

STUDY 9

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

ROMANS 4:1-12

EXPOSITION

A glorious theme for any gospel preacher to develop is that of Jesus Christ the righteousness of God for all who believe in him. This is what Paul declared – **But of him you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.** (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) George Whitefield (1714-1770) the great gospel preacher of the Evangelical Awakening said this:

In one sense, God now sees no sin in them; the whole covenant of works is fulfilled in them; they are actually justified, acquitted, and looked upon as righteous in the sight of God; they are perfectly accepted in the beloved; they are complete in him; the flaming sword of God's wrath, which moved every way, is now removed, and free access given to the tree of life; they are enabled to reach out the arm of faith, and pluck, and live forevermore.

(From a sermon on '**Christ the believer's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption**'. A copy of this sermon by George Whitefield in easier English can be found at the end of this Study.

The great truth concerning justification is a most important and essential element of the gospel. In the fourth chapter of Romans we come to the second great doctrine of the gospel – that a sinner may be justified (or, made right with God), and be acquitted of any transgression against God's law. The ground of justification is God's free grace. Salvation is by grace, justification is by grace, and acceptance by God is by grace. Grace comes freely from God, and is not dependent upon any human merit or effort. By grace, God supplies in the gospel all that a sinner needs to come to him. It is a grace that is firmly based not on an individual assessment of each sinner by the law but on God's love and mercy alone.

The conditions under which righteousness is granted have already been considered in Romans 3:20-24. Sinners receive a righteousness from God which is conveyed to them only through Jesus Christ. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ, he becomes justified in God's sight. This is the only way in which he can be made right with God.

The reason for the granting of righteousness has already been considered in Romans 3:24-26. It is a free gift, based upon the sheer grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The means of justification is faith, which is the only thing a sinner is called upon to exercise. Justification and faith are inseparable partners in the work of salvation, a truth repeated often enough in the New Testament. In Romans 3:27-31, Paul described the grounds for justification – by grace, through faith alone. What a great relief to know that nothing is required of the sinner! He has no need to be religious, or live his life according to certain rules. This was the great discovery of Martin Luther as he was reading through Paul's Letter to the Romans. So great was his wonder at such a truth, that he added an extra word in his German translation – For we maintain that a man is justified by faith **alone**... (Romans 3:28)

A sinner is justified by faith alone. God does not require him to do anything in order to be justified.

Luther found that the God of wrath (Romans 1:18-19), of whom he was terrified, and whom he could never seem to please, was extending to him a grace that would make him right with God. When Luther came to Romans 3:28, he discovered that it is God who makes a sinner righteous, and that it is fruitless to attempt to produce deeds of righteousness in order to be saved.

Every gospel preacher needs to make sure that his hearers are made aware of this fact – that no one can do anything to please God. Therefore a sinner must find another way to come to God – **apart from the deeds of the law**. A sinner is not saved by religious observance, but by God's grace.

This raises another question: In what sense are Christians under the Law of Moses? Here is a difficult and involved subject, which is really outside the scope of our present study. However, we can say this: above all, Paul would say that the law cannot save sinners; it is unable to make sinners right with God. This must be impressed upon the minds of all those who listen to our preaching of the gospel.

The Law has two functions: (1) it condemns sinners, making them feel guilty before God; and (2) it points the way for sinners to flee to Christ for salvation. However, we must also add that the law provides Christians with a perfect standard by which to live. God requires everyone everywhere to keep his law. Those whom he saves satisfy the demands of God's moral law (the Ten Commandments) through Jesus Christ. Each Christian has an inward desire to keep the law; and is this not an evidence of his salvation? **For I delight in the law according to the inward man.** (Romans 7:21-22)

In Romans chapter 4, Paul fills in the details concerning justification by faith. Matthew Henry comments – **His argument stands thus: 'All who are saved are justified in the same way as Abraham was. But Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works. Therefore all who are saved are justified by faith.'** After delivering this syllogism (a classical method of stating two facts, and drawing an inevitable conclusion from them), Matthew Henry continues – **If Abraham, a man so famous for works, so eminent in holiness and obedience, was nevertheless justified by faith alone, and not by works, how much less can any other...who comes so far short of him, set himself up for a justification by his own works.**

Romans chapter 4 provides the gospel preacher with the following four points:

(1) That Abraham's righteousness was not dependent upon anything that he did (Genesis 15:4-6).

(2) That Abraham's righteousness had nothing to do with circumcision. Circumcision was the supreme sign of religious observance, whereby a Jew was pledged to God under the terms of the Old Covenant. When Abraham was justified, he had not yet been circumcised, neither had his family (Genesis 15:6; 17:10-11).

(3) That Abraham's righteousness had no connection with the Law of Moses, which was to appear in the distant future.

(4) That the way Abraham was made righteous becomes the pattern for all sinners who come to God by faith, as Abraham did – **And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness.** (Genesis 15:6)

With these facts, Paul gives us a clear idea of what the gospel is. We cannot say to our congregations – If you work hard enough you will be made right with God, and God will receive you. Instead, we declare, as did the apostle Paul – Sinners must come to God by way of the New Covenant whose basis is not works, but faith. The crucial question is this – Was Abraham saved by works or by faith? Was Abraham a works man, or a faith man? The answer must surely be the latter.

The righteousness of Abraham was apart from his works (1-8)

Abraham was accepted by God because of his faith, and not because of anything that he did. Abraham could do nothing about fathering a child, for Sarah was long past the age of childbearing. Abraham could not produce the child of God's promise by his own efforts. Yet Abraham became the progenitor of the Jewish nation, its founder both physically and spiritually. The Jews were very proud of the name of Abraham. Therefore Paul's reference to Abraham was both important and authoritative. He begins with a question in verse 1 – **What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?** Was Abraham accepted by God through his works or by the way of faith? Verse 2 begins to answer the question – **For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God.**

There are some very important implications here. A prophet wrote long after the days of Abraham – **But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags** (Isaiah 64:6) Paul has previously stated that everyone is corrupt before God (Romans 3:10-18). God can never accept sinners on the basis of their professed good works. If Abraham had done anything to please God, he would have had good grounds for boasting. But he never did. Instead, he simply believed in God. Paul reminded the Corinthians that their boast was in the Lord – **...as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'** (1 Corinthians 1:31; quoting Jeremiah 9:24) Christ is our righteousness from God. Paul also reminded the Ephesians that it is **by grace that you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.** (Ephesians 2:8-9) In verse 3, Paul looks back to the declaration of Scripture concerning Abraham in Genesis 15:6 – **For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'** Again, faith is seen in close association with justification in the Word of God.

The original question of verse 1 is answered further in verses 4-5 – **Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.** Salvation is by grace, and is received by faith – **...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** (John 3:15) If sinners are saved by their works, what happens to grace? God becomes a debtor to sinners, owing them salvation in exchange for their works! But God's method of salvation is by grace, and through faith. Paul and Silas replied to the Philippian gaoler's question, **What must I do to be saved?** in this way – **Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved** (Acts 16:30-31) Here, the gaoler is steered away from any thought of any human action or works in order to be saved. Indeed, the reply of the two missionaries is a classic evangelistic appeal. However, we must also avoid thinking that the exercise of saving faith is a meritorious work that credits sinners with a ground for their salvation. When sinners come to Christ, it is by faith alone. It is at that point that justification is accounted to them when God's mercy and the sinner's faith meet together in his saving plan.

Paul, careful to ensure that his Roman readers did not think that the doctrine of justification by faith was just his opinion, refers them to David in the Old Testament – **... just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose**

sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin'. (Verses 6-8, quoting from Psalm 32:1-2) This is the other side of Paul's answer to the original question about justification by faith. Here is a great truth indeed – God does **not** reckon sin to the one who has faith in Christ.

The gospel preacher now needs to take the argument on to its next stage. We have seen that Abraham was justified by faith alone, but someone is bound to ask – Was there, then, no connection between Abraham's faith and circumcision under the Covenant? Was not Abraham justified because God made a covenant with him, circumcision being an outward sign in the flesh of that covenant? If this is true, was not circumcision then a religious observance...and therefore a work? Were not the Jews brought into salvation by marking themselves in the flesh with circumcision? This argument is similar to that used by many people today who claim to be Christians because they were brought up in a Christian home and within the Christian faith. Every gospel preacher comes across this kind of thinking in some of his hearers. But his task is to remind them that salvation is not of works, but of God's grace. Righteousness is entirely separate from religious observance.

Righteousness could not come through circumcision. (9-12)

Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, and before his children were circumcised. Circumcision was only a sign of what had already taken place in Abraham's heart. Circumcision was a confirmation of what was already effective in his life. Verse 9 poses an important question, and replies that righteousness comes by faith, and is never the result of works – **Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.** The decisive question is – did Abraham receive his justification before or after his circumcision? The answer must be that he was accounted righteous **before** his circumcision. **How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.** (Verse 10)

Paul's answer is plain and straightforward. Paul continues, **And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised.** (Verse 11) He argues correctly that it is not the outward sign that saves the sinner, but what God does in his heart. So vital is this truth that no demand by the Christian Church was ever made of Gentile believers to be circumcised – **And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'** (Acts 15:1) This view was universally rejected by the Church; faith in Jesus Christ being all that was required to be saved. Peter was scathing in his reply – **Now therefore why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.** (Acts 15:10-11) James summed up the argument with these words – **Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.** (Acts 15:19)

Some of the Gentile nations practised circumcision, but not for the same covenantal reasons as the Jews. Neither were they so devout in their religious observances. All the Christian leaders of the early Church believed fervently that it was wrong to insist that circumcision and the observance of the Jewish law should be made a condition of their salvation, and their entrance into the Church.

The connection Paul makes between the faith of Abraham and that of all believers is astounding – ... **that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of**

the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. (Verses 11-12) Circumcision did not bring salvation to Abraham or to his physical descendants. So then, we ask, what was the function of circumcision? It indicated that Abraham had been made right with God, and was a sign of God's covenant with him.

Yet circumcision was not required of Abraham's spiritual descendants. The whole emphasis is upon an inward faith, not an outward sign. Abraham is the spiritual father of all those, from all nations, and within all cultures, who believe in Jesus Christ. Here, gospel preachers are encouraged to see that they have a direct link with Abraham; for their evangelical thrust is to the whole world. Both Jews and Gentiles are saved in exactly the same way – through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 9

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read 1 Corinthians 1:30-31.

1. What 4 things connected with Jesus Christ are given to every Christian at his conversion?
2. As a result, what do Christians desire to do above everything else?

Read Romans 1:18-19.

3. Why did Martin Luther find verse 18 a personal threat?
4. What proof for the existence of God is found in verse 19?

Read Romans 7:21-22.

5. What is the first **law** that every Christian finds in his own experience?
6. What is the attitude of every believer to God's law?
7. Where does the believer find freedom from the first **law**?

Read Genesis 15:4-6.

8. Why was Abraham not able to do anything about having the promised heir? (See verse 2).

Read Genesis 15:6.

9. Did Abraham believe before or after his circumcision? (Compare 15:6 with 17:10)
10. Is there a connection between his being **accounted righteous** and his circumcision?

Read Genesis 17:10-11.

11. Of what was circumcision a sign?
12. Using the words of verse 11, upon which part of the male body was the mark of circumcision made?

Read Isaiah 64:6.

13. How does God regard the good deeds of mankind?
14. Why? (See the beginning of the verse)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:31.

15. Which other words could be used for the **glory in the Lord**?

Read Jeremiah 9:24.

16. What does the believer glory in?

17. What 3 things does he know about the Lord?

Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

18. How does a sinner come to experience the grace of God?

19. How is this conveyed to the believer?

20. If men and women could be saved by their good works what would they be tempted to do?

Read John 3:15.

21. Here, the sinner is commanded to believe in the uplifted Christ. Where was Christ uplifted?

22. What had been uplifted in the wilderness?

23. What happened when the people looked at it? (See Numbers 21:4-9)

24. Briefly, explain how this incident recorded in the Old Testament could be used in a gospel sermon?

Read Acts 16:30-31.

25. What was the gaoler's question?

26. In the missionaries' reply, which word is substituted for the gaoler's **do**?

27. Who else were saved on this occasion?

Read Psalm 32:1-2.

28. What is this Psalm about, in one word?

29. What 2 things is the repentant sinner saved from?

Read Acts 15:1.

30. What were the false teachers adding to faith and salvation?

31. Why was this wrong?

Read Acts 15:10-11.

32. Why was Peter indignant?

33. What did Peter say **alone** leads to salvation?

Read Acts 15:19.

34. What conclusion did the presiding James come to?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

1. In not more than 20 words, explain for each of the 3 following sections of Chapter 4, how Abraham was justified without works :

(1) Verses 1-8;

(2) Verses 9-12;

(3) Verses 13-15.

2. What does the word **impute** mean, found in this Chapter in verses 4, 6, 8, 11, 23, 24?

C. PRACTICAL

In no more than 100 words, say how you would apply the meaning of the word 'impute' to your hearers while you are preaching the gospel?

STUDY 9. APPENDIX

Here is a sermon by the greatest of all gospel preachers of the 18th Century Evangelical Awakening on justification by faith, and other blessings in the Christian life. There are no questions on this sermon. Just enjoy it, and be inspired by it.

CHRIST

THE BELIEVER'S WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION

A gospel sermon by George Whitefield (1714-1770)

(Adapted into modern English by Geoffrey Stonier)

**But of God you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom,
and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.**

(1 Corinthians 1:30)

This must be one of the most wonderful and comprehensive verses in God's Word. What a view of the gospel is opened up here to believers! What great privileges they receive from their heavenly Father!

The blessings of all believers

What blessings come to the elect through Jesus Christ from the fountain of God's eternal love! An eternal covenant was drawn up between the Father and the Son – **I have made a covenant with my Chosen.** The servant of Jehovah has come to make himself a sacrifice for sin, so that the Father **will see his offspring, prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand.** In a glorious prayer, Jesus referred to this covenant – **Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me, will be with me where I am.** The Apostle breaks into praise when he considers the elect who were chosen in Christ **before the foundation of the world.** Jesus refers to it when he says – **Come, those who are blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!** To the sons of Zebedee he said, **to sit at my right hand and at my left, is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.** In our text, the apostle speaks of the privileges of the saved, not because of their faithfulness or freewill, but because of the eternal love of God the Father through Jesus Christ. If only more people would consider this important doctrine – the covenant of redemption made between the Father and the Son – then more would be willing to accept the doctrine of election, and be less hostile to it. On my part, I am unable to see how true humility of mind can be attained without a knowledge of this doctrine. I will not say that all those who deny this teaching are wicked; but they reveal a poor knowledge of the Word. A denial of eternal election shows a great ignorance of ourselves. Our redemption is such that whoever glories should glory in the Lord. What can I say about God's election? It is a deep mystery even to those who have drunk deep of his electing love. It shines out so strongly that it even dazzles the eyes of God's dear children. Whatever kind of Christians we are, we must all acknowledge that the privileges we enjoy in Jesus Christ flow from the eternal love of God the Father.

The Blessing of Wisdom

First of all, Christ is made our **wisdom.** Where can true wisdom be found? For many unbelievers, wisdom is living according to the evil desires of the flesh, in eating, and

drinking, and having a good time. To them, wisdom is living for pleasure. Others say that wisdom is in acquiring wealth and power. Unfortunately for many, riches fly away like birds to distant lands. Jesus himself said, **a man's life does not consist of the abundance of things which he possesses.** A time is coming when all must leave their possessions behind, and then discover that their riches will not redeem them in the grave. Perhaps you are not interested in the pursuit of riches and pleasure, but you see wisdom in books. Well, you might be able to count the stars and know them all by name, but still be a fool; for students of books are not always wise. Let me send you to the school of that wise man Socrates, who declared, "Know yourself." Here is a true wisdom that sends us back to our text, where Christ is spoken of as the only source of blessing to elect sinners. We are nothing in God's sight. Once we were in darkness; but now all is light. Once we were dead in our trespasses and sins, children of wrath, and heirs of hell; but now we see that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and there is no health in us. Without Jesus Christ, we are wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked, and without him there is no salvation under heaven. We see our need of coming to Christ, and the wisdom of God in appointing him our Saviour. At last, we acknowledge that it is God who makes us willing to accept salvation on Christ's own terms.

The Blessing of Righteousness

Secondly, Christ's personal **righteousness** is made available to believers, and is counted as their own. God enables them to take hold of Jesus Christ by faith so that he might blot out their transgressions like a thick cloud, and remember their sins and iniquities no longer. They are made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ who is **the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes.** In a sense, God no longer sees any sin in his children. The whole covenant of works is fulfilled in them, for they have actually been justified and acquitted, and made righteous in God's sight. They are accepted in the Beloved, and are perfect in Christ. The flaming sword of God's wrath is taken away so that believers are free to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Thus Paul exclaims, **It is God who justifies; who is the one who condemns?** The righteousness of Christ delivers us from all the guilt of sin. He is our Saviour, and the atonement for our sins. **Who then will bring any charge against God's elect?** The law condemns, but when we have Christ's righteousness accounted to us, we are dead to the old covenant, the law of works. Christ has satisfied all its demands of us. Does death threaten us? Have no fear; the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but God gives us the victory through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a privilege we have here! No wonder the angel declared to the humble shepherds at the birth of Christ, **See, I bring you good news of great joy; there is born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.** How the angels rejoice at the conversion of poor sinners! The Lord is our righteousness; we have peace with God through faith in Christ's blood; and never again will we be condemned. Believer, raise your head! **Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice.** If God has made Christ to be our righteousness, what is there to fear? Look to the Lord our righteousness, and do not be afraid. What can separate us from the love of Christ? **Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No; I am assured that neither death, no life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Yet, however glorious the righteousness that is accounted to us, it is only the beginning of the believer's happiness.

The Blessing of Sanctification

Thirdly, Christ alone is our **sanctification**. What sort of blessing is sanctification? It does not mean only going through the motions of the Christian life, though true believers should count it a privilege to obey all of the Lord's commands. Nor is sanctification a mere outward reformation of the life in response to a few pangs of conscience and a skin-deep repentance

over sin. True sanctification is when the whole man is re-created. Clothed in the righteousness of Christ, true believers are made spiritually alive and are sanctified. Through Christ's righteousness, we become entitled to heaven. Through sanctification we are made ready for glory, for it affects us body, soul, and spirit. Once, our understanding was darkened, but now all is light in the Lord. Once, our wills rebelled against the will of God; now, our minds are set on things above, and are taken up with divine matters. Our consciences have been enlightened; our bodily members, once instruments of uncleanness and iniquity, are now dedicated to righteousness and true holiness. **The old things have passed away; all things have become new.** Sin no longer has dominion over us; we have been freed from its power, but not yet from its presence within. We are holy in our manner of life, and in our hearts. We have received a new nature in Christ, where every grace of Christ is reproduced in our souls, transforming us into his likeness. We dwell in Christ, and he in us. We are led by the Spirit of God, and produce his fruit. Christ is our Emmanuel – God with us – and the Holy Spirit makes our bodies his temple. Thus, as a holy dwelling place of the Lord, the whole Godhead indwells us. We are enabled to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, being vitally united with him, our Head, in a living faith. Our Redeemer is our maker and our husband, so that we are flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. We walk and talk with him as a friend. We are one with Christ, even as he is one with the Father. What a privilege to have Christ as our sanctification! We are changed from beasts into saints, and our devilish nature is made to partake of the divine nature. We have been translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, putting off the old man which is corrupt, and putting on the new man which is created by God to be righteous and true and holy. This blessing is beyond words. No wonder the apostle exhorts believers to rejoice in the Lord! Indeed, believers have a reason for rejoicing even to their dying day; for the kingdom of God is within them, and they are being changed from glory into glory by the Spirit of the Lord. This may well be a mystery to the natural man, but it is also a great mystery to the spiritual man – something he can never fathom.

You children of the Lord! Are you not dazzled by the brightness of the Lord within you, as your Redeemer lifts the light of his countenance upon your souls? Are you not astonished when you experience the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and when he holds out his golden sceptre of mercy towards you, and asks you what you want, and gives it you? Does not the peace of God, which guards and rules your hearts, surpass the utmost limits of your understanding? Is not the joy that you feel **unspeakable, and full of glory?** I believe it is. In your secret communion with the Lord, when his love flows into your soul, do you not feel as though you are **filled with all the fullness of God?** Do you not cry out with Solomon, **And will God, in very deed, dwell with men?** How wonderful to be called the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty! If you know what it is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and if you walk by faith and not by sight, I am sure this is the language of your hearts. However, you are still looking forward to the splendid prospect of eternal happiness. What you have received already is only like the bunches of grapes brought out as first-fruits from the land of Canaan; for you have a token of infinitely better things in the future. There is a great harvest coming when your grace will be swallowed up in glory. Your great Joshua, your merciful High Priest, will grant you a glorious entrance into the land of promise, and a rest that remains for the people of God.

Before we go on to consider the immense privilege of redemption, let us look first at the great mistake many writers and preachers make in thinking that sanctification is the cause of justification, and not the result of it. Christ's righteousness, or what Christ has done for us, is the only reason for our acceptance with God. All our holiness is due to him; and to him we look for justification, never to anything in ourselves. Our sanctification, even at its best, is imperfect in this life. Never can we meet the demands of God's perfect law by ourselves. We look instead to a righteousness outside of ourselves, a righteousness that alone comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, making us acceptable to God.

Some often preach about the work of Christ, but know nothing of the inward working of sanctification. We are not putting ourselves under bondage to the old covenant law by examining our lives, and looking for the marks of sanctification that indicate the change and renewal brought about by Christ. Otherwise, we would lose some very good grounds for our assurance. However, the Scriptures instruct us to look for fruit in our lives, and then judge whether we have partaken of the Spirit of God. Here is an example: John said, **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.** We need to be holy in heart and life, so that both the external and internal work of Christ provide evidence that we are his, and that he is preparing us for eternal happiness.

The Blessing of Redemption

Lastly, we come to the end of the believer's golden chain of privileges – **redemption**. However, we must look up to a very high place, for the top of it is like Jacob's ladder stretching right up to heaven where all believers ascend and take their place at God's right hand. Christ is indeed made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In this golden chain, not one link breaks away from another. No other verse in the Bible proves the final perseverance of believers like this. God justified no one without sanctifying him; nor sanctified without glorifying him. God's way is perfect; he always finishes the work he begins. At the beginning of the old creation, God said, **Let there be light!** In the new creation, the light shines out towards that glorious day when believers will enter into their perfect rest, as God did his. Whom God has justified, he has already glorified; for just as in our unworthiness God has seen fit to grant to us Christ's righteousness, so our unworthiness will never be the cause of God taking it away. God's gifts and callings are not dependent upon our future repentance. I will never understand those who deny the final perseverance of the saints. They are obviously lacking in their understanding of the true nature of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Justification means not only the forgiveness of past sins, but the associated right to all the good things that are to come. If God gave us his Son, will he not with him also freely give us all things? Paul declares – **who of God is made unto us righteousness** – not meaning that Christ **may** be made our sanctification and redemption, but that **he is made** those things to us. There is an eternal, unbreakable connection between these blessed privileges. As the obedience of Christ is counted to us, so too his perseverance in that obedience. This is at the heart of God's covenant of grace and redemption.

Redemption not only means complete deliverance from all evil, but also a full enjoyment of all that is good in both body and soul. I say body and soul, because the bodies of believers are made temples of the Holy Spirit. God promised that even when our bodies return to the dust, in the flesh we shall see God. Christ's resurrection is our guarantee, as the apostle declared – **Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who sleep.** Christ, the last Adam, who represents believers as their Head, will certainly, in the power of his resurrection, raise us up again at the last day. Listen, believer! Here is the lowest degree of redemption in which you partake in eternity – the redemption of your body. Corruption will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality. Your bodies and souls were given to Christ by the God the Father, and both will be raised in the resurrection. Do not be afraid, believers, to look into the grave. For you, it is nothing more than a holy dormitory, where your bodies sleep on quietly until the resurrection morning, when the voice of the archangel will be heard, and the trumpet of God will sound this alarm – "Arise all the dead, and come to judgement!" Earth, air, fire, water will give up your scattered atoms; and so, in both body and soul, you will be with the Lord forever. No doubt you complain that the state of your mortal body at present weighs down your immortal soul. Have patience; for soon you will be delivered from your earthly prison; and before long, this tabernacle of clay will be dissolved, and you will be clothed with a new one which is from heaven. Soon, your body will become a spiritual body; and, far from being a hindrance to your soul through weakness, as at present, it will become strong – so strong, that it will bear up under an exceeding and

eternal weight of glory. Some of you have deformed bodies; some are weak from sickness; others are worn out with labour and age. Wait a little, until you are greatly changed at death. Then, your bodies will be renewed and made glorious like Christ's. Well may the apostle exclaim triumphantly, **Death, where is your sting! Grave, where is your victory!**

However, what is the redemption of the body compared with the soul? I must say to every believer, as the angel said to John, **Come up here!** Let us take as clear a view as we can at such a distance from the redemption that Christ has purchased for us. Already you have been justified and sanctified, and set free from the guilt and power of sin. Yet indwelling sin is still in us. God sees fit to allow the Canaanites to remain in the land. The most perfect of Christians would agree with the Confession, which says that there abides still some remnants of corruption in every part: from this there arises a continual and irreconcilable war – the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. Believers find themselves unable to do perfectly for God what they desire. This grieves them every day, making them cry out with the apostle, **Who will deliver us from the body of this death!** Thank God that our Lord Jesus Christ will deliver us! But not before death. Then, at last, the very existence of sin will be destroyed, and all indwelling sin will cease. Is this not a grand redemption?

Believers quickly become disheartened by unceasing temptation. God has a reason for that; for although we are highly favoured, and caught up in our communion with God, even to the third heaven, we need a messenger of Satan to buffet us in case we become proud of our spirituality. Do not become weary, and faint in your minds; for the time of your redemption draws near. At that time, Satan will never again come near to disturb your weary souls from the enjoyment of eternal rest, or accuse God's children when Jesus Christ has closed the door on him. Every day, your righteous souls grieve at the wicked talk of unbelievers. Weeds grow among the wheat, and wolves come in sheep's clothing. The redemption spoken of in our text should free your souls from all this anxiety; for by-and-by you will enjoy perfect communion with God. Nothing unholy or evil is found in the Holy of Holies above. You will enter fully into the enjoyment of all that is good. You will judge the wicked, and speak intimately with angels. You will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the spirits of the righteous made perfect. You will look upon God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in the seeing, will be more and more like him, passing eternally from glory into glory.

Conclusion.

Here I must close. Thoughts of the glories of the next world crowd so fast into my soul, that I am overcome, and lost for words in describing our redemption! We will never know the extent of it; for eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of the holiest saints to imagine how great is our redemption. Whole ages in heaven will not be long enough to give a full account of it. We will echo the words of the queen of Sheba, **See, the half was told me!** All we can do here is, like Moses, go up on Mount Pisgah, and, with the eye of faith, take a distant look at the Promised Land. We see it, as Abraham saw Christ – from afar; and, like Abraham, we rejoice. We see only in part; but, blessed be God, there will come a time when we will know God even as we are known. We continue to pray, "Lord, make up the number of your elect! Lord Jesus, hasten your kingdom!"

There are many scoffers in these last days that call Christians mad. Unhappy souls! How little they know! If their spiritual eyes were opened, they would discern spiritual things, and not mock God's children. They would honour them as the great ones of this earth, and envy them their happiness. Their souls would hunger and thirst for righteousness, and they too would become fools for Christ's sake. The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God; for what is the use of wisdom if it does not lead to salvation? With all its wisdom, can it hope to find a better way of salvation than what is provided in Christ? With all men's logical reasoning, can they find a better way to be accepted by God, than through the righteousness

of the Lord Jesus Christ? Their works can never save them; so why do they not come in his righteousness? They are fallen creatures, full of sin and unhappiness. They find that they cannot change their hearts, nor get the victory over sin. They are slaves to their own lusts, and are led captive by the devil's will. Why will they not come to Christ for sanctification? They long to die in a righteous state before God, and cannot bear the thought of their end, for they fear eternal punishment and endless misery. Their conscience troubles them; and in their quiet moments they believe that hell is more than a picture of painted fire.

Why will you not come to Christ? He alone can bring you eternal redemption. Come to him quickly, poor blinded sinners! You look for wisdom; look no further than Christ. He can help you, for he is the wisdom of the Father. You have no righteousness within you; therefore come to Christ. You are unholy; flee to the Lord Jesus, for he is full of grace and truth. You are afraid to die; let this drive you to Christ, for he possesses the keys of death. In him is full redemption; he alone can open the door that leads to eternal life. May the deceived sinner no longer rely on his pretended wisdom! It is the most unreasonable thing in the world not to believe in Jesus Christ. Why will you die? Let everyone who thirsts come to the waters of life and drink freely; come, buy without money and without price. If we could buy these precious privileges mentioned in our text, we might think ourselves too poor to purchase them. If they were offered only to those of high rank, we would ask how we, poor sinners, could ever be so highly favoured. God gives these privileges freely to the worst of sinners. The apostle, who regarded himself so, received them, and also the Corinthians who had been **fornicators, idolaters, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, swindlers**. Every sinner, then, has the right to ask, "Why not me?" Has Christ only limited blessings? Even though he has granted them to millions already, and turned sinners away from their iniquities, yet he still the same today. He ever lives to make intercession, and will bless you also. Though, like Esau, you have despised your heavenly birthright, even now, if you believe, Christ will be made to you by God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Believers, partakers in the heavenly calling, what great blessings are treasured up for you in Jesus Christ your Head! What things you are entitled to by believing in his name! Take care that you walk worthily in your calling. Think often how highly God has favoured you. Remember that you did not choose Christ, but he chose you. As the elect of God, walk humbly before him, and glory only in him. You have nothing, except what he has given you. You were once like the rest – foolish, proud, unholy, and living under God's condemnation. Be loving and courteous to others, as you grow in holiness. Do not think you are already perfect, for let the one who is holy, be holy still. Those who are the purest in heart have the clearest vision of God. Let indwelling sin be your daily burden, so that you not only lament your sinfulness, but conquer it each day by the power of divine grace. Look to Jesus continually as the finisher as well as the author of your faith. Do not build your lives on your own faithfulness, but rely entirely on the fact that God never changes. Do not think that you can persevere by the powers. The eternal love of God the Father is your only hope and support in all your trials. Remember that God's calling and gifts are separate from repentance, and that Christ, having once loved you, will love you to the end. Be obedient to him, and long for that blessed time when he will not only be your wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, but also your complete and eternal redemption. To God be the glory!

STUDY 10

ABRAHAM: THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

ROMANS 4:13-22

EXPOSITION

In our previous study (Romans 4:1-8), we saw that Abraham's righteousness came from God, and was not a reward for his good works. In verses 9-12, we went on to see that Paul clearly stated that Abraham's righteousness has no connection with the religious observance of circumcision. Now, in verses 13-15, we shall see Paul proving effectively that Abraham's righteousness had nothing to do with keeping the law of Moses.

Any gospel preacher is delighted to discover people who have grown weary of trying to get right with God through their own efforts. Martin Luther declared:

Wearied at length with your own righteousness, rejoice and confide in the righteousness of Christ. Learn, my dear brother, to know Christ, and Christ crucified, and learn to despair of yourself, and sing to the Lord this song: Lord Jesus! you are my righteousness, but I am your sin. You have taken what belonged to me; you have given me what you were not, in order that I might become what I was not myself.

It is the task of the gospel preacher to direct every sinner to come to God the way Abraham did, trusting in God's gracious and saving plan of salvation.

The righteousness of Abraham

Romans 4:13-15 comes as a relief to those who are struggling to please God by observing certain religious rules. **For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.** (Verse 13) The word **promise** occurs 3 times in this chapter – **the promise...to Abraham** (13), **the promise** (14), and **that the promise might be sure** (16). God's promise to Abraham is also found on 10 occasions in Paul's Letter to the Galatians. What was the promise to Abraham? Verse 13 speaks of Abraham having an heir. The phrase **heir of the world** should appeal to every preacher who has caught the missionary spirit. God calls out his people from every nation in the world; and these are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, for they come to him by faith, just as Abraham did. Those who walk in the footsteps of old father Abraham become right with God, and are made the spiritual heirs of Abraham. What a pioneer Abraham was, in more ways than one! Abraham's heirs are now found all over the world, with not one nation excluded – for they come **out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation** (Revelation 5:10). When the time comes, Abraham will look out with great joy, perhaps in utter amazement, from his favoured position at the throne of grace, and see the whole company of the redeemed before him, all of whom claim him as their spiritual father. He was the first to tread the pathway of faith, and millions follow in his footsteps. Abraham was indeed made **the father of many nations** (Romans 4:16-17,18; Genesis 15:6). Through the faith that he exercised, he has become **the heir of the world** (Romans 4:13).

A further comment on this phrase **heir of the world** needs to be added at this point. An obvious thing to say – but it is still worth stating – is that the whole world has not been made righteous. **World** is not always used in the Bible to mean every human on the face of the earth. (See Luke 2:1) The Greek word **KOSMOS** means a complete system, in which everything that rightly belongs is included. In its widest extent, the cosmos includes the stars, the sun and moon, the earth and everything in it. Nothing is lost; for what God has created will endure to the end of time, when it will come to its designated end (2 Peter 3:10-11). **KOSMOS** can indeed mean the physical universe, plus the whole human race that inhabits the earth; but Paul uses the word in a different sense here. If he had meant every human being, he could have used the Greek word **OIKOUMENE** (OY-KOO-MEN-AY, from which is derived the English word ecumenical) See Matthew 24:14; Luke 2:1, 4:5; Acts 11:28, 17:6,31, 24:5; Romans 10:18; Hebrews 1:6, 2:5; Revelation 3:10, 12:9, 16:14. Instead, Paul chose to use **KOSMOS**. In 1 John 2:2 we read – **And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.** Here, John uses **KOSMOS**, κοσμος (pronounced, KOSS-MOSS). What exactly does he mean? Did Christ die for the sins of the entire human race? If so, then the cross is strangely ineffective, for not all believe in Jesus Christ. If **KOSMOS** means the whole of mankind, how could the prophetic words of John the Baptist be right when he said, **Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** John informs us in his gospel that **the world did not know him** (John 1:10), that is, he was rejected by the world. **KOSMOS** should be thought of in the more specialised sense as the world of God's people, from among whom not one is lost. It includes all believers of any country, and from all time. It bears the same meaning as in the message brought by the angel to Joseph – **...and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.** (Matthew 1:21) **His people** is the world of believers. The same restriction is found in John 3:16 – **God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.** Faith is the condition for entering the company of those who will not perish, the **world** that God loves so much. The 'KOSMOS', so far as salvation is concerned, is the world of the faithful.

Abraham, then, is described as the father of the **world** of believers. Whoever believes in Christ is a child of Abraham by faith – from any nationality, from any condition, and from any century. Through faith, Abraham is the **heir of the world**, the spiritual father of all who believe.

Abraham's righteousness had no connection with the Law of Moses (13-16)

For the promise that he would be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Verse 13) The justifying of Abraham occurred many hundreds of years before the Law of Moses was given. The great promise that God made to Abraham was made effective **through the righteousness of faith.** Every gospel preacher should warn his hearers that they must not rely on their works or their religious observances to be saved. Taking hold of God's promises requires an act of individual faith. They must hold out the hands of faith, just as Abraham did. Those who do so become the true children of Abraham.

Paul now changes direction in his argument. Having spoken of those who exercise faith, he now refers to those whose spiritual security is in observing the Law of Moses, and in their religion. He states severely – **For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect** (14). If it were possible to be made right with God by being born a Jew, and act according to the law, why then did God commend Abraham for his faith? Is what is said about Abraham a deception and a lie, leaving us with no gospel to preach to sinners. Paul continues – **...because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.** (15) If people rely on their own works under the law, what promise can God made to them? When a sinner breaks the law, he comes

under the **wrath** of God. Religious observance can cover up many sins, but God sees past outward respectability, and condemns the sin lying hidden in the heart. Therefore, **God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.** (Psalm 7:11)

The Christian life begins with an admission of sin. John reminds us that **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** (1 John 1:8) At an early stage, the believer feels keenly God's condemnation of his sin. But his salvation is founded upon God's imputed righteousness through faith. A sense of God's anger for sin is a sign the gospel preacher looks for in his hearers. At that point, he is able to apply the gospel effectively. Should his hearers die without faith in Christ, and come into the immediate presence of God, he has the wrath of God to face. The way of works under the law is the way of wrath, for God demands perfect obedience, which is totally impossible. Sinners may try to reform many areas of their life for a time, hoping that this will make them more acceptable to God. But what they do not realise is that only one sin is needed to bring them under God's condemnation and righteous anger. In the case of Adam, one sin not only brought him under God's condemnation, but it dragged down the whole human race with him – **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men...** (Romans 5:12).

Those who rely on good works under the law receive only the promise of the wrath of God. Paul excluded the law, for it got in the way of the doctrine of justification by faith. Jesus Christ came to do away with the law by fulfilling its demands, and thus brought in a new way by which sinners can come to a holy God. He declares – **where there is no law there is no transgression.** (Verse 15) As far as the believer is concerned, he now belongs to Jesus Christ, and is therefore free from guilt. His sin was paid for with the blood of Christ on the cross. Believers no longer fear God's wrath, for every sin is covered by the precious blood of Christ.

Paul concludes – **Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all** (verse 16). Abraham received a promise from God that he did not deserve, for he was not a particularly good man, nor an enlightened man; neither was he a naturally God-fearing man. God held out his promise to Abraham as a free gift. All Abraham had to do was to receive it by faith – just like any sinner under the preaching of the gospel. The preacher points to God who makes a free offer of salvation to anyone who will receive it by faith. God's free gift is by grace, never as a result of the sinner's response to the demands of the law. The Puritan commentator John Trapp wrote – **As oil and water cannot mix, so neither can Christ and anything else in the work of men's salvation.**

The good qualities of faithful Abraham (17-22)

Verse 17 reminds us of what God's promise consisted of – **(as it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations') in the presence of him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.** We contemplate God's choice of his children with amazement, and especially his choice in the case of Abraham. Yet God made him **a father of many nations.** We, who were once dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), have now been made alive in Christ. What a miracle this is! God made his promise to Abraham when he was 99 years old. The result of that promise was the birth of Isaac. All Abraham did was to trust in God who gave **life to the dead.** It was because of this faith that **it was accounted to him for righteousness** (3). It was not easy for Abraham to believe; yet **contrary to hope, in hope (he) believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.'** (18) John Trapp comments strongly on the Christian's faith – **'It will not be', says sense; 'it cannot be', says reason; 'it both can**

and will be', says faith, for I have a promise for it. The believer's hope of faith is based on this undoubted fact – that what God promises, that he will do.

Contrary to hope refers to Abraham's feeble but human hope. His wife Sarah had been an exceptionally beautiful woman; they loved one another, and lived a happily married life. But Sarah had not produced any children. Then the time came when Sarah came to the age when she was beyond the age of childbearing. It is not surprising, then, to find Abraham's human hope practically non-existent. In contrast with this feeble human hope, Abraham placed his hope in God – a hope that was founded upon his faith in God's promise. **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude – innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.** (Hebrews 11:11-12) It is good to see here a record of Sarah's faith along with her husband's.

The promise God made to Abraham is found in Genesis 15:5-6 – **Then he brought him outside and said, 'Look now towards heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness.** God kept his promise, for it is in his nature to keep his word.

The result of Abraham's faith in God is found in verses 19-20 – **And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.** Robert Haldane comments – **Had Abraham looked on any natural means, he would have staggered; but he looked only to the power of him who promised.** In the exercise of his faith, Abraham's faith developed, and he **was strengthened in faith.** How Abraham must have given glory to God when he first took Isaac into his arms! How difficult it was to believe that God could take a 99 years old man, and make him father to a child whose mother was long past the age of childbearing! In the same way, God takes a spiritually dead sinner, and makes him alive in Christ. How the mercy and grace of God are displayed in the saving of lost sinners!

Verse 21 concludes – **...and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to perform.** Abraham was assured that what God promised, he would do. Verse 22 rounds off the whole argument, returning to the point in verse 3 where Paul described Abraham's justification by faith – **And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.'** (Genesis 15:5)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 10

A. QUESTION ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Revelation 5:9-10

1. Who is singing this new song? (See verse 8)
2. Who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb?
3. Who will reign on the earth?

Read 2 Peter 3:10-11

4. Will heaven and earth come to an end?
5. On what day?
6. What will happen to the earth?

7. What effect on present Christian behaviour should these future events have?

Read 1 John 2:2

8. Who is the **he** in this verse? (See verse 1)
9. Provide another word meaning **propitiation**.
10. Who are the **our** in '**our** sins'?
11. What encouragement is found here for evangelism?

Read John 1:10.

12. What is sad about this verse?

Read Matthew 1:21

13. What is the meaning of the name of **Jesus**?
14. Whom does Jesus save?
15. What does he save them from?

Read John 3:16

16. Who will be saved?
17. What will happen to those who do not believe?
18. Who is the Saviour?

Read Psalm 7:11

19. With whom is God angry?
20. How often does God express his anger?
21. Why is he angry?

Read 1 John 1:8, 10

22. What does John say to those who say that they do not sin?
23. What are self-confessed sinless people lacking?
24. What are the two sad effects of self-confessed sinlessness?

Read Romans 5:12

25. Who is the **one man** in this verse?
26. What did he introduce into the world?
27. What was the result?
28. Is anyone free from this result?
29. What is the absolute proof of this?

Read Hebrews 11:11-12

30. What was unusual about Sarah's pregnancy?
31. What did she think of God's promise of a son?

Read Genesis 15:5-6

32. What did God promise Abraham?
33. What did Abraham do in response to this promise?

Read Genesis 15:5 again.

34. Briefly, explain what this meant in practice?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

1. The word **promise** is found on 10 occasions in Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Make a list of them, and write them out.
2. Read verses 23-25 again. Show how there is a connection between the Christian's

justification and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

C. PRACTICAL

Copy this table into your answers, and, using Romans chapter 4, complete this table of comparisons, and give the verses :

| <u>ABRAHAM</u> | <u>THE CHRISTIAN</u> | <u>FOUND IN VERSE</u> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Believed | | |
| Received a promise | | |
| | Is set free from the Law | |
| Was accounted righteous | | |
| | Is saved by grace | |

STUDY 11

THE FACTS OF FAITH

ROMANS 4:23 – 5:2

EXPOSITION

This passage provides a link between the theme of justification by faith which Paul has already introduced in chapters 3-4 – and the benefits and blessings of the life of faith outlined in chapter 5. Modern evangelism is sometimes criticised for the way in which some preachers present the gospel, inviting their hearers to receive the gospel because of its benefits. Of course, it is true that no one would be attracted to the gospel unless he saw something in it that would do him good. In the gospels, we have a record of many people coming to Jesus Christ because they saw in him the answer to their particular needs.

However, when some evangelists attempt to make the gospel fit into a pattern of modern marketing methods, producing, in their view, a very attractive package, they are simply not following the pattern laid down in the New Testament. This pattern we have already noted in the early chapters of Romans, where Paul begins his gospel with a disclosure of how God sees men as sinners, before declaring how God would save them. The gospel is not, at first hearing, attractive to sinners. The gospel only becomes inviting when sinners realise their lost condition before God, and are desperate to alter it. The whole world lies under the condemnation of God, whose righteous wrath is directed towards all who break his Law.

To become righteous before God, men need to act righteously – and that is impossible due to their sinful nature. Another way must be found; and this was discovered by Abraham – the way of justification by faith. God imputes (accounts) righteousness to all sinners who come to Jesus Christ in saving faith.

Abraham's faith is a pattern for all believers (4:23-25)

In chapter 4, we have already seen the importance of faith. No one can be made right with God without faith in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour. **And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.'** (Verse 22) This same righteousness is available to all those who come in the same way as he did – **Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him...** (Verse 23) The way of salvation is the way of imputed righteousness. Paul himself came this way after ridding himself of a long experience of Pharisaic training and self-righteousness:

'We ... have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... (Philippians 3:3-8)

Paul concludes this remarkable confession with these words – **not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith** (verse 9).

What a great message gospel preachers deliver! What happened to Abraham long ago is just the same today for all sinners who come to God by the way of faith. Just as Abraham's life changed, so too does the repentant sinner's when he begins to understand what the gospel preacher is offering, and is called upon to believe that Jesus Christ died for his sins. But knowledge is not enough. What the sinner needs is to experience the presence of Jesus Christ himself. He needs to know Christ, as well as know about him, and, in particular, how, through Christ, he is accounted righteous before God. Belief cannot save a sinner; only God can save.

This saving God, in whom sinners believe, is the one **who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead** (verse 24). The **first fact** of saving faith is that Jesus died on the cross for men's sins. The **second fact** of faith, closely associated with the first, is that God raised him from the dead. Here is the Christ who confronted Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, the risen Christ who spoke to him. This Jewish Messiah had been rejected by his own people, and hanged on a Roman cross. Jesus of Nazareth had not fitted comfortably into the Jewish religious views of Saul's day. As a member of the Jewish High Council, Saul must have been glad to see an end to this troublemaker. The teacher from Nazareth had healed the sick, and spoken like an Old Testament prophet. Now at last he had been put away in a tomb, with a seal on its entrance. (See Matthew 27:62-66) But God raised him from the dead, the God before whom all sinners will appear on the Day of Judgement. Those who believe in his Son will be acquitted of all blame, for they have risen through Christ from their spiritual death. On the Damascus Road, Saul addressed the risen Christ as **Lord**. The closing words of Romans 4:24 have an obvious bearing on Paul's conversion experience.

Christ was delivered up for sin

Verse 25 tells us why Christ came – **...who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification**. As the early part of the Letter to the Romans unfolds, Paul points out painfully to sinners their offences. They have entered areas that are forbidden by God, and trample on his holy laws. He uses two words for the condition of sinners before God. Firstly, they have **come short** (Romans 3:23). Sinners cannot meet the moral standard that God expects of them. They can never come to God, for they always fall short. Secondly, they **transgress** (Romans 5:14). This means that sinners go beyond the boundaries of what God's holy law forbids. For these two reasons, Jesus **was delivered up** (verse 25). It was the sin of mankind that brought God's Son to earth. Sinners have no hope, for they cannot avoid God's righteous judgement. God sent his Son to deal with their sins. In what way did he deliver up his Son? **...when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** (Romans 5:6,8) When sinners feel hopelessly trapped in their sins, then the message of the gospel preacher become powerful, for Christ came to die for sinners. God looked down on the earth and saw sinners neither desperately trying to improve their lives, nor seeking after him. Instead, he saw them as they truly are – wretched, vile, depraved, and cut off from him. (See Romans 3:10-18) But wonder of all wonders, he loves them just as they are! So great is his love that he was willing to send his Son to die for them. God so longed for sinners to be made right with him (see 1 Timothy 2:3-7), that he delivered up his own Son on the cross – **the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God** (1 Peter 3:18).

That is why Paul wrote in an earlier letter – **I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me** (Galatians 2:20). Jesus Christ became the very centre of his existence. In the same way, the justified believer naturally becomes a

dedicated believer in response to what God did to his Son for his sake – **Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted...And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all...Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief** (Isaiah 53:4,6, 10). On the cross, Jesus cried out in agony – **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** (Matthew 27:46, quoting Psalm 22:1) This was the cost willingly paid by Christ for the redemption of sinners.

Christ rose for our justification

...he was raised because of our justification. (Verse 25) Jesus said – **Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father.** (John 10:17-18) Jesus claimed the right to rise from the dead because he had no sin to hold him there. Hell could not detain him, nor death have any claim on him. The sins that he bore were of others, for he had none of his own. When sinners have faith in this Saviour, they become justified in God's sight – JUST-IF-I'D never sinned. That is how God views any sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What are the results of these two great facts of faith?

Therefore, having been justified... (Romans 5:1). As a result of Christ's death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, believers are justified before God. Some further important results can also be observed. In the light of all the great gospel truths we have considered so far in Romans – **therefore....** There are three very wonderful things that happen to every believer.

(1) ...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 1). The world looks for peace, but finds it an illusion. True peace can only be found in the hearts of all Christ's devoted disciples, where peace with God has been obtained through the Cross of Christ. Some people agonise for years over the wrongs that they have done, their consciences giving them no rest. Gospel preachers have the desire, and the means, to reach out to those who suffer the bitter pangs of guilt and do not know how to ease their burden. When Christ enters the human heart, he brings peace to those who agonise under their transgressions, and fear the condemnation of God.

(2) ... through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand (verse 2). **Access** means a promised introduction to God, thus enabling believers to claim, with the authority of Christ, a place before Almighty God. This is only possible to those who have faith in Christ. Paul takes this thought further in his Letter to the Ephesians – **And he came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father** (Ephesians 2:17-18), and he continues – **...according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him.** (Ephesians 3:11-12)

(3) ... and (we) rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Verse 2) **Rejoice** is a strong word, meaning – to be ecstatic with joy. Athletes train for years, and experience many hardships in order to be at the peak of fitness for forthcoming international events. Look at their faces after they cross the finishing line first! They are almost beside themselves with happiness. In his **Pilgrim's Progress**, John Bunyan (1628-1688) describes the pilgrim parting with his burden at the Cross:

Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore burdened Christian ran, but not without great difficulty, because of the

load on his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending; and on that place stood a cross, and a little below, at the bottom, a tomb. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up to the cross his burden was loosed from his shoulders, and fell off his back, and began to tumble and tumble until it came to the mouth of the tomb, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then Christian became very glad, and said with a merry heart, He has given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death. Then he stood for a while to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should so ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the tears ran down his cheeks...Then the Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on his way singing, Blessed cross! Blessed tomb! Blessed rather be the Man who there was put to shame for me!

Justification by faith is an intensely important matter. But there are moments when the believer is overcome by sheer joy at the thought of what Christ has done for him. At long last, a sinner who has believed is able to meet God's perfect standard through Christ! His timid faith grows in confidence in Christ, and he is filled with joy like the runner passing the finishing line. He is accepted by God who welcomes him into his glorious presence, where Jesus Christ his Saviour sits at the Father's right hand.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 11

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Philippians 3:3-8

1. Whom did Paul consider to be truly circumcised?
2. In thinking back to his pre-Christian days when he was in the flesh, which seven things does he now reject?
3. What did Paul desire above all else? (See verse 8)

Read Philippians 3:9.

4. What do we find in this verse concerning the doctrine of justification by faith?

Read Matthew 27:62-66

5. What prophecy of Jesus did the Jewish religious leaders fear?
6. What did they think the disciples of Christ might do?
7. Which 2 security measures were followed?

Read Romans 4:24.

8. What obvious connection does this verse have with Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus Road?

Read Romans 3:23

9. Who are the 'all'?
10. In this verse, how does Paul describe sinning?
11. When do sinners cease from doing this? (See verse 24)

Read Romans 5:14

12. What did Adam transgress? (See Genesis 2:16-17)
13. What was the result in his descendants?
14. What gift overcomes the results of Adam's transgression? (See verse 17)

Read Romans 5:6, 8

15. In what state were the ungodly when Christ died for them?
16. What proves the sincerity of God's love more than anything else? (See verse 8)

Read Romans 3:10-18

17. Why have these verses great authority?
18. Where do they mostly come from?
19. In no more than a sentence, summarise these verses.

Read 1 Timothy 2:3-7

20. What does verse 3 say about God's heart and mind?
21. In what sense has Christ become the Mediator? (See verse 5)
22. What connection is there between **ransom** (verse 6) and salvation?
23. How do we know that Paul preached these truths?

Read 1 Peter 3:18

24. What do the words **just for the unjust** imply?
25. What do the words **once for sins** indicate?

Read Galatians 2:20

26. In what way did Paul now live his life?
27. What did Paul find amazing?
28. In what sense was Paul **crucified with Christ**?

Read Isaiah 53:4, 6, 10

29. Which 4 phrases in these verses show how much God severely treated his Son?
30. What was God's purpose in Christ's suffering? (See verse 11)

Read Matthew 27:46.

31. Why would God need to forsake his Son?

Read John 10:17-18

32. What did Christ's resurrection prove?
33. When did the Father show his love to his Son in a special way?

Read Ephesians 2:17-18

34. To whom must the gospel be preached?
35. What did Christ preach?
36. When the war between a sinner and God is finally over through Christ, what happens next?

Read Ephesians 3:11-12

37. How did God fulfil his eternal plans?
37. What three things does Christ give to believers?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

(Only short answers are required)

1. How were Old Testament believers saved before the death of Christ?
2. Why did Paul go to such lengths to reject his past? (See Philippians 3:3-9)

3. State three characteristics from this study of a believer who is justified by faith.
4. Explain the results of conversion seen in the passage quoted from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

C. PRACTICAL

Preach a sermon based on the three results of justification by faith found in Romans 5:1-2.

- 1. Send in your outline.**
- 2. Provide a brief summary of your sermon.**
- 3. Describe any special reactions by your congregation.**
- 4. Provide evidence of Christian joy among your congregation.**

STUDY 12

THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

ROMANS 5:1-5

EXPOSITION

Jesus said that a good tree is to be judged by the fruit it bears (Matthew 7:15-20). The doctrine of justification by faith is bound to bear good fruit in the life of every believer, for it lies at the very centre of his experience of salvation. Paul shows this in the opening verses of Romans Chapter 5. The evidence of a true Christian confession is seen in the production of good fruit. This question, then should be put to every self-confessed believer: Are you enjoying the fruit of justification by faith? Some of these fruit are mentioned in this chapter – peace (verse 1); access, grace, joy, and glory (verse 2); bearing up in tribulations, and perseverance (verse 3); character and hope (verse 4); lack of disappointment, God's love, and the Holy Spirit (verse 5).

The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry writes,

The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification make us all determined to give diligence in ensuring that we are justified...The fruits of this tree of life are exceedingly precious.

Justification

'Therefore, having been justified by faith...' (1). Here is a declaration of the position of every Christian before God. The moment he believes in Jesus Christ, he is regarded by God as if he had never sinned. This standing is permanent and unalterable. God acquits the Christian of all blame for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom he has believed.

Faith

...justified by faith... (1). The crucial question is this: not, 'What do you believe?', but, 'Upon whom is your faith centred?' The correct answer is: 'I have faith in Christ who shed his redeeming blood for me upon the Cross.' Consider Romans 5:9 – **...having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved...** When the blood of Christ is applied spiritually to the repentant sinner, the stain of every sin is removed. Nothing remains that would subject him to the condemnation of God and eternal judgement. The blood of Christ covers the sin of all believers for all time.

Faith is most certainly the personal commitment of every believer to the Lord Jesus Christ, that his sins may be forgiven and cleansed away – **But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (1 John 1:7-9) However, faith is also a submission to God and to his will. The believer can then say honestly, 'Once I lived for myself – but that led to spiritual death; but now I live for Christ – and that leads to eternal life.' As a man, and as a submissive and obedient servant to his Father, Jesus said, **O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as**

you will...O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away from me unless I drink it, your will be done. (Matthew 26:39,42) This submission to God's will involved the cross, and there is something of that in every Christian's desire to embrace the will of God. To accept salvation offered through Jesus Christ involves also embracing his Lordship over the whole of his life. Every gospel preacher will preach Christ as both Saviour and Lord if he is to remain faithful to the truths of the gospel. On his final departure to Africa in 1910, Charles Thomas Studd (1862-1931), founder of the Heart of Africa Mission (now known as WEC International), was heard to declare, **If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.** Robert Haldane defines the life of faith as **a submission to the will of God, and the claims of Jesus Christ absolutely over our lives.**

Peace

... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (1). By using the word **peace**, Paul is implying that there once existed a state of war with God. Through Christ, there is now peace between two former enemies – **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of sin...** (Romans 5:10) The task of the gospel preacher is to startle his hearers by telling them that, while they remain outside of personal faith in Jesus Christ, they are enemies of God. The war will only come to an end when sinners believe in Jesus Christ. The terms of reconciliation are described fully in Ephesians 2:13-17 – **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.** Faith involves a total and unconditional surrender to God, and a ceasing of hostilities towards him. On the other hand, it also means that God no longer condemns the believer for his sin for the sake of Christ. The Christian not only has peace with God when he believes in Jesus Christ, but he remains at peace with God for all time and eternity.

Access

... through whom also we have access by faith... (2) The believer now has the right of access to God the Father. In the eastern world, at the time the Bible was written, to come into the presence of the king required someone at court to make the introduction. In Jesus Christ, the believer has One who makes the perfect introduction – **For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.** (Ephesians 2:18) We find in Hebrews 10:19 a very interesting point concerning the holiest part of the Tabernacle which the High Priest entered only once a year on the Day of Atonement, bearing the blood of the sacrifice which he sprinkled on the Mercy Seat – **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.** Believers may come into the holy presence of God at any time, for the blood of Christ has already been shed and accepted by God. He is the High Priest of their profession. Indeed, they may come to God with **boldness**, for the blood of Christ covers all their sins.

Grace

... we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand (2). Peace is a special blessing, but grace includes all of God's blessings in Christ. Two verses spring readily to mind in this connection – **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ** (Ephesians 1:3); and, **For all the promises of God in him are 'Yes', and 'Amen', to the**

glory of God through us. (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). The meaning of grace (in Greek, **CHARIS**, χάρις (pronounced, KA-RIS) is **free gift**. Faith is a free gift; and so is justification and peace. Peace brings with it the gift of unconditional access to the Father, and all its attendant blessings. Grace is God opening his hand full of good things, so that the undeserving believer may take whatever he wants.

The letters of 'Grace' forms the acrostic:

G – God's
R – Riches
A – At
C – Christ's
E – Expense

The word '**stand**' indicates that it is God who allows us to come before him; and it is God who produces and develops faith in us, with all its fruit. The word **grace** also implies that God will never disappoint his children at any time, for his store of blessing is always full. Never can it be said that God failed his people at any time – **Be strong of good courage, do not fear not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, he is the one who goes with you, he will not leave you nor forsake you...And the Lord, he is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, he will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear no be dismayed.** (Deuteronomy 31:6,8; also quoted in Hebrews 13:5)

Joy

...and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (2) This rejoicing is the triumph of a slave set free from the old cruel master, and a happy acceptance of the demands of the new master. The believer turns away from the devil, saying to his old master, 'You no longer have any claim on my life whatsoever. I am free of you at last! I now belong to Jesus Christ, and am answerable only to him.'

The old bondage is gone forever. Believers triumph in their victory won for them by Christ on the Cross. Martin Luther wrote:

'Where Christ is truly seen, there must be full and perfect joy in the Lord, with peace of conscience which makes you think, 'Although I am a sinner, and under condemnation of the law, yet I do not despair, because Christ lives, who is my righteousness. In that righteousness I have no sin, no fear, no sting of conscience. I am a sinner as a child of Adam. But I have righteousness and life eternal; through whom my body shall be raised up again and delivered from the bondage of the law and sin, and shall be sanctified together with the Spirit.'

Glory

... in hope of the glory of God. (2) Here the believer is marked off from the unbeliever. Glory is something that the believer notices in the face of his Saviour – **It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** (2 Corinthians 4:6) What is the glory of God? In our sin, we fell short of it (Romans 3:23), but now, in Christ, we experience it – at last we are free to become what God intended for Adam at the beginning. In Jesus Christ, believers recover what Adam lost in the Fall. Yet it means much more than that. Believers also rejoice in the glory of God displayed in Jesus Christ – **...and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.** (John 1:14) They also rejoice in the final triumph of Christ, the hope of every Christian, in his Second Coming, when sin and suffering will be no more, and God's kingdom will rule

over all. At that time, God's people will fully reflect the glory of God – ...**giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.** (Colossians 1:12) At such a time...**we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** (1 John 3:2) Peter declared with great passion – ...**looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.** (2 Peter 3:12-13)

All things that tend to disturb believers – their infirmities, weaknesses, and sins – will come to an end with Christ's final triumph – **there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.** (Revelation 21:4) What a day of glory that will be! In order to encourage them in their sufferings, Paul reminded his readers of the following glorious truth – **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.** (Romans 8:18-19)

Tribulation

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations (3). It is comparatively easy to glory in the cross, and in the forgiveness of sins, as indeed Paul did (Galatians 6:14), but it is not so easy to discern the glory of God in adverse circumstances. We glory in what is yet to come, but it is hard to glory in the sufferings of the here-and-now. Yet the triumph of Christ extends to the believer's tribulations – whether physical afflictions or spiritual persecutions. Christians may triumph in every present circumstance. They pass through them with a sense of peace and assurance, for it is Jesus Christ who grants his disciples inner serenity and peace of heart when they know that God is in control. Paul declared – **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.** (Romans 8:28) The Christian can say with conviction, as Job did – **Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.** (Job 13:15) He knows that he will be brought safely through his tribulations, for God's love never ceases, neither does his power fail. He rejoices in his present hardships, for they benefit and improve him – **Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.** (1 Peter 4:16)

Tribulations set off a chain-reaction of useful results – perseverance, character, and hope. Believers persevere in their faith, they grow in their Christian life, and their faith is strengthened by hope.

**Though troubles assail us and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail and foes all unite,
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
The Scripture assures us the Lord will provide.**

John Newton (1725-1807)

Perseverance

'... **tribulation produces character**' (3). The Christian is not called upon by God to endure passively painful circumstances, but to actively struggle, and to glorify God. Robert Haldane calls perseverance a **habit of enduring**. The believer endures patiently, actively seeking to

please God, for he delights to do God's will, and particularly in difficult days. Robert Haldane continues, **Christian patience implies submission to the will of God.** This is the natural result of faith – **My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.** (James 1:2-4) Tribulation is like a fire that refines faith and hardens resolve. Early in his first letter, Peter declares, **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ** (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Character

... and perseverance produces character (4). Tribulation is a trial of faith, testing out the **true** Christian. Robert Haldane comments – **Tribulation detects the hypocrite as well as the saint.** The formation of Christian character is a mysterious process. God uses difficult circumstances to deepen a Christian's love, and his trust in him.

Hope

... and character [produces] hope. (4). Hope brings to the believer assurance and confidence. It has the positive function of making the Christian persevere in times of difficulty, disappointment, and tribulation. It spurs him on to expect future blessings. Christian hope looks to the end of suffering and to the revelation of Jesus Christ – **Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the inner part behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus** (Hebrews 6:17-20).

No disappointment

Now hope does not disappoint (5). Jesus Christ never fails his followers. He keeps all his promises, and strengthens and guides at all times. He is always available to the believer – **...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.** (Matthew 28:20) The Puritan preacher, John Trapp, compares a man of the world, who is too often disappointed, with the believer, who is never disappointed in his Saviour. He states that the world is full of **men who go to the lottery with their heads full of hopes, but who return with pockets full of blanks!** The Christian is never disappointed in God, for he knows the love of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The love of God

... because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts (5). At this point, Paul takes his readers to the very heart of the gospel. God justifies the sinner because he loves him. He saves him because he loves him. He guards and keeps him because he loves him. God never stops loving his children; and there is no variation in the quality of his love. **Poured out** indicates how overwhelming God's love is. God's love touches every part of the Christian's life, and meets his every need. Pouring out is an eastern way of looking at God's blessings – **... prove me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.** (Malachi 3:10) There are many New Testament echoes of this great encouragement to faith. God expresses his love in his gifts to his children.

The Holy Spirit

... poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. (5) The greatest mark of a true believer, in Paul's estimation, is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.** (Romans 8:9-10) The Holy Spirit extends to every believer the benefits of God's great love. He enters the believer the moment he is justified, acting as the special mark of God's ownership. Probably the greatest passage in the New Testament concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer is to be found in Ephesians 1:13-14- **In him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.**

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 12

A. QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Matthew 7:15-20

1. Who is Jesus referring to as bad fruit?
2. Why is it that a good tree cannot produce bad fruit?
3. What will happen to trees that produce bad fruit?

Read Romans 5:9

4. What does Christ's blood represent in the process of justification?
5. What is the result of justification? (Just one word)
6. How can justification face the wrath of God?

Read 1 John 1:7-9

7. What experience is common to all in the fellowship of God's people?
8. To whom should sins be confessed?
9. What does God's cleansing lead to?

Read Matthew 26:39, 42

10. What was **this cup**?
11. What was God's will for his Son?

Read Romans 5:10

12. Who are the **we** who were once enemies?
13. Enemies of whom?
14. What brought about a reconciliation?
15. What, then, saves sinners?

Read Ephesians 2:13-17

16. How are sinners described in verse 13?
17. Who brought about the peace?
18. How did he achieve this? (See verse 15)

Read Ephesians 2:18

19. Who is the **him**?
20. Who ensures access to the father?
21. What does **access** mean?

Read Hebrews 10:19

- 22. What makes a believer bold?
- 23. Where is the spiritual Holy Place?
- 24. What is special about this way to God? (See verse 20)

Read Ephesians 1:3

- 25. Why does Paul bless God?
- 26. Are all of God's blessings available for all believers?
- 27. How are the blessing conveyed?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:9-20

- 28. What do you think Paul meant when he preached Christ as **Yes**?
- 29. What does the fulfilment of God's promises in believers bring to God?

Read Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

- 30. Who is speaking here? (See verse 1)
- 31. What promise did God make to Israel?
- 32. Which words are repeated in both verses?

Read Hebrews 13:5

- 33. With what is a trust in an unfailing God contrasted?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6

- 34. Whose minds have been blinded?
- 35. What enlightens some of them?
- 36. What does the gospel reveal?

Read John 1:14

- 37. Whose glory impressed John?
- 38. Who is he?
- 39. What does he bring to believers?

Read Colossians 1:12

- 40. Which title is used for God's people here?
- 41. What does God promise them?

Read 1 John 3:2

- 42. Who are the 'we'?
- 43. When will Christ be revealed?
- 44. What is going to happen to believers?

Read 2 Peter 3:12-13

- 45. What will finally happen to the physical universe?
- 46. What is God's great promise here?

Read Revelation 21:4

- 47. What do you think the tears represent?
- 48. What 4 things will disappear?

Read Romans 8:18-19

- 49. What outweighs present suffering?
- 50. What is yet to be revealed?

Read Romans 8:28

- 51. Who believes that all things will come out well?

52. What is the purpose of God calling his children?

Read Job 13:15

53. Who was trusting in God? (See Job 12:1)

54. What indicates here that Job's trust was not complete?

Read 1 Peter 4:16

55. Should a Christians be surprised if he suffers for Christ's sake?

56. What should a Christian do in his suffering?

Read James 1:2-4

57. What should a Christian think of his trials?

58. What is the outcome of a tested faith?

59. What is the final effect?

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

60. What is a natural reaction of a believer to his sufferings?

61. What is the purpose of trials?

62. What is the final outcome of trials?

Read Hebrews 6:17-20

63. What does God reveal about his counsels?

64. What keeps a Christian going?

65. What is sure and steadfast?

66. Where is Jesus now?

Read Matthew 28:20

67. What promise did Jesus make?

68. How long will this promise last?

69. What 3 things should Christians be doing?

Read Malachi 3:10

70. How can believers prove God?

71. Where do blessings come from?

72. How do we know that these blessings cannot be measured?

Read Romans 8:9-10

73. What is the greatest characteristic of a Christian?

74. What stern warning is found here?

75. What does the Holy Spirit bring to a righteous person?

Read Ephesians 1:13-14

76. What is the word of truth?

77. When is the believer sealed with the Holy Spirit?

78. Why is the believer sealed?

B & C. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL

As you have had to answer many questions in Section A, we will combine the remaining two sections.

- 1. Many people today, as in Paul's time, believe that their works justify them before God. As a preacher, how do you correct this false idea using Paul's Letter to the Romans as the basis for your argument.**

(In no more than 200 words)

- 2. From your study of Romans 5:1-5, explain to someone who is enquiring about the Christian faith what it means to be a Christian, and the results of saving faith.**

(In no more than 100 words)

STUDY 13

THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE

ROMANS 5:6-8

EXPOSITION

Some Christian may have been discouraged from reading and studying Paul's Letter to the Romans because someone gave them a very difficult commentary on the book to read. Actually, on the whole, Romans is not a hard book to understand, although there are some verses that are difficult to interpret. Above all, Romans may be recommended as essential reading to new Christians who need to understand their faith and salvation in a deeper way. The Letter contains all that is needed to grasp hold of the gospel. It contains the most systematic explanation of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ found anywhere in the Bible.

We have seen that the doctrine of justification by faith (Chapters 3-5) comes as the answer to the sinner's cry – 'How can I be right with God?' The answer to that vital question is, that a sinner is only right with God as far as God makes him right with himself. The believer is released from any guilt or blame for his sins, for the penalty and punishment of his sin fell on his Saviour. This salvation is offered freely to all who will believe in Christ. Through his death on the cross, he takes away all the sins of those who repent. It is as if a culprit is brought before a court of law, where the judge declares, 'You are innocent; you may go free.' In the same way, the sinner is released from the full penalty of the law – which is the wrath of God, and the eternal punishment and shame of the sinner. Here, in Jesus Christ, is the means by which a sinner can be put right with God if he exercises justifying faith.

The source of justification is alone found in Jesus Christ. In verses 6-10, Paul states six things that Christ has done for every believer:

- (1) He died for the ungodly (6);
- (2) He died for sinners (8);
- (3) He justifies sinners through his blood (9a);
- (4) He delivers sinners from the wrath of God (9b);
- (5) He reconciles sinners with God through his death (10a);
- (6) He saves sinners by his life (10b).

Matthew Henry writes

'The apostle here describes the fountain and foundation of justification, laid in the death of the Lord Jesus. The streams are very sweet, but if you trace them to the fountain-head, you will find it to be Christ's dying for us; it is the precious stream of Christ's blood through which all these privileges come flowing to us.'

The source of justification is God's love, revealed in the saving work of his Son. The proof of God's love is seen in the willingness of his Son to die for sinners in order to free them from their sins (6-8). The application of God's love is in the salvation of sinners from his righteous wrath, and in the realities of justification by faith and reconciliation through the blood of the Cross. (9-10).

The love of God (6-8)

These verses should thrill every gospel preacher to the uttermost depths of his soul. These wonderful truths are bound to move us, for they take us to the very heart of God. We are reminded that it is his love that causes God to act as he does towards sinners. It is his mercy that moves him; it is through his grace that he offers free salvation; and it is in his love that he forgives and provides reconciliation.

These verses reveal three aspects of love:

(1) In Man's relationship with God – a vertical, upward movement – where he appears as **without strength** and **ungodly** (6);

(2) In which Man is seen in relationship with others, so that Christ, as a man, fulfils our highest aspirations to care for the needy – a horizontal movement (7);

(3) In the relationship of a loving God with Man, which shows the lengths to which God was willing to go for the sake of sinners (8) – a downward movement.

The word **for** (6) contrasts the eternal and all-powerful resources of God (described in verses 1-2) with the great need of Man – **For when we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly**. Christ did not come for the righteous or the religious, but for sinners. Where the Gospel is proclaimed, the preacher has the duty of declaring that Christ died for the ungodly. Jesus said this concerning the despised, and often infamous, people of the day – **Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** (Luke 5:31-32) God's love marks out sinners who know that they are evil in God's sight, and have no hope in their hearts of ever being accepted by him. They are **without strength** (the Greek word is ASTHENĒS, ασθενής, giving us the medical word 'asthenia'). God's heart was so moved at the plight of the ungodly, that **when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.** (Galatians 4:4-5) God saw men in their need and helplessness, as sinners unable to save themselves from the inevitable judgement. Therefore God, in his pity, did something for them – **Christ died for the ungodly**. He provided a mediator – **For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time** (1 Timothy 2:5-6). He stood between himself, as the offended party, and offending sinners. This he accomplished through his Son, who became a man. As both God and Man, Jesus Christ possesses the true nature of both, and is thus in the best position to act as mediator. The only way that God's justice could be satisfied, and his anger appeased, was in the death of his Son on the cross. Notice that in verse 6 those for whom Christ died are called **ungodly** – impious, and deserving of God's condemnation.

The best of human behaviour

In verse 7, we have a description of men's best relationships with one another – **For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die**. Hardly anyone would lay down his life for a righteous man, even knowing that he was innocently condemned. Some people, however, have been prepared to die in the cause of a strong and good leader. We find such an example in Priscilla and Aquila – **Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life** (Romans 16:3-4). When Jesus prophesied his own death, he added these words – **Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.** (John 15:13-14) At its very lowest, we see in Christ's death an example of human love at its best. However, Jesus did not die for

his friends; he died for his enemies. God's love is incomparably better than the highest example of self-sacrificing human love. We note here, then, in verse 7, this second relationship – a horizontal relationship of man to man.

Why does God save?

The next question we may ask is this: 'Why does God take hold of sinners and save them?' He does not wait until they show signs of moral improvement in their lives, for they do not, of themselves, have the moral capacity. God receives them just as they are when they have nothing to boast about. The Bible shows clearly how God sees them – degraded, vile and abominable in their sins. When they are willing to accept this unpalatable truth about themselves, God reveals to them his way of salvation, and puts them right with himself – **But God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** (8) It is at the time when the sinner admits that he can say nothing in his own defence, and find nothing to commend himself before God, that Christ comes as the Saviour. The sinner feels that all hope is lost, while conviction of sin burns fiercely in his conscience. It is then that God saves those whom he pulls **out of the fire** (Jude 23).

We have a striking illustration of this in the High Priest Joshua, who was rightly accused by Satan of his sins. The Lord rebuked Satan with these words – **Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?** The prophet continues – **Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel [of the Lord]. Then he answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.** (Zechariah 3:2-4) A parallel passage is found in the parable of the prodigal son, when the wanderer returned home (Luke 15:22-24). When sinners are in greatest need, and in spiritual danger, Christ comes with his salvation.

Paul speaks with urgent words not to neglect the offer of the gospel – **We then, as workers together with him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.'** Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2; also Isaiah 49:8) Gospel preachers are ever conscious that, for some in their congregation, this could be the last opportunity they have of responding to the love of God, for soon they must die, and die without a Saviour.

The gospel preacher also conveys to his congregation the wonder of God's love. How is this best illustrated? Take the case of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam, and mankind with him, was expelled from the Garden, but never from God's love. God is still at work in men and women, producing what is good. He also provides for their needs. This doctrine is often called the doctrine of common grace, best summed up in the words of Christ – **...for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** (Matthew 5:45) When God is at work in men, he enables them to produce admirable deeds. However, these deeds are no grounds for salvation, despite the fact that they bring glory to God. God's love for those whom he saves is unique. The words **For scarcely for a righteous man will one die...** remind us that some courageously rise to deeds of great heroism, often going against their own instinct for self-survival. Love is often their motive; but God's love does not work that way.

The third relationship Paul speaks of is that of divine condescension for the spiritually lost – **God demonstrates his own love towards us...while we were still sinners** (8). When man found it impossible to reach up to God, God reached down to man. God proved his love not to his friends but to his enemies. How extraordinary! God's love is infinitely removed from human love, even at its best. God's love is a very different kind of love – a love that is

shown to the unlovely; it is a priceless love for the worthless. Human love is variable at the best of times, but God's love is unchanging, because **God is love** (1 John 4:8).

The extent of God's love

Finally, the words **Christ died for us** provide the grounds for any proper gospel appeal. For whom did Christ die? He died for those who respond to God's demonstration of love in Christ and have faith in him. He is the only one through whom a sinner may be saved. This, in its turn, points to the source of salvation – God's love.

As stated earlier, the cross is the supreme expression of God's love, and the only means of justification before God. When Christ died, he died for those who are without strength – the ungodly and the unlovely – sinners, and enemies of God. There is a special note of tenderness in verse 8, which should be sounded whenever the gospel is preached. God's love is great, for it has a great deal to overcome – and it does so effectively in Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 13

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Luke 5:31-32

1. Who was making a complaint about Jesus' behaviour?
2. What was their complaint?
3. Why did Jesus use the particular illustration?
4. What kind of sinner does Jesus receive?

Read Galatians 4:4-5

5. When was **the fullness of time**?
6. What does **born under the law** mean?
7. What was the purpose of Jesus' coming?

Read 1 Timothy 2:5-6

8. Why did Christ need to become a man?
9. What did he do?
10. How do we know that Paul preached these truths?

Read Romans 16:3-4

11. What is known about this couple? (See Acts 18:1-3, 24-26)
12. What heroic deed did they perform?
13. Which particular churches liked them?

Read John 15:22-24

14. What did Jesus regard as the highest form of human love?
15. How did Peter fail in this? (See John 13:38)
16. What sort of death did Jesus have in mind for himself? (See John 12:32)

Read Jude verse 23

17. What feeling motivates Christian witness? (See verse 22)
18. How is the saving of a sinner described?

Read Zechariah 3:2-4

19. What was surprising about the state of the High Priest's clothes? (See Exodus 29:4-9)
20. What do you suppose was the cause of Satan opposing Joshua?
21. How did the Lord describe Joshua?
22. What Christian word would describe this divine action?

Read Luke 15:22-24

23. What indicates that the son was repentant? (See verse 21)
24. What 4 things did the Father give to the son?
25. How do we know that this son had been spiritually lost?

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

26. What appeal does Paul make here?
27. What is **the acceptable time**?
28. When is it so?

Read Isaiah 49:8

29. Why did God wish to save Israel? (See verse 7)
30. What did God do in the day of salvation?
31. What will God do to his people?
32. What missionary task did God have in mind for Israel? (See verse 9)

Read Matthew 5:45

33. What 2 things prove God's benevolence to mankind?
34. To which 4 groups, surprisingly, does God grant these two things?
35. Where do you find common grace in this verse?

Read 1 John 4:8

36. What command came from John? (See verse 7)
37. Why did he command this?
38. What is one of the greatest attributes of God? (See verse 10)
39. How did God reveal this attribute?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

1. How right is it to say that the phrase '**Christ died for the ungodly**' is a good summary of the gospel?

(Answer in no more than 100 words)

2. Make a list of other words that describe those for whom Christ came to save?

C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Prepare and preach a sermon on the love of God using the following texts in your sermon:

Romans 5:8

1 John 4:8

John 3:16

Write out an outline of your sermon (including a title, introduction, main points and headings, and conclusion), and send it in.

STUDY 14

RECONCILIATION

ROMANS 5:9-11

EXPOSITION

The importance of these verses can be seen in the opening words – **Much more then...** In the previous verse (8), we read these glorious words – **But God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Yet in the words of verse 9, Paul wants his readers to consider something better, something even better than justification and peace with God (1), better than the hope of the glory of God (2), and better than God's love in Christ (8). What God has done for sinners is marvellous; but everyone under the sound of the gospel should exclaim with amazement, 'What God has done for **me** is even more wonderful!' To hear and understand the truth of the gospel is one thing, but to know that it is true for me is something else. It is good to know that **Christ died for us** (8), but it is better to be able to say, 'I thank God that Christ died for **my** sins!' It is also important not only to look back at what God has done for us, but to consider what God is doing in us in the present. What is he doing? Paul declares – **...having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.** (9) There is both a present and a future work in salvation. Looking back, we see how God saved us in his grace; but looking forward in time, we see how we will be saved from God's wrath through Jesus Christ.

The phrase **much more** is used on three further occasions in Romans chapter 5. We read in verse 10 – **enemies...reconciled...much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.** Reconciliation leads naturally to the appeasement of God's wrath through the life of Christ. In verse 15, we read – **...if by one man's [Adam's] offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.** Adam brought a terrible fate upon his descendants by passing down his fallen sinful nature to them, thus bringing about their spiritual death. Yet, gloriously, Christ offers his priceless gift of salvation to sinners. Finally, in verse 17, Paul declares – **... if ... death reigned ..., much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through ... Jesus Christ.** Once, we were cast down by many cares and sorrows, fully conscious of spiritual separation from God. But now we **reign** – we triumph in our salvation. Our battle against corruption and hopelessness in our lives was won by Christ. Our offences were nailed to the Cross – **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.** (Colossians 2:13-14) At the same time, we not only share in the triumph of Christ's death, but also in the victory of his resurrection.

More than anything else, a Christian triumphs in what Christ has done for him. He has personally received by faith what Christ accomplished for him. The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry says this:

Sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted as righteous, the quarrel taken up, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. All this is done – that is, Christ has done all that was needed on his part to be done, in order to achieve this end. Immediately we believe, we are actually brought into a state of justification and reconciliation.

There are three key phrases in this passage (verses 9-11):

- **justified by Christ's blood**
- **saved from the wrath of God**
- **reconciled**

Paul provides here three important words which every sinner needs to hear, and in which every believer rejoices – **justification**, **salvation**, and **reconciliation**. Once, we were enemies of God (10) – a long and sad story, taking us back to the Garden of Eden where Adam disobeyed God's commandment. (Genesis chapters 2-3). Now, all believers are justified, saved, and reconciled to God through Christ; but this is not all, for there stretches before them an eternity of life and happiness. Not only do they need to consider what they are saved **from**, but what they are saved **for**. Another Puritan commentator, Matthew Poole, explains verse 9 briefly in these words – ...**faith means faith in the blood and the sufferings of Jesus Christ**. The believer has faith in what Christ has done for him in the shedding of his blood on the Cross.

Justification

Much more, then, having now been justified by his blood... The word **justification** sounds theological and theoretical. What does it mean in the Christian's experience? The act of justification is both critical and practical. God no longer looks upon the believer as his enemy, and the believer now has an overwhelming defence in the face of God's judgement. The grounds for this are found in what Christ did for sinners in his death on the cross, for they have been **justified by his blood**. The cross has become the glory of the Christian faith. Paul expresses it like this – **But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world**. (Galatians 6:14) What happened on the Cross has become the means by which sinners are justified before God.

What was the purpose of Christ dying on the Cross? It was to shed his blood. To understand this, we need to go back to the law of Moses – **For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul**. (Leviticus 17:11) There is a direct link between the life and the blood, for without the blood there would be no life. When the blood of the sacrificial animals was shed, they died. The shedding of blood does not signify life, but death. The slaying of the animals by the priests was a symbolic act, showing the people that death is the result of sin. Sin leads to spiritual death – **Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul who sins shall die**. (Ezekiel 18:4) No doubt Paul had these words in mind when he declared – **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**. (Romans 6:23) Christ died, taking men's sins upon himself, so that whoever believes in him becomes justified in God's sight.

Peter declared – ... **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot**. (1 Peter 1:18-19) All those Jewish sacrifices were futile in saving sinners, but Christ's precious blood is entirely effective in redeeming sinners. Peter's use of the word **lamb** is probably a reference to the time when Israel was a nation of slaves in Egypt. On Passover night, each family killed a lamb, and painted its blood on the doorposts of their home. Sheltering under

the blood, the Hebrews were spared the judgement of God in the death of the firstborn – **For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I am the Lord. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.** (Exodus 12:12-13)

Christians feel great awe when they come across such expressions as **justified by his blood**. Robert Haldane wrote:

'This expression 'justified by his blood' gives a most awe-inspiring view of the infinite evil of sin, the strict justice of God, and his faithfulness in carrying into execution his first sentence – 'In the day you eat of it, you will surely die.'

Salvation

The last part of verse 9 is of great importance in our understanding of the scope of salvation – **...we shall be saved from wrath through him**. Believers are justified through faith in Christ's saving work on the cross. However, we must also note that there is a future aspect of salvation. Jesus made it plain, on the night before he went to the Cross, that the destination of his followers is heaven itself – **In my Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also.** (John 14:1-2)

Verse 10 puts forward a slightly different view of salvation – **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life**. The believer is therefore entirely free from God's judgement – he is **saved from wrath**. What is the **wrath** of God? It is his righteous anger against those who break his holy laws. Yet, however fierce God's condemnation of sin, all believers are saved from it – **let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.** (Hebrews 12:28-29) God's anger is there in the future to be faced by all sinners who do not believe in his Son.

Even worse than God's present condemnation of sin is his eternal punishment. Every gospel preacher must come to terms with the fact that, from time to time, he is called to preach the doctrine of hell. Without hell, there is one motive less for the preaching of the gospel. If, as some believe, sinners pass away into a state of unconsciousness, or annihilation (non-existence), what is the point of preaching a gospel of salvation? The gospel delivers sinners from the wrath to come, not from the eternal silence of non-consciousness. Just as God actively condemns sinners for their sin in this life, so he will punish them actively in eternity. The certainty of hell is found in the teaching of Christ, who is surely the final authority in such matters – **And if your eye makes you sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched – where 'their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'** (Mark 9:47-48)

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 66:23-24, where the evangelical prophet concludes his book with these words – **'All flesh shall come to worship before me', says the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh**. The **worm** indicates continuous corruption, and the **fire** the endless torment of conscious unbelievers, forever separated from God. The gospel preacher feels that he must 'set up a rescue shop on the very brink of hell.' This is his calling – to preach the gospel in order that believing sinners may be spared such endless misery.

The phrase **saved from wrath** reminds us of the words of John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he describes the spiritual awakening of one of the citizens of the city of Destruction:

Now I saw later, when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as was his custom, reading in his book, and was greatly distressed in mind; and as he read, he burst out crying, as he had done before, 'What shall I do to be saved?' I saw also that he looked this way, and that way, as if he wanted to run; yet he stood still, because, as I saw, he did not know which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him, who asked, 'Why are you crying?' He answered, 'Sir, I see by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgement; and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor am I able to do the second.' Then Evangelist said, 'Why are you not willing to die, since this life is full of ills?' The man replied, 'Because I fear that this burden upon my back will sink me lower than the grave, and I shall fall into Tophet [hell]. And, sir, if I am fit to go to prison, I am fit to go to judgement, and from there to execution; and the thought of these things makes me cry.'

The doctrine of hell not only vindicates the righteous judgements of God, but awakens sinners to their need of the gospel. When people go in fear of hell, the evangelist can fulfil his function by pointing out to sinners the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Verse 10 refers to the saving life of Christ – ... **we shall be saved by his life**. This concerns the coming of Christ; for without his coming as a man there would be no forgiveness of sins, or hope of heaven. There is also a reference here to the resurrection of Jesus Christ – **It [justification] shall be imputed to us who believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification**. (Romans 4:24-25) Believers are saved from the wrath of God by the saving life of Christ. In his resurrection, Christ becomes immediately available to every sinner who comes to him in spiritual distress. At such a time, the gospel preacher is able to say, 'Yes; come with your burdens to Christ, and he will help you, and change you; for Jesus said – **Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**' (Matthew 11:28-30) The risen Christ hears sinners cry out, and responds to it. He who imparts eternal life to the repentant sinner declares – **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even though he dies, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die**. (John 11:25-26)

The gospel preacher is a messenger of the risen Christ. He preaches the cross, but he also declares the gospel of the resurrection. The living Christ makes available all the benefits of the gospel for all time – **I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the key of Hades [death and hell] and of death**. (Revelation 1:18) He has the power to open the gate of heaven and shut the door of hell – **Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him, since he ever lives to make intercession for them**. (Hebrews 7:25) The heavenly intercession of Christ is a reality because he has risen and ascended. Salvation is thus secured and assured, firm in the fact that Christ is alive for evermore. Matthew Henry wrote – **Christ dying was the testator who bequeathed us the legacy; but Christ living is the executor who pays it**.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is referred to twice in these verses:

... when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son (verse 10);
... through whom [Christ] we have now received the reconciliation (verse 11)

The definite article **the** in verse 11 indicates that there is only one way to be reconciled with God, and that there is only one Mediator through whom sinners may dare to approach a holy God. Jesus Christ is the reconciler. Reconciliation touches not only our minds, but our hearts. It moves us to the depths of our souls, and stirs our emotions. Once we were in terror of God, whom we hated, and treated like an enemy. His very presence made us afraid of him. As sinners, we saw God as a threatening darkness and a fearful Judge; but now he is the light of our lives – **we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ** (verse 11). What brought about such a profound change? The answer is found in Isaiah 12:2-3 – **...the Lord is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation. Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.** It is our salvation that causes a change in our attitude towards God. This drawing of water from the wells of salvation reminds us of the words of Christ that greatly surprised a Samaritan woman – **Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'...Then the woman of Samaria said to him, 'How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.** Jesus continued, **... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.** (John 4:7, 9-10, 14)

Having been reconciled, there weigh heavily on every Christian the responsibilities of the ministry of reconciliation – **Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.** (2 Corinthians 5:20-21) The gospel preacher finds himself pleading with sinners on behalf of Christ!

**This is the King's command, that all men everywhere
Repent and turn away from sin's seductive snare;
That all who will obey with him shall reign for aye,
And that's my business for the King.
This is the message that I bring,
A message angels fain would sing;
'Oh come, be reconciled', thus says my Lord and King,
'Oh come, be reconciled to God!'**

(E. T. Cassel)

Matthew Henry sums up the subject of reconciliation in his usual sweeping way – **True believers in Jesus Christ receive the atonement. Receiving the atonement is our actual reconciliation to God in justification, founded upon Christ's satisfaction.**

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 14

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Colossians 2:13-14

1. Find a similar verse with verse 13 in one of Paul's letters.
2. What do you think Paul means by **the handwriting of requirements**?
3. How was it taken away?

Read Genesis chapters 2-3

4. What did God forbid in the Garden?
5. What warning did God give as the result of sin? (See chapter 2)
6. What did the serpent say about this warning? (See chapter 3)
7. What did God do to the guilty pair?

Read Galatians 6:14

8. What was central to Paul's life and ministry?
9. What do you think Paul meant by the phrase **crucified to the world**?

Read Leviticus 17:11

10. What was put on the altar of sacrifice?
11. What is another word for atonement?
12. What is the connection between atonement and sin?
13. What brings about the atonement?
14. What has this to do with Jesus Christ?

Read Ezekiel 18:4

15. Does God actually punish the children for the sins of their fathers? (See verses 2-3)
16. The souls of which 2 groups are personally accountable to God?
17. What happens to the sinful soul?

Read Romans 6:23

18. What does Paul mean by **wages**?
19. What is God's gift?
20. How is it obtained?

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19

21. What does **redeemed** mean?
22. What was Jewish **tradition**?
23. What has redeemed a Christian?
24. To which sacrificial animal is Jesus compared?
25. How was Christ **without blemish**?

Read Exodus 12:12-13

26. What Jewish festival owes its origin to this event?
27. Who struck the firstborn?
28. What saved the Hebrew families from this last plague?
29. What has this to do with Christ?

Read John 14:1-2

30. What promise does Jesus make here?
31. In what way does Jesus describe his followers' destination?
32. What is Jesus doing for his followers at present?

Read Hebrews 12:28-29

33. What is going to be shaken?
34. What cannot be shaken?
35. What is the word used here to describe God's attitude to believers?
36. Which 2 words describe the believer's attitude to God?
37. What description is given here of God?
38. What does this description mean?

Read Mark 9:47-48

39. Which book in the Old Testament does Jesus quote from?
40. In which other verses in this chapter do you find the same quotation?
41. What does **worm** mean?
42. What does **fire** represent?

Read Isaiah 66:23-25

43. Why is it surprising to find these words at the end of Isaiah?
44. Which people are referred to here?
45. What phrase here conveys the idea of the abomination of those who are in hell?

Read Romans 4:24-25

46. What is actually imputed? (See verses 22-23)
47. What sort of Christ is he in whom people believe?
48. What does **delivered** mean?
49. Why was Jesus raised?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

50. Who may come to Christ? (See verse 27)
51. What 2 things characterise a seeker of Christ?
52. What do you think **rest** means in the light of Paul's teaching in Romans?
53. What 2 things characterise the Saviour?
54. Jesus describes his lordship in two words in verse 30. Which are they?

Read John 11:25-26

55. Who is **her**?
56. Who had just died?
57. What promise did Jesus make to her?
58. How could Jesus be **the resurrection and the life** in the future?
59. Who will never die?

Read Revelation 1:18

60. To whom is Jesus speaking?
61. Why is Christ alive for evermore?
62. What does **Amen** mean?
63. Of what does Jesus Christ have the keys?

Read Hebrews 7:25

64. What does Jesus Christ have? (See verse 24)
65. What does he do?
66. What is Christ doing in heaven?

Read Isaiah 12:2-3

67. Who saves?
68. State a title that is given to God here.

- 69. What image is used for the origin of salvation?
- 70. What is characteristic of those who are saved?

Read John 4:7-15

- 71. Why was the woman surprised at Jesus' request?
- 72. What did Jesus say was the gift of God?
- 73. What effect does it have on sinners?
- 74. What do you think is meant by the phrase **a fountain of water**?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

- 75. What title is used here for a Christian?
- 76. What are Christians pleading with sinners to do?
- 77. What happened to Christ?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

- (1) How are those for whom Christ died described in Romans 5:9-11?
- (2) Paul mentions at least 3 results of the death of Jesus Christ for the believer:
 - (a) Name these results;
 - (b) What does each result mean in practice for the believer?

C. PRACTICAL

Read again the extract from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* on the spiritual distress of the citizen of the City of Destruction. This obviously reflect Bunyan's own conversion which he describes in autobiography *GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS*.

Imagine that you are speaking to a group containing unbelievers whom you are encouraging to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Write out what you would say about your own conversion experience as a means of encouraging your listeners to believe in Lord Jesus Christ.

STUDY 15

ADAM AND CHRIST

ROMANS 5:12-19

EXPOSITION

In Romans 5 verses 12 to 19, Paul deals with the source of God's condemnation of sin. When then were men first condemned by God? We need to go back to Adam, and to the first sin in the Garden of Eden, which is described in Genesis 3:1-7. Paul comments – **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned** (12). Condemnation of sin goes back to Adam, but justification goes back to Jesus Christ – the first Man of the new race, called by Paul 'the last Adam'. **And so it is written, The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.** (1 Corinthians 15:45) The whole human race lies under God's condemnation because of Adam's sin, but the new race of believers looks to Christ for their justification before God. In verses 12-17, Paul compares what Adam did with what Christ has done. Verses 18-19 we find a summary of the major differences between the calamity that Adam brought upon his descendants, and the salvation that Christ has accomplished for his people. John Calvin remarks – **'A clearer realisation of what we possess in Christ can come only when we have been shown what we have lost in Adam.'**

The easiest way to understand this passage is to draw, as it were, a line down the centre of your mind. This will give you two columns, which you can label **Adam** and **Jesus Christ**. Filling in the two columns from this chapter will then make more sense.

Reconciliation.

The keyword to this section is **reconcile** – found previously in verse 10 – **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.** Verse 11 continues with this glorious thought – **And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.** These two verses raise a number of questions, such as: What does it mean to be saved? What are the means of salvation? How can a sinner be reconciled to God? What part does Christ play in this reconciliation? These are all vital questions that at some time or other pass through the minds of those to whom we preach the gospel. Answers to these questions must be rightly demanded of every gospel preacher, for central to every answer is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is he who saves sinners from the results of their estrangement from God, and reconciles them with their Creator at last. If a sinner is not reconciled, then he will find himself without an advocate at his last trial on the Day of Judgement. In that case, he will be rejected by God, rejected for the whole of eternity. There is no appeal against God's condemnation and sentence because God is the final appeal! However, for the saved sinner – **if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** (1 John 2:1) A sinner is saved from the righteous wrath of God which is removed entirely when he believes in Christ. At the Judgement, Christ will declare, 'This one is mine. Enter into the joy of your lord.' But to the unrepentant unbeliever he will say – **Cast the unprofitable**

servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
(Matthew 25:30)

In drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ, we are distinguishing between the source of death and the source of life. Whereas God is angry with sinners, and rejects them when they appear before him after death, he shows his love to all who believe in his Son. What a world of difference there is between the misery of the sinner who takes after the first Adam, and the happiness of the believer who takes after his Saviour! Yet we must not overemphasise the differences between Adam and Christ, for Christ too was born a man, lived as man, was tempted as a man, and died as a man.

Adam is a type [picture] of Christ.

Another way of looking at Adam is to consider him a type (picture) of Christ as we note in verse 14 – **Adam, who is a type of him who was to come.** Every sinner takes after the first Adam, but every believer takes after the second (and last) Adam – **And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven.** (1 Corinthians 15:44-45) Paul is insisting here on the headship of each man – Adam representing the whole of mankind, and Christ the whole body of believers. Luther remarks joyfully – **The figure of Adam’s transgression is in us, for we die just as though we had sinned as he did. The figure of Christ is in us, for we live just as though we had fulfilled all righteousness as he did.**

Consider these two heads of two separate races. Adam acted as the head of all of his descendants when he plunged them all into sin – **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus sin spread to all men, because all sinned ...** (12). Now, what Christ did was also to profoundly affect all those who would believe in him. As their representative, he suffered and died for them, rose for them, and ascended into heaven to intercede for them. Matthew Henry remarks – **He came to repair the breach with God that Adam had made.**

The parallels between Adam and Christ

(1) **Adam and sin.** (12-13) **Death reigned from Adam to Moses** (14). All of us sin **according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.** Do we not shed a tear for this disaster? Do we not look around and see a world lost in sin and polluted by the Fall? Is there not the stink of moral and spiritual corruption and death everywhere? Why is this so? Because of the sin of the first man Adam. **Through one man sin entered the world.** Sin entered into the root of mankind, infecting all its branches until the end of time. A profound spiritual darkness has fallen on **the people who walk in darkness** (Isaiah 9:1-2). There is darkness, and there is death, and there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12). When Adam sinned, we, his seed, sinned with him. What proof do we have of this? When Adam sinned, his nature became sinful; and so too ours, because we have all sinned (12).

The reward of sin is spiritual death. **When desire has conceived it gives birth to sin.** (James 1:15) From Eden, God’s voice sounds down through all the succeeding generations of mankind – **In the day you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die.** (Genesis 2:17) And death spread like a deadly plague to every man. **And thus death spread to all men** (12). **Death reigned** (14). Look how it quickly spread – the guilty behaviour of Adam and Eve, the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, the threat of vengeance of blood, violence, bigamy, apostasy, the sexual perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. And this was only the beginning as recorded in the book of Genesis. Sin took its place on the throne of men’s lives

long before Moses delivered the law of God to the people. Pleading ignorance of the law is no excuse, and no way to avoid punishment for transgressing the law. Calvin says sternly

'The apostle, therefore, notes the perversity of men, when not aroused by the law, in having laid aside to a great degree the distinction between good and evil, and indulged their lusts without care or disturbance, as if there were no judgement of God.'

(2) **Christ and sin.** (15-19) It is right to point out the sinner's plight in Adam. But it is more important to preach Christ as the head of all believers – Christ who brings to sinners the priceless gifts of the grace of God (13), justification (16), righteousness (17, 19), and life (18).

The parallels are made very striking here – Adam's act of disobedience (his offence) brought death to many, but God's grace brings the gift of Christ to many. Adam brought condemnation and judgement to many through his one offence, but Christ brings justification from many offences. Through Adam, sin reigns, but, in Christ, believers reign in life. Adam brought condemnation, but Christ brings justification. Adam made men sinners, but Christ makes many righteous. What important theological words are used here! And, oh, how practical they are! Grace means Christ, and justification, and righteousness, and eternal life. What more do we need? Nothing, for all has been provided.

But we are not to be parted from verses 18-19 easily. What fruit came from **one man's obedience**. Through Christ's obedience we receive his righteousness, God's justice was satisfied, and we gratefully receive his mercy and grace. These are all themes Paul deals with at length in his wonderful Letter to the Romans. What a gospel for any gospel preacher! The passionate gospel preacher that Luther was, desiring that all men should be saved, comes out with this comment – **If sin proved itself so powerful that a single transgression has perverted man (or rather all), then divine grace is much more powerful; for the one act of grace can save many (indeed all men) of many sins, if they only would desire it.** What preaching we have for sinners, what a gospel we have for the condemned, and what hope we bring to those who groan under the burden of the law! **And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.** (Revelation 22:17)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 15

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

1. Where in the Old Testament can the quotation in verse 45 be found?
2. What is the believer's body called here?
3. What will happen to this body? (See verse 42)
4. What is the believer's resurrection body called?
5. What will it be like? (See verse 43)
6. Where did the 'first man' come from?
7. Who is the 'first man'?
8. Who is the 'second man'?
9. Where did the second man come from?
10. Why do we bear the image of Adam?
11. How can we bear the heavenly image?

Read Romans 5:10-11

12. Why are we enemies of God?
13. What did Christ have to do to reconcile us to God?
14. What comes with reconciliation?
15. What else comes to stir the believer? (See verse 11)
16. Give another biblical word for reconciliation.

Read 1 John 2:1

17. What did Christ have to become to reconcile us with God?
18. What produces the barrier between God and men?
19. For what did Christ die?

Read Matthew 25:23-30

20. What were the characteristics of two of the servants? (See verses 21, 23)
21. What was their great reward?
22. What was the third servant called? (See verse 26)
23. What was taken away from him?
24. Where was he sent?
25. What do you think is the meaning of 'weeping and gnashing'?

Read Isaiah 8:22 – 9:2

26. Which 3 things are characteristic of life on earth?
27. What 2 things did God bring on Zebulun and Naphtali for their sins?
28. What came into the darkness?
29. Write a New Testament verse that proves your answer to 26.
30. What kind of land received this wonderful gift?

Read Ephesians 2:4-13

31. Why were the Gentiles without a Messiah (Christ)?
32. Did God make a 'covenant of promise' with the Gentiles?
33. So, they were without two things. State them.
34. Who brought the Gentiles to God?
35. How did he do it?

Read James 1:13-15

36. Who cannot tempt?
37. Who is never tempted?
38. Where does temptation come from?
39. What does giving in to temptation lead to?
40. What does this lead to?

Read Genesis 2:16-17

41. What positive command came from God?
42. What was the negative command?
43. Why did God make this second command?

Read Revelation 22:17

44. Who is the bride here?
45. Who is the bride saying 'Come' to?
46. Who are the 2 sorts of people who can come to Christ?
47. Who can receive 'the water of life freely'?

B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

1. Explain briefly how Adam is a TYPE of Christ? Make a list of things that are the same for both of them.
2. Even if Adam is a TYPE of Christ, make a list of things that show how different Christ was from Adam.
3. Give the references in Genesis for the sins mentioned in the second paragraph of the section entitled:

The parallels between Adam and Christ.

4. Read Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, and state:
 - (a) What is the same in both passages?
 - (b) What are the differences between the two passages?

C. PRACTICAL

In no more than 200 words, write how you would use Romans 5:12-19 in a sermon to explain the difference between an unbeliever who takes after Adam, and a believer who takes after Christ, and why salvation is such good news for your hearers.

STUDY 15. APPENDIX

Here is a classic sermon by a great Welsh gospel preacher. His illustration of the graveyard describing man's spiritual state and the covenant of God's grace in Jesus Christ, and the satisfaction of the demands of God's Law, has never been surpassed.

There are no questions on this sermon. It is very powerful and solemn, so you will need to read it carefully. May it give you 'fire in your bones' (Jeremiah 20:9) the next time you preach on Romans 5:15!

THE FALL AND RECOVERY OF MAN

**A gospel sermon preached by Christmas Evans (1766-1838)
Adapted into easier English**

**For if through the one man's offence, many died, much more the grace of God and the gift of the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.
(Romans 5:15)**

Man was created in the image of God. Knowledge and perfect holiness were impressed upon the very nature and being of his soul. He had constant access to his Maker, and enjoyed free communion with him in a life of spotless moral uprightness. But alas! the glorious diadem was broken, and the crown of righteousness fallen. Man's purity was gone, and his happiness lost. **There is no one righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** But the ruin is not hopeless. What was lost in Adam is restored in Christ. His blood redeems us from bondage, and his gospel gives us back our lost inheritance. **For if by the one man's offence many die, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.** Let us consider, **first**, the corruption and condemnation of mankind; and, **secondly**, its gracious restoration to the favour of an offended God.

(1) To find the cause of mankind's corruption and condemnation, we must go back to Eden.

The eating of the fruit from the forbidden tree was **the one man's offence**, in consequence of which **many died**. This was the original sin, an act of disobedience that brought death into the world, and all our woes. It showed the greatest ingratitude for divine blessings, and the boldest rebellion against divine sovereignty. The royalty of God was despised, the riches of his goodness slighted, and his most terrible enemy preferred before him as a wiser counsellor than the One of infinite wisdom. Thus man joined with hell against heaven, and with the demons of the bottomless pit against his almighty maker and helper; robbing God of the obedience he expected, and the glory due to his name; worshipping the creature, instead of the Creator; and opening the door to pride, unbelief, enmity, and all kinds of wicked and horrible desires. God asks, **I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before me into a degenerate plant of an alien vine?**

Who can look for pure water from such a fountain? **That which is born of the flesh is flesh.** All the faculties of the soul have been defiled by sin; the understanding is dark, the will perverse, the feelings worldly, and the conscience full of shame, remorse, confusion, and mortal fear. Man is a hard-hearted and stiff-necked sinner, loving darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil, eating sin like bread and drinking iniquity like water; holding fast to lies, and refusing to let go of them. His heart is desperately wicked; full of pride, vanity, hypocrisy, covetousness, hatred of the truth, and hostility to all that is good.

This depravity is universal. Among the children of Adam, there is not one who is free from its taint. **The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one, and we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.** The corruption may vary in degree from one person to another, but the elements are all there, and of the same nature everywhere – the same in the blooming youth as in the withered old man, in the proud prince as in the humble peasant, in the healthiest giant as in the feeblest invalid. **The enemy comes in like a flood**, producing a tide of sin that has swept through the world. From the highest to the lowest, there is no health or moral soundness. **From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores.** The laws and their violation, and punishments designed for the suppression of vice, prove that evil is everywhere. The sacrifices of blood, and various purification rites among the pagans, show the handwriting of remorse on their consciences, exposing their sense of guilt and fear of punishment. None of them are free from that fear which brings torment, whatever their efforts to overcome it, and however great their involvement in the service of sin and Satan. 'Mene, mene, tekel' is written on every human heart. 'Found wanting, found wanting!' is stamped on every nation's place of worship and altar – on its laws, customs, and institutions; and, indeed, on the entire conscience of mankind.

This inward defilement manifests itself in outward actions. The tree is known by the fruit it bears. As the smoke and sparks from a chimney show there is fire within, so the **filthy conduct** of men, and all **the unfruitful works of darkness** in which they delight point to the pollution of the source from where they come. **For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** The sinner's speech betrays him. Evil speaking comes from malice and envy. Foolish talking and jesting are evidence of impure and trivial thoughts. **Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practised deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known** – a clear and ample demonstration that we **have all gone out of the way, and have together become unprofitable.** We see the bitter fruit of the same defilement in robbery, adultery, gluttony, drunkenness, extortion, intolerance, persecution, apostasy, and every evil deed tolerated by false religion. The Jew obstinately cling to the earthly ceremonies of an abolished law; other religionists give false honour to mere men, and accept lies as a revelation from God; Roman Catholics worship images and relics, pray to departed saints, seek forgiveness of sin from sinful men, and trust in absurd things for salvation; pagans attribute divinity to the works of their own hands, adore idols of wood and stone, sacrifice to spiteful demons, cast their children into the fire or flood as an offering to gods of their own imagination, and change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the beast and the worm.

For these things' sake, the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience, who are under the sentence of a broken law and the curse of eternal justice.

As through one man's offence judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation.

He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God ... but the wrath of God abides on him.

Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.

Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands will be given him.

Those who plough iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same.

Upon the wicked he will rain coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning wind; this shall be the portion of their cup.

God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not turn back, he will sharpen his sword; he bends his bow and makes it ready.

Who can describe the misery of fallen man! His days, though few, are full of evil. Trouble and sorrow drive him on to the tomb. All the world, except Noah and his family, are drowning in the deluge. A storm of fire and brimstone is falling from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The earth is opening her mouth to swallow up alive Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Wrath is coming upon **the beloved city; wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.** The tender and delicate mother is devouring her darling infant. The sword of men is executing the vengeance of God. The earth is emptying its inhabitants into the bottomless pit. On every hand there is **the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood.** Fire and sword fill the land with distress and dismay. Amid the universal devastation, wild shrieks and despairing groans fill the air. God of mercy! is your ear heavy, that you cannot hear, or your arm shortened, that you cannot save? The heavens above are brass, and the earth beneath is iron; for Jehovah is pouring his indignation upon his enemies, and he will not pity nor spare.

Yes; **the misery of man increases greatly**. Consider the wretched fallen creature! Pestilence pursues him. Leprosy cleaves to him. Consumption wastes him. Inflammation devours his vital organs. Burning fever seizes upon the very springs of life. The destroying angel has overtaken the sinner in his sins. The hand of God lies heavy on him. The fires of wrath are burning all around, drying up every source of comfort, and turning all his hopes to ashes. Conscience chastises him with scorpions. See how he squirms! Hear how he shrieks for help! Mark the agony and terror that are in his soul and on his brow. Death stares him in the face, and shakes at him its iron spear. He trembles, he turns pale like a criminal at the bar, like a convict facing execution. He is condemned already. Conscience has pronounced the sentence. Anguish takes hold of him. Terrors gather in battle formation about him. He looks back, and the storms of Sinai pursue him; forward, and hell is moving to meet him; above, and the heavens are on fire; beneath, and the world is burning. He listens, and the trumpet calls for judgement again; and the bronze chariots of vengeance thunder from afar. Yet again, the sentence enters his soul with unspeakable pain – **Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.**

Thus, **through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned**. They are **dead in trespasses and sins**, spiritually dead, and legally dead; dead by the fatal power of sin, and dead by the sentence of condemnation under the law; and helpless as sheep going to the slaughter, driven fiercely on by the instruments of wrath to the all-devouring grave, and the lake of fire.

But is there no mercy? Is there no salvation? Listen! Amid this prelude to wrath and ruin comes a still small voice, saying, **Much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.**

(2) This brings us to our second subject: man's restoration through grace to the favour of his offended God.

I can best present to you this glorious work with the following illustration. Imagine a vast graveyard, surrounded by a high wall, with only one entrance, a massive iron gate, which is firmly bolted. Within, are thousands and millions of human beings of all ages and conditions, sent to the grave by a disease of epidemic proportions. The graves are open to swallow them up, for they must all perish. There is no medicine to relieve them, no physician to cure them. Such is the condition of man as a sinner. All have sinned; and it is written, **The soul that sins will die**. But while the unhappy race lies in that dismal prison, Mercy comes and stands at the gate, and weeps over the sad scene, exclaiming – ‘Oh that I could enter! I would bind up their wounds; I would relieve their sorrows; I would save their souls!’ A company of angels, commissioned by the court of heaven to some other world, pauses at the sight, and heaven joins in that pause. Seeing Mercy standing there, they cry, ‘Mercy, can't you enter? Can you look upon that scene and feel no pity? Can you not show pity, and help them?’ Mercy replies, ‘I see it all!’ And in tears, she adds, ‘Yes; I do feel pity, but I cannot help!’ ‘Why do you not go in?’ inquires the heavenly host. ‘Oh,’ says Mercy, ‘Justice has shut the gate against me and I must not – indeed, cannot – open it up!’ At this moment, Justice appears, as if to guard the gate. The angels ask, ‘Why will you not allow Mercy to enter?’ He replies sternly, ‘The law has been broken, and it must be honoured! Transgressors must die, or Justice will!’ Then, there appears among the company of angels a figure like the Son of God. Addressing Justice, he asks, ‘What do you demand?’ Justice replies, ‘What I want is strict justice. I will have shame for their honour, sickness for their health, and death for their life. **Without shedding of blood there is no remission!**’ ‘Justice’, says the Son of God, ‘I accept your terms! Let this wrong fall on me! Let Mercy in, and bring to an end this festival of death!’ ‘What pledge do you offer for keeping these conditions?’ asks Justice. ‘My word, and my oath!’ ‘When?’ asks Justice. ‘In four thousand years on the hill of Calvary, outside the walls of Jerusalem!’

This is how the covenant was drawn up, signed and sealed in the presence of the angels. Justice was satisfied, the gate was opened, and Mercy entered, preaching salvation in the name of Jesus. The covenant was committed to the patriarchs and the prophets, and a long series of rituals and ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings, were set up to preserve the memory of that solemn event. At the end of four thousand years, when Daniel's **seventy weeks** were complete, Justice and Mercy appeared at the hill of Calvary. 'Where,' asked Justice, 'is the Son of God?' Mercy replied, 'There he is, at the foot of the hill!' And there he was, bearing his own cross, followed by his weeping Church. Mercy retired, and remained apart from the scene while Jesus ascended the hill like a lamb prepared for the sacrifice. Justice presented the dread covenant, saying, 'Now is the day on which this contract must be settled.' The Redeemer took it. And what did he do with it? Did he tear it to pieces, and scatter it to the four winds? No! He nailed it to his Cross, crying, 'It is finished!' The Victim ascended the altar, and Justice called on the holy fire to come down and consume the sacrifice. The holy fire replied, 'I am coming! I will consume the sacrifice, and then burn up the world!' The fire then fell on the Son of God, and rapidly consumed his humanity. But when it touched his Deity, it was extinguished. Then there was darkness over the whole land, and an earthquake shook the mountain. But the heavenly host broke out in joyful song – **Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men!**

So grace abounded, the free gift came to all, and the gospel proclaiming redemption went out to every creature. **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.** By grace you are loved, redeemed, and justified. By grace you are called, converted, reconciled and sanctified. Salvation is wholly of grace. The plan, the process, the fulfilment are all of grace.

**Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise!**

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778)

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more contrasts sharply with the words, **by the one man's offence, many died.** As mankind multiplied, the offence abounded. The waters flooded the world, but they could not wash away the dreadful stain. Then fire fell from heaven, but it could not burn out the terrible plague. The earth opened her mouth, but she could not swallow this monster of sin. The law thundered its threats from the thick darkness of Sinai, but it could not restrain by terror the children of disobedience. Still the offence abounded and multiplied like the sands of the seashore. It grew bold, and pitched its tents on the hill of Calvary, and nailed the Lawgiver to a tree. But, in that conflict, sin received its fatal wound. The Victim became the victor. He fell; but in his fall he crushed the foe. He died to sin, but sin and death were crucified on the Cross. Where sin abounded to condemn, grace abounded much more to justify. Where sin abounded to defile, grace abounded much more to make clean. Where sin abounded to harden, grace abounded much more to soften and subdue. Where sin abounded to imprison, grace abounded much more to bring freedom to the captives. Where sin abounded to break the law and dishonour the Law-giver, grace abounded much more to repair the breach and cleanse the stain. Where sin abounded to consume the soul with unquenchable fire and gnawing worm, grace abounded much more to extinguish the flame and heal the wound. Grace has surely abounded! It has established its throne on the merit of the sufferings of the Redeemer. It has put on a crown, laid hold of the golden sceptre, and plundered the kingdom of the prince of darkness. The gates of the

great cemetery are now thrown open, and a new life-pulse beats among its wretched population. Immortality walks among the tombs!

This abounding grace is shown in the gift of Jesus Christ, through whose mediation we have our reconciliation and salvation. In him, believers are dead to sin and alive to God. Our sins were slain at his cross, and buried in his tomb. His resurrection has opened our graves, and given us assurance of everlasting life. **God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.**

The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. Glory be to God for the death of his Son, by which this enmity is slain, and reconciliation is made possible between the rebel and the law! This was the unspeakable gift that saved us from ruin, and wrestled with the storm and turned it away from the head of the believing sinner. Had all the angels of God attempted to stand between these two conflicting seas, they would have been swept away into the gulf of destruction. **It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**, nor bring peace to the conscience. But Christ, the gift of divine grace – the suffering Lamb, appointed by God a ‘sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they’, bore our sins and carried our sorrows, and obtained for us the blessing of eternal redemption. He met the fury of the tempest, and the floods went over his head; but his offering was an offering of peace, calming the storm and the waves, fulfilling the law, giving glory to its Author, and rescuing those who transgressed it from wrath and ruin. Justice laid down its sword at the foot of the cross, and peace was restored between heaven and earth.

Draw near, you guilty ones! Come and surrender the weapons of your rebellion! Come, with your evil thoughts and wicked actions, your unbelief and enmity and pride, and cast them down at the Redeemer’s feet! God is here, waiting to be gracious. He will receive you. He will cast all your sins behind his back into the depths of the sea, and they will not be brought up against you any more forever. By heaven’s unspeakable gift, by Christ’s priceless atonement, by the free and infinite grace of the Father and the Son, we persuade you, we beseech you, we entreat you, **Be reconciled to God!**

It is by the work of the Holy Spirit in us that we express a personal interest in the work done on Calvary for us. If our sins are cancelled, they are also crucified. If we are reconciled in Christ, we cease to fight against our God. This is the fruit of faith. **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.** May the Lord inspire in every one of us that saving principle!

But those who have been restored to divine favour may sometimes feel disheartened. They have passed through the sea, and sung praises on the shore of deliverance; but there is still between them and Canaan ‘a waste howling wilderness,’ a long and weary pilgrimage, facing hostile nations, fiery serpents, scarcity of food, and the river Jordan. With fears within and fighting without, they may grow discouraged, yield to temptation, murmur against God, and desire once again to return to Egypt. But do not fear, successors of Jacob! If you are reconciled by the death of Christ, much more will you be saved by his life. His death was the price of our redemption; his life brings freedom to the believer. If, by his death, he brought you through the Red Sea at night, by his life he will lead you through the river Jordan by day. If, by his death, he delivered you from the iron furnaces of Egypt, by his life he will save you from all the perils of the wilderness. If, by his death, he conquered Pharaoh, the great enemy, by his life he will subdue Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan.

- **We shall be saved by his life.**
- **Because he lives, we shall live also.**
- **Be of good cheer!**

The work is finished, the ransom paid, the kingdom of heaven thrown open to all believers. Lift up your heads and rejoice, you prisoners of hope! There is no debt unpaid, no devil unconquered, no enemy within your own hearts that has not received a fatal wound!

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

STUDY 16

LAW AND GRACE

ROMANS 5:20-21

EXPOSITION

In preaching through Romans, we have the delightful pleasure of presenting the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel has no connection with good works or the works of the law, and is entirely separate from them. In the two verses in Chapter 5 that remain to be considered, we find a contrast drawn between law and grace.

Let us first concentrate on the word **law**, which introduces this short section – **Moreover the law entered** (20). What the law fails to do is to make a sinner right with God. It can convict, but it cannot save from sin. The law is entirely excluded from the plan of salvation, for salvation is of grace and not of the law.

Righteousness cannot come from the Law

Verses 20-21 bring to a brief conclusion what Paul has already claimed – **For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.** (Romans 1:17) When sinners look for a way to be made right with God, they hunt around for anything in themselves that would justify them. But what they discover is that there is only one way to be right with God, and that is through justification by faith in Jesus Christ. One remedy is available for guilty sinners – Jesus Christ himself. In Romans chapters 1-3, Paul showed how that **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (3:23). Sinners must first acknowledge their desperate need of God's own remedy. In chapter 4, we noted the case of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race, who **believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.** (4:3) Salvation is linked very closely with a personal faith in God. When we come to chapter 5, we see the effects that this imputed righteousness had on both the status and the character of the saved believer. This, then leaves us with a very important question – a question answered fully in chapter 7.

What is the place of the law in the scheme of God's salvation? If the gospel removes the law entirely, and the Jews laid great emphasis on the observance of the law, why, then, did God bring in the law in the first place? The answer to this question involves the gospel preacher in pressing home the lesson concerning the **negative** function of the law. In understanding what the law could **not** do, we learn a great deal about ourselves, and our feeble and ineffectual efforts to make ourselves right before God.

Verse 20 indicates that this negative, though truly powerful, function of the law causes sinners to flee to Jesus Christ when the gospel is preached – ... **that the offence might abound.** The question of the place of the law in the gospel is similarly dealt with in Romans 3:19 – **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God ...** Paul actually asks the question in Galatians 3:19, 23-25 – **What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us**

to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you all are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The law plays no part in our salvation, but it drives the sinner to seek a Saviour in Christ Jesus. This was not something that came about by chance, but was all part of God's grand design – **The law entered**. Not by mistake, or as an after-thought, but deliberately, and after divine consideration. **For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.** (Proverbs 6:23) However, this still leaves unanswered the question – Why did the law enter if it was unable to save anyone? It looks like a futile action on God's part. Romans 5:13 points out a very important function of the law – **For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.** Sin was not counted under the terms of the written law, but guilt reigned because God's moral laws were written in the conscience of all men. When the law entered, it convicted men strongly of their sin. How would sinners know that they had broken God's commandments unless they knew what those commandments were? The keyword in verse 20 is **offence**. The law did not stop people sinning, but it made them conscious of the fact that they had offended God by breaking his law.

Against the law, appears the significant word **grace** – **But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.** We have already been introduced to this word in verse 15 – **For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.** When people begin to feel desperate about their guilty condition, and acknowledge that they can do nothing to alter it, suddenly God brings in as a free gift the offer of salvation in the gospel.

Law and grace

The apostle to the Gentiles, then is answering this implied question – 'What is the law for? What part do the Ten Commandment play in the world if they cannot save sinners?' The first thing to be said is that **the law entered that the offence might abound.** The law is like a magnifying glass, showing up all our moral imperfections in a seemingly outward blameless life. The law displays to us our moral flaws, and presents us with the evidence that we are sinners in God's sight. When the law entered, it showed up the sinner's transgression of the law – **that the offence might abound.** The law stirs up the conscience, and convicts of sin.

Another function of the law, by way of contrast, is to show that the more sin is revealed, the greater the grace of God appears in the saving of sinners – **where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.** Sin might seem to the sinner like a high mountain, but God's grace is higher still. John Calvin declared – **When sin had held men plunged under its power, grace came to the relief. For Paul teaches us that the more sin is known, the grandeur and magnificence of grace is more evident; and is poured out in so copious a manner as not only to overcome, but even to overwhelm the overflowing deluge of iniquity.** The law of God not only indicates what sinners deserve by not observing it, but point to the way of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin and grace.

A sinner under conviction of sin can see no way of escaping the judgement of God – **sin reigned in death** (21). The law makes sinners run away from their own feeble efforts at self-reformation, and see in Jesus Christ their only hope of being accepted by God. Christ is the only one who ever kept the law of God perfectly.

The law speaks of punishment, but the gospel speaks of salvation by grace. Once, sin reigned as a cruel tyrant in our

lives, but now grace has come to rule in our hearts. Grace brings righteousness through Jesus Christ – **those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.** (17) Grace gives hope of eternal life – **that grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.** (21) By grace, believers are brought into an intimate and eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Puritan Matthew Poole comments – **The grace of God is superabundant after they [sinners] have abounded in sin, and no matter how great their guilt, so much greater is the grace of God in its free forgiveness.**

In verse 21, Paul states that **sin reigned in death**, but that **grace reigned through righteousness**. What a testimony to the working of God's grace in the hearts and lives of those who believe in Christ! Sin brought death to every member of the human race, without exception. All of us were born with a sinful nature, and were therefore separated from God. Only the gospel speaks of the possibility of being made alive to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin makes us dead to God, but grace brings us righteousness as a gift from God.

The law makes sinners feel that grace alone is the only alternative left to them. It is God's grace that displays the greatness of **Jesus Christ our Lord**. He is the only Saviour from sin, and takes first place in the believer's life. The Lordship of Christ is evident in the lives of all true believers. It was Martin Luther who tried to be right with God through human – one may even say, superhuman – effort, but failed miserably. When he discovered the simple way of faith, he found himself in the company of the great theologian Augustine who said

'The law was not given to make sinners alive. It is grace alone, which, by faith, makes alive. The law was given to show with what strong chains of sin those are bound and held captive who arrogantly assert that the law is to be kept by their own power.'

Finally, **eternal life** (21) is a result of being made right with God. Therefore, every gospel preacher must call sinners to repentance, and turn them away from their moral and religious works to a righteousness that comes to sinners only when they believe in Jesus Christ. This is the true life, and it lasts forever.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 16

A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

Read Romans 1:17

1. In what is the righteousness of God revealed? (See also verse 16)
2. Who are **the just**?
3. How is God's righteousness received? (By faith)

Read Romans 3:23

4. What causes a sinner to feel guilty?
5. How is justification achieved?

Read Romans 4:3

6. What had God said that Abraham believed? (See Genesis 15:4-5)
7. What happened to him when he believed?

Read Romans 3:19

8. To whom does the Law of Moses speak?
9. What law, then, speaks to the Gentiles?
10. State 2 effects of the law.

Read Galatians 3:19, 23-25

11. Why did the law come in?
12. Who handed over the law?
13. What took the place of the law?
14. What function did the law have before Christ came?
15. What took the place of the law?

Read Proverbs 6:23

16. To what are God's commandments compared?
17. To what is God's law compared?
18. What does the law do?
19. What is the purpose of the negative function of the law (see the end of the verse).

In view of the nature of the Practical work, B and C have been combined.

B & C PRACTICAL

1. Read carefully the two quotations in the Exposition.
 - (a) Calvin on grace
 - (b) Luther (following Augustine) on law and grace.
2. Discuss the quotations with a fellow-preacher with a view to:
 - (a) Whether they fairly represent biblical truth;
 - (b) What Bible texts support what is being said;
 - (c) How they would fit into a gospel sermon.
 - (d) Write a report of your discussion in no more than 250 words (unless you want to write a longer one!)

THIS IS THE END OF ROMANS MODULE 2

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