

RIGHT IN ROMANS

Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

PART TWO – JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (3:21-5:21)

A. PROVIDED IN JESUS CHRIST (3:21-31)

1. Righteousness of God in Christ available for justification (vv. 21-24)

a) Manifested in Christ (v. 21)

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested . . .” The apostle never minimized the requirements of the law. He was thoroughly versed in the law, having been, prior to his conversion, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. The holiness required by the law was fully realized in Jesus Christ.

But just what is meant by this righteousness of God? Perhaps we cannot do better than to answer this question in the words of an old Puritan divine, “The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires Him to require.” And let it never be forgotten that the only acceptable righteousness God can ever find in men is that which He Himself imputes and imparts to them in the person of His Son.

“. . . being witnessed by the law and the prophets . . .” We know, of course, that the incarnation and atonement were the crowning fruition of the Old Testament revelation, the fulfillment of all that went before.

b) Obtainable through faith in Christ (v. 22)

“. . . even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . .” Like Niagara Falls this righteousness of God in Christ is more than a spectacle to be admired; it is a source of redemptive and transforming power to be appropriated through faith in the Saviour. In Christ and in Him alone, we acquire the righteousness that God requires of us. We become righteous in God's sight through surrender to God's Son.

Saving faith in Christ is simply taking what God offers us in Him. Trying to scale the cliff of the law's inexorable demands, we sooner or later inevitably find ourselves helplessly trapped on a ledge. Yet we must reach the top or fall into eternal condemnation.

But one recourse is left to us, and that is, to seize with the hand of faith the rope of redemptive love that God has let down to us in the person of Jesus Christ who died for our sins.

c) Indispensable for all (vv. 22b, 23)

“ . . . **for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God . . .**” If all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, then it follows that all are in equal need of grace, the least sinful as well as the most sinful. The strongest swimmer is as helpless to swim across the Atlantic as is the beginner. Compared with God's standards of perfection, the gradations in natural goodness are like the varying elevations of hills and mountains as over against the distance from the earth to the stars measured in terms of thousands and millions of light years. Man is helpless to lift himself out of sin. None but Jesus Christ can save him.

d) Available for justification (vv. 24, 25a)

“ . . . **being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation . . .**” The righteousness of God is made available for justification through the death of Christ. The cross at one and the same time unveils the righteousness of God and provides a righteousness for men whereby they may become justified in the sight of God.

The blood of Jesus shed on Calvary signifies His life offered to God for sin and communicated to men in grace. But it is only through faith, as we have already emphasized at some length, that man appropriates the fruits of the redemptive death of the Saviour.

“ . . . **through faith in his blood . . .**” Faith on the part of the sinner is absolutely indispensable to this transfusion of the redemptive love of God. What Christ is to us is inescapably conditioned by what we let Him be for us. He must be seen and accepted as Saviour to be the Saviour of a particular soul.

Newness of life results when the objective revelation of the love of God in Jesus inspires subjective appropriation of it, even as food must be taken and digested if it is to give nourishment to the body, or as medicine must be taken before it can prove efficacious in the cure of the patient.

2. Threefold justification effected on the cross (vv. 25b, 26)

In these two verses we find a threefold justification set forth. God had to justify Himself to men, to justify Himself to Himself, and to justify men to Himself. Apart from the first two, the third form of justification would have been out of the question. God could not justify men if He did not satisfy justice. He cannot for any cause abrogate the attributes that make Him God. Men could never be redeemed to a holiness relaxed in their favor.

a) Justification of God to men (vv. 25b, 26a)

“ . . . **to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God . . .**” The apostle is here referring to God's apparent passing over of sins in the Old Testament dispensation before Christ came.

If taken as making atonement for sins, the sacrifices of animals were, of course, ridiculously inadequate; they were, as we well know, but types of the divine Sacrifice later to be made, but this typological significance of animal sacrifices may not always have been realized by those who were living under the Mosaic system, much less by their heathen neighbors. They were like bank notes: of value only when backed by gold in the government treasury.

Now the cross demonstrated that God, far from regarding sin lightly, was prepared to go to the outermost limit to secure its removal. It revealed His infinite hatred of iniquity and His infinite love of holiness. The death of Jesus demonstrated that God counted no cost too great to pay if only sin might be done away with and holiness made a permanent possession in the lives of believers.

b) Justification of God to God (v. 26b)

“ . . . **that he might be just** . . . ” Were God to give Himself to men as less than infinite holy love. He would be untrue to Himself. What God is governs what God does. When sin came into the world, it precipitated in God the necessity for the reconciliation of two life principles, namely,

- (1) the communication of Himself in love,
- (2) the preservation of Himself in truth or holiness.

And this inner reconciliation within the divine nature necessitated, as the one and only means to its realization, a sacrificial atonement whereby man could be redeemed from sin.

Let us make use of an analogy to make clear how divine love, coming into conflict with human sin, involved Deity in sacrificial suffering. The love of God, like a stream fed by perennial springs, could not but flow irrepressibly onward, but always, in an undeviating and inescapable course of holiness, like a river imprisoned on either side by sheer perpendicular cliffs several thousand feet in height. The sin of man lay directly in the way, like a precipice in the bed of the river. Since the love of God, being infinite, could not cease flowing, and being holy, could not go around sin compromisingly, there was nothing left but for it to plunge over sin in a Niagara of redemptive sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

c) Justification of men to God (v. 26c)

“ . . . **and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.** ” The object of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross was not only the justification of God to men, and of God to Himself, but also of men to God. This last is probably the aspect of this threefold justification effected on Calvary to which the average Christian commonly gives the most thought; and yet its integral relation to the other two should not be overlooked.

Apart from the justification of God to men, there could be no real reconciliation of men to God. We have already seen that in redeeming man God could not do violence to His own holy nature. In the deliverance of men from the guilt, power, and penalty of sin there could be not the slightest particle of compromise with sin on the part of Deity. But let it never be forgotten that the God whose justice demanded an eternal penalty on sin is one and the same God whose mercy provided in Jesus Christ an eternal remedy for sin.

3. Justification by faith, not by works (vv. 27-30)

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” How can men boast of what is theirs only through faith? How can a Christian be proud or self-righteous if he realizes the tremendous price paid for his redemption? All other glorying than in the cross of Jesus Christ is shamefully out of place.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Salvation by faith and dependence on works are mutually exclusive. Christ became a curse for us that He might remove the curse from us (Galatians 3:13). Surely he would not have had to suffer such terrible things had there been any other way whereby to save us from sin.

The costliness of God's gift of grace in Christ should make ineffaceably plain the costliness of a trust in works on the part of sinners. Dependence on works is rejection of grace and subjection to sin.

“Is he the God the God of Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also: it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.” The Jew and the Gentile, says the apostle in effect, are one in their need of redemption and one with regard to God's willingness to save them by grace.

Let churches everywhere get back to the cross and realize the common yet infinite need that Jesus has met in giving **“his life a ransom for many.”** Transcending all the innumerable differences of race; circumstance, environment, aptitudes, temperament, and everything else that divides men, stands the incontrovertible fact that all are in need of that justification before God which can be appropriated only through faith in the crucified Redeemer. By faith we are made one in Christ.

4. Justification by faith confirms rather than destroys the Law (v. 31)

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Faith is unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Master. Acceptance of Christ as our Redeemer does not nullify, but rather, glorifies the law, because it is Christ alone who fulfilled the law, and it is through Him, and through Him alone, that we can measure up to the law. Christ purified us with His blood that we might glorify God with our lives.

The law is honored by the one and only means whereby its fulfillment is made possible; and it is through the cross that souls are saved from the guilt, power, and penalty of sin and enabled to live righteous and holy lives. It is only in Christ that we receive power to live in and for God.

In this verse Paul has in mind, very likely, the charge against his teaching that it tended toward presumption, toward the Antinomian view that men saved by grace might sin with impunity. Few attacks on his doctrine filled him with such horror.

Justification by faith is not justification for flouting moral standards. Freedom from sin is not freedom to sin. This point will come up again in chapter 6.

God's law condemns that God's grace may redeem. We must be brought to see that we are naught in self that we may find all in Christ.

B. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXEMPLIFIED IN ABRAHAM (4:1-25)

In this fourth chapter of Romans the apostle shows how justification by faith was exemplified in Abraham. We shall cover this section somewhat more summarily than we have the subjects gone before, touching upon the highlights.

1. Abraham's belief in God was accounted to him for righteousness (vv. 1-8)

“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.” If Abraham were saved by works, he could glory in self rather than in God, but that was not the case. Paul vigorously contends that Abraham was justified, not by his works, but rather by his belief in God. Abraham is set forth as our father in the faith, if not in the flesh.

It is the privilege of all who come within range of the Gospel message to enter into the spiritual heritage of Abraham which is pricelessly more precious than any material legacy could possibly be.

“For what saith the Scripture?” Do we turn to the Bible as our fountain of authority on the great questions of life? Some people seem to have the idea that confidence in the Bible is a sign of intellectual backwardness. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The use of this Book in sounding the great depths pertaining to God, the soul, and the meaning and destiny of life is no more narrowing than the use of the telescope in astronomy. Far from contracting, it vastly expands the vision. Especially when read prayerfully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God will continually unveil to our adoring gaze new worlds of truth, beauty, and goodness.

“Abraham believed God . . .” When it is said that Abraham believed God, what is meant is his personal trust in God, his acceptance of God's Word absolutely, simply because it was His Word. Such belief implied trust in the faithfulness and power of God to keep His promises, and so it was faith in the fullest sense.

“. . . and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Faith in itself is not to be regarded as righteousness. It is the condition, not the ground of acceptance. The ground of acceptance is the mercy of God.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” The faith of Abraham agrees with Christian faith in the characteristic that it is not of works. Justifying faith is not trust in any thing: it is trust in God. Abraham was saved, not by a general belief, but by his belief in God's supernatural promise.

Faith saves through creating a medium in and through which the grace of God, like water through irrigation canals, enters our hearts to transform them from deserts into gardens. Faith is simply the surrender of self to that which God alone can do in and for us.

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute [reckon] sin.” This quotation from Psalm 32 leads us to wonder whether people appreciate as deeply as they should the blessedness of the forgiveness of sins.

Does the pardoning of our iniquities seem to be as imperatively needed as the healing of our bodies when stricken by some deadly disease? The real blessing of forgiven sin is the restoration of fellowship with God. The temporal benefits of having roads reopened and telephone lines repaired after a devastating blizzard are but the faintest illustrations on a material plane of the immeasurable blessing of having God's forgiveness renew our communion with Him after sin has played havoc with our hearts and lives. The more God means to us the more do we hate all that breaks, and the more do we prize all that builds, fellowship with Him.

2. Abraham's righteousness by faith made him the father of that believe (vv. 9-17).

a) Both of the circumcision and the uncircumcision (vv. 9-12).

Abraham received the promise of God before submitting to circumcision, the outward sign of his faith, and because of this priority of the promise and consequent belief in it over circumcision, he became the father of all that believe, whether circumcised or uncircumcised.

Many Jews counted upon their racial descent from Abraham physically to guarantee them against all condemnation and to procure for them against all condemnation and to procure for them eternal blessings, regardless of the manner of their personal living. They thought that because they submitted to certain ceremonial rites, they were immune from punishment for sin. But forms no more make people righteous than dishes produce the food they contain. It is perilous to make the sign a substitute for the reality it is designed merely to represent.

b) Children of Abraham are of faith and not of works (vv. 13-17).

“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” It was in his belief in God's promise that God found righteousness in Abraham; and it was this same faith in God that made him the spiritual ancestor of all who should believe throughout all generations to come. He became the father of all chosen people through Christ, who on the physical side was descended from Abraham. It is to be observed that this promise was given to Abraham several centuries before the law was received.

Abraham was impelled to obey God and to set forth into a land which he knew not, on the basis of the promise that God would make him a great blessing to the world. Appealing promises are revealing promises. The kind of promise that has the most attraction for a man shows much as to the kind of person he is. Are we as desirous of becoming blessings as of receiving blessings? The more God means to us the more do we long to have His truth prevail in the hearts and lives of men.

What we let God do for us governs very largely what He can do through us.

We must believe in order to receive. Faith makes us heirs of that in which we believe. What we think God is has much to do with what God does for, in, and through us. Faith is the main trunk line of spiritual commerce between man and God. What we can do for God is conditioned by what we let God do for us. All can believe when not all can achieve (in their own strength). And in a very real sense—because it lays hold of the very power of God—believing is achieving.

3. Abraham's faith a prototype of the Christian faith (vv. 18-25)

In this passage the apostle makes reference to Abraham's faith when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac as a type of Christian faith. His belief in the spoken Word of God was a prefiguring of belief in the Living Word of God.

He believed that even if Isaac were slain, through whom God had promised to make him the father of millions, God would keep His promise, even if it meant the raising of Isaac to life again by the hand of God. He retained his faith in the goodness and power of God, in the very face of facts that seemed utterly contradictory to such a hypothesis.

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed unto him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead . . .” The apostle here very pointedly makes the application of this faith of Abraham as being illustrative of the believer's faith in God.

Abraham believed that somehow, even if Isaac were slain, God would raise him up again and restore him to life. We believe that we are saved through Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. As Abraham trusted God in the face of seeming impossibilities, we have faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We believe not simply in a man, but in a God-man who has been raised up and is even now at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

Saving faith in God is staking everything upon the assurance that God is true to Himself and to those who put their trust in Him. God has revealed Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through Christ He has made salvation available to all who put their faith in Him.

“ . . . who was delivered for our offenses [trespasses], and was raised again for our justification.” Because we have no righteousness in ourselves God allowed His Son to be put to death on the cross for men who could never save themselves, that He might declare righteous those who should repent and believe in Him who was crucified for their sins.

In closing this portion of our exposition, one or two points of comparison between the faith of Abraham and that of Christians deserve notice.

- Abraham had faith in what God would do through Christ; we have faith in what God has done through Christ.
- Abraham believed in a Christ concealed in the future; we believe in a Christ revealed in the present.

Is our dedication to God commensurate with this fuller revelation from God?

C. RECONCILIATION WITH GOD THROUGH JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (5:1-11)

1. Peace with God through faith in Christ (vv. 1, 2a)

Up to this point the apostle has been building an approach for his main argument, which is this, namely, that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Here in the fifth chapter he comes to grips with this mighty transforming truth. He has set forth the thesis that we are saved by faith and not by works.

He has demonstrated that the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, is under condemnation for sin. All are helpless to save themselves. Even Abraham was justified because of his belief in God and not by works. And now Paul sets out to prove it is through Jesus Christ that we find justification by faith and have peace with God.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God . . .” Just what is meant by that wonderful statement, **“we have peace with God”**? The reference is not to the sinner's changed attitude toward God, but to God's changed relationship to the sinner. God has pronounced, or declared, the sinner not guilty.

The sinner, in other words, has been acquitted before the great tribunal of God. God Himself has abolished the hostility. He Himself has made peace through the death of His Son on Calvary's cross.

“. . . through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” It is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ through whom this new relationship of peace with God has been effected. Only the One, who was at one and the same time truly God and truly man, could make possible this restored fellowship. Just as a bridge spanning a wide gulf must rest securely on each side of the chasm, even so must the One through whom the gulf of sin is to be bridged, by whom man and God are to be brought together, be both God and man.

“. . . by whom also we have access . . .” We come to God by Him who saves from sin and bestows the garment of imputed righteousness. Those who want to be introduced to the king and queen in the Court of St. James in England cannot come garbed in whatever kind of dress happens to please their fancy. Yet there are those who have the effrontery, in spite of all that God has said to the contrary, to come into the presence of God arrayed in the rags of their own self-righteousness.

“. . . by faith into this grace wherein we stand . . .” The bridge of reconciliation between God and man has been built at the cost of Jesus' death on the cross, but we must walk across this bridge. That is where faith comes in. We must accept for ourselves what God provides in His Son.

2. Triumph over trial through hope of glory (vv. 2b-5a)

“. . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” The hope of Heaven should be very real to us as Christians. It is not self-centeredness to look forward to the glories which God Himself has provided for us in the life to come. Anticipation of life in Heaven affords invigoration for life on earth. Streams that flow from the hills of God should be harnessed to turn the wheels that run the mills of life. Our object of hope for the future should be a fountain of strength in the present.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also . . .” The thought of the apostle is not simply when we are in tribulations, but because we are in tribulations. Paul wants his readers to realize that if they have a living faith in Jesus Christ, they should rejoice because of being in trial, subjected to tests.

And we, too, if our faith in Jesus be as dynamically real as it ought to be, can rise on the wings of that faith above the storms of life. Faith makes the reality of Jesus Christ to become vitality in us. It is only in Him, however, that we can thus become the masters rather than the victims of adverse circumstances. Aspiration for Christ and inspiration from Christ are wings that will enable us to ride the wildest gales of trouble victoriously.

“ . . . **knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience [approvedness]; and experience, hope . . .**” The view of a goal is a great help to us in the discernment and employment of means that will further its attainment. As Christians we should rejoice in even the most difficult lessons that God assigns, because it is by mastering these lessons through the power of faith that we come to the place of mastery in presenting Christ to others with an eloquence born of a living experience of His transforming and enabling power. What Christ means to us has much to do with what we make of life.

“ . . . **and hope maketh not ashamed . . .**” Hope, which in its origin is doctrinal, is strengthened by the bracing of character in the conflicts of life. The truths of faith do meet the needs of life. It is when our hopes in Christ are put on trial that they are in the way of becoming more genuinely ours. There is a commercial slogan, “Best by Test” that is most applicable to our Christian faith. It has abundantly proved its transcendency over all religions. Let us, individually, then, welcome the opportunity even through tribulation, to let God demonstrate through us the supremacy of a living faith in Christ. Endurance for Christ strengthens possession of Christ and fortifies our witnessing for Him.

3. The love of God in the heart is the spring of hope (v. 5b)

“ . . . **because the love of God is been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.**” All these Christian experiences and hopes rest upon the assurance of the love of God. This love is “the brimming river of the love of God” which has overflowed in our hearts.

Hope flows from the experience of the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. If God has bought us at such a cost, if He let His Son die upon the cross that we might become His eternal possession, will He not take care of us in all kinds of trouble in life? In all the evils that may beset us, will He not see that we come through unscathed?

Is it God's love to us or our love to Him that Paul has in mind in this passage? It is primarily God's love for us that Paul is thinking of, for that is his prevailing usage of the terms.

God's love for us is the essential thing, but unless God's love for us makes our hearts burn with love for God, it has proved ineffective so far as we are concerned. God's love revealed to us and bestowed on us must issue in love evoked from us.

4. Christ's reconciling death for us (vv. 6-8)

Just as redemptive love must be revealed before it can be received, so, to go a step farther, appropriation of redemptive love is prerequisite to transformation by it. In a blood transfusion it is of no avail for the vein of the healthy person to be opened to impart of its blood unless a vein in the one who is in danger of death be opened to take it in.

The cross that opened the heart of God must open the heart of man in order that the redemptive love in God may, by a process of spiritual blood transfusion, become redemptive life in man. The love of God poured out on the cross of Jesus must be poured into the soul of the sinner to become redemptively operative.

5. Christ's reconciling life in us (vv. 9-11)

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” The atonement as an objective reality wrought for us must become a subjective vitality wrought in us. Christ ever liveth to plead for us and to live in us. The atonement is an effect once achieved and ever abiding. The cross was like an immense dam converting a river into a mighty reservoir for irrigation purposes; Jesus' death made available for human salvation the redemptive love in the heart of God from all eternity.

D. CONTRASTING HERITAGES (5:12-21)

1. Heritage of sin and death through Adam (vv. 12-14)

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin . . .”

Anthropology, the study of the human race, points unmistakably, according to great authorities in that field, to the human race having come from one primal pair. While there are some who take opposite ground, perhaps through inveterate prejudice against anything savoring of Biblical authority, there are, on the other hand, a great many men well versed in all fields of research, who give it as their reasoned judgment based upon a careful study of all ascertainable facts that we have no reason to question the reliability of the scriptural statement as to the human race having originated in one man and one woman.

That being so, we may well appreciate how the fall of Adam and Eve would affect mankind down through the ages, and would bring death through sin. Men are not condemned for Adam's sin; they are condemned for the sins they individually commit of their own free will. However, they inherit a guilty nature subject to condemnation. All have inherited from Adam the tendency to sin; and there is no record in all human history of a sinless being except Jesus, who was, of course, the Son of God as well as the Son of man. All have sinned through yielding to the germ of sin, and death came as the consequence.

Through Jesus Christ there is redemption from the power of sin. Not escape from physical death (save for those alive at the time of the Rapture), is promised believers, but rather the promise is for the resurrection of the body and the everlasting survival of the soul in joyous and conscious union with God in Heaven where there is nothing to hamper and everything to promote unending progress in all that pertains to love and holiness.

“. . . for until the law sin was in the world.” The fact of death pointed to the fact of sin. Sin was in the world. Why? Because death had been universal from the time of Adam down to Moses, and the universality of death argues in Paul's mind (and we know that he was inspired of God in that viewpoint) that all have sinned and were sinners. There was the law of conscience before there was a written law. Man can no more violate the moral law with impunity than he can brazenly defy the laws of nature and escape the consequences.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses . . .” “Death reigned”; the picture here is of death as a tyrant holding cruel sway over a vast domain. Death and sin are very closely related. Death reigned because sin reigned.

In Colossians 1:13 there is an illustration or metaphor that vividly suggests the dominion of sin. The verse reads: **“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”**

It was the custom in ancient times for a conqueror to transport a whole people into bondage, or at least the cream of the population. That was the case with Israel and Judah when they were taken into captivity in punishment for their sins and idolatry. In this verse in Colossians we have an opposite kind of transportation – souls transported, not from freedom into bondage, but from bondage into freedom, transported from a kingdom of darkness into a kingdom of life and light and joy and everlasting fellowship with God.

How tragically unfortunate is it that there are hosts of men and women today who scorn this proffered emancipation, who deliberately choose freedom to sin instead of freedom from sin.

“. . . even over them that had not sinned after the similitude [likeness] of Adam's transgression.” There are a great many men and women who, because they do not sin in the same ways as other people do, flatter themselves upon the possession of marvelous virtues. We may not commit this sin or that, but we are under the dominion of sin unless we have given ourselves to the control of Jesus Christ.

2. Heritage of grace and life through Christ (v. 15)

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if by the offence of one the many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” Death has come through the sin of one person, Adam, who poisoned the stream at its source; but Jesus Christ, the second Adam, brings deliverance from trespasses for all who accept Him. The word “trespass” in the original story implies decline, deterioration, a fall from a higher position.

We know that to be a true description of sin. But against the hideous fact of sin stands the glorious fact of God's grace in sending Christ, and the grace of Christ in coming. The good results of Jesus' grace far out measure the bad results of Adam's sin.

3. Elaboration of these contrasting heritages (vv. 16-21)

a) Sin and death—Justification and life (vv. 16-18)

Because Jesus gave His life upon the cross for the redemption of men, therefore, God has declared “not guilty” all who avail themselves of that pardon. Souls must personally accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam's fall was the entering wedge for the sovereignty of death.

The state of those who receive God's gift is far more than mere deliverance from death; it is a new life of victory.

Let us, then, go forth realizing that the Christ-life is to be one of progress, going from height to height, ever growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This righteousness is a gift of God, a gift of possession, and a gift for expression.

b) Many made sinners—Many made righteous (v. 19)

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” We are made sinners through inheritance from Adam on the physical and merely on the human side; but we are made righteous if we have entered into the life of Christ. **“For to me to live is Christ,”** as Paul says in Philippians 1:21. We might well use that verse as a parallel to this whole section.

c) Abounding sin—Abounding grace (v. 20)

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound . . .” We sometimes become discouraged because of the prevalence of sin, but let us remember that the results of the grace of God are immeasurably beyond anything that sin can produce.

d) Death through sin—Life through Christ (v. 21)

“. . . that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” We know how desperately science is struggling today to gain the upper hand over defiant maladies. Medicine has made conquests in the recent past over certain diseases long regarded as incurable, but science has not yet found a sure cure for cancer, nor been able to find the cause of it. Why are people so indifferent to the means right at hand for the conquest of the disease of sin? Why are they so desirous of the extension of a few years of physical life on earth and so oblivious to the free gift of everlasting life? Let us remember that Jesus Christ died upon the cross that the power of sin might be overcome and that all who believe in Him might have life.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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