

Restored Relationship

CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS, MAKING RECONCILIATION
WITH GOD POSSIBLE FOR ALL.

My local paper carries an advice column. Most newspapers do, so they must be popular. I don't read the column every day. Sometimes I have enough problems to deal with in my own life and don't really have the desire to hear about the problems in other people's relationships. At other times reading the column is strangely entertaining, like watching a train wreck (and hoping that no one gets seriously hurt).

I have noticed a frequent theme in these columns: the desire for reconciliation. The person writing to ask for advice usually paints some other person as the one who has caused some problem. Sometimes the problem is an offense given. Money was misappropriated. A spouse or a parent was abusive. Sometimes the problem is estrangement. A person someone deeply cares about ghosts him or her. The writer does not know how to overcome the indifference of the other and the pain the rejection causes. Occasionally the writer confesses to past bad behavior, asserts that he or she has changed, and wants to know how to reestablish a relationship with people he or she injured in the past.

Whatever the cause of the rift, the writer normally wants to heal the broken relationship but does not know how. The desire to reconcile is laudable, but the act can be difficult. For one thing, both parties have to desire a restored relationship. As long as one party remains hostile or even just indifferent, reconciliation can never be achieved.

In our session today, we will read about a broken relationship. Since the time of Adam and Eve, humanity has disobeyed and sinned against God. Sometimes humanity has shown a tragic indifference toward the One who gave them life and desires the best for them. When people ghost God, they rob themselves of the daily blessings He can provide, and they break His heart in the bargain.

Yet God's love for us endures. So in spite of offenses and indifference suffered, He offers reconciliation through faith in Christ. Sins can be forgiven. A new, healthy, and blessed relationship can be established. This is the message of the gospel, and it is indeed good news.

Romans 5:1-21

Through the first four chapters of his letter, Paul presented the universal sinfulness of humanity. He also presented the only solution to human sin. The solution was not doing good. It was not keeping the law. It was not circumcision. It was not even being a true, physical descendant of Abraham. The only means of salvation from sin is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the necessity of salvation by grace through faith thoroughly established, Paul turned his attention to the benefits that accrue to those declared righteous by faith. Romans 5–8 focus on the believer’s restored relationship with the living God and his or her new life in Christ. Our session today begins Paul’s presentation of the blessings enjoyed by those saved by grace through faith in Jesus.

 ▶ EXPLORE THE TEXT ◀

A New Peace (Rom. 5:1-5)

The story of humanity’s universal sin points to a tragic end. A just God must punish a rebellious humanity. Wrath seems to be the inevitable conclusion to the story. But through the grace of God and the work of Jesus, the broken relationship is mended. Peace and hope result.

VERSE 1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore points back to the account of Abraham and the revelation that right standing with God comes by faith (chap. 4). Paul joyously highlighted the consequences of salvation by grace through faith. Like Abraham, believers **have been justified** or declared righteous as he explained earlier in the letter (3:21-26). Those guilty of sin are depicted as standing before the just Judge, God. Their guilt is proven. Wrath and punishment are deserved. But by the grace of the Judge and the work of Christ, the guilty one is acquitted **by faith** in Jesus.

Rather than facing a wrathful Judge who must punish the sinner, *by faith* the believer enters into an entirely different relationship with God. Paul told the Roman believers that **through our Lord Jesus Christ** an amazing reversal is accomplished, and now **we have peace with God**.

Peace involves both the absence of conflict and a sense of well-being. Prior to their salvation, people lived in a state of enmity with God. They suffered from the chaos, discord, and anguish resulting from their own bad behavior. They suffered from their rejection of divine wisdom. And they were subject to the righteous wrath of God. But when *justified by faith*, the state of a believer changes radically. A state of well-being and harmony with God becomes his or her new reality. The presence of God no longer generates fear due to our knowledge of our sin, but peace due to faith in the work of Christ.

VERSE 2

We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Those who are justified **have also obtained access . . . into this grace in which we stand**. Gaining *access* into God's *grace* refers to the state of peace with God which was acquired through our justification (v. 1). But this implies something more. It pictures a person graciously granted access into the presence of a royal figure. All believers now have ongoing access to their gracious God.

The Greek verb form for *have obtained* indicates a past act that has resulted in a present state of being. The same is true of the verbal idea translated *in which we stand*. Believers have obtained *grace* and exist in that state of *grace*. Thus, they exist in a state of peace in their ongoing relationship with God. Reflecting this blessing, Paul frequently used various forms of "to stand" to refer to the status and behavior of those in Christ. Believers stand on the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1) and in Christ can stand firm even in the face of opposition (Eph. 6:10-20).

As with justification, Paul reiterated that peace with and access to God did not result from human goodness or effort. These blessings came **through him** (Christ) and **by faith**. Only the grace of God accessed through faith in the Person and work of Jesus can bring about forgiveness of sins and an ongoing (permanent) state of peace with God (2:8-10).

Those justified in Christ celebrate what God has done in their past. But looking forward they also can **boast in the hope of the glory of God**. *Boast* carries the positive meaning of "celebrate" (NASB) or

“rejoice” (ESV). *Hope* focused on *the glory of God* does not refer to wishful thinking. The nature of God provides a guarantee that His Word and His promises will be fulfilled. Christian *hope*, as a result, implies no uncertainty but conveys the joyful and confident looking forward to the fulfillment of the future promised by God.

VERSE 3

And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance,

Not only that refers back to that access to grace and hope (v. 2) that believers enjoy and points forward to another benefit of our life in Christ (vv. 3-5). The spiritual benefits that believers receive through salvation are real and are cause for rejoicing. In addition, the new relationship that believers have with God also enables them to deal with the challenges they encounter as they live in Christ in this fallen world.

Believers **also boast in our afflictions**. Paul’s statement does not mean that *afflictions* cannot hurt the believer or that believers rejoice because they experience pain. Rather, believers can rejoice in the midst of affliction because of what the affliction means and the way that God can use it to the believer’s benefit. The believer’s relationship with God and walk with Christ produce a spiritual wisdom that changes how we look at our world and our experiences. And it generates a spiritual strength that both justifies and enables joy even when experiencing affliction.

Believers can also rejoice in the knowledge that God can use the difficult things we experience to help us mature spiritually. To make this point, Paul presented a chain of effects starting with faith encountering afflictions. **Affliction produces endurance**. *Endurance* is the ability to bear up in the face of difficulty. While afflictions are not pleasant, God can use them to teach us about His power, His comfort, and about the strength of our own faith. Those who have embraced that knowledge find that they can endure temporal afflictions for the certainty of spiritual and eternal reward (8:18).

VERSE 4

endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

Affliction endured in faith builds within us the spiritual strength to survive subsequent and even greater afflictions. And so, **endurance produces proven character**. *Proven character* refers to the result of

successfully going through the process of a test or an ordeal. The ordeal reveals the true character of the person tested, both to that individual and to others.

The believer whose Christian character is tested, endures, and is proven becomes a person of genuine and meaningful **hope**. Christian *hope* does not refer to wishful thinking but to the confident expectation that the future will unfold as God has promised. *Hope* is faith looking forward with confidence. Persons of mature hope can experience peace even in earthly turmoil because they rest in the promises and in the hands of the Father who determines their future. Whatever life brings they can “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5:2, ESV, KJV).

Believers live in a fallen world and suffer in many ways along with the rest of humanity. But believers know that such hardships cannot separate them from God. They also know that nothing can rob them of the blessings both present and future of that relationship. As a result, the troubles that might crush unbelievers need not have such an effect on the faithful. Mature people of faith know that earthly sufferings are temporary. They understand that physical affliction—painful as it may be—cannot rob them of the goodness of a life in Christ. In fact, walking through hardships with the reassurance and in the power of faith can further build faith and confirm the power of a life lived in Christ.

VERSE 5

This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Believers who put their hope in God and live on the basis of that hope will not find their confidence in Him was in vain. Paul was certain of this truth because of what God had already done. **God’s love** and the indwelling **Holy Spirit** prove His presence, His concern for us, and the power of our relationship with Him. *God’s love* is an element of His character. We can have hope precisely because “God is love” (1 John 4:7-12), and that love **has been poured out in our hearts**. *Love* is from God, and its presence shaping how we treat others reveals God working in us and among us. We know God exists because we have encountered His love in Jesus Christ, and it has transformed us.

God reveals His love for us also **through the Holy Spirit who was given to us**. The work of the *Holy Spirit* in the life of the believer provides evidence of the presence of God (Rom. 8:12-17,23).

As one declared righteous by faith, who knows the love of God, and is indwelt by the Spirit, the believer can live in peace and hope, whatever circumstance or challenges life brings (Phil. 4:10-13). The person who has embraced these truths can truly rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.



Explore Further

Paul traced a connection between affliction endured in faith and confidence in the future. Reflect on the challenges you are facing in your life. Pray that God will enable you to see His hand at work, sustain you, mature you, and give you confidence for tomorrow

- that enables you to stand firm in His peace today.

A Proven Love (Rom. 5:6-11)

God revealed the amazing degree of His love for humanity in the work of Jesus (John 3:16). Those who are honest about their own sinfulness know that they do not deserve God's gift of forgiveness in Christ. They also must admit that they have not worked their way to God and secured His favor. For it was God's action in Christ, at His initiative, that makes our reconciliation with Him possible.

VERSE 6

For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Humanity was trapped in its own sin, helpless to find a cure and destined for death, but God acted to our benefit. Humanity had not earned, did not deserve, and could not accomplish its own cure. Yet **at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly**. The word *ungodly* refers to persons who are irreverent and do not fear God and so do not deserve God's sympathy.

The spiritual illness of willful sin, rebellion against God, had produced a terminal condition from which humanity could not cure itself. But God Himself provided the cure *at the right time*. First-century Greek had two main words for *time*. One refers mainly to the passage of time, but the one Paul used here refers to a time of particular importance. God sent Jesus

at the appointed moment in line with His grand plan for the salvation of all who turn to Him in faith.

VERSES 7-8

For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

In a brief aside, Paul observed that **rarely will someone die for a just person**. *Rarely* translates a word referring to something done either with great difficulty or infrequently. A *just person* might be appreciated as someone who follows the law or who keeps the rules. Such people might not have done anything to deserve ill treatment. But how likely is it that someone would willingly die to defend a person they consider guiltless?

For a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. The concepts of a *just person* and a *good person* overlap. The implication is clear. If rarely would someone die for the just and the good, then certainly no one would die for a person who is neither just nor good. Even more, the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, willingly dying for someone else, especially an undeserving person, seems incredible. Yet this is what the gospel story tells us that God did for us in Christ. The evidence proving God's **love for us** was the gift of His Son. **Christ died for us**, and He did this **while we were still sinners**. We were neither just nor good. But in spite of the fact that we did not deserve His compassion and mercy, God acted in Christ to offer us forgiveness and a right relationship with Him.

VERSES 9-10

How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

Salvation impacts all aspects of the believer's life—past, present, and future. **We have now been justified by his blood**. And God did this because of His love for us and in spite of our sinfulness. Since He has already acted for our benefit in Christ, **how much more then . . . will we be saved through him from wrath**. *Will we be saved through him from wrath* highlights the future aspects of salvation. Paul used the Greek verb translated *saved* in the past, the present, and the future tenses in

his letters. Believers can look back to the point of their conversion or salvation as a past event. But salvation also has an ongoing impact in the lives of believers who should see their salvation being worked out in their present as well (Phil. 2:12). And in Christ believers also have the assurance that they will be saved from the wrath that God will visit upon sinners in the future judgment.

Christ died for the helpless who were trapped in their own sin. But even more amazingly, Christ died for us **while we were enemies**. *Enemies* is a strong word. Paul used it mainly of people who have rejected the gospel (Rom. 11:28; Phil. 3:18) or who have actively rejected the ways of God (“hostile,” Col. 1:21). Yet God worked to remove the enmity between us and Him so that we might be **reconciled to Him**. Reconciling two parties requires resolving hostility and restoring a healthy, positive relationship. It often is not easy to accomplish, and someone must take the first step toward the other. God did this for us in Christ. Furthermore, since we have been reconciled, **then how much more . . . will we be saved by his life**. Reconciliation assures believers of God’s love in the present and also of salvation in the future—deliverance from the wrath of God in the day of judgment (Rom. 5:9).

VERSE 11

And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

And not only that introduces another aspect of life in Christ. Those who **have now received this reconciliation** and been assured of salvation can now also **boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**. Believers ought to boast in the sense of celebrating the accomplishments of God in Christ. Amazed by His love, celebrating the gift of salvation, believers rightly give Him praise.



Explore Further

Read “Reconciliation” on pages 1337–1338 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What does a broken relationship with God look like? How would you explain the need for
• and the means of reconciliation to an unbeliever?

A Growing Grace (Rom. 5:18-21)

After celebrating the work of Christ that provides the offer of reconciliation to all people who will put their faith in Him (vv. 6-11), Paul answered an implied question. How could the act of one person have such a great impact on all people? He did this by comparing the impact of Jesus to the impact of Adam (vv. 12-17). He explained that Adam served as “a type of the Coming One,” Jesus (vv. 12-14). He then contrasted the two, emphasizing especially that Adam brought sin and death to all people “because all sinned” (v. 12), but Jesus brings life and righteousness to all those who receive “the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness” (vv. 15-17).

VERSES 18-19

So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. For just as through one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

So then, or “consequently” (NIV), links the teachings that follow (vv. 18-21) to the preceding observation (vv. 12-17) that Adam serves as a “type” (an image to compare/contrast to something else) that helps us understand the work and impact of Jesus. Building on 5:12-17, Paul asserted that **through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone**. Adam’s sin brought sin into a previously sinless world, and all his descendants followed him in sin (v. 12). In contrast, through **one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone**. Adam introduced sin into the world and all who follow Adam in sin reap condemnation. In contrast, Jesus by His righteous act has made justification available, and all who follow Jesus reap life.

Through one man’s disobedience reframes Adam’s *trespass*, emphasizing that it was a willful act. Likewise, Jesus’s *one righteous act*, His willing self-sacrifice on the cross, is characterized as **one man’s obedience**. Focusing on the choice to obey or disobey God frames the consequences not just for Adam and Jesus but also for all those who would follow them.

As a result of Adam’s act, **many were made sinners**. While the descendants of Adam can be called sinners by nature, the fact is that they also ignored God’s revelation to them (Rom. 1-2) and chose to disobey. The gospel story begins with this tragic truth. However, through the

obedience of Jesus, **many will be made righteous**. Paul made it abundantly clear that salvation is not automatically applied for all, but only for those who follow Jesus in faith (3:21-26). For those who believe and become followers of Jesus, the gospel story concludes with triumph rather than tragedy.

VERSES 20-21

The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The law called people to righteousness, but due to their disobedience, it also had the effect of pointing out their sin more clearly than ever. But the good news is that **where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more**. Where sin is abundant and evident, God's abundant grace is seen with even greater clarity.

The law highlighted the fact that **sin reigned** in human affairs. And sin leads to spiritual **death**. But for people of faith, **grace will reign**. When the problem of sin is resolved by the blood of Christ (3:21-26) faith is credited as **righteousness** (4:9-25). So, *grace* (not law) through faith in Jesus Christ leads to **eternal life**.

Followers of Jesus live not by law but in grace. And in grace through the work and teachings of Jesus, the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26), and the love of the Father, our lives can be transformed. For in Christ we have been reconciled to Him. This is the blessed and joyous message that we are to share with the world.



Explore Further

Read "Adam and Eve" on pages 26–27 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. How are the sin of Adam and the sins of people today related? How is the resultant broken relationship with God manifested in daily life? Faith in Jesus can mend the relationship. It also changes the way believers live. What does that change look like in your own life?
