

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

Romans 5:1-21

Key Verse: 5:8

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Chapters 1-8 can be divided into four parts: God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel (1:1-17); God’s righteous judgment upon the whole world (1:18-3:20); God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus (3:21-4:25); and God’s righteousness brings amazing blessings (5:1-8:39). The key word of Romans is **“God’s righteousness.”** The issue is how we can have it. We cannot earn it by our works; we can only receive it as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Why is it so important to have the righteousness of God? It is the way to have a right relationship with God who gives us eternal life. However, if we are cut off from God, the source of life, we experience spiritual death - meaninglessness, emptiness, helplessness, fear, anxiety and misery. We cannot gain eternal life by our own effort. Only God can give us eternal life.

A few years ago, 33 miners in Chile were trapped far underground due to a collapse. They were helpless and destined to die from lack of air, food and water. But help came from outside, when persistent rescuers drilled through and opened a way to save them. When they were set free, they knelt down and thanked God; a tremendous celebration followed. Spiritually speaking, when we are cut off from God, we are just like these miners. We are perishing. Our only help comes from God. Out of his great mercy, he provided the way of salvation through Jesus Christ and offers it to us when we simply believe in him. Through Jesus we can have a right relationship with God. In other words, we are justified - declared righteous. This blessing impacts our lives powerfully. In chapter 5, we can see that God’s righteousness makes our lives very fruitful. Let’s discover the fruitful life God has given us in Christ.

First, the fruits of peace, joy and hope, which come from love (1-11). At the end of chapter 4, Paul said that the words, **“it was credited to him,”** were not written for Abraham alone, but also for us, who believe in Jesus (4:23-24). Now Paul tells us what blessings we receive as a result. Paul appropriates these blessings directly to all believers in Christ. The words **“we,” “us,”** and **“our,”** are repeated 24 times in verses 1-11. What are these blessings?

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

The most immediate effect of being justified by faith is to have peace with God. Verse 1 reads, **“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The first meaning of peace is the cessation of an enemy’s hostility. Before being justified through faith we were God’s enemies, objects of his wrath (10). This is why dread, fear, guilt and anxiety filled our hearts. But when we put our faith in Jesus, he paid the price of our sins in full. We are no longer objects of God’s wrath. Now we have peace with God. This is God’s wonderful gift. Jesus said, **“...in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”** (Jn 16:33). No matter how much the world shakes, we have deep and abiding peace in Jesus. Paul exclaims that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us enjoy peace with God.

A continual effect of being justified by faith is that we stand in grace. Verse 2a says, **“...through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”** We have access to God’s presence. Knowing Jesus is like having a personal identification number (pin). When we simply come in Jesus’ name, the way to God opens (Heb 10:20). Now we can come to God freely anytime by depending on the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 says, **“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”** What a blessing! In the past many of us lived with a work-oriented mindset. We always felt we should do something to obtain God’s favor. If we did well, we became self-righteous and judgmental. If we did not do well, we condemned ourselves and felt guilty. There was no understanding or forgiveness. However, now we can have a grace-oriented mindset. God accepts us as we are. There is no condemnation. Rather there is understanding, love and forgiveness. Those who live under God’s grace enjoy true freedom and joy in their hearts. We can live boldly without fear of making mistakes. We can serve God freely by his grace. It is a blessed life to live under such grace.

The ultimate effect of being justified by faith is that we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Verse 2b says, **“...and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”** We can boast because our hope is certain. We can have a joyful and confident expectation which rests on God’s promises. Our ultimate hope is the glory of God. When Christ appears, we will be changed to be like

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

him and inherit the kingdom of God (Php 3:11; 1Co 15:50). People live with various hopes in this world. One lady hoped for a successful career, and sacrificed being a mother for it. Now she is unusually successful and wealthy. But worldly things cannot be our ultimate hope. They will all perish. However, hope in the kingdom of God is true and eternal. It is the living hope that never perishes, spoils or fades away (1Pe 1:3). When we have this hope, we have something worth boasting about and reason to be thankful in all circumstances.

Just as we rejoice in future glory, we can also rejoice in present sufferings. Let's read verses 3-4. **“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”** Here, **“glory,”** comes from the same Greek word as **“boast”** and carries the meaning of **“rejoice and exult”** (2,11).¹ How can we rejoice in suffering? Job said, **“man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward”** (Job 5:7). Furthermore, when we live a godly life in Christ Jesus, we will suffer (2Ti 3:12). Jesus said, **“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you”** (Jn 15:19). Suffering includes all kinds of trials, sacrifices and pains for the sake of serving Jesus. In the past, we made every effort to avoid suffering, because it was meaningless and wounded us. However, since we have been justified through faith, our attitude toward suffering has changed. Far from merely enduring it with stoic fortitude, now we are to rejoice in it. Why? We know that suffering leads to glory in the end. People whom God uses are led to glory through sufferings. Apostle Peter said, **“But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”** (1Pe 4:13). Let's remember that after suffering, glory comes!

Another reason we can rejoice in our sufferings is that suffering produces perseverance. **“Perseverance”** means the capacity to bear up under difficult circumstances. In other words, it means having an unwavering spirit, a strong inner man. Just as a tree takes deeper root through storms, so we take deeper root and become strong to persevere through suffering. Perseverance is very important in our lives of faith. Jesus said, **“By your endurance you will gain your lives”** (Lk 21:19 ESV, NASB). The life of faith is like a marathon.

¹ Many prominent Bible versions translate it as “rejoice” and “exult.” See, for example, ASV, AMP, AMPC, ESV, CSB, NASB, RSV

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

We will receive the crown of righteousness when we run to the end (2Ti 4:7). If we give up on the way, we have run in vain. Let's run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Perseverance produces character (4). The word “**character**” means the quality of a person who has been tested and passed. It is a mature, proven character. Through sufferings, the image of Christ is carved into our hearts until we grow to be like Jesus. Character ultimately produces hope. Through suffering, we can be purified; true hope is formed. This hope never disappoints us (5a). Hope in the world disappoints us. However, hope in the kingdom of God never disappoints us. How are we sure of this? Because God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (5b). George Matheson (1842-1906), while studying to be a Christian minister, began to go blind at the age of 20. Upon hearing this, his fiancé broke the engagement saying that she could not live her whole life with a blind person. George's sister took care of him faithfully and affectionately. But when he turned 40, his sister married. Not only did he lose her loving companionship, but it brought back the painful memory of his own broken engagement. On the evening of her marriage, suddenly, the Lord gave George inspiration to write the hymn “O Love that wilt not let me go.” It was completely finished in five minutes and never revised. In this way the Holy Spirit poured love into George's heart and helped him.

When we think about the results of being justified by faith, it is really amazing: we have peace with God, we stand in grace, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God and even in our sufferings. How is this possible? We find the answer in verses 6-8. Simply speaking, it is through God's unconditional love. Here we can see three kinds of people: a righteous person, a good person and a sinner. A righteous person is morally upright. People may respect this person, but they will not sacrifice their lives for them. A good person has genuine concern for others and does good for them. In rare cases, those who are loved by them will sacrifice their lives for them. Sinners are ungodly people living in willful rebellion against God. Who will die for such people? Verse 6 says, “**You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.**” Verse 8 says, “**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” God's love extends to us at the most desperate, awful moments of our lives, in our times of great need. It is not given because we are lovely or worthy. It is given unconditionally to wretched sinners. In verses

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

6,8,10, the words “**when**” or “**while**” refer to our status before knowing Christ. We were still powerless. We could do nothing to save ourselves. We were so hopeless that we couldn’t move. We were enemies of God and objects of his wrath. No one wants to die for people like that. But Christ died for us. What love! What grace! This is the historical evidence that God loves us.

God’s love is not limited in time and space. The word “**demonstrates**” is a present, active verb. This shows us that God’s love is beyond time and space. Just as he showed his love toward sinners on the cross 2,000 years ago, so he continues to love sinners today, tomorrow and forever. God’s love does not depend on our condition, circumstances or performance. Some people who served God for many years, suddenly develop cancer. Other people may have a sudden and tragic accident. Still other people may repeat the same mistake or sinful habit. When these things happen we naturally doubt the love of God and have a sense of punishment. However, we should not doubt God’s love in any situation. God’s love is so deep and wide that we cannot measure it. As we are rooted and established in God’s love, we grow to the fullness of God (Eph 3:17-19).

So far, Paul has concentrated on what God has already done for us through Jesus Christ. Yet there is more still to come, which is not yet ours. We are eagerly looking forward to our full and final salvation. How can we be sure of what is to come? In verses 9-10, the words “**how much more**” are repeated. Paul answers like this: If God has accomplished our justification at the cost of Jesus’ blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Christ (9)! Again, if we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son when we were God’s enemies, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his resurrection (10)! These verses assure us of our salvation. Sometimes, when we make mistakes, we worry that we can lose our salvation. But our salvation does not depend on us; it depends on God’s love and the living Savior Jesus Christ who is able to guide us to the end. Here, Paul emphasizes having assurance of our salvation.

“Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (11). Reconciliation means that our relationship with God is restored. We have fellowship with God as we live in this world. This is more precious than all the money and fame of the whole world. When we are convinced of this we

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

don't envy anyone or anything, but rather can give godly influence to others. Let's boast in God through Christ!

Second, death in Adam and life in Christ (12-21). When we consider the assurance of salvation through Christ, questions arise in our minds. How can one person, Jesus Christ, give salvation to all mankind? How can Christ's death 2,000 years ago affect me today? Paul answers by comparing and contrasting Adam and Christ - representatives of mankind.

Verse 12 says, **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”** This tells us the principle of representation. We wonder why, since only one person Adam sinned, blame is passed on to all mankind. It is because Adam was a representative of mankind. His sin was imputed to all his descendants. This is “original sin.” Death came through Adam's sin. In this way, death came to all people, because all, in Adam, sinned. Verse 13 says that sin was in the world even before the law was given. Sin was not taken into account when there was no law. Nevertheless, people died as a consequence of sin, whether they recognized sin as sin or not. Let me explain using an illustration. There was a bottle with poison inside but it was unmarked. One man drank from it, not knowing it was poison and died. Later, someone put a sign on the bottle, “Caution: Poison! Do not drink!” Despite this sign, one curious person drank from it, and died as a result. Both of them died after drinking poison; it didn't matter whether they knew it was poison or not. Likewise, we die of sin whether we know sin as sin or not. People, from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, died because they sinned in Adam even though they didn't commit the same sin as Adam (14). In this way, all people have been influenced by Adam. The disobedience of one man, Adam, continues to affect us even today, and so, death continues to reign over us as it did over Adam.

Adam is a pattern of the Christ to come (14b). Like Adam, Christ is the representative of humanity. Just as Adam influences all mankind, so does Christ. However, the content is different, as verses 15-19 show us. The nature of their actions was different (15). The gift is not like the trespass. Adam insisted on going his own way. It was an act of self-assertion. The effect of Adam's sin was disaster which meant death for everyone (15a). But the work of Christ was an act of self-sacrifice. God's grace and the gift that came by

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR US

the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many. The “**overflow**” implies “rich, undeserved abundance.”

The immediate effect of their actions was different (16). Adam brought condemnation to mankind, but Christ brought justification. The ultimate effect of the two actions is also different (17). By the trespass of the one man, Adam, death reigned; through the one man, Jesus Christ, we who receive the abundant provision of grace in him reign in life. It is tragic that one sin, that is, one man’s disobedience, influenced all human history. However, one act of righteousness, that is, the obedience of the one man Christ, affects human history greatly and has the power to transform our lives even today (18-19). Adam and Christ are main characters in creating new histories. While Adam created the history of sin and disobedience, Christ created the history of life and obedience.

Verses 20-21 state why the law was added. When there was no law, people, though they sinned, didn’t consider sin as sin, because their consciences were paralyzed (13). If sin is not taken into account, we are unaware of our need for Christ’s death. That’s why the law was added. The law exposes sin as sin and increases the trespass. However, where sin increases, grace increases all the more. The more fully we are aware of sin, the more Jesus’ grace overflows. Then at last, grace reigns through righteousness and leads us to eternal life. God demonstrates his love for us through Jesus. Because of this we can have assurance of salvation and live a dynamic and fruitful life. Thank God for his amazing love for us.