

Romans 5

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 25, 2018

Well, good morning everyone. You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles with me to the book of Romans, if you're not already there. And as you're doing that this morning, we're continuing our series called the book of Romans in Three Months, where we're looking at the book of Romans over a three month or a 12-week period of time. I mentioned to you earlier that there are a lot of ways to study the Bible and one is with a survey. You can look at large portions at a time and that's what we're doing right now in this series. We're surveying the book of Romans large portions at a time. We're going through about a chapter or more per week, so you can get the main idea of the book, so you can get the flow of it.

And the main idea is found in chapter one and that is this: We are saved by the power of God. If you could sum up the book of Romans in a single phrase, that is it. Romans one verse 16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The word "power" there is the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get the word dynamite. This is the dynamite of God, Paul says. This is his TNT. This is what He uses to change the world and blow things up. He uses the gospel.

If you think about it, you can't put dynamite in a room and expect nothing to change, and in a similar way, you can't put the gospel in a room and expect nothing to change. I've seen it before where you give someone the gospel and you tell them that Jesus died for sinners and rose from the grave and everything changes doesn't it? The air goes out of the room and gets real quiet, especially on a plane, because they can't go anywhere, you got a captive audience. They're stuck there. Why does it get quiet like that? Well, it's because you just threw dynamite in the room. You just put TNT on the plane.

We've also seen it where you do that, and someone believes, and everything gets exciting. It gets fresh and new, because they've become new creatures in Christ, their whole world gets turned upside down. Why is that? Because you just put dynamite in the conversation. Paul says, "For it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." To say this in other way, if anybody needed the power of God, it was the people Paul wrote this to. And they needed a ton of dynamite.

Chapter one verse seven says that this letter was written "...to all who are beloved of God in Rome." And if you look a little bit down in verse 15 he says again, "From my part I'm eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." So, this is a letter that's written to the church in Rome to the city of Rome. Everyone lived in the Roman Empire back then, so there would be no point in referring to the empire. This is a reference to the city. And if anybody needed God's power, it was this place.

Just a little background on Rome. At the time this was written, the Roman Empire ruled over about 100 million people, that was one-fifth of the population of the world. So, one out of every five people on the planet lived in the Roman Empire. It covered two million square miles. It started in Europe and went all the way to Asia. If you look on a map that's a tremendous amount

of territory to rule without modern communications, modern travel, no emails, and they did it all from this one city. They governed it from the place Paul was writing to. This was the headquarters. This was the capital. It was everything, which means it was very, very, very, rich; a very, very wealthy city. It was beautiful, by all accounts.

Many authors talk about the famous buildings that were in Rome. They had the Forum and the Pantheon, where the Romans worshiped all their gods. They had one building called the Pantheon where they put all of them in there and worshiped them. You had the Circus Maximus or the Colosseum where the gladiators fought. The Colosseum could sit 50,000-80,000 people in the first century. You can imagine crowd control at a gladiatorial combat would be something intense, right? The Palatine Hill was there, the Balas Diclition, Trajan's Market, the Arch of Titus which celebrated the emperor's deity. And it might be worth mentioning that all these buildings were made out of concrete which was brand new at the time. The Romans actually invented concrete. And so all of their materials, all their buildings, were made out of this solid material.

They were connected by an intricate network of roads. You guys have heard the phrase, "All roads lead to Rome." That was actually true. Because at the end of the second century, the Romans had built 200,000 miles of road. 50,000 of them were made out of concrete, and they all went back to the capital. The city dominated everything. It towered over everything. It was an incredible place. We need to mention this morning that it was also very, very, very evil.

For instance, all the Roman Caesars (Emperors) were bisexual or adulterous, just to name one of their sins. They were enslaved to lust. We complain about the sexual morals of our leaders today, but they have nothing on these guys. They slept with whoever they wanted to: slaves, married people, the young and the old. They had no self-control over their depravity.

They were also very violent. It was said that the worst job in the empire was the job of emperor because you weren't going to live long if you were the emperor. Somebody was going to kill you. Of the 70 Roman emperors that we know of, only 20 died of natural causes, the rest were assassinated. Many of them actually sipped poison on a regular basis to build up the tolerance to it, just in case someone slipped something in their drink. You could see the ulcers on their lips.

And there were thieves. There were stories of Nero robbing temples to pay for his building projects and the Emperor Caligula sending his sister off into exile, and then plundering all her goods. They were liars and gluttons. And the people of Rome followed all of this. They copied the emperor's behavior.

So, for instance, the city of Rome was full of brothels. Everywhere you went in the city, you would see the act of prostitution. It was legalized. In fact, it was so common there were 15 different Greek words to describe a prostitute. The Romans were also violent towards each other. The average life span of a Roman was about 30 years of age due in large part to sickness and disease, and violence.

Murder was common, assault and other crimes were common. And to punish them, the Roman soldiers were just as violent. They met violence with violence. The Romans didn't invent the art of crucifixion, but they perfected it. And they buried people alive. They skinned them alive.

They sowed them up in sacks with wild animals - they were horrendously violent. They stole from each other. They were liars and gluttons. There are stories of wealthy Romans vomiting in the middle of feast, just so they could go back and eat more. This is the city Paul is writing to. A lot of people today talk about (I've heard one famous pastor who talks about), "Boy, in my church we are in the most least churched part of the country." There's nothing on the city of Rome. This place was horrible.

And you've got to wonder as you're looking in Romans chapter one, how would you start a letter like this? What would you say to a city this bad? You can just imagine Paul sitting there with his pen wondering, "Okay, where do I even start? Okay, here's what I'm going to do, for I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God for salvation. That's how you fix this, that's how you make it better. Give them some dynamite. Give them some power." By the way, this is exactly what happened as the Roman people believed the gospel - the empire changed. One historian said, "The birth of Christianity changed forever the face of the world, especially Rome. It changed everything the Roman Empire stood for."

Now, if you lived in the city in the first century, you would think there's no way you're going to change this thing. There's no way you're going to turn this around. It's too bad. It's too far gone. It's too disgusting. I've heard people say the same thing about Canada. I've heard them say the same thing about Chilliwack and Vancouver. The sin is too bad. The adultery is too bad. All the depravity is too bad. Paul says, "That's not true, you can do something about it. You can tell people the gospel. You can show them the power of God. Tell them what Christ has done for them. Tell them that He died to set them free."

As I was studying this, I remember I've got friend, a graduate at seminary with. He's actually right outside the city of Rome right now doing missions work, and training of pastors. And the point is that city turned around. And it's been turned around for thousands of years by the grace of God, and the power of God.

A little boy was visiting a cave with his mother, and when they got to the deepest part of the cave, the tour guide turned off the lights just to show how dark it was. And the room went black, and the little boy started to cry because it scared him. Immediately his mother said, "Don't worry son because somebody knows how to turn the lights on." That's what Paul is saying in the book of Romans. Somebody knows how to turn the lights on. Somebody knows how to fix this cesspool of sin and this world of iniquity. And His name is Jesus Christ. Paul says tell them about Him. He will change everything.

And just to show you how He does this, in the book of Romans in chapter one verse 18, building up to our passage for this morning, Paul says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." In other words, God is angry with unrighteous men. He is angry with those who commit adultery and engage in violence, in gluttony, in lying, in thieving, and all that stuff.

But, to balance that out in chapter two verse three, he goes on to say, "But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same things yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?" In other words, God is angry with self-

righteous men too. He's angry with unrighteous men in chapter one, He is angry with self-righteous men in chapter two. He says they won't escape God's wrath either because they do those things in their heart. Chapter one: those guys do it overtly, they do it out here in the open flagrantly. And chapter two: those guys do it in their heart and judge everybody else. Paul says that's evil too.

And then he says in chapter three verse 21 (he gives us some good news in chapter three verse 21) he says, "But, now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ." In other words, you can be saved apart from the law Paul says, or apart from keeping the law. You can be righteous or right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus kept the law, Jesus was perfectly righteous, and you can be righteous through Him.

Chapter four verse five explains this a little further when it says, "But to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as a righteousness." Paul uses the phrase credited there. A credit is something you don't earn. It's a free gift. The Bible says, if you believe in Jesus Christ, righteousness will be given to you as a free gift, as a credit through the mercy of God. And if you believe in Him, it will be credited to you. Romans four says, "Just as it was with Abraham, through faith alone."

And that brings us to Romans chapter five. Chapter five verse one starts off this way ... You want to look there with me. We're caught up to our passage for this morning. Romans five verse one says, "Therefore having been justified by faith." The last word in chapter four is "justification," and one of the first words in chapter five is the same word. He says, "Therefore having been justified by faith." In other words, Romans five is about justification, that's the theme of this chapter. Being "just" or "right with God."

When we trust in Jesus, God makes us right with Himself, right with His law. When we have faith in Him like Abraham did, He treats us as if we kept all of it, just like Jesus did. Albert Barnes in his notes on Romans says,

What is justification? It is the declare and purpose of God to regard those who believe in Jesus as if they had not sinned, on the basis of His merits. It is not mere pardon. Pardon is forgiveness of past offenses...but justification, however, is an act by which God determines to treat us here after as righteous – as if we had never sinned. The basis for this is the merit of Jesus Christ, merit that we can plead as if it were our own. He has taken our place and died in our stead; He has met the discerning stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own heads and He did it because we believe in Him.

If you think about it, Paul as a Jew starts off the book of Romans. He should be talking about the law of God. And every law in the world is based on a merit system. You do this, you get this, right? You don't do this, you don't get this. It's the same way with God's law. Keep God's law you will be rewarded, you go to heaven. Don't keep it you will be punished, you'll go to hell. It's really as simple as that.

And with that in mind, Jesus kept it where we didn't, but now He offers to give us His reward. He offers to save us and to give us His merits. Not just to forgive, but to treat us as if we had never sinned at all. Not just to pardon, but to justify. To give us a perfect standing with God. And that's what chapter five is about. Paul is giving us the gospel and talking about the power of God, the power that will change the world, power that will change the empire, power that will change this rotten city of Rome. He gives us some benefits of our justification.

So, if you're taking notes this morning, here are some benefits, four benefits to our justification with God. That's a big word. (I'll break this down for you). The four benefits to our justification, four blessings of Jesus' merits, of trusting in His merits. And the first one is this, is peace. The first benefit we have from our justification is peace.

The world needs a little bit of peace today, doesn't it? I didn't grow up in the 60s and 70s, but for you guys who did, did the peace sign make it to Canada too? Was that a Canadian thing as well? Everybody talks about peace. But when you break God's law, there is a war between you and God going. There's no peace. There's a rift in the relationship. Does that make sense? There's hostility because God is angry with you. He's mad at your sin. But Paul says, Jesus came to fix that, to heal the rift and bring you peace.

And verse one says it this way. In chapter five verse one he says, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now that's a short phrase there, but let me give you a few thoughts on it. One is this, Paul says, "Therefore having been justified." If you notice that's in the past tense in English, and in Greek it's in a tense which means it happened in the past. It's completely finished now. So, it happened back there and stayed back there. In other words, Jesus died for your sins, and now you're justified. Period. It's a finished event. It's complete, it's not a process.

There are Christian groups that teach that justification is a process. God does His part, you do yours. God gets the ball rolling, you keep it rolling through the sacraments, or things like that. There are groups that say that, but Paul says that's not true. God does it all. Jesus paid it all. And if you trust in Him, you have been justified.

To look at this another way (I think this is very, very helpful), if you're in Christ this morning, you could never be more justified than you are right now. I know that some of you are struggling with sin this morning. It's getting the best of you to the point that you're down and discouraged. Let me build you up for a moment and remind you that if you're in Christ, you could never be more justified, or right with God, than you are right now, because your justification is finished. The work is done.

And as a result, Paul says, you can have peace. That peace doesn't refer to a feeling. Sometimes you have the feeling of peace, sometimes you don't, right? And this peace in verse one doesn't refer to an easy life. Sometimes you got that, and sometimes you don't. It refers to the fact that the hostility between you and God is over. The rift has been healed.

And as a result of this, verse two says, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction

by faith." Some of your translations say "access" there which is a good translation as well. In ancient times you couldn't visit a king unless someone gave you access, unless someone gave you an introduction. You couldn't just walk right into the throne room first. You might get your head cut off for that. Paul says Jesus did that for us. He gave us access to God. He gave us an introduction.

I don't know if any of you have heard of this before, but several years ago my Dad got me a ride on a Goodyear Blimp. Do I have any fellow red necks in here? Is anybody impressed with that? ... Okay good. It flies over sporting events in the States like the Super Bowl, things like that. But, my Dad got me a ride on it because he works for Goodyear. Now, here's the thing about that, I don't work for Goodyear. I don't know anybody who flies the Goodyear Blimp. I have no way to get on that thing. He had to give me access. I went through him. It's the same way here. Speaking reverently here, Paul says Jesus gives us access to God. He brings us into that relationship. He had a perfect relationship with God, He had a perfect connection. Everything looks good. Everything was great for all eternity, and He lets us into that through faith in His blood.

And Paul says that as a result of that, we can now stand. In verse two it says, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand." That means stand in His presence, stand in the relationship. If you think about it, you can't stand in a relationship with God. You have too much sin for that. If someone picked out the sins in your life, you would crumble to the ground. Psalm 130 verse three says, "If you O Lord should mark iniquities, who could stand?" Revelation six verse 17 says, "When the great day of God's wrath comes, no one will be able to stand." But Paul says, "Jesus can stand, and you can stand with Him." He stood in God's presence for all eternity. He was one with the father, one in relationship, one in everything. And if you trust in Him, you can be blessed with that.

And let me give you some thoughts on this; what this means practically speaking. Let me give you some applications for this. One is this, you don't need to be anxious about your sin because it has been justified. Remember that's past tense. As I just mentioned, some of you are struggling with sin this morning. I don't know where everybody is at, but that's always the case. It's a battle for you. I mentioned all those sins in Rome: the violence, lust, and gluttony, and dishonesty, all those things. And you're experiencing that stuff in your heart. I want to encourage you that if you're a Christian you don't have to be anxious about that, because it has been justified. It's been taken care of at the cross which means the victory is a sure thing. The conquest is over, from God's point of view, which leads to this: you don't have to feel guilty about your sin.

You shouldn't feel anxious about it, you don't have to feel guilty about it, because Jesus took care of that too. You should feel guilty about it if you're still living in it, and that's another sermon for another time. Matter of fact Romans six will talk about that. You should feel guilty if your sin is getting victory over you, but if you're getting victory over your sin, you shouldn't feel guilty because Christ took care of that at the cross. Your debt has been paid. Let me say it this way, you don't have to kill yourself for the sins that Jesus died for. You don't have to beat yourself up for the things that beat Him up at the cross.

Martin Luther said you call God a liar when you do that. You call God a liar when you punish yourself for the sins that Jesus was already punished for. He said that's a terrible form of blasphemy. That's a horrendous slap in the face of God, because you're saying the cross was not enough. You're saying it didn't take care of your sin, and now you have to do more. Paul says you couldn't do more than what Christ did on the cross. It's impossible.

And that leads to this, and this might be the most encouraging application to this passage (this part of it anyway): you can come directly to God, since your sin is done away with and it's nailed to the cross, you can come directly to the Father. You don't need to go through a priest. You don't need to go through a bunch of works, you can just come to Him in faith.

I love being a pastor, but I'm blown away with how people respond when I tell them I do that. Some people look nervous, and they start cursing, and they don't make eye contact. Others start confessing their sins, they start telling me their deepest darkest secrets. And I'm like, "Oh, we just met! Give me a second to..." And some ask me to pray for them, which I'm happy to do. It's always a blessing to pray for somebody, but I have to remind them that they can pray for themselves. I'm not a priest. You don't have to go through me to get to God, you can go straight to God through Christ. Amen? That's probably the most encouraging part of this. Jesus died for our sins. He healed the broken relationship. He gave us an introduction, gave us access, and now we can stand with God and have peace.

And that leads to another benefit we get from our justification, another blessing from this and that is hope. Jesus gave us peace, and He also gave us hope. We just talked about that this morning. He gave us something to look forward to, something to be excited about.

The Roman people didn't have a lot to get excited about. They lived a very bleak existence. You can imagine living in a city like Rome, and you're coming home from the grocery store, and "Oh goodness there's someone getting crucified again," on your way home from the store. Or "Oh boy, there's Joe getting beat up by the Centurions again." In fact, on the ruins of a tomb in ancient Rome, we find the words that were scribbled on there, "I was not, I became, I am not, and now I don't care anymore." And the Romans thought that way. They lived a pretty meaningless life. These are the people that popularized stoicism, and cynicism, and fatalism where they said there's nothing we can do about the future. Paul says you don't have to talk that way if you're in Christ.

And if you notice at the end of verse two, he says it like this, he says, "And we exalt in the hope of the glory of God." Paul says because of what Christ has done for us, because He's justified us and introduced us to God, we can exalt and hope. Some of your translations say, "Rejoice in hope." That's another way of saying take delight in it, be excited about the hope we have. Why? Because you know where you're going. Because of what Jesus has done for you, you know what's going to happen to you when you die. If you're right with God now, you'll be right with Him then. If you're justified with Him now, you'll be justified then. You will stand before God through Christ.

And not only that but Paul goes on to say in verse three that God is building character in you through your trials. In verse three he says, "And not only this, but we also exalt in our

tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.” If you notice, you see a progression of thought here. Since we've been justified, we rejoice in our trials, because they bring perseverance which leads to character, which leads to hope. In other words, we rejoice because our trials change us, and they make us like Jesus, and that gives us hope.

If you were a Roman living in the first century, you would have seen your fair share of trials, but what you wouldn't have seen is somebody rejoicing over them. Does anybody in here rejoice when they get slapped around, or beaten? Paul says you can do that, and that's a revolutionary thing for these people back then. Verse five goes on to say, "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." In other words, this is how you tell someone is a Christian. This is how you tell that they have the Holy Spirit given to them: they have hope in the midst of their trials.

I know some of the people in our church like to grow garlic. And I've heard that (correct me if I'm wrong) garlic is planted in the fall and it freezes in the winter, is that right? And it grows back again in the spring. That's how you know it's alive. It grows back in the spring, after it freezes. That's how you know a Christian is alive. They grow back after they freeze. They grow back after they suffer. Or, they grow through the suffering, they don't die in it. The tribulation brings perseverance, and perseverance proven character, and proven character hope. Eternal life is eternal, which means you never lose it. Once you have it, it sticks with you forever.

To say it another way, John Bunyan said Christians are like bells. The harder you hit them, the better they sound. I think I've quoted that to you before, but Bunyan says Christians sound really good when they're hit. Unbelievers don't. They don't ring out to the glory of God. But we do, and it gives us hope to see that. Andrew Murray said the tree's roots grow deepest in the storm. As a tree is blowing around and being tossed from side to side, the roots go deeper, and deeper, and deeper, and deeper into the ground. We do the same thing in our trials. We grow deeper and deeper into Christ, and that draws us closer to Him; and that gives us hope.

A study was done several years ago about the church in China. It said that in the 1800s the church there was very small, about half a million Christians or so in the country. Today there are about 50 million, and they say it's because of the communists. The communist came in and persecuted the church and it grew. It grew by leaps and bounds because they had hope. These dear people had their roots deep into Christ, and as they suffered they rejoiced in the trials, and they persevered. And lots of people saw that and said, "What is all that about?", and the church grew. The church in Rome grew the same way. Tertullian said the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. This is what he's referring to.

And leads to another benefit we get from our justification, and that is this: love. The justification that Christ gives us, it gives us peace, it gives us hope, and it gives us love. As I was writing this out I thought it sounds a little cliché to say that, because we hear so much about the love of God today. We just had Valentine's day and little heart candies with "I love you" on them. A lot of people think that way about the love of God.

But it's interesting, if you put yourself in the first century, nobody talked about the love of God back then. The Roman gods didn't love anybody. Zeus, and Aphrodite, and Hercules, and Apollo, they're all selfish. Matter of fact, Plato said the funny thing about our gods is they're worse than our humans. It was one of the criticism the Romans had against the church, by the way. They couldn't believe we worshiped a God who loved us. They thought that was sissy. They thought that was weak, but this is exactly what Paul says in verses six through eight. If you read in Romans five, he says,

For while we were all still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one would hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare to even die. But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul's argument here is simple. It's very rare to die for someone. Looking around the room here I can tell that none of you have done that before. I have not myself. But, if you're going to do it, Paul says, it's very uncommon. You will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare to die. But verse eight says, and here's the kicker, "But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in the while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The word "sinners" there means someone who misses the mark. You could translate it "enemy." I believe verse 10 uses that word "enemy." You can translate it to "law-breaker," this means someone who misses the mark of the law. Jesus died for people like that. That's how He loved us. He was crucified for sinners. There wasn't a Roman god or any god in the ancient world who did anything like this. There isn't a god in the modern world who did anything like this. You can search the scope of religion from creation until today, no one ever thought of this.

In fact, this was so unusual that Paul had to use a word (*agape*) that was an unusual word to describe. It was a very rare word. The Greeks had four words for love: *storge*, *eros*, *philia*, and this word *agape*, and this was the rarest one of them all. As a matter of fact, Plato and Aristotle never used it in their writings. Seneca and Cicero never referred to it. Homer didn't put it in the Iliad. Sophocles left it out of his plays. And they did that because *agape* meant unconditional love, and nobody knew what that meant. It meant "love for love sake; love that expected nothing in return." And no one had ever seen that before, so no one ever mentioned it. They left it alone.

Paul says, "I'm not going to leave it alone. I know what this word means. I know what unconditional love looks like. It looks like Jesus Christ." He says, "But God demonstrates His own love (*agape*) towards us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." It's unconditional love, Paul says. I've heard a lot of wonderful stories in my life, but I've never heard anything like this.

I heard the story once of a little boy who offered to donate some of his blood for his sister, because she was sick. And as the doctor poked him with the needle the boy said, "Am I going to die now doctor?" And the doctor said, "No you're not." And then he thought about it for a minute, and the doctor said, "Wait a minute, if you thought you were going to die, why did you go through with this procedure?" And the boy said, "Because she's my sister. I love her." That's a

great story. But it doesn't compare with this, because his sister wasn't his enemy. She didn't break his law. Paul says while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I heard another story once about a father sacrificing his son to save some people on a train. But as the story goes on, you find out it was an accident. The father didn't mean to do it. That doesn't compare with this either. This was no accident. God meant to do this. The verse says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us." This was very intentional.

And just to unpackage this a little bit, if you notice the flow of Paul's thought, in verse seven he mentions, "dying for a righteous man." That is one man singular, but by the time you get to verse eight, Paul mentions dying for sinners, plural; more than one. This means not only did Jesus die for one enemy, one rebel, one law-breaker, He died for all of them, all those who would believe. He had an infinite nature, which means He could take on an infinite amount of sin. He was God in flesh, so He could do only what God could do.

Here's the good news friends: if you're a sinner this morning, you've come to the right place, because Jesus died for people like you. If you've ever missed the mark or broken God's law, He died for people like that. I've heard people say, "I can't become a Christian because I've sinned too much." That's not what this says. It says you can never sin too much for God, because Jesus died for sinners. I've heard other people say, "I can't go to church because I'm too evil." Well, that's not what this is. This says Jesus died for God's enemies, and you can't get more evil than that; than being an enemy of God.

Let me flip this around and say it the other way, you don't get the benefits of this until you admit to your sin. You can't have salvation if you don't admit you're wrong, because He died for sinners. And if that category doesn't fit you, then salvation doesn't fit you. Jesus says in Luke five, he says, "It's not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick." He says, "I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repent." Since Jesus came to call sinners, He came to call those who were sick.

Martyn Lloyd Jones, who had a wonderful way of explaining things, said it this way, he says,

To make it very practical, I have a simple test. After I've explained the gospel to somebody I say, now are you ready to say that you're Christian?" And they hesitate, and I say, "What's the matter, why are you hesitating?" And they say, "Well, I don't feel like I'm good enough yet, I don't feel like I'm ready to be a Christian." And at once I know I've been wasting my breath. They're still thinking in terms of themselves.

It sounds very modest to say, "Well, I don't think I'm good enough," but it's a denial of the faith. The very essence of the Christian faith is to say that He is good enough, and I am in Him. As long as you go on thinking about yourself like that and saying, "I'm not good enough; Oh, I'm not good enough," you're denying God, denying the gospel, denying the very essence of the faith.

How can I put this plainly? It doesn't matter if you've almost entered the depths of hell. It doesn't matter if you're guilty of murder as well as every other vile sin. It doesn't matter what you've done...you are not hopeless.

Can we all say amen to that?

And that leads to one more benefit through our justification (and this is a long portion of Scripture, but it falls under one category): reconciliation. Our justification, or our being made right with God through Christ, gives us peace, it gives us hope, it gives us love, and one more thing Christ gives us, He give us reconciliation. Justification reconciles us with God. It restores the broken relationship that we were talking about. If you read in verses nine through ten, Paul says, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we will reconcile to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." And then Paul goes on in the rest of this chapter.

This is the reason I love it being under one category. He goes on in the rest of the chapter to describe when this problem started, this problem of a broken relationship. I won't be able to cover everything in the rest of chapter five. You can read it, and if you have any really deep questions, ask you care group leaders. They've all read 25 commentaries on this chapter. I'm joking...not a very funny joke, but it's very sincere from the heart. All right. And he says in verse 12 (this is where he gets into the beginning of the broken relationship) he says, "Therefore just as through one man's sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread through all men, because all sinned."

That phrase "one man" in verse 12 is a way of saying Adam, the one sinless man. Adam was sinless. I think you understand he was completely unique in the creation of the world. Adam and Eve were without sin, and that's it. He had a perfect relationship with God. But if you remember, he sinned and shattered the relationship. He ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, like he was not supposed to do. And as a result of that, Paul says, death entered the world. If you read Genesis, you'll read one, two, three, four, and then you get to chapter five, and what do you read in Genesis five as is given the genealogy? "And he died, and he died, and he died, and he died..." That's all a result of Adam's sin. It's been said that if you want evidence of the existence of sin, just go look at a graveyard.

You can say it this way too, in some sports you have what's called a team foul, or one person fouls, and it affects the entire team, everyone get penalized. That's what happened with Adam. He committed a foul. He penalized everyone. Death came to us all because we all went on to sin. But if you look down in verses 18 through 21, here's what God did to solve that problem. And again, we're skipping over some stuff here, but in verse 18,

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so

that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That phrase in verse 19 “the one” is a reference to Jesus, the other only sinless Man who ever lived. That's why it's capitalized in some of your Bibles. It's a reference to deity, the Son of God. Adam was created, or born without sin, so was Jesus. Adam came into the world with a perfect record, so did Jesus. He was virgin born, which means He did not inherit a sin nature.

But, where Adam sinned and brought death into the world, Jesus kept the law and brought reconciliation. That's the point here. He restored the relationship that Adam broke. He healed the rift that the first man created. This is some deep stuff. Some people have said, "Well, it's not fair that we all have a sin nature because of what Adam did." Well, it's not fair that you get to go to heaven because of what Christ did either. This is just the way God governs the universe.

And we don't have time to get into everything Paul says in verses 15 through 21, but if you noticed a couple of things. Notice how many times it mentions the word “reign.” That's important. Verse 14 says, "death reigned," and verse 21 uses a similar expression where it says, "sin reigned in death." But, on the flip side, verse 21 also says, "grace reigned; grace would reign through righteousness." And in verse 17 it says, "We shall reign if we trust in Jesus." And Paul says, "This is the result of this, Jesus reigns over Adam. The work of grace triumphs over the fall."

You also see the word “much more” repeated a couple of times in this passage. You see that phrase repeated in verse 15, verse 17, and verse 20. And the point is that Jesus did much more than Adam did. Verse 15 says it this way, "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more than the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the One man Jesus Christ abound to the many." I believe it's John Calvin who said Jesus is more powerful to save than Adam was to condemn. And another commentator said we're given so much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe this, this morning? Do you believe that Jesus did more than Adam did? I don't think I have to ask you guys if you believe that there's sin in this world. I think we all believe that, but do you believe Jesus is more powerful than that? To ask this another way, how is your relationship with God? Does it need to be reconciled? It's been said that everyone has a relationship with God. Even Satan and the demons have a relationship with God, it's just a bad one. Does that describe you this morning? Do you have a bad relationship with God? Is there a rift in the relationship that's not been healed? Is there a war going on between you and Him? If so, I want to tell you this morning that Jesus came to fix that. He has the power to fix that. He can reconcile you with the Father and make the war stop. There's perfect peace between Him and God, and He can bring you into that.

A well-known pastor once ran into an elderly man outside of a gym, and the elderly man was reading his Bible. So the pastor asked him what he was reading, and the man said, "I'm reading the book of Revelation." So, the pastor said, "Well, do you understand it?" And the man said, "Yeah I think I do. It means that Jesus wins." He's right. That's what Romans five says. It says Jesus is going to win. He's going to win against sin. He's going to win against death, and He's

going to win against hell. He's going to win against everything, and you can win too if you're in Him. Will you come to Him today? The Romans did, and it changed their world. If you would come to Him this morning, He would change yours. Let me pray for you to do that, if you haven't already. And if you have trusted in Christ, let's pray a prayer of rejoicing at what He's done in your life and mine.

Father we thank You for what Your sinless Son accomplished on the cross. And this is one of those chapters where we come to it and we feel like we could spend a whole month in this, diving into the mysteries of our salvation, Lord. But the point is very clear, and that is that Jesus saves us full and free. And we rejoice in that Lord. We thank You for that, for what Christ has accomplished. What He has done, what we never could. He has done what the first man Adam reversed and broke; that relationship. Thank You that Christ has healed it.

Lord I pray if there's any here this morning who have never come to Christ and experienced all this, if they feel like they read Romans five as an outsider, they're kind of looking in through the windows and wondering what is this all about; if they have a bad relationship with You where sin is engrossed in their life, and they're enslaved to it, Lord I pray you'd break them of that this morning and free them in Christ. Lord, thank You that we have a powerful message to tell. Thank You that we have a gospel that can change lives. And Lord I pray it'll do that today, and I pray that we will rejoice in the changed life we've already seen here in Grace Fellowship Church. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.