

By Faith

(ROMANS 5:1–21)

Before you begin ...

- *Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and wisdom as you go through this lesson.*
- *Read Romans 5:1–21. This lesson references chapter 4 in Be Right. It will be helpful for you to have your Bible and a copy of the commentary available as you work through this lesson.*

Getting Started

From the Commentary

[Paul] 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?

—Be Right, page 59

1. Do you resonate with the questions Wiersbe poses in the excerpt about “justification by faith”? As you read Romans 5:1–21, what other questions did you have about this important concept?

More to Consider: How does the phrase “once saved, always saved” line up (or not) with Paul’s contention that justification happens only once?

2. Choose one verse or phrase from Romans 5:1–21 that stands out to you. This could be something you’re intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further. Write that here. What strikes you about this verse?

Going Deeper
From the Commentary

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.

—Be Right, page 60

3. What are some of the blessings we enjoy “here and now” from justification? Underline phrases or words that Paul uses to imply or suggest our earthly blessings. God doesn’t promise the same kinds of blessings to each person. How would Christianity look different if there were no “here and now” blessings and only the blessing of heaven?

From the Commentary

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!

—Be Right, page 60

4. Respond to Paul's comment that "the law worketh wrath." Why does the law condemn? In what ways do you see the "battle" that is being waged by the condemnation of the law?

From Today's World

The highest ranking officials in our government are almost always surrounded by security, and the chances of a common citizen getting an opportunity to have a casual or serious conversation with them is next to zero. This is, of course, a matter of safety and practicality—no one "king" or leader would have time to sit down with every one of his "subjects," therefore we elect representatives to speak on our behalf. It is a good system for government, but far from perfect for the individual.

5. Imagine what it would look like if every American citizen were invited to the White House to talk with the president—one-on-one. How might that change the way each person feels about his or her contribution to society? About how he or she views the president? How does justification open that door in our relationship with God?

From the Commentary

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.

—Be Right, page 61

6. Describe some of the “life trials” you have observed in your life and in the lives of those you know. In what ways is it a comfort to know that no amount of suffering can separate us from God? According to Paul, why do trials bring us closer to God? Is it easy to embrace this truth? Why or why not?

More to Consider: Compare and contrast Adam’s sin (and how it impacted many) with Jesus’ sacrifice (and how it also impacted many).

From the Commentary

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).

—Be Right, page 62

7. How do faith, hope, and love give patience? What does that sort of patience look like? How does the character growth Wiersbe mentions in this excerpt manifest itself in a believer's life?

From the Commentary

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."

—Be Right, page 63

8. What does it mean to be "saved by [Jesus'] life"? Does the imagery Wiersbe uses of being written into Jesus' will help you understand this idea? Explain.

From the Commentary

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)!

—Be Right, page 64

9. What is your immediate response to the skeptic's question as previously noted? Do you agree that all humans would have failed and disobeyed? Why is this significant to the theology Paul is presenting in Romans?

From the Commentary

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.

—Be Right, page 67

10. How did God deal with Adam and Eve in grace? The patriarchs? The nation of Israel? In what specific ways does the Law reveal man's need for

grace?

Looking Inward

Take a moment to reflect on all that you've explored thus far in this study of Romans 5:1–21. Review your notes and answers and think about how each of these things matters in your life today.

Tips for Small Groups: To get the most out of this section, form pairs or trios and have group members take turns answering these questions. Be honest and as open as you can in this discussion, but most of all, be encouraging and supportive of others. Be sensitive to those who are going through particularly difficult times and don't press for people to speak if they're uncomfortable doing so.

11. What are some specific examples in your life where you are “condemned by the law”? How does that make you feel about being justified by faith? Do you sometimes feel that you have to be “rejustified”? How do Paul's words provide an answer for that feeling?

12. What are some of the greatest trials you've faced in life? In what ways did they threaten to move you away from God? In what ways did they bring

you closer to Him? How have you grown because of these trials?

13. Think about what God's grace looks like in your life. What choices or circumstances make you the most thankful for God's grace? Are there areas of your life where you desperately need God's grace? What would it take to receive that grace?

Going Forward

14. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).

Do you need to better understand what it means to be justified by faith? Do you need to learn to accept God's grace in difficult circumstances? Be specific. Go back through Romans 5:1–21 and put a star next to the phrase or verse that is most encouraging to you. Consider memorizing this verse.

Real-Life Application Ideas: Take a random survey of friends and neighbors (believers and nonbelievers alike), asking them what they think it takes to get into heaven. Then ask them what's most important about our lives here on earth. Compare these responses with what Paul says in Romans 5. Spend a little time in prayer, asking God to prepare you for those opportunities that may come to help people see the truth of God's gift of grace.

Seeking Help

15. Write a prayer below (or simply pray one in silence), inviting God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears.

Notes for Small Groups:

- *Look for ways to put into practice the things you wrote in the "Going Forward" section in this lesson. Talk with other group members about your ideas and commit to being accountable to one another.*
- *During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you've read and studied.*
- *Before you start the next lesson, read Romans 6:1–23. For more in-depth lesson preparation, read chapter 5, "Dying to Live," in Be Right.*