



ROMANS

ROMANS 5:1-21

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ADAM AND CHRIST

FIXING A BROKEN WORLD

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.*

That’s how the nursery rhyme tells it, and that’s how life feels to us sometimes. But it is not so! Our broken world is fixable, our fallen humanity is redeemable, and the process has already begun. So says Paul in this magnificent fifth chapter of Romans.

This chapter is a bridge from the first part of Romans to the second. Chapters 1–4 describe how the righteousness of God is revealed, especially in His wrath, to a sinful humanity. There Paul answers the question, “How are we justified by God?” Chapters 5–8 will now describe what follows for all those who have been justified. Paul takes up the question, “What is that new life like for the justified?” There are over 20 occurrences of the word “life” in Romans 5–8. One after another, the implications of the Gospel will be spelled out in glorious detail. In the face of it all, we are invited to rejoice (v. 2).

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD

ROMANS 5:1–5

The very first thing Paul unpacks from his suitcase of benefits is peace. “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1). Normally, when the world says “peace,” it means the absence of something. Peace talks are aimed



at stopping or preventing war. Activists with Greenpeace aim at the kind of peace they hope will come with the elimination of nuclear weapons, commercial whaling, GMO wheat, and fossil fuels, among other things.

But the peace the Gospel brings, Jesus made clear, is “not as the world gives” (John 14:27). It is, at heart, a peace with God. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, means “wholeness” or “completeness.” It is not so much the absence of something, but the presence of a new, completely restored relationship with God, and because of that, a healthy relationship with His world and other people.

A word Paul uses to explain the change in our relationship with God is “access.” We all know that human authorities can be hard to approach! We wait to get an appointment, something that gets harder to make the higher up the chain we go. Cynical people conclude, “You can’t fight city hall.” The good news Paul brings, however, is that we have a friend way above city hall! In the very highest place of all, we are known personally and loved deeply by God Himself.

This access has been brought about not by any kind of payoff or persistent lobbying, but solely by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (v. 2). A vivid reminder of that new access was the tearing of the temple curtain “from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51; Luke 23:45) the day Jesus died. The way into the Holy of Holies, understood by Jews as the place where one might get closest to God (and only accessible by the high priest one day a year!) was now open. In unmistakable terms, God says to us, “Come in!”

Even suffering cannot erase this peace with God. “We rejoice in our sufferings” (v. 3). Paul does not here say that suffering is good, nor that we seek it out. But we can take heart in knowing that in

God’s hands, suffering can inaugurate a sequence of blessed changes in our lives. Suffering first “produces endurance” (v. 3). The Greek word literally means “remaining under” something that pressures us. Those who do so find that by the grace of God “endurance produces character” (v. 4). The Greek word for “character” suggests metal refined by fire. Most of us know people who have endured some lengthy ordeal and whose character, so refined, shines brilliantly. Such tested character, finally, “produces hope” (v. 4). This hope is no mere “maybe”! Paul gives it specific shape in 8:18–25. Here in verse 5, he simply says it will not “put us to shame” (NIV translates as “disappoint us”).

BECAUSE OF A LOVE LIKE NO OTHER *ROMANS 5:6-11*

The source of such peace and hope for us is the astonishing love of God, a love truly like no other. Human love, someone accurately observed, is “love on a leash.” It is normally reserved for those who love us back, and even then, it has a limit. When we run up against some serious hurt or irritation, our human love says, “That’s it! I’ve had enough of this!” But God’s love has no leash, no limit.

Paul uses a fascinating sequence of terms which express how we humans stretch God’s love. When God seeks us, we are “weak” and “ungodly” (v. 6). That’s bad enough, but we must hear the bald-faced truth: we are, in fact, “still sinners” (v. 8). Worst of all, we are even God’s “enemies” (v. 10)! For the persistent, relentless love of God, none of this matters. Paul reminds us “Christ died for the ungodly.” There is no leash on this love! “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” There are no limits on this love! “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”

One question students often raise about verse 7 is the curious progression from “scarcely die for a righteous person” to “perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.” It seems backward, for “righteous” seems a stronger (and more

worthy!) term than merely “good.” In the Greek text, a definite article accompanies the word “good.” In common usage, this referred to a person who had done something good for you! Being someone’s personal benefactor would present a stronger case for returning love than simply being “righteous.”

God’s love, however, is not for His benefactors but for His enemies! In his book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, David Wilkerson describes his encounter on a Philadelphia sidewalk with a tough street kid named Nicky Cruz. In a scene that enacted the love here described by Paul, David bore his witness to Nicky, who responded by striking him and finally knocking him down on the sidewalk. Each time, Wilkerson got up and repeated, “God loves you, Nicky.” Finally, overwhelmed by the persistent witness about a loving God by a man he had bloodied, Cruz gave in and listened. Eventually he became a Christian and later even traveled with Billy Graham to share the change in his life that came because of God’s love.

Paul himself bore the same witness. God making enemies into friends is what is meant by the word “reconciled” (v. 10). Like Nicky Cruz, Paul knew the reconciling power of God’s love in the face of his own hatred. “I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it,” Paul recalls in Gal. 1:13. Yet there came the encounter with the “deep, deep love of Jesus” that reconciled and converted Saul into Paul. No wonder he uses the noun “love” seventy-five times in his letters!

IN ADAM’S FALL, WE SINNED ALL *ROMANS 5:12-14*

The previous section portrayed the effects of the reconciling love of Jesus in an intensely personal way. In the section that follows, the curtains are pulled back and we see the love of Jesus on a wide screen. The stage is the whole world. The scope is the entire range of human history. The drama of the redemption of mankind is done through a “contrast of epic proportions”

(Middendorf). Paul sets before us Adam and Christ and invites us to compare and contrast.

This section assumes the readers know the story of the fall into sin (see Gen. 3). “Sin came into the world” brings to mind a picture something like the tale of Pandora’s box.

In Greek mythology, Pandora, the very first woman, was given a box and told never to open it. She promised not to, but curiosity overcame her and she opened the lid. Out came a horde of evils — all the evils in the world! Alas, it was impossible to put them back in the box. Today the phrase “to open Pandora’s box” means to perform an action that seems small, but turns out to have far-reaching evil consequences.

The sin in the Genesis fall narrative appears small: the eating of the forbidden fruit. But the consequences were devastating, not only for Adam and Eve, but for us all. Adam is “patient zero” in the pandemic called sin. Like a deadly Ebola outbreak, “sin came into the world” and as a result “death spread to all men” (v. 12). *The New England Primer*, a children’s textbook in the American colonies, put it this way: “In Adam’s Fall, we sinned all.” With that simple rhyme, children were learning the unpleasant truth about the origin of our sin. Let’s think further about it.

Scholars and students have long puzzled over the question, “Do people die because Adam sinned or because they sinned?” Framed this way, the question sounds like an either/or. We must take a closer look at verse 12. The first simple point is that Adam is responsible for the “entrance” of both sin and death — the outbreak of the pandemic of sin and its consequence, human mortality. There is an undeniable connection between us and our first parents. The Israelites knew that in some way, if ONE of them sinned, they were ALL implicated. The story of Achan’s sin at Jericho (Joshua 7) rests on that truth.

But there is a second simple point in the verse that makes it a both/and. Death's spread to "all men," Paul affirms, is "because all sinned." We cannot excuse ourselves by pointing to Adam as children might do and saying, "He did it, not me!" Yes, sin has been let loose in the world, but each of us has acted out that disobedience. So the answer to our question is "Yes. Sin and death made entrance because of Adam. His action started this pandemic. We are sinful at our very origin (original sin). But we are individually culpable. We joined his rebellion and took up his cause. We all die because we all sin." The deadly connection between sin and death, begun with Adam, has repeated itself in the case of every human, observes commentator Douglas Moo.

In verse 14, Paul introduces a new term. He says, "death reigned," as if it were an evil king. Later he will say, "sin reigned" (v. 21). Death and sin are deadly co-regents over a fallen humanity. Their reign did not start with the handing down of the Ten Commandments to Moses. It began with Adam, and it continued right on through the time of Moses even before there was any law. When Paul uses the phrase "from Adam to Moses" (v. 14), he simply means to affirm that people were sinning from the start, long before the law came to help identify the transgressions.

ADAM AND CHRIST

ROMANS 5:15-21

Adam is already on the stage. But in verse 15, Paul brings Jesus Christ vividly before his readers with a pointed comparison between the two. Consider the following:

ADAM		CHRIST
<i>one man's trespass</i>	(v. 15)	<i>the grace of that one man</i>
<i>one man's sin</i>	(v. 16)	<i>the free gift</i>
<i>condemnation</i>	(v. 16)	<i>justification</i>
<i>condemnation for all men</i>	(v. 18)	<i>life for all men</i>
<i>one man's disobedience</i>	(v. 19)	<i>one man's obedience</i>
<i>many were made sinners</i>	(v. 19)	<i>many will be made righteous</i>
<i>sin reigned in death</i>	(v. 21)	<i>grace might also reign...leading to eternal life</i>

Adam, as a “type” of Christ, was a man whose one act had an impact on everyone. Jesus, as the anti-type, does the same, but with a positive result rather than a negative one.



Paul uses a special word to connect Adam and Christ. He says Adam is a “type of the one who was to come” (14). Old typewriters used metal keys (“type”) with letters or numbers that struck a page, leaving that same mark (called the “anti-type”). Theologians often speak of “typological” prophecy, in which an Old Testament person or event prefigures a corresponding fulfillment in the New Testament (as the flood prefigures baptism - 1 Peter 3:20–21). Adam, as a “type” of Christ, was a man whose one act had an impact on everyone. Jesus, as the anti-type, does the same, but with a positive result rather than a negative one.

But Paul wants to make clear that the blessing Christ brought is much more than the evil Adam caused. The lesser moves to the greater. So he uses words like “much more” (v. 15 and again in v. 17) and “abounded all the more” (v. 20). The word Paul uses in verse 20 actually means “overflowed above and beyond,” a wonderfully picturesque word that demonstrates how the grace of Jesus Christ always prevails over the damage caused by Adam and by our own sins.

As the chapter closes, we come again to the word “reigned.” The rule of sin and

death comes to an end for those who know and trust in Jesus Christ. Where once “sin reigned in death,” now “grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 21 NIV).

That grace has had an impact on the whole world, but it is experienced one life at a time. John Newton (1725–1807) was a British slave ship captain responsible for the death of countless innocent people. Later he came to know the grace of Jesus in his life. The reign of the rightful king in his life brought Newton out of his slave ship work into a new life as a Christian and as a pastor. His beloved hymn “Amazing Grace” is a testimony to that change. He wrote this epitaph for his tombstone:

John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.

A lost man was found. A dead man came to life. Paul will take that blessed theme of death and life and run with it in the next chapter of Romans.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

ROMANS 6:1-23

Lord Jesus Christ, liberate me from slavery to my habitual sins, addictions, and excuses. By Your Word set me free to serve You and my neighbor. I ask it for Your sake and in Your name. Amen.

For Review:

1. Sum up the difference between the world's understanding of peace and the meaning of shalom.

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2. What does it mean that Adam is a "type" of Christ?

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3. According to this chapter, what powers compete to "reign" over human beings?

Romans 6:1-10

4. How would you answer a person who says, "I like to sin and God likes to forgive. It's a good arrangement"? What help do these verses provide?

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5. Paul says, "We died to sin." According to him, when did that happen? And what does it mean?

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6. If you were baptized, find out as much as you can about the date and place. If you can locate your certificate, bring it along to class. Using these things, share with your small group what your baptism means to you.

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7. Which of the following comes closest to "mastering" you?

___ Envy and resenting others

___ Bodily appetites

___ Love for money

___ Electronic devices

Romans 6:11-14

8. How many times does the word "sin" or "sins" appear in these verses? Is it in singular or plural?

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9. In what concrete ways can you "offer yourself" to God this week?

Romans 6:15-23

10. What do you think is the difference between living "under law" and living "under grace"?

11. Luther complained that the people who had come out from under the pope's rule and heard the Gospel had, in some cases, begun to "live like pigs" as a result. What do you suppose he meant?

12. React to these two statements:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant, subject to all.

Is one of these more "true" than the other?

Does one appeal to you personally more than the other?

13. A word Paul uses in verse 22 is "sanctification." How is this word translated in the NIV? _____

What more do you learn about it from:

1 Cor. 1:30 _____

Eph. 5:25-26 _____

1 Thess. 4:3 _____

Heb. 10:14 _____

14. What, if anything, do you think this chapter has to say to people who have an addiction?

15. How has this chapter deepened your understanding of sin and how it works?

Memory Verse Challenge for Chapter 6 – choose ONE of the following:

Rom. 6:4 *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Rom. 6:13 *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God...as instruments for righteousness.*

Rom. 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*