

A STUDY OF ROMANS
FROM JUSTIFICATION TO GLORIFICATION – PART 2
Taught by Bruce Bickel
September 19, 2012

Let's turn in your Bible, please, to Romans 5. This is our series on Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. The handout you have, what we used last week, is the same one that will be used this week. When we come to Chapter 6, which will be next week, I'll give you another handout. Each handout will go for two weeks. This is lesson 1 and 2; next week will be lessons 3 and 4. While you're turning in your Bibles to Romans 5, let's ask the Lord to be our Teacher.

Gracious and merciful Heavenly Father, once again we sit in awe of the privilege we have of sitting at your feet, that you would be our Teacher. We ask, Lord, that you would remove the frustrations of this week, that the Word of God would dwell in us richly, that we would respond with Psalms and hymns and praises and thanksgiving. But most of all, Father, we just pray that you'd be pleased as you always do so faithfully, that you would open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen!

The theme of Romans 5 is the absolute assurance of our salvation, and of our final glorification. Beginning at verse 3, where we left off last week, we have a continuation of what the Apostle Paul had been saying in the first two verses, where he taught us that we can be certain of our salvation as a result of our justification by faith alone. In that passage, as we saw last week, just as a quick review, you can see this on your notes, he tells us as a result of having been justified, we have peace with God, we have access to God, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Those are some of the consequences of our being justified by faith.

He says as wonderful as those three things are, that's not all that is there; there's still something more. He does this in the form of asking a question. It's basically this, "What is further proof that we are children of God, and that we are destined for glory?" That's a question he's going to ask in this. It's in this way that we can, which our faith enables us to face the trials, and the answer is, the way in which our faith, having been justified by faith alone, enables us to face the trials, the tribulations, and the troubles and the problems of life. That's what he's going to teach us tonight is one of the assurances that you have of your salvation, that your salvation is guaranteed; it's by how you handle the difficulties of life. There's evidence in that, in the proof of that.

You'll notice item C is that not only do we have peace with God, we access with God, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now he says that the believer has assurance from God. If you'll look at verses Romans 5:3-5, "³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and 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."

This is an extremely important concept and theme that deals in the Scripture, because so much of the New Testament really deals with how is that you and I manage the trials, tribulations and troubles of life. Really, there's no theme that's more predominant in Scripture than that theme of our managing the difficulties of life. That's because Jesus dealt with that theme at the very end of his ministry.

Take a look at John 16:33. These are the words of our Lord, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." There's no more important, no more subtle test of our profession in Christ than the way that we act toward the trials, tribulations and the troubles of life. The real test of our maturity, friends, is not that

you fail, because you're going to fail. The real test of our maturity in Christ is how quickly we get up after we have failed.

This is the great difference between Christianity and the cults. The cults will say something like this, "Believe this teaching, and you'll no longer have any troubles in life. Believe this teaching, and you'll see yourself as you really are. You'll get to know yourself. You'll have a bright outlook on life. And you won't have any more problems." You see, that's what the cults teach. But that is not the language of the New Testament. The language of the New Testament is this, "In this world, you will have tribulation."

There are some people who think they're Christians because of some good experience or some feeling they've had, that sounds so wonderful, but at the moment that they are confronted with trials, tribulations or troubles in life, their first response is to? Blame God, and then they abandon their so-called faith. You see, blaming God is really convenient. It means that you can be irresponsible, to not take responsibility for your own conduct, and let's just blame God because I'm the center of the universe, and it's his fault that I'm having these difficulties. You see, that's the easy way out.

To those people, I would say, "You probably don't have true saving faith, because that is not the response that Paul is saying as a result of having been justified by faith. Salvation, to them, means being happy and having happy feelings. Now that's one of the consequences, but remember this; Jesus said this, "I give you peace, because in this world, you'll have tribulations. But have peace, I have overcome the world."

One of the tests that's Paul's going to teach us in Romans 5, to give us the assurance of our salvation, is how do you handle your troubles. How do you handle your tribulations? How do you handle the difficulties of life? The true test of saving faith is how do we manage the difficulties that we're subjected to that Jesus said we would have?

It's not merely that we put up with these problems, which is stoicism, but he says you actually glory in them. Notice, you don't glory because of them; but you glory in them. It's when you're having it you're glorying. That is not natural. That's absolutely supernatural. That's a consequence of being justified by faith alone. That's why it's so critically important for us to understand this passage in Romans 5.

In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, Jesus constantly introduced the Beatitudes by the word "blessed." The word "blessed" literally means happy in spite of circumstances. He's saying that your happiness is not a result of the circumstances in which you find yourselves. Your happiness is not a result of the consequences or the circumstances in which you find yourself. In fact, the literal meaning of that word "blessed" means it is the state of being that has an awareness of happiness. In other words, the reason you're happy is because of your state of being. It's not because of the circumstances. It's not because of the situation. It's not because of the environment. It's because of the state of being that you have as a result of having been justified by faith alone. You see, that's why it's a test of our true saving faith.

Our Christian response, Paul tells us, is not merely to put up with the trial, not just to be happy in the trial, or be happy in spite of it, but he's saying the true test is to be happy in the midst of it. Folks, that is not natural. That's why he's saying it's so important to understand it. That's a consequence of God declaring you sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient, imputing the righteousness of Christ to you, giving you justification by faith, he changes the way he looks at you. And the result is this, that when you recognize that, your state of being changes, and what allows you to rejoice in the midst of your suffering is this—you're in the state of being that's aware of happiness. But your happiness is not dictated by your circumstances. We rejoice not on account of it; we rejoice because of it.

So how does that work out in us? I mean, how is that possible? Well now we come to verse 4, and we see that suffering produces perseverance, which Paul says produces character, which produces hope. He's basically saying that trials produce hope. That's one of the assurances of our salvation, is you have hope in the midst of our trials.

The keyword here is to understand this word "works." Notice that, that he says that these sufferings work for us. Paul is thinking of a process that does something to us. This process we're going through does something to us. It's a process that works out certain things in us, and that final product is namely patience. It means that we understand what we're going through, these sovereignly ordained trials in life, are given us the opportunity to be patient. When we pray for patience, does God give you patience? Or does he give you the opportunity to be patient? When you are praying for courage, for strength, does he give you strength? Or does he give you opportunity to be strong and to be courageous?

Look at 2 Corinthians 4:17. There's a certain process that works itself out and it has certain results. This works, these things, this process works step-by-step, and it produces a final product. That product in our character is patience. Patience means constancy. It means steadfastness. The result of this process is this. It helps us do a couple of things. Trials help us do a couple of things. First of all, it helps us recognize a fresh need for the Lord, because you're overwhelmed. You're just buried in this difficulty. What that does, if you have true saving faith, is first of all, it will help you recognize that you have a fresh need for God's grace. You're in a need position. Grace is given at the moment of application, not at the moment of contemplation. In other words, when you're praying for grace, God doesn't give you the grace when you're thinking about it. God gives you the grace when you need it. Grace is given at the moment of the application, not at the moment of contemplation.

Let me give you a crass example of how I learned this years ago. On my ship that was going to Southeast Asia to be engaged in the Vietnam war, I was a pilot, and I wondered what would do the first time I got shot at, if it got shot at. What would I do? Would I panic? Would I flee? Would I run? Would I bail out? What would I do? It took the ship nine days to get over there. For nine days, I agonized, I worried, I fretted over, "What will I do?" I sweated bullets. I couldn't sleep at night. That's a legitimate concern for somebody going into combat. On my first mission, I did get shot at. Do you know what I did? I did what I was trained to do. I did exactly what was trained to do. All of a sudden, I came down and I said, "Why did worry for nine days? When I did what I was trade to do." You see you get the grace...I asked God to give me the grace to have the right response. I got the grace when I needed it. That's when I got jumped when I was flying. It wasn't when I was on the deck of my ship fretting over, "What am I going to do?" You see, the one thing that a trial and tribulation does for you is it puts a desire in your heart to have a fresh need for God's grace. Grace comes at the moment of application, not at the moment of our contemplation.

You see, these trials, Paul says, are very good for us, because it's confirming the assurance of your salvation. It's driving us back to the Lord. That's what's the good part of it. So we don't blame God anymore; take the easy way out. Rather we see this—that my faith, my justification by faith, puts me in a position of being drawn to the Lord, not blaming him. That's why suffering through trials by faith is an indication of the assurance of your salvation. Where do you go when you're suffering? Where do you go in your trial? Where do you go when you're troubled? The answer to that is going to verify, or give you the assurance of your salvation or indicate you don't have it at all. That's what Paul is saying.

You see, these trials help us do two things. Get a better knowledge of the Lord and a better knowledge of yourself. That's what trials do. Paul says, "That's why it's an assurance of your salvation." It's the fruit of your assurance, is you're recognizing how you manage these trials. You see, patient endurance leads to a proof that we really are truly a follower of Christ. That's because of this. We passed the test.

I'm not saying you go look for trials. I'm not saying you go make it happen. All I'm saying is when you do come up with a trial that you can't manage, you can't handle, what do you do? Do you blame him? Or do you go to him? It's going to reveal more about your understanding of who you are and who he is when you go through these trials. Paul says that's an assurance of your salvation—how you respond to it. Trials and problems show your love for God by how you respond. Either you have it or you don't.

Look at it this way. If I only love God when things are going well, I'm probably not a believer. It's the person who can say with Job, "Even though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." You see, when the evil ones come and attack you in a trial or a tribulation or trouble in life, and he begins to attack your trust in the Lord, here's what you have to say, "Get behind me Satan." You've got to fight it at that moment, because what he's going to do is deceive you, he's going to accuse you of your worth and your value, and at that moment, we have to stand firm and say, "Get behind me Satan. My faith is in the Lord, and in this trial, I'm going to rejoice in it because two things are happening. I'm going to get to know him more effectively, and I'm going to see myself more clearly." Paul says that's an assurance of your salvation. It's an indication of your salvation because you couldn't think like that unless God had changed your heart.

I want you to notice how this ends, this portion in these verses. It ends with hope. Paul starts with hope in verses 1, 2 and 3, and in verse 5, he ends with hope. It's this rejoicing in hope because I am better than I was before I went through this trial. I'm more certain of God than I was before I went through this trial. I'm more certain that I'm his child now than I was before I went through this trial. I'm more certain of his love for me because of this trial, and that I'm more certain of my love for him because of this trial. That's the assurance of hope. You see, it's when you and I respond like that, that God says, through Paul, that you have hope, and that is the hope that is the assurance of your salvation. So be sure, dearly beloved, when you go through these trials, you have to look at yourself and say, "What is my response? Am I going to blame him? Or am I going to go and flee to him?"

The next thing he tells us, not only do we have assurance from God, notice this. He says the believer is indwelt by God. That would be in Romans 5:5. Here he says the Holy Spirit is placed within our hearts. This is fascinating what Paul is teaching us here. When you and I become a Christian, God deposits the Holy Spirit within you. You can read about that in Ezekiel 36:22-27. In Ephesians 1:4, Paul calls the Holy Spirit, uses the Greek word "earnest." Literally it means engagement ring, or down payment or guarantee. In other words, when you and I come to saving faith, we become a follower of Christ; you were given a guarantee of your ultimate glorification, your ultimate salvation. You were given a guarantee of your perseverance, you were given a guarantee of your security, and you were given a guarantee that you'll make it to heaven.

The guarantee is—not your circumstances, it's not your response, it's not anything in you—the guarantee is the indwelling Holy Spirit given to every believer to produce—now notice this—to produce the awareness of love of God. Now notice, the unbeliever feels none of this love for God. Practically speaking, the Holy Spirit gives you the sense that God loves you. Without the Holy Spirit, you can't recognize that. That's why non-believers don't recognize that. They'll say, "Oh God loves me because my life's going well." But the first time a trial comes along what do they do? Blame God, "How can a God of love do that?" Have you ever heard, "That's not fair." Well I'll tell you what's not fair, folks. It's not fair Romans 5:6-11, that Christ died for me when I was his enemy. That's not fair. But it's righteous. It's holy.

The words "shed abroad," notice in verse 5, "and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." This word "shed abroad" or "given to us" carries the idea of profusely pouring out or lavishly pouring out. What is it that he lavishly pours out? Your understanding that God loves you. Now notice, this is something the Holy

Spirit does to you. It's not something that you deduce on your own. It's not something that you take by faith. You don't take by faith the fact that God loves you. We don't arrive at this at some conclusion, as a result of some argument or some deduction or some study we did. It's not something you absorb by faith. It's something that you do not take by faith; it is something the Holy Spirit does to you. Notice verse 5. He pours out lavishly the sense in your own spirit, soul and inner being that God loves you.

That's why the non-believer has no understanding of God's love because they don't have the Holy Spirit. This is not something that you accept by faith; it's a gift that God gives you because you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit to give you one single thought—God loves you. You sense that because the work of the Holy Spirit is doing something to you.

Now notice, it is the love of God being made real by the means of the impression upon your mind, the impression upon your heart by the spirit of God. It affects your emotions. It affects your feelings. It is direct and immediate. You do not come to understand that God loves you by deduction. You do not come to understand that God loves you by some study. You do not come to an understanding that God loves you except by this. The Holy Spirit lavishly pours that out in your spirit, and you know it because it's something the Holy Spirit does to you.

You see, you can be a Christian without this form of assurance, but you can't be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. You see, all believers do not have this level of assurance, but it's available to all of us. But not all of us have it. You see, it's our understanding of how much we let the Word of God dwell in us richly. What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Is it to have a good pep rally and get you all excited? It's to guide us unto all truth. One of the truths is this. God loves you. The more you spend time in the Scripture, the more you're going to have the Holy Spirit work in your life to convince you that God loves you, because you don't accept that faith. That is something that does to you through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. The more you are letting the Word of God dwell in you richly, the more you're going to understand how much God loves you. That's his role. That's his job description. It's to call attention to the person and work of Christ and to guide us into all truth. One of those truths is this. God loves you. You don't accept that by faith. That's something that does to you through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Notice in verses 6-9, we see a description of the lavishness of God's love being poured out through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Notice, first of all, the conquered people in verse 6. We were powerless with no ability. That's who he pours it out to. The compassionate Christ; you see that in verse 6. God looked at us as ungodly, yet loved us enough to prescribe Christ to die for us. Then you see the conditional sacrifice in verse 7. Nobody will die for a bad person, but God does. Now you see in verse 8, the commending God. God who hates every sin, evil thoughts and deeds, despises it with the fury of all heaven, is the one who reaches down and loves us, the ungodly sinner.

You see, you have to understand this. The degree to which you understand that God loves you is the degree to which the Holy Spirit is guiding you into all truth. The more you spend time in the Word, let the Word of God dwell in you richly, the more you're going to understand that. You don't do this by deduction. You don't accept it by faith. You accept it by the fact that God's Holy Spirit is increasing that as he deals with your mind, your soul, your spirit and your inner being to convince you of that, because that's a gift of the Holy Spirit, that God loves you.

You see, you may not feel love when you're going through a trial. You're not going to feel it. Where do you get it? "I know that God loves me." No, you see, that's something the spirit does. He convinces you of that because he guides you into all truth.

Next he wants you to see in verses 6-11 that the believer is preserved in God. I hope you see the sequence of our outline. We have access to God, we have acceptance from God, we have joy and hope in God, we are indwelt by God, and now we're preserved in God by the Holy Spirit. Notice how his description of our salvation is secure by the following. It's really described for us in verses 6-8. Notice, Christ's past work on the cross is the means by which you and I have assurance of our salvation. What did he do in verse 6? He died on the cross for us. Why did he do it? Verses 7 and 8—he died because he loves us. When did he do it? He did it when we were still helpless and hostile sinners. We need to understand this.

We don't spend enough time talking about when did Christ die for you. We always talk about the fact that he did die for you. When did he do it? Paul now says, "Let me tell you when he died for you." It's not when you think he did. It's not when you accepted him. It was prior to that. This is understanding—we need to grasp this, folks, because you never hear this taught in evangelism. We always say that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Yes, he does, but do you know when he loved you? Paul's going to tell us when he loved you. That's how you understand the depth of his lavishness of the Holy Spirit helping convince you that God loves you.

Paul's point here is this. It's the total inability of man to do anything about his own salvation. The total inability for you and me to do anything about our salvation. Let's look at verses 6-11, "6For while we were still weak, at the right time," timing, in your life, "Christ died for the ungodly. 7For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." When did he die for you? Not when you accepted him. Something happened before you accepted him. "9Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10For 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. 11More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

You see, notice the four words that he used to describe the timing when he saved you, when he died for you. Four words describe that in that passage, and here are the words—weak, ungodly, sinner and enemy. That's when he died for you. Weakness means this—you're without strength. You have no ability to do anything that's going to cause God to do anything in your life. That's when he died for you. When you had nothing to do with it, he died for you. Do you understand that? It's timing. The timing is critical here. Yes, he loves you, but he didn't love you when you loved him.

Ungodly means that the image of God in which you and I were created is so defaced that we give no resemblance to God and we're no longer recognizable as one who's been created in God's image. That's when he died for you. It also means that we are without love to God. That's when he died for you. It's we are without a desire for God. That's when he died for you. It's indeed when you were hating God and his law. That's when he died for you. When you were ungodly, when you were absolutely without strength, is when he died for you.

Every person who's a believer, every person who is a Christian, at one time was ungodly. That's when Christ died for you. That's the measure of his love. Folks, if you don't understand these four words of what you were, you'll never understand who you are. You've got to understand what you were before you were saved. You've got to understand who you were before you came to saving faith. If you don't understand these four words, you're going to take your salvation for granted because you're going to think it's a convenience, not a conversion, as we'll see in a moment.

You see, many people say they believe in God. They say they pray to him. Just because somebody says they believe in God does not prove they believe in God because their idea of God may be wrong. If you

really want to know if somebody knows the God of biblical revelation, ask them this question. What does God in the Bible say about you? What does it say about you? The God of the Bible says this, “You’re weak, you’re ungodly, you’re a sinner and you’re an enemy.” If you don’t understand that, you’re not worshiping the God of the Bible. You’ve created a god of your own human imagination that says, “Oh, I’m loveable.” No, you’re not. You were unlovable at the moment. He died for you. That’s why you have to take your salvation and understand these four words significantly, because if you don’t, you’re never going to understand the value of your salvation.

Does he see himself as weak, ungodly, sinful and an enemy of God? Or does that person see themselves as the publican in Luke 18 who said, “I thank God that I’m not like the other people.” You see, he thought he was godly, but he wasn’t. Ask a person, “What does the God of the Bible say about you,” and you’ll know more about who they’re worshiping—the god of their own human imagination or the God of biblical revelation.

Romans 10 says this, “There are people who have a zeal for God, but it’s without knowledge.” They’re worshiping God of their own human imagination, or they might be worshiping the right God in the wrong way, or they might be worshiping the wrong God. Ask them that question, “What does the God of the Bible say about you?” and you’ll know more about who they’re worshiping than any other question you can ask a person. You see, if you don’t understand that, you have no understanding what it means to be justified by faith alone. You see, these are all consequences of being justified, Paul tells us.

Next we Christ’s present work at God’s right hand. Paul says that Christ died to save us and now he lives to keep us saved. Here’s another reason for the assurance of our salvation. If Christ died for me, can he save me and continue in my life so that I don’t lose my salvation? That’s his logic. Now notice in the past, we have been justified by Christ’s blood. In the future, we’ll be saved from his wrath through Christ, he tells us in verses 9-11. You see, we were made right in God’s eyes by the blood of Christ. Now we’ll be saved from the wrath to come, through Christ. You can read about that in Revelation 20.

Look at it logically. One of the great things about Scripture is it’s so logical. It’s wonderful and poetic, but it’s also extremely logical. If God brought us to himself when we were his enemies, and he redeemed us then, when you hated him and you were his enemy, don’t you think that he will keep us much more now that we’re his friends? Look at the logic of that. That’s what Paul is saying. He’s saying this. If a dead Savior on the cross can save you, can’t a living Savior keep us? It’s logical. If Christ did the greater work, when he was dead, which was to save us, can he not do a lesser work, right now, which is to keep us? You see, that’s what he’s saying. You’ve got to understand the greater work was accomplished; the lesser work is maintaining your salvation because he accomplished it.

Notice the contrast—he says some people will die for a good person, but not a righteous person. What does he mean? Paul says there’s a difference between a good person and a righteous person. A righteous person is one who does everything correctly. They follow the law, they do what is required, they obey the Ten Commandments, they obey the rules and regulations. But he says nobody is going to die for a righteous person, but they might die for a good person. What’s the difference between a righteous and a good person? Paul’s definition of a good person is one who does all of those things that a righteous person does, but he goes even further. That’s the person who goes the second mile.

Let me give you an illustration of two piano players. One student plays all the correct keys, plays every note correctly, and plays the song absolutely, perfectly correct, but there’s no life in it. The second person comes along and plays every key correctly, plays the song absolutely perfectly correctly, just as the first person does, but you’re moved by that person because they give their life to that, and you sense that person is giving their life to the piano and to the music. You see, that’s the difference between a righteous person and a good person. Paul says nobody is going to die for a righteous person. Some might

die for a good person. But who will die for a bad person? Logic. No one. No one. If you won't die for a good guy, you're certainly not going to die for a bad guy. Yet he says that's what Christ did. He died for us when we were weak. When we were ungodly. When we were sinful. That's means you're an abject failure in everything you do. You miss the mark. He died for you when you were his enemy. Nobody does that. But God does.

Until you admit what you were before your conversion, you'll never appreciate who you are now—a child of the living God. You see, that's what Paul is saying. If you don't understand who you were, you're never going to appreciate now who you are. It's when you appreciate who you are, it's because you see what you used to be, and now you see that I'm now a child of the living God, who poured his love into me through the indwelling Holy Spirit and I now am convinced, not by faith, I'm convinced by a supernatural work of grace that God loves me because he loved me when I was weak, when I was ungodly, when I was sinful and missed the mark and was an abject failure in everything I tried to do, and he loved me when I was his enemy. You see, that is absolutely not logical. It's supernatural because it's grace. It's all the gratuitous grace of God in the Holy Spirit.

I want you to go with me to Ephesians 2. I want you to see what we were to help us understand this. “¹And you were dead...” That's when he loved you. What does dead mean? It means you have no ability. Absolutely weak. No ability to do anything. You could have a person up here who's dead and sing Just As I Am 563 times and he won't respond to anything, unless the grace of God goes into that person breathes into them life. What do you need? Faith or life first? You need life. A dead person doesn't need faith. They have no ability to do anything. They need life.

He reminds us, “²And you were dead,” that's who you were, “in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” What happens to a dead person? They need to be made alive. You don't do that by choice. That is done by grace. It's done by grace.

Now go to Titus 3. You notice in Chapter 3, he starts off with giving us about seven different virtues, and then he goes and reminds us of seven different vices in this passage. “¹Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” That's who you are now. He reminds us of what you were, “³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” You see, our life is this. I was weak, I was ungodly, I was an abject failure, and I was his enemy. But God. You see, that's the keyword. But God.

If I ever write a book, I'm going to call it But God. This is what I call the apostolic but. It's one of the most significant words in all of the New Testament when you see the word “but God.” He's reminding us of what you were and what you are now. Friends, if you don't understand, Paul is saying, if you don't understand what you were, no doubt you're going to have doubts about the assurance of your salvation, because you think it was something that had to do with yourself. He's reminding us that had nothing to do with it because you were weak. You see, it's all of him, and logically this—if he saved you when he was dead on the cross, can he keep you in your salvation now that he's alive? He did the greater. Can he do the lesser? It's very logical. That's why you have the assurance of your salvation.

You see, there's nothing in human nature, nothing in any of us, to recommend us to God and to his love. We must realize that our salvation is entirely a gratuitous act that arises only and all together from the grace and mercy of God. It's when you understand that, that you take your salvation seriously, because you know it's not of you.

How does this provide us with assurance? Well let's take the position, the opposite position, and do some logical reasoning here. Let's say that, first of all, salvation is solely not of grace. Let's say, for instance, that I say I believe that Christ died for me because I love God, and because I was trying to please him, because I was trying to be a good person, I was striving to keep the law. Then the inevitable corollary or conclusion to that mindset would be that. If in the future, I might choose to love God less. I might choose to do fewer good works. I might choose for some reason or other not to be as good a person as I used to be. The conclusion is can I lose it? Because it's up to me. You see, what security do I have if I have a salvation that's based upon me? If my salvation depends on who I am and what I've done, and what I desire, that in any sense it depends upon me, what assurance do I have? I may change. I may fail. I may falter. I might slip. I might backslide. You see, then my salvation would always be precarious. But thankfully, Paul says, it all depends upon the love of God, and he does not change.

So you see, salvation dearly beloved, is not merely a future; it's a present and abundant joy. Look at Romans 5:11, "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." You see, we don't joy in our own righteousness. We don't joy in our own ability. We don't joy in our ability to handle trials and tribulations. We joy in God. A cross-reference would be Psalm 35:9. I'd encourage you to read that tonight when you go home. You'll see the source of your joy is we joy in God.

Now we come to a very important passage, verses 12-21. This is the summary of our condemnation. Paul contrasts the work of Adam, who is the sinful father of all people, he contrasts that with the work of Christ who is the sinless Savior of people. As you go to Romans 5:10, I'd make one suggestion. For a stronger, better translation, which is consistent with the more ancient texts of the translations of the Bible, is to have verse 10 read, the last portion would be, "saved in his life." We translate it "saved by his life."

The Greek words "in" and "by" are the same word. It can be cross-used at times. More recent translations use the word "by." I prefer the word "in," and I'll tell you why. This helps me understand what Paul says when he uses the word "therefore" in verse 12. You see, then he says, "Therefore just as sin came into the world." You see, the word "in" means this—in the spirit of or in the realm of or in connection with. We begin to see in the use of that little word "in," we see that reconciliation in Christ not only leads us to forgiveness of our sins and the declaration that God says that your righteous, but it also puts us into Christ. Into Christ. That's why Paul says 129 times, he uses the expression "in Christ" to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. He doesn't say they're a Christian. He says they're in Christ. It's because of that verse.

Notice, "More than that, we also rejoice in God." Why do we do that? "For 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 in his life." That means you're in Christ. You're saved because you're in Christ. That's why he can keep you because you're in Christ. You see, that helps us understand the rest of this section as we go through this. It gives us a clear picture in my mind of the radical change of position before God by the use of that little word "in." You see, we're now in Christ, where Paul says you were formerly in Adam. There's your contrast. I was in Adam, but now I'm in Christ.

In these verses, he shows that there is nothing new to this idea of imputation. The concept of imputation means crediting to. Just as we were credited with the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, the imputation of his righteousness to us through justification. It's imputation. You see the same thing that when you were in Adam, the imputation of his sin was placed upon you and me and all of mankind. The idea of imputation isn't new with Christ; it's because of the imputation of Adam's sin to us. There can be no imputation of the sinless perfection and perfect obedience unless there was imputation of sin in Adam. See how that works? There's no reason for this, so there wasn't reason for that. That's what Paul is saying. You were in Adam, but now you're not because you're justified by faith. You're now in Christ.

These verses show us that there's nothing new to this idea of imputation. The whole story of the human race can only be summed up and understood in terms of our relationship to Adam and the imputation of his sin to us. You'll never understand humanity of mankind until you understand this, what Paul's teaching us. That's why this is such a critical passage for us to understand humanity. That's because God has always dealt with mankind through a representative and a head.

The whole story of the human race can be summed up in terms of this. What happened because of Adam and what happened and will happen because of Christ. That's the history of the world. Look at it logically. Think of the world today. The same things that are occurring today, occurred the moment Adam sinned; it just continued, now probably more flagrant and egregious now because we've learned how to do it more effectively over 3,000 years. But notice, we have war. We had it right after sin entered the world. Thievery, moral breakdown, moral decadence, murders and so forth. But in the midst of all of that, there was a group of people who were radically different. Those are the ones who are in Christ. Radically different.

You know what the greatest proof of the truthfulness and historicity of Genesis 1, 2 and 3 is? It's death, because prior to that, there was no death. When sin entered, doubt, blame, shame and death occurred, that didn't exist before sin. Adam, as the head of the human race, all of that sin was now imputed to us.

There are some wonderful things that we need to understand. We need to understand there are about four things that this passage is going to teach us that are critical. In the whole of human history, the whole history of humanity—past, present and future—all depends upon our understanding of our relationship to Adam and our relationship to Christ, because there's only been two heads of mankind. One was Adam and one was Christ, and there will never be another one. The Lord Jesus Christ is the new head—now get this—of a new humanity, because of what he has done. What has he done? Read verses 6-11 of Romans 5. You see, he is the head now of a whole new humanity. When we are in Christ, Paul's going to tell us this—we are members of a new human race; we are members of a new human humanity, because you're no longer in Adam; you now have been credited with the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, and in midst of all of the evil of this world, there's a group of people who are radically different, and those are the ones who understand what it means to be justified by faith alone. Those are the followers of Christ.

One of the great passages—I think this is one of the greatest passages of Scripture. Let me give you a couple of reasons why. He teaches us four great truths in this Scripture. I'm just going to have to give them to you. I can't teach them to you because of time, but I'm just going to give to you. Four great things are found in verses 12-21. First of all is this—the doctrine of original sin. Adam's sin was imputed, credited to you and me, and that's why the Scripture says this, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." You were given credit for his evilness, his sinfulness. What is it you need to be removed from being in Adam to in Christ? You need credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. There would be no need for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ if there were not the imputation of Adam's sin on you and me and all of mankind. There would be no need

for it. You understand humanity when you understand what it means to be in Adam, and what it means to be in Christ.

The second thing we learn here is this. This section of Scripture (Romans 5:12-21) really insists upon our accepting the story in Genesis as literal fact in history. That's because of this. Are people dying? That's proof that Genesis is historically accurate and real and literal. That's a literal event in history that occurred, and death is the confirmation of that. It proves that that was literal because death did not enter until sin came. When somebody dies, it's proving Genesis 1, 2 and 3 is literal historical fact, not some allegorical fiction.

The third thing it teaches us this. It teaches us about covenant theology, that God always deals with mankind through a special arrangement. Two big arrangements—the old covenant and the new covenant. The old covenant was through the law; the new covenant is through grace. He always works through an arrangement. It also reveals one of the most precious doctrines that we can ever discuss in this Romans 5 study and that is this. He reveals to us what it means to be in union with Christ. Union with Christ. That's why I like the word “in” his life, rather than “by” his life. It accentuates the fact that you are now in union with Christ Jesus. This section tells you why you're weak. It tells you why you're ungodly. It tells you why you're an abject failure in everything you do. It tells you why you're a hater of God. But it also tells you this. It really tells you what your salvation means. It says salvation is not a convenience. It's a radical conversion into a new humanity, into a new race of people, who are no longer in Adam, but you're in Christ.

You see, there's no in and out of salvation, Paul says in those verses. There's no in and out. He says this. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ. You're not in one and half the other. You're either in Adam or you're not. You're either in Christ or you're not. The assurance of your salvation is your understanding that little word “in.” You see, Paul reveals what we were, but he also says this is what we are. You're now in union with Christ. You're part of a new humanity. You're part of a new race of people who are no longer bound by the sin of Adam. You've been justified by faith alone. God looks at you as totally different. He says you're now in Christ. You're no longer in Adam.

The Holy Spirit comes into your heart and convinces you that God loves you because of what you know you were, because you know this. Some people die for a righteous person, some people might die for a good person, but nobody would die for me, except God. That's because he loves me, and he loves you. That's what Paul is telling us. That's why you have the assurance of your salvation.

Let me just quickly walk you through a contrast between the work of Adam and the work of Christ (verses 12-15). I've just given you a summary of what we're now going to go through by your outline. Notice the work of Adam. The reality of his act was this in 5:12. When Adam sinned, sin entered the whole human race. That's why you were born sinful. That's why you were born guilty. My first act of breath was an act of sin, because I had Adam's sin on me at my first breath as a child.

Secondly, the scope of his act—death spread to everyone. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The nature of his act—because one person disobeyed, everybody became sinful. The results of his act—imputed judgment on Adam's posterity. That's us. They all died anyway. And also eternal judgment on all the unsaved. Adam's sin brought death and condemnation upon all people. And then the relationship of the law to his act. God's law was given so that all people would see how sinful they were. That's why the law was given. Not for us to live up to, because you can't. It's to reveal how sinful you are. There's a sign outside in the yard says, “Do not walk on the grass.” What the first thing you want to do? Walk on the grass. You see, all that sign does, it doesn't prevent you from walking on the grass, it just exposes how sinful you are, because you want to walk on the grass. That's what the law does.

Contrast that with what he says is the work of Christ. In Adam versus in Christ. Because of Christ's death, people now can be justified by faith. The scope of his act—he brought forgiveness through God's bountiful gift. He brought forgiveness, compared to Adam bringing condemnation. Christ's one act of righteousness makes people right in God's sight through justification by faith.

The nature of his act—because one person obeyed God, now we can become right in God's eyes. Just as one person disobeyed, we all suffer. Because one man obeyed, we all can be justified by faith alone. The results of his act—by justification, sanctification and glorification. Justification is freedom from the penalty of my sin. Sanctification is freedom from the power of sin. Glorification is freedom from the presence of sin. Notice the relationship of sin to his act—as people sin more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant.

I was talking to a friend of mine today who wrote me a nice note. We were just talking about Romans 5 and 6. He said, "You know when people ask me how am I doing in my faith, I used to say I'm doing fine. Everything's fine. But you know, in reality, when I listen to what you're teaching, I realize I'm not doing well in my faith. But Christ is. It's not me. I'm not doing too well in my faith. But I know this—Christ is." That's what Paul is saying.

You see, if you're depending upon your faith to give you the evidence of your salvation, it's going to be precarious. He gives us the consequences of justification by faith alone in Romans 5 and says this is why you know that your salvation is absolutely secure and your salvation is guaranteed. If you look at your notes, and that is because the believer has peace with God, the believer has access to God, the believer has assurance from God, the believer is indwelt by God, the believer is preserved by God, and you contrast that with what it means to be in Adam versus what it means to be in Christ. Then the consequence is this—you and I have the absolute assurance of our salvation because it's a work that God does in us. It's not something that you accept by faith. It's something God does to you when you're justified by faith alone.

Next week we'll pick up the logical question, which is this. Well if that's the case, then why not just sin more? We'll talk about that; that's where we start next week. Let's pray.

Father, this is has been extremely powerful and convicting truth that your Holy Spirit has taught us. I would say, Lord, if I've said anything that is inconsistent with the revealed Word, that is inconsistent with your nature, your attributes, your glory or your intent, that you'd be gracious to remove that from our mind and only those things that have been taught to us by the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth will be the things that we would remember. And most of all, Father, may we walk out of this room tonight with a clear understanding of what it means to have a salvation in Christ Jesus by grace alone. It's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. And all God's people said...Amen!!