



The Blessings of Being in Christ

Lesson 7 | Romans 5:1-21

The small child prays to accept Jesus as their Savior. The teenager quits wrestling and lets God win, accepting the free gift of salvation they have resisted for so long. The religious hypocrite who's played the game but has never really trusted Jesus humbles himself and gets saved. The hardened sinner turns from a life of sin and looks to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing. But what happens next? Once someone is saved, what changes? Paul has been explaining what the gospel is and how it works. Now he shows everything that happens to us once we are saved.

Can you summarize the book of Romans up to this point? What one thing that has stuck out to you from this series so far?

In the first half of this chapter Paul shares with the Romans the blessings they have because they are justified. In the second half he explains how it is that all these blessings belong to us – because we are now in Christ rather than in Adam. The good news that we can be declared righteous before God will have a major impact. We are given a new position and on the basis of that position will have the blessings and privileges that come with it. To borrow illustrations from other parts of Scripture: we have been given a new citizenship, we are part of a new family, and we are now a totally new creature. Such great changes will impact how we think and live. Paul will go on later to show what changes should come as a result of this new status, but for now his goal is to help believers realize how much has truly changed since they have been justified.

Many believers struggle to believe that things are really all that different since they've been saved, especially if they were saved when they were young. How would you help a believer who struggles to believe that anything has truly changed since they have been saved?

The Blessings We Have through Jesus Christ (5:1-11)

Sometimes we throw around the word “saved” without thinking about what that word means. When we talk about being saved, we need to ask, “saved from what?” and “saved to what?” When we are saved, we are saved from our sin and from the ultimate penalty of that sin – death. But we are also saved to a new relationship with God and the wonderful blessings that flow out of that. After explaining how it is that someone can be justified in chapter 4, Paul starts talking about many of the blessings that flow from that justification in chapter 5.

The Blessing of Peace (5:1)

Paul warned his readers in the first three chapters that God was wrathfully angry against sin. This anger was directed at those who didn't have the law because they rejected what He had shown them in His creation (1:18-32). It was directed at those with the law because while they boasted in the law and their knowledge of it, they failed to keep the law (2:1-3:8). This meant that God was angry with everyone, both Jew and Gentile, religious and pagan (3:9-20)! Yet God in His love sent Jesus to be the redemption and propitiation we need (3:21-31), so that through faith we can be declared righteous (4:1-25). Not surprisingly, the first benefit of our justification that Paul mentions is peace with God.

If most people are not at peace with God, why do you think they aren't more concerned about this?

Many people today mistakenly believe that God is okay with them. They know that God is love and assume that means that God accepts them and whatever they do. But Paul is clear that we are at war with God because of our sins. We are rebels against the King of heaven, and we must lay down our weapons and come to Him on His terms. When that happens, the relationship that has been destroyed by our sin will be repaired, and we will no longer be at odds with our Creator!

What difference will it make in someone's life if they are at peace with God instead of being enemies with Him?

The Blessing of Access (5:2)

The word that is here used for "access" was used by the Greeks to describe those who could come before the king. It was used in the Old Testament to describe those who came to God with sacrifices and to be purified. Now, because of the work of Jesus, believers can come before their God and King with boldness and confidence. This is an incredible thought! We are not only righteous before God, and not only do we have peace with God, but we can go to Him with our problems and questions because we have access to Him as a child has access to their father.

Why do we so often fail to use this access to our Father that we have in Christ?

The Blessing of Hope (5:2-5)

Not only do we have peace with God and access, but as believers we also have hope. Normally we think of hope as a wish something might happen: "I hope it doesn't rain later today." But in the Bible, hope is a confident expectation that something will happen. Paul here says that one of the things that results from standing before God justified is that we now have hope for the future.

What is the difference between the hope of a believer and the hope of an unbeliever?

But what exactly are we hoping in? Paul gives two things that believers can be confident about: the glory of God and the afflictions we face. First, Paul says that we rejoice or boast in hope of the glory of God, but what does that mean? Probably this refers to the glory that God will give to us when we are glorified. Later in this letter Paul talks about "the glory which will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18) and in both cases he is talking about the glory which will be ours when we stand before God and our glorification is complete. But we don't just have hope for the future, we also have hope in the afflictions and trials we face today. We know that the trials we face today are building character, character which will be completed when we are glorified.

Why does Paul say that we can have hope in afflictions?

Compare Romans 5:2-4 with James 1:2-4. How are they similar? How are they different?

The Blessing of Love (5:5-8)

As Paul continues writing, he wants us to know that the eternal hope we have won't disappoint. Our confidence that God will do what He said is rooted in the fact that He loves us, and this is a love we can know for certain. The certainty of God's love comes from two things: the work of the Spirit in our hearts (5:5) and the work of Christ on the cross (5:6-8). The Holy Spirit pours out God's love in our hearts, or we could say He helps us understand and know that we are loved by God. But this love has an objective certainty to it. The love of God is not just something we feel, it is concrete. God's love for us was shown clearly when Christ died on the cross. And this love was a love that surpasses the normal love that we see around us, for it was a love that reached out to rebels and sinners.

How would you define the love of God? What does it mean and what does it not mean?

How does our world's understanding of love differ from God's view of love?

The Blessing of Reconciliation (5:9-11)

Anyone who had a brother or sister growing up understands reconciliation. After fighting over something (typically unimportant), the two children both apologize for the way they have treated the other. They hug and go back to playing together and being friends. What has just happened is reconciliation. Reconciliation can happen between children, adults, and even whole nations. Reconciliation is when there are two individuals or groups which aren't getting along resolve their differences. This is similar to the first blessing we studied – we have peace with God because we have been reconciled to God. The problem of our sin and the wrath of God that results from our sin has been addressed by Christ on the cross.

Why did Christ have to die for us to be reconciled to God?

What does it mean that we “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ”?

The Position We Have through Jesus Christ (5:12-21)

Some jobs have really nice perks. A recent internet trend has shown young adults walking you through a day in their life working a job in silicon valley. Very little of it has to do with the work they do and almost all of focuses on the perks they have at their jobs – from yoga rooms to full-service restaurants to foosball to cozy workspaces. These workers have those benefits because they are employees of the company. They have a badge that lets them in when they get to work, and with their status as an employee they have access to all the sweet perks that go to employees.

In a similar, but much more serious way, believers have the benefits that they do because of Jesus Christ and Him alone. Three times Paul says that it is through our Lord Jesus Christ that God's blessings flow (5:1, 11, 21), and throughout this section we read repeatedly about what we have “by Christ,” “by whom,” “by one,” etc. (verses 2, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18). Because we are given a new position, we are given benefits that go along with those who are “in Christ.”

How does one come to be “in Christ?” What has Paul already taught about embracing what Christ has done for us?

How often do we think of ourselves as “in Christ”? What would happen if we thought of ourselves that way more frequently?

Our Old Position in Adam – Sin and Death (5:12-14)

Our new life in Christ must first be understood by comparing it to our old life before Christ. In this section Paul explains how before we were in Christ, we were “in Adam.” For us this way of talking might sound a little weird, and people who study theology spend a lot of time debating what exactly these verses mean. But the general idea of what Paul is teaching is clear – when Adam sinned he fell and dragged all of humanity with him. Although sinning against the law is more serious than simply violating conscience or rejecting God’s witness in creation, all sin leads to death and so when sin was introduced, all died.

Here Paul is connecting sin and death. We were all born in Adam, which means we were all born into sin and have all chosen to sin. When the law comes it increases our guilt, but even before God gave Israel His law people sinned and died. Sin always leads to death. This is true ultimately speaking – people die because they sin. But it is also true on a more immediate level – every choice to sin cuts us off from the God who is life itself. Paul says that death reigns through sin, in other words death has conquered everyone, and most of the world has lived in spiritual death, separated from the God of life.

Why do we struggle to believe that sin leads to death?

How would our lives change if we truly believed God when He says that sin leads to death?

Our New Position in Christ – Grace and Life (5:15-17)

Sin and death came into the world because of Adam’s transgression – his breaking of God’s law. But there is hope at the end of verse 14 when it says that Adam “is the figure [or type] of him that was to come.” In other words, just as everyone is in Adam and in some sense bears the guilt of their forefather, someone is coming who will stand as a different kind of representative for humanity. Those who have put their faith in Jesus are now no longer in Adam; they are instead in Christ.

Yet when Paul considers Jesus as the next Adam, he focuses on the differences between the two. Both stand as representatives for humanity, but Jesus is far better. Twice Paul says “much more,” because he wants us to know that however bad the bad news of our position in Adam is, our position in Christ is so much better. Throughout this section, Paul compares Adam and Christ. The result of Adam’s sin is that all die, but the gift that Christ offers grace and the gift of grace which abounds to many. The result of Adam’s sin is that all are condemned, but the free gift of salvation offered by Jesus leads to many being declared as righteous.

How can thinking of ourselves as being in Christ rather than being in Adam change the way we live?

The Superiority of Being in Christ (5:18-21)

The difference that Christ makes means we go from a condemned status before God to having life and having it more abundantly. Once again, Paul teaches that God added the law, not so that people could be righteous before God, but so that sin could be seen to be sin. The law is like a light that God shines on our sin, but rather than give up their sin, sinners responded to the law by becoming even more sinful. But the

more and more ugly and gruesome sin became, the more God's grace was seen. Sin might abound, grace abounds more. As A.W. Tozer observed, "To 'abound' in sin: that is the worst and the most we could do or can do. The word *abound* defines the limit of our finite abilities; and although we feel our iniquities rise over us like a mountain, the mountain, nevertheless, has definable boundaries: it is so large, so high, its weight only this certain amount and no more. But who shall define the limitless grace of God? Its 'much more' plunges our thoughts into infinitude and confounds them there. All thanks be to God for grace abounding." (Knowledge of the Holy, 95-6).

Why do we sometimes doubt the power of God over sin?

Why do we sometimes think there are sins so grievous and heinous that God could not forgive them?