death to close up our links with Adam and his race; and that we have been identified with Christ in resurrection to share in all the blessings that belong to His race.*

v.12, 18-19: There are two representative men before God (federal heads) and all humanity is comprehended either in one or the other. In Adam = sin, death, and condemnation. In Christ = righteousness, justification and life. Adam sinned (Genesis 3) resulting in the sin principle entering the world as through a door. Consequently, death (both physical and spiritual) moved into every room in the house, penetrating to all men. All of Adam's seed were therefore constituted sinners. That all have come under the slavery of sin is proved by the fact that 'all have sinned'.¹ **v.18:** The sad result of Adam's 'offence' (transgression) was that all men are threatened (note the preposition *eis*) with condemnation and eternal death. But, praise God, the 'one accomplished righteousness' (the finished work of Calvary) has made justification (which results in life rather than death) available towards (*eis*) all. **v.19:** Adam's disobedience has constituted 'the many' sinners. In contrast, Christ's supreme act of obedience at Calvary will ultimately constitute 'the many' (those who believe) righteous (Isaiah 53.11). Note. The language has changed from 'all' to 'many'. Scripture uses 'all' in terms of offer and availability. 'Many' is used in terms of final result and ultimate classification.

Note that **vv.13-17** are in parenthesis. They are introduced to show the relationship of the law to sin and answer a possible Jewish objection. Can mankind be guilty of sin and worthy of death when, between the time of Adam and Moses, there was no law to explicitly define what sin is? **vv.13-14:** Yes! Although sin could not be charged to a person's account as *transgression* (there was no law to transgress), they still all **died** (see Genesis 5) showing that they were infected with the sin principle. Even though they had not broken a specific commandment (like Adam) they were still guilty sinners (Genesis 6.5; Romans 2.12). Paul then introduces Adam as a type of Christ in the sense of *federal headship*. Their individual actions had enormous and *contrasting* impacts upon those they represented. Note *three* contrasts. **1.** The offence of one man (Adam) brought death to the many, but the grace of God has granted the free gift of righteousness to the many who believe by 'the one Man, Jesus Christ' (**v.15**). **2.** Adam's *one* sin brought judgment and condemnation, but the free gift of righteousness removes *many* transgressions and brings justification (**v.16**). **3.** Through the transgression of one man (Adam) death reigned, but those who receive the free gift of righteousness, through the one man (Jesus Christ), shall *themselves* reign in life. The slaves of death have become kings! Believers are the royalty of heaven, reigning in the enjoyment of spiritual and eternal life (**v.17**). This reminds us of the glorious prospect of reigning in a coming kingdom with Christ.

vv.20-21: If the whole of salvation history can be characterised in terms of the actions of two men (Adam and Christ), what then was the purpose of the law? The law 'entered' or 'came in alongside' (suggesting a limited and temporary role) the sin principle that sin might be recognised and abound in its character as *rebellion* against God (transgression). This demonstrated the desperate need of mankind for salvation. Praise God, where sin abounded, grace 'superabounded'. **Coulson:** *For every sin exposed by the law, there was divine grace ready to deal with it righteously. Though billions of sins might engulf a wretched world of guilty rebels at enmity with God, there was a superabundance of divine grace to deal with it all.* Through Adam's transgression, sin reigned as a monarch resulting in death. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, grace now reigns, securing and offering eternal life to all those that believe, and all this on a firmly righteous basis.

¹ It is possible that Paul is also making the point that as a result of Adam's sin, all people enter the world in a state of death (i.e. separated from God). As a result, all human beings sin (see Ephesians 2.1-10; 4.17-18). This writer does not subscribe to the interpretation that 'all sinned in Adam'.