



## Romans - Chapter Five

### Summary of Chapter Five

Paul starts the chapter on a very positive note, stating that, thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, those of us who have accepted the Gospel message of peace, are now justified before God the Father, and can enter into his presence. We have been brought into a righteous and loving relationship with God through no action or ability of our own; purely through the grace that is given so freely.

Paul then expounds the great love of the Father for his human creation; a love that he so clearly and dramatically showed us on the Cross. The truly amazing aspect of it all is that it did not occur after a period of sustained effort on our part to enter into a relationship with God, but it came when mankind's relationship with God was at its lowest point: we were sinners, idolaters, God-haters; and yet he reconciled us to himself with the greatest act of love ever seen; God came to earth in the flesh and died for each and every one of us.

Paul describes the whole process by comparing and contrasting the first man Adam, with the man through whom salvation would be given Jesus Christ. By disobeying God's commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam sinned. As sin entered into the world, so did death; spiritual and physical. Moral and physical decay set in and the world seemed doomed. Through this one sin, many more people have sinned and the problem just kept piling up, but through the righteous act of Jesus, sin and death were conquered and many people, all who would choose life, were sanctified to everlasting life in a righteous relationship with God. The gift far outweighed the original trespass.

Paul concludes the chapter with a shocking statement from the perspective of the Jews. God gave the law, which the Jews had seen as being the saving grace for mankind, or at least for the Jewish nation, but this was not the case. Not only was the law a tool to highlight sin, something Paul had stated before, but in fact it actually multiplied sin and exacerbated the problem of sin even more. But, just as sin abounded, the grace of God abounded all the more, thanks to the loving atonement offered by God himself through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### IV Romans 5:1-8:39 - Hope as a result of righteousness by faith

The central theme of Chapters 5-8 is that believers in Christ, who are righteous in God's sight, have a certain hope of future glory and life eternal. Having proved that justification is by faith alone, in Chapter 5, Paul shows the fruits of justification (vv. 1-5), and then he shows the fountains and foundation of justification in the death of Jesus (vv. 6-21).

#### IV.a Romans 5:1-11 - Peace and joy

Paul has demonstrated, from the crucial scriptural testimony concerning Abraham, just how scripture's claim of God's righteousness, as reckoned to man, should be understood. He now proceeds to draw out the basic insight and its implications, not only for the individual believer, but also for humankind as a whole. Those who are justified by faith have an unshakable hope, knowing they will be saved from God's wrath on the Day of Judgment by virtue of Christ's substitutionary death on their behalf.

##### IV.a.i Romans 5:1-5 - Peace and hope

One of our failings as human beings is that we do not accept the mysteries of God and we try to conceptualise him in human understanding. How can the Creator God, who is transcendent over and above all things, especially humans, even possibly want to be interested in each individual; especially with regard to the mundane aspects of our everyday lives? Yet he is able to keep the whole of creation in order, and not only desire, but maintain individual relationships as well. Jesus said that not even a sparrow dies without him knowing about it (Matthew 10:29). The problem is that to have such a relationship with each of us, his children, which is so natural to him, but sadly it does not seem natural to so many of us, we want to make him into something else: Father Christmas perhaps, rather than our heavenly Father!

The reasons for this are quite apparent once we have grappled with Romans 1:18-32. Not only our behaviour, but our thinking and feeling have been so warped by rebellion and idolatry that we assume it is hard to establish a relationship with God, and even if we succeed, it will be difficult and awkward to maintain it. When we are reconciled to God, who is our Father, we discover that he wants not simply to enjoy this one to one relationship, but to enlist us into his service in working for his kingdom. And that will bring all kinds of pressures and problems, which will require us to hang on in faith and hope, even when we do not sense his presence, even when it doesn't feel as though there is anything happening. We must not imagine that our feeling of being close to God is a true index of the reality. Emotions often deceive us. Paul is summoning us to understand the reality, the solid rock beneath the shifting sands of feelings.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

##### Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified. Chapter 5 begins with a ringing affirmation of the objective legal standing of the Christian. That the Christian, through faith in Christ, has been justified and declared righteous by God, once for all: <<Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son>> (John 3:18 Good News Translation). Paul reverts from his use of 'righteousness' to 'justify', but his readers will still be clear in their own minds that Paul is talking about salvation by faith. Here Paul reiterates that God justifies through faith; God holds a person in good standing, reckons him as an acceptable partner in covenant relationship, simply on the grounds of that person's trust, his humble acceptance of God's unconditional promise to act for him. And this is not a once-for-all offer; rather, it is God's reaching out to embrace and sustain up to and including the final verdict of acquittal.

Paul goes on to describe what the ongoing experience of God's acceptance means, how God's accepting and sustaining righteousness works out in day-to-day reality. The first is the experience of peace with God. The result of this is that the Christian no longer lives under the fear of judgment and the wrath of God, but has peace with God, which is not merely a subjective feeling but an objective reality. As Solomon wrote: <<Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son. May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice. Let the mountains bring peace to the

people, And the hills, in righteousness. May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor. Let them fear You while the sun endures, And as long as the moon, throughout all generations. May he come down like rain upon the mown grass, Like showers that water the earth. In his days may the righteous flourish, And abundance of peace till the moon is no more>> (Psalm 72:1-7 NASB), and the sons of Korah: <<I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints – but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps>> (Psalm 85:8-13). Paul may also have had the words of Isaiah in mind: <<The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever>> (Isaiah 32:17), which beautifully captures the scene that Paul is portraying.

As noted on previous occasions, the expression peace, Hebrew shalom, had a much richer connotation than the English word does since it conveyed not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil, but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of right relationship with God, e.g. <<'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty" >> (Haggai 2:9), and also, as a result, the idea that 'all is well' in one's life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation.

The Jewish or God-worshiping reader of Paul's letter would also be familiar with this richer concept of peace. More to the point, for a Jew this peace was something closely dependent on Israel's relationship with its Lord; to give his people peace was an integral part of God's covenant undertaking: <<Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you>> (Isaiah 54:10). The full flowering of that peace was a strong feature of the prophetic hope of the new age to come: <<"I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord'" >> (Ezekiel 34:25-31), <<I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever>> (Ezekiel 37:26), and: <<My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name>> (Malachi 2:5).

Paul had previously been speaking of all nations, who have faith to come before God through Jesus, coming into the one family of Abraham in a harmonious, peaceful coupling of Jew and Gentile. It would not be lost on his readers that he now extended this desire for peace to be with God for one is dependent on the other: <<For this is what the Lord says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the Lord will be

made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with his sword the Lord will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the Lord>> (Isaiah 66:12-16), <<I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth>> (Zechariah 9:10), and: <<Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfil your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed>> (Nahum 1:15); or the converse of covenant of peace: <<This is what the LORD says: "As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him>> (Micah 3:5). In contrast, by use of the first person plural throughout this section, which embraces both Jew and Gentile among his readers, Paul indicates that, so far as relationship with God through Christ is concerned, that kind of Israel-centred, militaristic understanding of covenant peace is no longer appropriate; the peace given by God embraces members of all races and nations without distinction!

Being justified through faith in Christ brings us peace with God, which we cannot have while we are still in the grip or guilt of sin. If we take hold of his right arm, his strength, then we will have peace: <<I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me" >> (Isaiah 27:4-5).

Adam, in his innocence, knew peace with God and required no mediator. In our sin, we require a mediator, Jesus, who is the peace-broker: <<For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility>> (Ephesians 2:14), <<and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross>> (Colossians 1:20). It is our faith in Jesus that leads us into this peaceful friendship with God.

The phrase through our Lord Jesus Christ, which so frequently seems to simply be a label to mark out the statement as Christian, here has a much deeper meaning for Paul. He is referring to the crucified Jesus, raised from the dead and now at the right hand of God as a mediator between God and believers. Integral as always to Paul's faith, his experience of faith, as well as his theological expression of that faith, is the sense of personal relationship with God, activated and maintained by Jesus. God had reached out to Paul on the Damascus Road and has continued to do so ever since, not for the sake of a Jesus whose personal existence ended on the Cross, but through this same Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

#### Romans 5:2

Having gained access by faith to God the Father, it is our hope that we can build a relationship in true friendship with him. Abraham, by faith, was called a friend of God: <<And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend>> (James 2:23), and Jesus called his disciples friends: <<Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you>> (John 15:13-15), but there is more to friendship than the cessation of hostilities on our part which, in our relationship with God, is the renouncement of our sin. It is the fruit we bear to demonstrate our love of God and his loving and faithful nature, and his gracious mercy, by which we live, that make the friendship.

This grace in which we now stand refers to the secure position of the believer's standing, as a blessing of justification, and the hope of the glory of God refers to the promise that Christians will be glorified and perfected at the last day; a hope that results in joy. The glory hoped for is the glory spoken of earlier in Romans 3:23 <<for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God>>, the share in God's life and in his dominion over the rest of creation. That is to say, it is the hope of the human creature to fulfil the creator's purpose for mankind. And the hope is a confident hope because its fulfilment rests wholly with God; it relies solely on God's powerful favour, accepted in humble trust, a hope like Abraham's: <<Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be">> (Romans 4:18). In such boasting God delights, that man should be proud of his creator, of his purpose for humanity and of his power to effect that purpose.

We now stand in judgement: <<Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous>> (Psalm 1:5), guilty as charged, but standing is a posture, not of defiance, but one where our honour and dignity are secured by Christ's mediation. It is as if we had never sinned at all! And as we stand, we are required to make a stance for the Gospel in humble confidence that he who has begun the good work will perform it: <<being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus>> (Philippians 1:6), and: <<For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless>> (Psalm 84:11).

<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.

#### Romans 5:3-4

The people of God rejoice not only in future glory but in present trials and sufferings, not because trials are pleasant but because they produce a step-by-step transformation that makes believers more like Christ. Note that it is rejoice in our sufferings, not rejoice our sufferings!

We can also glory in our sufferings or tribulation: <<For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all>> (2 Corinthians 4:17), for we have hope and hope brings joy. And we can rejoice at even being considered worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus: <<The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name>> (Acts 5:41). Job's tribulation taught patience and he still held on to his integrity in the midst of it: <<Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason">> (Job 2:3). Our experience of God increases our hope and trust thus avoiding confusion, which is the enemy of faith: <<The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing>> (Proverbs 10:28), <<They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed>> (Psalm 22:5), and: <<In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame>> (Psalm 71:1).

It is quite likely that the Roman churches would have known of Paul's own personal sufferings by this time. For example, Pricilla and Aquila, two of the recipients named in Paul's letter (Romans 16:3), had been in Ephesus and Corinth with Paul, who wrote of his experience up until that time: <<Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my

own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness>> (2 Corinthians 11:22-30), and: <<To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong>> (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). It may initially seem strange why anyone would want to boast in their suffering, but there are several reasons why this should be, including the fact that we know our suffering is for the glory of God, and in that we rejoice for being considered worthy to do so. Also, it reveals the true nature of this world as it is; a world in which we are not meant to be, let alone be comfortable in. This is also a reason why a true believer never really finds full contentment in this life. By implication of Paul's language, tribulations envisaged and experienced are not merely 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', but the end-time tribulation, which mark the dissolution of the present age: <<At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered>> (Daniel 12:1), and: <<"The great day of the Lord is near – near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth" >> (Zephaniah 1:14-18); this will not be so for those who have chosen Jesus as their path to hope and glory! For the patient endurance is the patient endurance to the end for which Jesus called: <<All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved>> (Mark 13:13), the testing of the final purgation and purification, as in Malachi 3:2-3 <<But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness>>, which has already begun. The whole process produces hope because it indicates that the process of salvation is under way: when suffering is experienced not as a contradiction to faith or occasion to renounce God, but as a strengthening of patience and maturing of character, it stimulates hope in the grace that is having such effect. The whole process produces hope because, for Paul, it is itself the process of salvation, the process whereby God recreates humanity in his own image; what Paul refers to elsewhere as: the wasting away of the visible man, which is the necessary complement to the renewal of the hidden man: <<Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day>> (2 Corinthians 4:16).

<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

## Romans 5:5

Such hope does not put the one who holds on to it to shame. For it is the hope that springs forth from salvation's reversal of the sinful process, and that causes us no shame, no shame either at the indignity and pain of the suffering, or at the possibility of its being disappointed, as though it was an unrealistic hope. Why so? By implication, because it is trust in God, as the echo of Psalm 22:5 suggests: <<They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed>>, and: <<Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you>> (Psalm 25:20). That is to say, it is the same hope and trust that Abraham exercised and which God honoured against apparently impossible odds: <<Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised>> (Romans 4:18-21).

Followers of Christ have no reason to fear humiliation on the judgment day, for they now belong to God. Indeed, they know that they have received God's love because the Holy Spirit poured his love into their hearts at conversion. Paul uses Pentecostal style language here, as many of the early Christians would identify with this initial outpouring of God's Holy Spirit once for all. As we mature as Christians, our hope becomes even stronger as we realise his love is not a once for all event, but an outpouring of his love on each of us day-by-day. The love of God, i.e. our sense of God's love for us, draws out our love for him: <<For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died>> (2 Corinthians 5:14). Thus we are drawn and held by the bonds of love. Sense of God's love for us will make us unashamed of both our hope in him and our sufferings for him.

### IV.a.ii Romans 5:6-11 - Jesus' death reveals God's love and guarantees final salvation

It is often said that in Romans, Paul focuses on the law and says little about God's love. That is an incorrect assumption that now gets completely blown out of the water. Here we have Paul's vision of God's love, rising like the sun on a clear summer's morning, shining through all the detail that has gone before. You need to wake up early, to get out of bed, and to throw open the curtains, to see it; that's what the four previous chapters are about. But now that we have done all that, the view is here for us to enjoy; and to be dazzled by it.

God's love has done everything we need. As Paul continues to explore the meaning of the reconciliation that has taken place between God and mankind, he delves down into the depths of what God had to do to bring it about. One thing that we should note here, that Paul has not made explicit before, but does so now, is to note that when we look at Jesus, we are looking at the one who embodies God's own love; God's love in action.

In these verses Paul describes the fountain and foundation of justification. As we are washed in the streams of God's grace, love and mercy, we should note that if we trace the stream to its fountain or source we will find it is the death of Christ, releasing the cleansing flow of his blood.

#### Three things are illustrated:

1. Those he died for (vv.6-8).
2. The precious fruits of his death (vv.9-11).
3. And in the following section, the parallel between the communication of sin and death by the first Adam; and of the righteousness and life by the second Adam (vv.12-21).

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

#### Romans 5:6

In this and the following verses, Paul grounds the subjective experience of God's love (v.5) in the objective work of Christ on the Cross. Powerless here denotes lack of moral strength, our inability to oppose sin, and is parallel to ungodly. It also can refer to our natural physical weakness as our bodies decay with age, as brought about by the original sin.

With regard to our character when Jesus died:

1. We were without strength, which is the time that God steps in to give us strength: <<The Lord will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free>> (Deuteronomy 32:36).
2. We were ungodly. In our weakness we are likely to die; in our sin we deserve to die. Yet Jesus stepped in: <<Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command>> (John 15:13-14), and he does not take into account our character, deeds, usefulness or attitudes: <<the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so>> (Romans 8:7), <<Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour>> (Colossians 1:21), and: <<In one month I got rid of the three shepherds. The flock detested me, and I grew weary of them>> (Zechariah 11:8). That Christ should die for such as us is a mystery and a paradox that we have all eternity to worship and adore him for.

<sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

#### Romans 5:7-8

On rare occasions, even a human being will die for a righteous, i.e. a morally upright, man or for a good man, that is, one who has done a lot of good. God's love, however, belongs in an entirely different category from human love, for Christ did not die for righteous people, or those who have done good for others, but he died for sinners; that is, for ungodly, unrighteous, even wicked, people, living in wilful rebellion against God. It is not just Christ's love that was shown in his death, but also God the Father's love. While God's righteousness and justice led to his plan of salvation through the death of Christ: <<God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus>> (Romans 3:25-26), it was his love that motivated this plan.

Verses 6-8 refer to death, for it is mentioned four times in quick succession, but it is really a reference to and demonstration of God's own love. The love of God poured out in their hearts was the subjective counterpart of the love already expressed in the Christ's crucifixion. Reflexion on the significance of Jesus' death should confirm the testimony of their own hearts, since it is the same love at work in both cases.

God demonstrates, Christ died. Paul is writing to Christians in Rome and he clearly makes the assumption that they realise that, when he talks about Christ dying, Jesus is the embodiment of God. If he were not then the whole salvation plan collapses. For how could God say, 'you are in a mess, I will send someone else to die for you?' This is what incarnation means, God has come in the flesh, in the guise of his Son Jesus, has taken upon himself the burden and guilt of mankind's sin in order to appease his own wrath, and to satisfy his own need for righteousness.

It was the only way that he could offer reconciliation with his creation and not destroy his own faithfulness and righteousness. This is the depth of God's love for his people; not his people Israel, but for all his people: the Jew and the Gentile.

We should not forget how justification works out in practice. Paul constantly keeps before his mind the past, present and future tenses of God's work. He set out the ultimate future in Romans Chapter 2: there will be a day when God will judge all human secrets, and this judgement will be entirely just, fair and impartial. If the thought of it sends shivers down our spines that is because it should do! But then Paul argued in great detail, in Romans 3:21-4:25, that when people believe in God's good news about Jesus, they are assured in the present that they already belong to the covenant family of God, the family set up through Abraham, and these are the people whose sins are forgiven, who have already received the verdict of being righteous before God. We are bound to ask 'how does God know? How can it be that people who have the rest of their lives still to lead, lives in which they might still do all kinds of wicked things, are nevertheless given this assurance that the future verdict is already known?'

Although not fully discussed just yet, Paul's answer begins here: that the Christian hope for the verdict issued in the present, to be reaffirmed in the future, is based securely on what God has already done in the death of Jesus.

**<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

#### Romans 5:9

Christians are now justified, declared to be in the right before God, by virtue of Christ's blood, that is, his blood poured out in his death on the Cross. Therefore, they can be sure that they will be saved on the Day of Judgment from God's wrath.

Paul again refers to the sacrificial character of Jesus death, by his blood, and its necessary role as the ground of God's acceptance. The logic for Paul is that God could not be described as righteous if he simply disregarded unrighteousness, i.e. failure to live in creaturely or covenant conformity to the will of God; human weakness, ungodliness and submission to the power of sin must be dealt with. The sacrificial death of Jesus is God's answer. Salvation is the reversal of the process of divine wrath. What the output of divine love in Jesus' death and resurrection achieves is the rescue of man from the vicious circle of independence from God resulting in deeper dependence on human passions, and so also rescues from final condemnation in the Day of Judgement. It achieves this result because by implication the wrath of God exhausted itself in the death of Jesus, and so is already exhausted for believers insofar as they identified themselves with Christ in his death; an implication probably already present in the theology of sacrifice.

Our justification is ascribed to his blood, for without blood there is no remission: <<In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness>> (Hebrews 9:22), for life is in the blood: <<For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life>> (Leviticus 17:11), and all the proprietary sacrifices and sprinkling of the blood in the ceremonial law were of the essence of the sacrifice.

We have been delivered from the wrath to come: <<and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath>> (1 Thessalonians 1:10). We are reconciled through his death, yet saved by his life, not his life in the flesh but his life in heaven for all eternity: <<For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living>>

(Romans 14:9), and: <<I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades>> (Revelation 1:18).

<sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

#### Romans 5:10

As in v.9, Paul argues from the greater to the lesser, although here he speaks in terms of reconciliation, the language of friendship, rather than justification, which is a legal term. Since Christians are now reconciled to God through Christ's death, they can be assured that they will be saved on the day to come; here saved, the Greek word *sōzō*, includes not only justification at the start of the Christian life but also completed sanctification, glorification, freedom from final condemnation, and future rewards. But here the salvation is based on his life. The reference is to Christ's resurrection, showing that both the death and resurrection of Christ are necessary for salvation: <<He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification>> (Romans 4:25). Romans Chapter Six will develop the theme of union with Christ in his resurrection life.

We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by him exalted, and he lives to make intercession for us: <<Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them>> (Hebrews 7:25). He completes and consummates our salvation. Again, Paul writes: <<He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification>> (Romans 4:25), and: <<Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us>> (Romans 8:34). God has done the hard part by sending Jesus to die for our sins, while we were still rebellious sinners; the rest is easy for God, so we are assured that he will now see it through to the end, i.e. for final salvation: <<For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end>> (Psalm 48:14).

The idea held by many that we do not need a relationship with God, if indeed he exists, is nothing more than a childish tantrum in God's eyes. It is the cause of hostility toward God, i.e. the powerful hold of sin, by means of the sinner's identification with sacrifice; what they may have to give up to be in a relationship with God. By implication, faith is the acceptance, both of the need to be reconciled to God, and of the reconciliation itself, which was actually commissioned, instigated and fully 'funded' by God himself: <<All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God>> (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). If believers are even now experiencing reconciliation with God as an already restored relationship, they can be quite sure that the process of bringing the relationship to complete wholeness will proceed to its final conclusion.

The point Paul is clearly trying to make in these verses is, on the one hand, that the ground of hope is not simply a past event, i.e. Jesus' death, understood as some martyr-like sacrifice, nor simply an experience of divine power, understood as Jesus' risen life, but the cohesion of these two, as completely continuous with each other and, equally, manifestations of God's love. And, on the other hand, the point also comes clearly to expression that God's purpose to draw mankind back into proper relationship with himself is something accomplished not in a once-for-all instant, either in the death of Jesus or in the event of conversion, but in an ongoing process in which the power of Christ's risen life, expressed through the Spirit of God (v.5), plays a controlling role.

<sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

#### Romans 5:11

Christians go beyond avoiding God's wrath and actually rejoice, or celebrate according to many translations, in the same God who would pour out wrath on them (v.9), were it not for Christ. The discerning reader in Rome may also pick up on the overtones of putting to bed the Jewish nationalistic trait of rejoicing or boasting in God through the inheritance of the covenant promises and their works of the law. Our relationship is with God himself.

#### IV.b Romans 5:12-21 - Death through Adam, life through Christ

The main theme of this section continues to be the future hope of those who have trusted in Christ. Adam brought sin and death into the world, but those who have believed in Christ are full of hope, for Christ has reversed the consequences of Adam's sin and has given his own life and righteousness to secure their and our eternal glory. The extended parallel between the one man Adam's sin, and the one man Christ's obedience, shows that Paul considered Adam an historical person, as did the prophets, e.g. <<Like Adam, they have broken the covenant – they were unfaithful to me there>> (Hosea 6:7), and not a fictional or mythological character; it also shows the importance of insisting on the historicity of Adam today: <<For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive>> (1 Corinthians 15:22), and: <<So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven>> (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). However, it should be noted that Paul's argument does not rest on Adam being a real person, or on his disobedience being an historical event as such. Such an implication does not necessarily follow from the fact that a parallel is drawn with Christ's single act: an act of mythic history can be paralleled to an act in living history without the point of the comparison being lost.

It should be noted that this statement is in no way claiming that the biblical account of creation and the fall is in anyway inaccurate or fictional. It simply shows, as do many of Jesus' parables and claims that Job was a fictional character, that the truths that the accounts proclaim are just as valid if the stories used are themselves fictional.

These verses also show that Adam had a leadership role with respect to the human race that Eve did not have, for even though it was Eve who sinned first by eating the forbidden fruit before Adam did so, i.e. <<When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it>> (Genesis 3:6), it was 'one man's trespass', that is, Adam's sin, through which 'sin came into the world' (v.12) and through which 'many died' (v.15), 'death reigned' (v.17), and 'many were made sinners' (v.19). The woman is not absolved from blame but Adam bears the responsibility for it, as the instruction not to eat of the tree came to him from God.

#### IV.b.i Romans 5:12-17 - The big picture in shorthand: Adam and the Christ

It would be easy to think that the story is: God created the world, man sinned and wrecked everything, and so God came back and fixed it all so that it was just the way it was meant to be in the beginning.

This would miss the key point that, through the sacrificial response of Jesus, the Son of God, God coming into the world as flesh, he has done far more than put things back the way they were.

Life, eternal life, to be lived in hope, love and righteousness is now there for all those who will turn to God through Jesus Christ. Paul explains this with a comparison between the first man Adam and the perfect man Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned —

Romans 5:12

Sin entered the world through one man, namely, Adam (v.14); <<To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return">> (Genesis 3:17-19), and: <<For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive>> (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

And death through sin is contrary to secular thought that regards death as a natural part of human life. In the biblical sense, death is never natural, it is the result of sin, and is the last enemy: <<The last enemy to be destroyed is death>> (1 Corinthians 15:26), and: <<When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory">> (1 Corinthians 15:54); that will be conquered finally and forever at the return of Christ: <<He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away">> (Revelation 21:4).

Verse 12d, because all sinned, marks a sudden shift away from Paul's argument thrust which he leaves hanging until v.18. This is quite a common characteristic in Paul's letter writing, especially Romans. Although sin and death are two main characters, along with Adam and Christ in this analysis, Paul wants to re-introduce the role of the law from v.13.

Death in these verses most likely denotes both physical death and spiritual death together; Paul often connects the two. Most evangelical interpreters think that the phrase all sinned means that all sinned in Adam's sin because he represented all who would descend from him, just as Christ's obedience would count for all his followers, whom he represented (vv.15-19). Another interpretation is that all sinned personally because they were born into a world spiritually dead.

The word translated men is the Greek word anthrōpos, which in the plural can mean either people of both sexes or men, depending on the context. It is translated men here, and in v.18, to show the connection with man, anthrōpos singular, referring to Christ.

In Acts 17:26, Paul states: <<From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live>>, which confirms that we all stem from one man. When he sinned, all sinned and death came: <<but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die>> (Genesis 2:17), <<for the wages of sin is death>> (Romans 6:23). Thus we were all dead spiritually until we are resurrected in Jesus, and death is the last enemy, see 1 Corinthians 15:26, which Jesus has defeated, and which we overcome by dying to self in Christ, whether our death is physical and/or spiritual, for some will be alive when he returns. In the song 'Poor Jerusalem' from the musical 'Jesus Christ Superstar', Tim Rice writes: 'to conquer death, you only have to die'.

<sup>13</sup> for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

## Romans 5:13

Before the law was given. Paul's return to the law is not in terms of: <<I myself was once alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life>> (Romans 7:9), but to show it is sin that is the dominant force which leads to death. Paul also wants to show that, although all are under original sin, because all sinned (v.12), we are not under original guilt. Guilt is something that implies wilful disobedience of God's commands, such as Adam did by eating the fruit, or the Jews did by breaking the Mosaic Law. The guilt of those responsible for deliberate acts of defiance against God and his law is a heavy burdened, even if the carrier of that burden does not identify it as such. Those who have sinned unintentionally will still face death though, as death entered the world for all creation with original sin. The text implies that Paul's Gospel had in view not only those labouring under the sense of guilt, but all those subject to sin and death, and that the divine solution he offered was at a fundamental level, more redemptive than punitive: <<God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus>> (Romans 3:25-26).

Sin was in the world before the Mosaic Law was instituted, but it was not technically reckoned as sin before the time of the law. Paul does not mean that people were guiltless without the law, for he has already said in Romans 2:12 that those without the written law are still judged by God, e.g. those who perished in the flood as recorded in Genesis Chapters 6-9, and those who were judged at the tower of Babel, see Genesis 11:1-9. Since people still died, this shows that they were guilty as a consequence of Adam's sin, but possibly also as a consequence of having transgressed the universal moral law in their consciences before the written Mosaic Law was given.

Sin entered the world before the law, thus there was already a law or rule in the world, and that was transgressed by Adam disobeying a clear verbal command given to him directly from God, to give us original sin, and many other sins since then until the time of Moses have been perpetrated. Hence sin was in the world before the law was given. Therefore, we cannot be justified by the law nor condemned for simply disobeying it, as there is disobedience to other laws, actual or implied by us being created in God's image, to take into account. Original sin is a want of conformity to, and actual sin is a transgression of, the law of God. Paul's proof is that death was in the world before the law and original sin is imputed to all who follow after Adam, whether they as individuals have committed actual sin or not, and through that, death is imputed to them, both physical and spiritual death. Thus even innocent children can be victims of disease, accidents, atrocities, starvation, death, etc. For in Adam: <<all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God>> (Romans 3:23). The suffering of little children, in particular, could never be reconciled with the justice and righteousness of God, if they were not thus chargeable with inherited guilt.

Note this overview comparison between Adam and Jesus

We see that through the disobedience of one, many were made sinners:

1. Adam's sin was disobedience to a directive from God.
2. Sin is malignant and spreads rapidly.
3. Many are sinners, cast by due course of law.
4. Judged and condemned, all of mankind lies under sentence, which, unless some reversal process is applied, will last for all eternity.

By the righteousness and obedience of one, many are made righteous by free grace:

1. Christ's obedience annuls Adam's disobedience. By being obedient to the law of mediation and making his soul an offering for sin, he satisfied God's justice.
2. Just as many were condemned in Adam, so too many are freed in Christ, not just freed from the spiritual death of sin but granted eternal life. It is given freely but the cost is having and maintaining faith in the one who was and is obedient.

The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt; for this righteousness not only takes away the guilt of the original offence, but of many others as well; in fact, all of them. God in Christ forgives all transgressions: <<When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins>> (Colossians 2:13).

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

Romans 5:14

Those who did not live under the law were still judged for their sin, since death held sway over them. Still, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, since Adam violated a commandment specifically revealed to him by God. Adam is a pattern, Greek typos, i.e. model, type, of Christ, for both Adam and Christ are covenantal heads of the human race, so that all people are either 'in Adam' or 'in Christ', as noted in 1 Corinthians 15:22 earlier, see the introduction to section IV.b. All are in Adam by physical birth, while only those with the new spiritual birth are in Christ.

Paul does not deny that the law brought benefit to Israel, but because Israel has, in his view, overemphasised that benefit, he is anxious to emphasise the other side of the picture: that is, precisely because the law turns sin into transgression, it makes Israel's sin all the more reprehensible and worthy of condemnation, and so Israel's situation much more perilous than that of the Gentiles. And Israel had subsequently had a long history of sin under the law: <<But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin>> (Micah 3:8), <<Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha: "I lifted you up from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel, but you walked in the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin and to provoke me to anger by their sins>> (1 Kings 16:1-2), <<When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance>> (2 Chronicles 6:26-27), and: <<On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground>> (Amos 3:14).

As Adam, by his transgression, determined the pattern for the character of the present age, just as Christ has determined the character of the age to come. This same eschatological emphasis is indicated in the description of Christ as the one to come. That is to say, the verb probably describes Christ not so much as one who was future in relation to Adam, of a coming still within the context of this age, but Christ as the one whose effective role as epochal figure, as the inaugurator of the new age, is always future in relation to the present age. In other words, it is not Christ's birth and ministry which is in view, but his death as the eschatological counterpart to Adam's sin: as Adam's transgression introduced death, so Christ's death introduced life.

<sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Romans 5:15

Paul contrasts the consequences of the work of Adam and of Christ five times in the next five verses, showing their decisive roles as covenantal heads of the people they represent. Paul clearly teaches original sin, the fact that all people inherit a sinful nature because of Adam's sin. Paul probably is also teaching that all people are in fact guilty before God because of Adam's sin. What Adam did, was done by us all: <<For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive>> (1 Corinthians 15:22), what was done to Adam was done to us all. What was done by Jesus was done for us all.

It seemed as if Paul was drawing his argument to a close then suddenly burst in to praise more than cool theological analysis, as the realisation of the magnitude of God's grace impacts him once again. But the gift is not like the trespass, Paul proclaims. The gift is indeed the grace of God in all its beneficence. Paul also moves away from transgression, the deliberate act of disobedience, to trespass, a concept that brings almost a sense of pity on the individuals who find themselves sinning. The initial contrast, therefore, sets against each other human failing and the divine initiative of grace. As the age of Adam is characterised by death having the final say, so the age of Christ is characterised by grace actualised and received in plentiful sufficiency. What is sometimes described as Paul's pessimistic assessment of man, is actually therefore his realistic appraisal of the human condition, and the individual's prospects in the present era; man as having lost his way, with death being inevitable and inescapable. Such realism can be sustained without despair only because it also sees the grace of God as having opened up another chapter beyond that which ends in death. Just as many allude to Acts Chapter 29 being the work of disciples of Jesus that is undertaken in each generation from Paul's day throughout history until Christ returns, perhaps this new chapter is Acts Chapter 30: the final outcome of God's grace with his people praising and serving him day in, day out for: <<there is no night there>> (Revelation 21:25b), throughout all eternity.

The final comment seems to imply that eternity is a long time, whereas in fact it is not bound by time at all, hence the comment 'no night there'. Humans are bound up by time, a linear dimension, but God is outside of time and not bound by anything. Eternity is a concept beyond human conception. For God, eternity, the past, the present and the future are all the same - everything just is.

He is our joy and hope in the day of evil: <<Do not be a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster>> (Jeremiah 17:17). God had received the atonement: <<And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased">> (Matthew 3:17), <<While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!">> (Matthew 17:5), and: <<There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it>> (Matthew 28:2). The result of this is God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man. If we but receive it, the work is done.

Many, i.e. all human beings excluding Christ in human form, died through Adam's one sin. Death begins with spiritual separation from God and culminates in physical death. By contrast, Paul emphasises the lavishness of Christ's grace bestowed on the many that belong to him.

<sup>16</sup> Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

## Romans 5:16

Again, the astonishing depth of God's grace in Christ is featured. One man's sin, or the trespass of Adam, resulted in the condemnation of all, but Christ overcame the flood of sin that overwhelmed the world, so that all who belong to him enjoy justification.

Paul now re-expresses the contrast between the two men and their epochs in different terms. The one who sinned is set directly against the gift which Christ has made available; confirming the clear implication of v.15 that it is not merely an objective display of grace at one point in history which is in view, but also the gift actually received. Even more striking is the variation of 'the one and the many' motif; whereas in v.15, it was the act of one man which determined the destiny of the many, i.e. mankind, now the talk is of the one whose sin resulted in condemnation and of the many trespasses from which the gracious act emerges. With emphasis on judgement and condemnation, the human responsibility for sin and trespass is reaffirmed. And the contrasting gift is expressed in language recalling the central imagery of divine vindication, underlining the extent to which, for Paul, justification and the gift of grace or Spirit are simply two sides of the one experience of acceptance by God. Once again it should be noted, that Paul sums up the contrast between the epochs in terms of their beginnings and ends: the one man whose sin initiated the present epoch and the condemnation, which is its end result; the gracious act, which initiated the new epoch and the acquittal, which is God's final word in it.

<sup>17</sup> For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

## Romans 5:17

Death reigned and ruled the human race by virtue of the one sin of Adam, whereas Christians now stand as rulers because of the work of Christ. This verse shows we are not just saved from death but are raised to true life; like Joseph, we are exalted to the second chariot: <<So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt>> (**Genesis 41:41-43**), and before our God we are not just saints but priests and kings: <<and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen>> (**Revelation 1:5-6**), and: <<And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth">> (**Revelation 5:9-10**), not only pardoned but welcomed into the presence of God, in receipt of God's abundant provision of grace, and all through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Those who received implies that there is still a clear element of human responsibility, showing that membership of the new era is neither automatic nor conferred without the individual's consent, i.e. we choose to accept God's free invitation to come under his grace and will, accepting God's gift of righteousness through faith in Jesus: <<See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright — but the righteous will live by his faith>> (**Habakkuk 2:4**).

Paul asserts that the many die as a condemnation for their guilt as trespassers. Whereas the new age is characterised not by the rule of a fate one cannot escape, i.e. death, but by the willing reception of a grace freely offered, inevitably so since, in terms of the analysis of

Romans Chapter 1, death can only be outwitted for those who yield again their submission as creatures to the creator, in dependence on whom alone life can be sustained despite death.

The key factor here is the manifest overlap between grace and righteousness: they overlap presumably because both express the outreaching of God to man, and that outreach as experienced in its accepting and sustaining power. At such moments, when the heart is full, the mind need not insist on careful distinctions between such concepts as grace, Spirit and justification.

Here too the eschatological orientation of Paul's thought is clear: the righteous reign in life. Paul underscores once more that he has in view the whole epoch, death as the final result of one, life of the other. In each case the future end determines the character of the whole. As Paul implies that the old epoch is not yet at an end, for death has not been experienced by all, so he implies that the new epoch has only begun. By such inference, the careful reader is prepared for one of the central emphases in the next stage of the argument.

One final contrast should not go unnoticed. Adam stands only at the beginning of the era, even though his action determines the whole era's domination by death, hence the possibility of reading Adam as a way of speaking of mankind as such. In contrast, the epoch of Christ is not merely initiated by Christ but continues to be determined by Christ throughout its course. Where, in the present age, it is the grim reaper who broods over the offspring of Adam (see the image), in the new age it is Christ risen and exalted who enables



individuals to receive his grace and to reign in life. All this can be seen as integral to Paul's Adam Christology: Adam as having failed to realise the full purpose of God for man, i.e. to reign in life: <<You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet>> (Psalm 8:5-6), by being subjected to death; Christ as having by his resurrection fulfilled that purpose and at the same time made it possible for those who follow him to reign in life with him. So much was fundamental and indeed self-evident to Paul in his conceptualisation and understanding of the grace he here rejoices in.

#### IV.b.ii Romans 5:18-21 - The triumphant reign of grace

God has done it; God will do it. That is the message of this dramatic short passage, summing up the whole story of the letter so far.

This may seem strange for when we come to read the verses we find that God the Father is not even mentioned! But what Paul has done is, if anything, even more effective. In writing of the result of the acts of Jesus in vv.18-19, and in speaking of grace in vv.20-21, he has pointed towards the God whose plan of salvation has now been put into effect. Like a good story teller, Paul has left us to imagine for ourselves the one who could plan something like this and bring it off, the one whose hidden name is grace.

We have a real and stark contrast between two types of humanity. The first is, of course, Adamic humanity that reflects the 'one man' Adam, whose breaking of God's spoken commandment brought sin and death into the world. The image of mankind in its fallen state of sin and misery is indeed a sorry one. Sin brings with it condemnation, the final judgement spoken of in Romans 2:1-16. It means that those who live in the state of sin have the status of sinners; they are not, that is, basically good people who sometimes do bad things, but are rather basically flawed people, whose flaws reveal themselves repeatedly as specific acts of sin.

By contrast, a new type of humanity has been let loose into the world through the righteous and loving act of the one man Jesus, God incarnate, Israel's promised Messiah: <<And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!>> (Philippians 2:8). The renewed human beings who result from this act are declared to be righteous before God, already in the present time, as we have already seen; and they are assured of life eternal in the presence of God.

<sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

#### Romans 5:18

The one trespass of Adam, as the covenantal head of the human race, brought condemnation and guilt to all people. In a similar way, Christ's one act of righteousness, either his death as such or his whole life of perfect obedience including his death, grants righteousness and life to all who belong to him. For the first time in these verses, the nature of Christ's one act is given some clarification, so far alluded to simply under the heading of a gracious act. Now it is described as an act of righteousness, and is the 'act of obedience of the one man' (v.19). At this point the features of Adam Christology are most sharply drawn, with Christ's work described precisely as an antithesis to Adam's, the deed which accords with God's will, set against the trespass, which marked mankind's wrong turning, the act defined as obedience precisely because it is the reversal of Adam's disobedience.

For all men. Some interpreters have advocated universalism, the view that all will be saved, based on these verses. But Paul makes it plain in this context that only those who receive God's gift (v.17) belong to Christ. This is a recurring theme in Romans 1:16-5:11, which indicates that only those who have faith will be justified.

The wording as, so shows that Paul's focus is not on the number in each group but on the method of either sin or righteousness being passed from the representative leader to the whole group: the first all men refers to all who are in Adam, every human being, while the second all men refers to all believers, to all who are in Christ. On the translation men, see comments made on v.12. It is right in this current post-resurrection era to consider all men to mean the totality of the human race, otherwise how could grace be 'so much more' in its effect if it is less universal than the effect of death?

<sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

#### Romans 5:19

Because of Adam's disobedience, all people were made, Greek kathistēmi, 'cause[d] to be' sinners. Thus, when Adam as mankind's representative sinned, God regarded the whole human race as guilty sinners, thereby imputing Adam's guilt to everyone. In other words, God regarded Adam's guilt as belonging to the whole human race, while also declaring that Adam's guilt does in fact belong to all. All are therefore sinners, and are born with a sinful nature that is set in the mould of Adam's transgression.

The one man who sinned was Adam; the one man who is obedient is Jesus, who is the last Adam: <<So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit>> (1 Corinthians 15:45). Here Jesus' obedience reverses Adam's disobedience, his destructive error made good by the last Adam, thus opening the way for the fulfilment of God's original purpose for man: <<But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a

little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death>> (Hebrews 2:6-15).

<sup>20</sup> The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Romans 5:20

Paul has now drawn out the comparison and the contrast between Adam and Christ as far as it will go. The argument, which began in Romans Chapter 1, with the indictment of man's Adamic wilfulness, has now been fittingly completed by the repeated emphasis that this Adamic plight and destiny of man has been more than countered and superseded by the gracious act of Christ and its effect with the whole of mankind; and the whole history of mankind embraced in a simple yet compelling vision of the two men and their two eras. Paul is now ready to round off the first major section of his treatise. But for one last time he pauses, just as he paused at the beginning of his vision in v.13, to ensure that the law is not left out of the picture. Why so? For one thing he may have been conscious of the danger of oversimplifying the cause and effect link between Adam's trespass and the many's destiny; not simply Adam's sin was involved in the condemnation of v.18 or the being made sinners of v.19, but the multiplied trespasses of the many. For another, his thought may have been prompted by the language he used in vv.18-19: condemnation, righteous act, disobedience, sinner, etc; words which would, to a Jew, inevitably suggest the law. But if we have followed his train of thought correctly, the more probable reason is that the role of the law within the process of sin and within the present epoch lay at the heart of his exposition, at the centre of his critique of the understanding of righteousness and salvation, which he had been taught as a Jew and had embraced up to the time he was confronted by Jesus on the Damascus Road. He could not round off this fundamental section of his exposition without ensuring that the law was given its proper place within this summary overview.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. This role which Paul actually ascribes to the law must have seemed shocking to most of his Jewish readers. For in a few terse words he turns the role of the law completely on its head. He had already distanced the law with some success from the righteousness of God through faith: <<But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference>> (Romans 3:20-22), as exemplified by Abraham in Romans Chapter 4. But now he pulls the gap between law and grace into outright antithesis. Far from being an answer to sin, as his fellow Jews believed, or even a means of identifying sin as Paul had previously stated in Romans 3:20, here Paul claims it actually increased sin! Far from being an instrument of God in the epoch of grace, it is lumped instead with sin and death. Nothing Paul had said about the law so far could have prepared the Roman Jewish Christians for this.

The typical Jewish view in Paul's day was that God gave the law to counteract the sinful human impulse. In Judaism there was the proverb, 'The more Torah the more life', (Mishnah, Aboth 2.7). But Paul points out that the law came in that the trespass might increase, probably in the

sense that once people had written laws from God, they committed not just sins against God's law in their conscience, but, even more seriously, wilful trespasses, Greek *paraptōma*, like Adam's first trespass against a clear spoken command directly from God. See the comments made on Romans 4:15. Hence, the surpassing excellence of Christ's salvation is shown in that grace increased all the more, even more than these increasing sins. <<What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator>> (Galatians 3:19).

Just as light shining in a room will show the dust and dirt, so too the law reveals the depth of sin and corruption in our deeds and in our hearts. It is magnified as if it were placed on a microscope slide, attached to a digital projector and beamed onto a large screen using a high definition lumen lamp. The law was also given to show just how much the grace of God abounds and always has. But, through Jesus, grace abounds exponentially.

The law highlighted the reign of sin. The reign of sin set off the reign of grace. Sin reigned unto death, but grace reigns to and throughout eternal life, and this through righteousness, a righteousness imputed to us for justification, implanted in us for sanctification; and both by Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power and efficacy of Christ, the great prophet, priest and king of his church.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for Paul is that the power of sin and death has been broken: God's grace has more than matched the intensification of sin through the law and so given sure promise of life beyond the cold grasp of death. So too, Paul would also recognise that the righteousness through which grace rules is not to be seen as a once for all package, analogous to Israel's election, but as the status of one accepted by God, and sustained by God, in continuing dependence on his grace, until its final and complete outworking in eternal life.

And it is always through Jesus Christ as Lord: if the agency of Adam's trespass gave free reign to sin and death, it is precisely the force which continues to come through the one man who defeated sin and death, which sustains the believer against their continuing claims upon him and which will prove finally triumphant. The one man who lost his way condemned those like him to fall short of the destiny intended for man; the one man who refused the wrong turning and completed man's intended destiny, thereby made it possible for those who come after him to fulfil that destiny too, through the free grace, which was and is pre-eminently his.

Thus Paul finally brings the first main stage of his argument to a resounding conclusion, with ringing phrases, which both gather up key terms from the preceding chapters and sustain the note of tragedy confounded into a triumphant doxology.