

Chapter Four

Live Like a King!

[\(Romans 5\)](#)

Since Romans is a book of logic, it is a book of “therefores.” We have the “therefore” of condemnation in Romans 3:20, justification in Romans 5:1, no condemnation in Romans 8:1, and dedication in Romans 12:1. In presenting his case, Paul has proved that the whole world is guilty before God, and that no one can be saved by religious deeds such as keeping the law. He has explained that God’s way of salvation has always been “by grace, through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9), and he has used Abraham as his illustration. If a reader of the letter stopped at this point, he would know that he needed to and could be saved.

But there is much more the sinner needs to know about justification by faith. Can he be sure that it will last? How is it possible for God to save a sinner through the death of Christ on the cross? Romans 5 is Paul’s explanation of the last two words in Romans 4: “our justification.” He explained two basic truths: the blessings of our justification (Rom. 5:1–11), and the basis for our justification (Rom. 5:12–21).

1. The Blessings of Our Justification (5:1–11)

In listing these blessings, Paul accomplished two purposes. First, he told how wonderful it is to be a Christian. Our justification is not simply a guarantee of heaven, as thrilling as that is, but it is also the source of tremendous blessings that we enjoy here and now.

His second purpose was to assure his readers that justification is a lasting thing. His Jewish readers in particular would ask, “Can this spiritual experience last if it does not require obedience to the law? What about the trials and sufferings of life? What about the coming judgment?” When God declared us righteous in Jesus Christ, He gave to us seven spiritual blessings that assure us that we cannot be lost.

(1) Peace with God (v. 1). The unsaved person is at enmity with God (Rom. 5:10; 8:7) because he cannot obey God’s law or fulfill God’s will. Two verses from Isaiah make the matter clear: “There is no peace, saith the LORD,

unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22); “And the work of righteousness shall be peace” (Isa. 32:17). Condemnation means that God declares us sinners, which is a declaration of war. Justification means that God declares us righteous, which is a declaration of peace, made possible by Christ’s death on the cross. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10). “Because the law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15), nobody condemned by the law can enjoy peace with God. But when you are justified by faith, you are declared righteous, and the law cannot condemn you or declare war!

(2) Access to God (v. 2a). The Jew was kept from God’s presence by the veil in the temple, and the Gentile was kept out by a wall in the temple with a warning on it that any Gentile who went beyond would be killed. But when Jesus died, He tore the veil (Luke 23:45) and broke down the wall (Eph. 2:14). In Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles have access to God (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:19–25), and they can draw on the inexhaustible riches of the grace of God (Eph. 1:7; 2:4; 3:8). We stand in grace and not in law. Justification has to do with our standing; sanctification has to do with our state. The child of a king can enter his father’s presence no matter how the child looks. The word *access* here means “entrance to the king through the favor of another.”

(3) Glorious hope (v. 2b). “Peace with God” takes care of the past: He will no longer hold our sins against us. “Access to God” takes care of the present: We can come to Him at any time for the help we need. “Hope of the glory of God” takes care of the future: One day we shall share in His glory! The word *rejoice* can be translated “boast,” not only in Romans 5:2, but also in Romans 5:3 and 11 (“joy”). When we were sinners, there was nothing to boast about (Rom. 3:27), because we fell short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But in Christ, we boast in His righteousness and glory! Paul will amplify this in Romans 8:18–30.

(4) Christian character (vv. 3–4). Justification is no escape from the trials of life. “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). But for the believer, trials work for him and not against him. No amount of suffering can separate us from the Lord (Rom. 8:35–39); instead, trials bring us closer to the Lord and make us more like the Lord. Suffering builds Christian character. The word *experience* in Romans 5:4 means “character that has been proved.” The sequence is tribulation—patience—proven character—hope. Our English word *tribulation* comes from a Latin word *tribulum*. In Paul’s day, a tribulum was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the grain. The tribulum was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff. As we go through tribulations, and depend on God’s grace, the trials only purify us and help to get rid of the chaff.

(5) God’s love within (vv. 5–8). “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick”

(Prov. 13:12). But as we wait for this hope to be fulfilled, the love of God is “poured out into our hearts” (literal translation). Note how the first three of the “fruit of the Spirit” are experienced: love (Rom. 5:5), joy (Rom. 5:2), and peace (Rom. 5:1). Before we were saved, God proved His love by sending Christ to die for us. Now that we are His children, surely He will love us more. It is the inner experience of this love through the Spirit that sustains us as we go through tribulations.

For many months I visited a young man in a hospital who had almost burned to death. I do not know how many operations and skin grafts he had during those months, or how many specialists visited him. But the thing that sustained him during those difficult months was not the explanations of the doctors but the promises they gave him that he would recover. That was his hope. And the thing that sustained his hope was the love of his family and many friends as they stood by him. The love of God was channeled through them to him. He did recover and today gives glory to God.

Faith (Rom. 5:1), hope (Rom. 5:2), and love (Rom. 5:5) all combine to give the believer patience in the trials of life. And patience makes it possible for the believer to grow in character and become a mature child of God (James 1:1–4).

(6) Salvation from future wrath (vv. 9–10). Paul argued from the lesser to the greater. If God saved us when we were enemies, surely He will keep on saving us now that we are His children. There is a wrath to come, but no true believer will experience it (1 Thess. 1:9–10; 5:8–10). Paul further argued that if Christ’s death accomplished so much for us, how much more will He do for us in His life as He intercedes for us in heaven! “Saved by his life” refers to Romans 4:25: “raised again for [on account of] our justification.” Because He lives, we are eternally saved (Heb. 7:23–25).

A will is of no effect until the death of the one who wrote it. Then an executor takes over and sees to it that the will is obeyed and the inheritance distributed. But suppose the executor is unscrupulous and wants to get the inheritance for himself? He may figure out many devious ways to circumvent the law and steal the inheritance.

Jesus Christ wrote us into His will, and He wrote the will with His blood. “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). He died so that the will would be in force, but then He arose from the dead and returned to heaven that He might enforce the will Himself and distribute the inheritance. Thus, we are “saved by his life.”

(7) Reconciliation with God (v. 11). The word *atonement* means “reconciliation, brought back into fellowship with God.” The term is mentioned also in Romans 5:10. In Romans 1:18–32, Paul explained how people declared

war on God and, because of this, deserved to be condemned eternally. But God did not declare war on humankind. Instead, He sent His Son as the Peacemaker (Eph. 2:11–18), that people might be reconciled to God.

A review of these seven blessings of justification shows how certain our salvation is in Christ. Totally apart from law, and purely by grace, we have a salvation that takes care of the past, the present, and the future. Christ died for us; Christ lives for us; Christ is coming for us! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

2. The Basis of Our Justification (5:12–21)

How is it possible for God to save sinners in the person of Jesus Christ? We understand that somehow Christ took our place on the cross, but how was such a substitution possible?

Paul answered the question in this section, and these verses are the very heart of the letter. To understand these verses a few general truths about this section need to be understood. First, note the repetition of the little word *one*. It is used eleven times. The key idea here is our identification with Adam and with Christ. Second, note the repetition of the word *reign*, which is used five times. Paul saw two men—Adam and Christ—each of them reigning over a kingdom. Finally, note that the phrase *much more* is repeated five times. This means that in Jesus Christ we have gained much more than we ever lost in Adam!

In short, this section is a contrast of Adam and Christ. Adam was given dominion over the old creation; he sinned, and he lost his kingdom. Because of Adam's sin, all mankind is under condemnation and death. Christ came as the King over a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). By His obedience on the cross, He brought in righteousness and justification. Christ not only undid all the damage that Adam's sin effected, but He accomplished "much more" by making us the very sons of God. Some of this "much more" Paul has already explained in Romans 5:1–11.

Skeptics sometimes ask, "Was it fair for God to condemn the whole world just because of one man's disobedience?" The answer, of course, is that it was not only fair, but it was also wise and gracious. To begin with, if God had tested each human being individually, the result would have been the same: disobedience. But even more important, by condemning the human race through one man (Adam), God was then able to save the human race through one Man (Jesus Christ)! Each of us is racially united to Adam, so that his deed affects us. (See Heb. 7:9–10 for an example of this racial headship.) The fallen angels cannot be saved because they are not a race. They sinned individually and were judged individually. There can be no representative to take their judgment for them and save them. But because you and I were lost in Adam, our racial head,

we can be saved in Christ, the Head of the new creation. God's plan was both gracious and wise.

Our final question must be answered: How do we know that we are racially united to Adam? The answer is in Romans 5:12–14, and the argument runs like this: We know that all men die. But death is the result of disobeying the law. There was no law from Adam to Moses, but men still died. A general result demands a general cause. What is that cause? It can be only one thing: the disobedience of Adam. When Adam sinned, he ultimately died. All of his descendants died (Gen. 5), yet the law had not yet been given. Conclusion: They died because of Adam's sin. "For that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12) means "all have sinned in Adam's sin." Men do not die because of their own acts of sin; otherwise, babies would not die (Rom. 9:11). Men die because they are united racially to Adam, and "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Having understood these general truths about the passage, we may now examine the contrasts that Paul gives between Adam and Christ and between Adam's sin and Christ's act of obedience on the cross.

Adam's offense is contrasted with Christ's free gift (v. 15). Because of Adam's trespass, many died; because of Christ's obedience, the grace of God abounds to many bringing life. The word *many* (literally "the many") means the same as "all men" in Romans 5:12 and 18. Note the "much more," for the grace of Christ brings not only physical life, but also spiritual life and abundant life. Christ did conquer death and one day will raise the bodies of all who have died in Christ. If He stopped there, He would only reverse the effects of Adam's sin, but He went on to do "much more." He gives eternal life abundantly to all who trust Him (John 10:10).

The effect of Adam's sin is contrasted with the effect of Christ's obedience (v.16). Adam's sin brought judgment and condemnation, but Christ's work on the cross brings justification. When Adam sinned, he was declared unrighteous and condemned. When a sinner trusts Christ, he is justified—declared righteous in Christ.

The two "reigns" are contrasted (v. 17). Because of Adam's disobedience, death reigned. Read the "book of the generations of Adam" in Genesis 5, and note the solemn repetition of the phrase "and he died." In Romans 5:14, Paul argued that men did not die "from Adam to Moses" for the same reason that Adam died—breaking a revealed law of God—for the law had not yet been given. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Because sin was reigning in men's lives (Rom. 5:21), death was also reigning (Rom. 5:14, 17).

But in Jesus Christ we enter a new kingdom: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"

(Rom. 14:17). “Therefore being justified by faith,” we are declared righteous, we have peace with God, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Note that it is we who reign! “Much more they ... shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” In Adam we lost our kingship, but in Jesus Christ we reign as kings. And we reign “much more”! Our spiritual reign is far greater than Adam’s earthly reign, for we share “abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness” (Rom. 5:17).

The two “one acts” are contrasted (vv. 18–19). Adam did not have to commit a series of sins. In one act God tested Adam, and he failed. It is termed an “offence” and an act of “disobedience.” The word *offense* means “trespass—crossing over the line.” God told Adam how far he could go, and Adam decided to go beyond the appointed limit. “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16–17).

In contrast to “the offence of one” is “the righteousness of one,” meaning the righteous work of Christ on the cross. In Romans 5:19 Paul calls it “the obedience of one” (see Phil. 2:5–12). Christ’s sacrifice on the cross not only made possible “justification,” but also “justification *of life*” (italics mine). Justification is not merely a legal term that describes our position before God (“just as if I’d never sinned”), but it results in a certain kind of life. “Justification of life” in Romans 5:18 is parallel to “be made righteous” in Romans 5:19. In other words, our justification is the result of a living union with Christ. And this union ought to result in a new kind of life, a righteous life of obedience to God. Our union with Adam made us sinners; our union with Christ enables us to “reign in life.”

Law and grace are contrasted (vv. 20–21). “Then law crept in” (WMS); or, “Then the law came in beside” (literal translation). Grace was not an addition to God’s plan; grace was a part of God’s plan from the very beginning. God dealt with Adam and Eve in grace; He dealt with the patriarchs in grace; and He dealt with the nation of Israel in grace. He gave the law through Moses, not to replace His grace, but to reveal man’s need for grace. Law was temporary, but grace is eternal.

But as the law made man’s sins increase, God’s grace abounded even more. God’s grace was more than adequate to deal with man’s sins. Even though sin and death still reign in this world, God’s grace is also reigning through the righteousness of Christ. The Christian’s body is subject to death and his old nature tempts him to sin, but in Jesus Christ, he can “reign in life” because he is a part of the gracious kingdom of Christ.

An Old Testament story helps us understand the conflict between these two “reigns” in the world today. God rejected Saul as the king of Israel and anointed

David. Those who trusted David eventually shared his kingdom of peace and joy. Those who trusted Saul ended in shame and defeat.

Like David, Jesus Christ is God's anointed King. Like Saul, Satan is still free to work in this world and seek to win people's allegiance. Sin and death are reigning in the "old creation" over which Adam was the head, but grace and righteousness are reigning in "the new creation" over which Christ is the Head. And as we yield to Him, we "reign in life."

In Romans 5:14, Adam is called "the figure of him that was to come." Adam was a type, or picture, of Jesus Christ. Adam came from the earth, but Jesus is the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). Adam was tested in a garden, surrounded by beauty and love; Jesus was tempted in a wilderness, and He died on a cruel cross surrounded by hatred and ugliness. Adam was a thief, and was cast out of Paradise, but Jesus Christ turned to a thief and said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The Old Testament is "the book of the generations of Adam" (Gen. 5:1), and it ends with "a curse" (Mal. 4:6). The New Testament is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" (Matt. 1:1), and it ends with "no more curse" (Rev. 22:3).

You cannot help being "in Adam," for this came by your first birth, over which you had no control. But you can help staying "in Adam," for you can experience a second birth—a new birth from above—that will put you "in Christ." This is why Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is the significance of "therefore" as used in Romans 3:20; 5:1; 8:1; and 12:1?
2. Christ died for us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8). What does that demonstrate about God?
3. How would you answer the common question, "Is it fair to condemn the whole world just because one man (Adam) disobeyed?"

4. What are the spiritual blessings of our justification? Which of these are most evident in your life today?

5. How are we justified? What is stated in Romans 5:1–21? What does justification mean to you?

6. How does tribulation form Christian character?

7. Who, if anyone, does not have access to God? What does it mean to you to have access to God? How can you better take advantage of this access in your own life?

8. In what way can a believer reign in life?

9. What is the relationship between law, sin, and grace?