
The Gospel: The Blessedness of Justification

Romans 5:1-21

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It is not possible to live Biblically above what you know. In the Christian life, ignorance can be deadly. But just gorging oneself on the Bible without thought, meditation and obedience is also deadly in another way. So, as we take up this difficult and important truth, this is not for your curiosity or even for your notebooks or theological shelves. This is for food, sustenance and life.

The Difficulties of Doctrine

- Because of our Aptitude - we often are *not able* to handle strong truth because we do not exercise what we know to develop our discernment (Hebrews 5:14).
- Because of our Attitudes - we often are *not willing* to do the hard work that hearing, understanding and applying truth requires (Hebrews 2:1).
- Because of our Approach - we often leave it to others to do - we expect our doctrine to be baby fed to us.

The Importance of Doctrine

- For our Affections - truth is the track for our emotions. What we believe channels our affections. If we believe lies, we are vulnerable to lusts (Romans 1). If we believe truth, our affections are directed Biblically.
- For our Actions - what is truly believed is practiced. Please understand this: truth shapes your choices.

So we need to gird up our minds and hold them to the task of hearing doctrine that will illuminate God's good and glorious blessings in our justification.

A Glory that Rejoices**(v.1-11)**

This is such a neat paragraph. It opens with having peace (v.1) and ends with receiving reconciliation (v.11). There is a grand progression in our exultation: we exult in the future glory (v.2) and in our present sufferings (v.3), which is grounded in glorying in God (v.11). God's love is poured out in us by His Spirit (v.5) and proven to us by His Son (v.8).

Justification brings us glorious privileges and provisions in which we rejoice.

In Its Privileges**(v.1-5)**

Now remember that what we know is the source of our choices and affections (emotions). So this is not just a list of our privileges but a progression in our growth.

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We have Peace with God**(v.1)**

In view of our being under the wrath of God because of our sin, what an enormous privilege it is to have peace with God.

We will not sense this *relief* if we have never experienced the sense of *alienation* and *separation*. The truth of the awful wrath of God is designed to cause us to really know and sense our separation from God. We need a real awareness of our sin and guilt so that our embracing of our Savior is rich and full in its experience of peace and reconciliation.

We have Access into Grace**(v.2).**

It is better and clearer to translate this word, *access* instead of *introduction*. It is not just our initial entrance, but our continuing privilege of access that is in view.

This is an access into a right standing in the sphere of grace. The access is to God through faith by grace. We have standing before God, a right standing before Him because of this grace.

We can Exult in Hope**(v.3-5).**

The word *exult* is the same as *boast* earlier in Romans. But there is a very significant shift in thought the translators are capturing. While we must not boast in the good works we do, we must exult in the glorious work God has done.

There is a future aspect to the exultation. We who had scorned God's glory (1:21-23) and had fallen short of it (3:23) are now able to exult in the hope of God's glory (Schreiner, p.254). There is a confident joy in the assurance that we will magnify God.

There is a present aspect to the exultation. We exult in our trials and tribulations. Now this is not because we are ignorant or naïve. We exult, *knowing* that God is at work in those trials to sanctify in us what He has secured for us. Trials build endurance, which

builds a proven character whose hope flows from the reality of God's love in us by the Holy Spirit.

Listen to how the NLT translates this last portion:

This expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.

This theme of not being disappointed in God and in His love for us thus opens this section of Romans. In Romans 5, our hope in God is never disappointed, even in trials, because of God's love in us. Romans 8 will then end with, "What can separate us from God's love?" Absolutely nothing. We can never be separated from God's love poured out in us by His Spirit and proven to us by His Son. In the darkest days, we will not lose hope. We will never be disappointed with God.

In Its Provisions

(v.6-11)

Now Paul wants to unearth the depths of our depravity so that we will more fully understand and rejoice in that which justification has provided. I am keying on the *while we were* language here.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

While we were Helpless

(v.6-7)

Christ died for us, the ungodly, at the time of God's appointment. We are helpless in our sins. We are unable to help or save ourselves. In the Greek it has this sound: we are without strength and without godliness.

Paul's irony comes through here. No one would die for someone who didn't need it and maybe some would die for another good person.

But the helpless, who are hopeless in their sins, are worse than that...

While we were Sinners

(v.8-9)

In a demonstration of the character and quality of His love, Christ dies just for helpless and ungodly, but rather for those who are *still* sinners. The word shifts toward the idea of a positive corruption. And it is an aspect of astonishment.

Christ's death on the cross is a demonstration of God's love for us...

But that is not all it is. Through Christ death we have been justified and we will be delivered from His wrath. Notice carefully the change in verb tenses. There is a sacrificial, substitutionary death (in his blood). We have been justified, have been given a right standing with God, by that death. This is a justification *in the past*, both at the cross

and at our conversion. And we will, *in the future*, be delivered from God's wrath through Christ.

Here is the eschatological dimension...

While we were Enemies

(v.10-11)

Marvel of marvels, *while* we were enemies, we were reconciled by Jesus' death and saved by Jesus' resurrection life.

How packed all this has been with transforming and hope-giving truth. Keyed on these "how much more" phrases, the crescendo rises and rises until the fortissimo of "WE EXULT IN GOD."

Don't miss the flow here. Christ died for the ungodly who were not only helpless and sinners, but were even enemies. So wrath is averted, relationship restored, reconciliation effected and thus we exult in God.

A Grace that Abounds

(v.12-21)

It astounds our ears how Paul can move from such affection raising statements to such pedantic and difficult doctrine. Let me assure you that the problem in this is with us, and not with Paul! The "therefore" that begins this section shows that it is not an intrusion or diversion or parenthesis. It is integral to his argument. The objective reality and subjective demonstration of God's saving love is rooted in salvation history.

Running through this text is a very important Biblical way of thinking. It is what the theologians call, Federal Headship. This means that we have a unity with Adam and Jesus Christ so that their actions affect all those united in them. Thus, when Adam sinned, we are viewed as sinning in him. When Christ died and rose again, we are viewed as having died and risen again with Him. The author of Hebrews uses this same principle to show that in Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek, Levi and his sons tithed as well. This is particularly difficult for us in the west because of our emphasis on individuality.

But this great text grounds abounding grace in this principle. In Adam we sinned, so in Christ we will be saved. So the grace in which we stand is not a grace that abounds.

Because of our Ruin

(v.12-14)

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Adam is a real person who is designated by God as the corporate representation for humanity. Sin entered the world through Adam and thus death entered as a result. Every one also died because everyone sinned (aorist). The implication then is that since everyone died, then everyone sinned.

Yet, there is a problem. In salvation history, the Law does not come till much later. Since sin is not imputed until there is Law, why did they die? They did not have the specific command like Adam did, so why did they die? Why is there death from Adam to Moses

when there is no Law and no one else sins like Adam did against a clear and specific commandment (as it is recorded in the Bible, in salvation history)? Death reigns because all human kind is viewed as sinning when Adam did. Even if you never committed a single act of sin, you are still condemned. You sinned in Adam and his disobedience is put to your account.

Be careful denying this. If you deny your corporate solidarity with Adam, then you also must deny the corporate solidarity with Christ. If there is no condemning union with Adam, then there can be no saving union with Christ either.

So grace abounds in the face of our universal ruin in Adam.

Through our Redeemer

(v.15-17)

Paul now brings us to exult in Christ by a series of contrasts between Adam and Christ, between the effect of Adam's sin and the power of Jesus' righteousness.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

These are a bit difficult because of the precision and brevity of Paul's language. Here are the contrasts:

Adam's sin affected all, but the free gift of grace abounds so much more than (v.15)

All are doomed under condemnation because of the one disobedience but the free gift of grace justifies the transgressors based on the obedience of one while (v.16).

Through Adam's sin, death reigned over us, but through the grace in Christ's righteousness, life will reign in us.

So, they are different because ❶ grace abounds (v.15), ❷ because justification is highlighted (v.16) and ❸ life reigns (v.17).

So we are in Adam, condemned transgressors ruled over by sin and death. Or, we are in Christ, justified by faith in His cross and resurrection and ruled by the power of His life in us.

For our Righteousness**(v.18-21)**

Finally, he concludes by summarizing and comparing the two.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For 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. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

One transgression, condemnation to all (v.18-19). One obedient righteousness (probably referring to His willing submission to a cross-kind of death) with a right standing before God to all. Now don't get confused: every human is condemned, but only those who believe are justified. Every human born in Adam is condemned; every human placed in Christ, is justified.

The Law "came in", or according to Galatians, "was added" so that the awfulness of sin would be fully disclosed (v.20-21) and grace would abound. The Law made it clearer as to what sin was. Thus, where there was greater revelation about what was sin, so saving grace that justified such sinners abounded and was magnified. The purpose was that grace would reign in life where sin once did.

Through one act of Christ's righteousness (v.18) the many are made righteous (v.19) so that grace would reign through righteousness (v.21).

Reflect and Respond

While you are condemned in sin as an enemy of God to the penalty of death, you may have peace and reconciliation with God through His grace. You may have a right standing before Him by faith in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Put your faith and trust in Him, today.

Embrace the truth of our corporate unity in Adam and in Christ. It is necessary for understanding the universality of sin and death. It is foundational to our corporate unity in Christ and thus our spiritual unity with one another.

Exult in:

- Your peace with God because of your reconciliation.
- Your sufferings in life because of your hope in God.
- God Himself, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Expect and experience that grace will reign in life. Don't let sin with its consequences rule. Allow the mighty power of Christ's life to transform you. That is what Romans 6-8 will all be about.