

Romans 5

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

Connecting, then, this verse — indeed the first eleven verses — with the last verse in chapter 4, we have three things made sure to us. Being justified, accounted righteous, before God, we have, as to all our sins, peace with God, yet fully recognizing His holiness and righteousness; and this, not through anything we have done, but through our Lord Jesus Christ; peace resulting from the blessed knowledge by faith that all our sins have been put away by the blood of Jesus, so that God can have no charge of guilt against us. *We have* peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. As to the past, all is cleared away.

Then, in the second place: “By whom also we have access by faith into THIS grace wherein we stand.” We enter by faith into the full, unclouded favor of God. This grace implies the free favor revealed in the redemption we have, being justified freely. This is our happy, abiding place. There we stand. What a wondrous, present peace! We need not say this cannot be enjoyed if we are walking carelessly, or allowing sin in any way.

And in the third place, as to the future, we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We do not hope to be justified, or to have peace — these *we have* — but we hope, with rejoicing, for the glory of God. Is it not joy to our hearts to know that we shall soon be in the scene where all is to the glory of God, all suited to Him; all pure within and without? Yes, sinless purity suited to Him, when He who has redeemed us has come, and taken us to Himself. Can anything give our hearts such joy as this, to be with Him, and like Him?

Verses 3-5: “And not only so,” not only have we peace with God, present access into the free favor of God, and the longing hope for His glory, but this enables us to glory in present tribulations also. “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not

ashamed; BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD IS shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO US.” We must notice a very common mistake as to these verses. They are often read as meaning the exact opposite of what they say, as though we must have this experience in order that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts; and if we pray much, and are very diligent in patience, experience, and hope, that then we may hope that the Holy Spirit will be given us.

No words can tell how utterly wrong all this is. The Holy Spirit is given to us because Jesus has finished the work of redemption; and He being now glorified, we are sealed by the Spirit, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Thus, to suppose that the Holy Spirit will be given because of any efforts, or experience, or devotedness of our own, is to set aside the perfect work of Christ. No, it is the very opposite; all this blessed patient experience is because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us.

Now just suppose you are invited to dine with her Majesty the Queen, and she shows you every possible attention and kindness; and, instead of enjoying that kindness, you propose to those present that you shall pray earnestly that you may have a queen, and a queen that will show you kindness; what would she — what would any one — think of such conduct? Blind and deaf persons alone could make such a mistake. No doubt those who know such a Queen best are most loyal; and those who know that the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto them, will love Him most, and have this blessed experience because of the very fact.

What shall we say of the blind and deaf who see nothing of God’s love to us, or its being shed abroad in our hearts; but, turning this precious scripture into legality, think and say that God will love us only as long as we love Him? The more we love God, the more He will love us! This thought is at the root of a great amount of spurious effort of holiness in man. Many would be startled to see it in plain dress.

What would you say to striving to make the flesh holy, in order that God might love it? Are not thousands doing so? Is not this the very thing you have been doing? Have we not practically said the old “I” must be holy, in order that God may love me? Truly the flesh must be subdued, but not even that, that God may love me, but because He has. We will now consider how He has loved us, and in what state we were when He loved us.

Verses 6-11: “For WHEN we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Have our hearts been bowed down to this fact? Not only were we guilty, but we had no strength, were without strength to be better. While we were in that very state, infinite love to us was displayed, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” There was no other means possible for God to justify the ungodly, but by His Son dying for the ungodly. Yes, it is in this very thing the love of God shines out to us. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Was this on the principle, that the more we love God, the more He will love us? Can there be a greater display of His love than, “Christ died for us”? Impossible! But this was while we were yet sinners.

Oh, pause and dwell on the love of God to us. Yes, not our love of God first. Not that we loved God, but that He thus loved us. The more this takes possession of our souls, the more shall we love Him.

Do you say, All this may be quite true as to the past; but may we not fail in the future, and then will not God cease to love us? No, having known the love of God, may we not at last be left to everlasting wrath? Let us hear the answer of the Holy Spirit to this most solemn question. If God has thus commended His love to us that when we were sinners, Christ died for us, “much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Note, *being* justified by His blood is always immutably the same; it is not having been justified once by His blood, we need to be again, but, being justified, it ever stands. His blood is ever the same before God,

having atoned for all our sins. Therefore we are ever justified by His blood. There is no change. Then, not only we are, but “WE SHALL be, saved from wrath through Him.” Oh, precious, infinite grace!

And there is still more: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Oh, what pains our Father takes to convince us of His everlasting, unchanging love! Just think — the whole atoning work of reconciling us to God was done by the death of His Son. God was glorified; our sins, all our sins, were transferred to Christ, and borne by Him, when we were enemies! And now we are justified from all things, redeemed to God, made His children. He who reconciled us by His death lives to serve, to wash our feet, to save to the end, by His priesthood and advocacy, should we fail. “MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Now this certainty as to the future removes every hindrance to the heart’s full joy in God. Not only have we this certainty of being saved to the end by His life, “but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

This ends the whole question as to our sins. God is absolutely righteous in the way in which He has put them away by the death of His Son. They have been laid on the atoning Substitute, in infinite love to us, when we were enemies, without strength. He who once bore them in His own body is raised from the dead for our justification. We are justified, and we have peace with God. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.

The love of God and the righteousness of God are fully revealed and displayed in reconciling us to Himself by the death of His Son. Our future practical deliverance and salvation from wrath are absolutely certain. We have received in our souls the full effect of all this as to our sins. And, oh, wondrous privilege! As to all our sins, we have now unhindered joy in God! Salvation is entirely of God, and we know Him,

so as to have joy in God, according to all that He is. We need not say this could not be through the law. If even the law could have justified from past sins — which was impossible — who could stand on his own responsibility as to the future, and joy in God? No, it is all through our Lord Jesus Christ, from first to last. Let us beware of letting slip this perfect grace, of letting in the least bit of confidence in the flesh. It is Christ in the future, as Christ in the past.

This verse 11, then, closes the question of sins. The question of sin will come before us presently, if the Lord will. May the Holy Spirit deepen in all our souls a sense of the infinite grace of our God, so that we may continually joy in Him.

Verse 12: We now come to the question of sin, or the two heads of the two families: the one head, Adam, by whom sin entered into the world; the other head, Christ, by whom grace has abounded over sin.

Many souls are greatly perplexed who find, though they believe their sins are forgiven, yet they find the root, sin, in the flesh. Much of this confusion arises from want of carefully noticing the distinction between sins and sin, as in this epistle. As we have seen, verse 11 closes the question of sins. Verse 12 takes up sin. “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Thus there are two proofs of the origin of evil: sin entered into the world by one man. Of the whole race of mankind, all sin, and all die.

What absolute consistency in the word of God, and with facts! And this has been found to be the case, whether man was placed under law, or without law. After sin had come in, and man fell, the law was not given for two thousand five hundred years. “For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed [or, put to account] when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come” (Rom. 5:13-14). That is, they

had not transgressed a given law; yet there was death, the proof that sin was there. Sin and death then came into the world by its head, Adam. Death, then, is not merely the penalty of a broken law; but sin having once come in, death is its result; or, as expressed in the word, “The wages of sin is death.”

Now, in contrast with what came in by the creature’s sin, the first head—sin and death—God is pleased to reveal to us what has come in for a new race by the gift of His own Son—righteousness and life. Only the infinite gift *must* abound over the finite, dreadful as has been the result of that creature’s sin. God could not, in His free favor to us, give a gift that would come short of our need. Hence, the care of the Holy Spirit to show us how the gift of free favor has abounded over sin, the root of evil, and death, that came by Adam. “But not as the offense, so also is the free gift [the act of favor]. For if through the offense of one many be dead, MUCH MORE the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man — Jesus Christ — hath abounded to many” (vs. 15). No doubt the effect of the offense of Adam’s sin on many, even all his posterity, is great and terrible; and we all belonged to that “many.”

Death passed upon all men. Yet if we have passed from death unto life in the risen Head of the new creation, we have now to see how the grace of God, and the gift, by grace, by One—Jesus Christ—hath abounded unto the many in Him.

Verse 16: “And not as by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification.” In Adam we see one sin, and the consequences that have flowed from it in judgment. See Jesus, our Substitute: all our iniquities have been made to meet on Him, and this for the very purpose, that we might by faith be justified from them all. And, much more than this, not only justified from all our iniquities by His blood, but He, having died for our offenses, was raised again for our justification.

Let us dwell now on this great fact—the resurrection of Jesus from the dead—and this for the express purpose of our justification — of our complete, abounding justification. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He took to Himself that holy life He had and was. He could assume it in perfect righteousness, having glorified God; and having redeemed “the many,” according to that glory, He could now communicate to them, *to us*, that same and eternal life, a justified life, in righteousness, unchanging, ever-subsisting. It will be very blessed if our souls understand this reigning, subsisting justification OF LIFE, though fully admitting that our life, as children of Adam, was forfeited.

Verse 17: “For if by one offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one — Jesus Christ.” This is the close of the parenthesis from verse 13. Can anyone deny that death reigns over Adam’s race through sin?

Where is the physician that can stay the reign of death? And Jesus says of His many, “and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Death has positively no claim on those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. They REIGN in life by One — Jesus Christ. Nothing can stay its course; none can pluck them out of His hand.

Verse 18: “Therefore, as by the offense of one [or, one offense], judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one [or, by one act of righteousness], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The true sense of this verse is, as by one offense judgment *toward* all men; so, by one act of righteousness, the free gift *toward* all unto justification of life. That is, as in verse 19, the effect of the two acts—Adam’s sin, and Christ’s obedience unto death on the two “manys”—the two families. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.”

It is, however, of the utmost importance to see that this justification OF LIFE is connected with, and results from, His resurrection from the dead. It is not written that He kept the law for our justification, but that God raised Him from the dead for that very purpose — for our justification. It is not, and could not be, our life in the flesh under the law that is justified; that could not be in any way. It is judged, and set aside. The life that we have now before God is the life of one that has passed through death for us; and everything that the righteous claims of God had against us is fully met by that one death of our Substitute. Christ is our life. Can there be a charge against Him, even as our Substitute? We have, then, through the abounding of grace, a life against which there is, and can be, no charge — therefore a justified life.

If (we are) in Adam, or in the flesh, under law, nothing can justify us, or that sinful life. Death and judgment are written upon it. If (we are) in Christ, we have a life that reigns, a life completely justified, that nothing can condemn. As to our sins, we are accounted righteous—faith is reckoned as righteousness, and, being justified, we have peace with God.

As to our sinful Adam nature, life, and standing, we are no longer in it, but in Christ raised from the dead; and the eternal life we have in Him is justified life—in Him, how completely justified! It is of the utmost importance to lay fast hold of this; completely justified from our sins by Him; and, as in the new creation, completely justified in Him raised from the dead. In both cases it is wholly of God, both by and in Christ Jesus.

Dear young believer, do you know that you are no longer in Adam, or connected with the old things that belong to him? The great point for you to see is this: “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (it is new creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new; and all things are of God” (2 Cor. 5:17). What a sad mistake would you make to go back, or cling to, the old things—law and a sinful nature—and suppose that anything would improve the one, or justify you under the other,

now passed away! And now mark, your righteousness and life is to you all new, and all of God. What is of God must be perfect. Thus we are perfectly and forever justified in the risen Christ.

Verses 20, 21: Oh, marvelous free favor of God! Do you ask, why was the law given, if man cannot be justified by it, or if it cannot give a justified life? “The law entered that the offense might abound.” It may even have been so in your past experience. It may have entered with killing power, and the more you have struggled to keep it, the more the offense has abounded.

How you may have struggled to make the flesh holy and the more you have struggled, the more you have failed. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Do you believe God as to this? Can you now cease from works, and rest in the boundless, free favor of God? “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign?” — Yes, and that “through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is not grace alone that reigneth—*that* would be indifference to sin; neither righteousness alone, or the sinner must be

condemned; but grace, through righteousness. Yes, it REIGNS on, on, unto eternal life.

But if we are constituted righteous by and in Christ, entirely apart from any works of our own, sins being forgiven, and sin not reckoned to us — a question is then raised as to practical righteousness — Shall we continue in the practice of sin? The enemies of the grace of God always raise this question, or put it as a charge, that those who hold the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God, imply that they live in sin that grace may abound. The charge is as common in this day, as it was by the Pharisees in that day, against the apostle. In the next chapter we have his inspired answer to the usual calumny. But rest assured, nothing short of this abounding grace can give rest to the soul.

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