

Date TBD

Adult Sunday Bible Study Lesson

The Letter to the Church at Rome

The State of Grace

Situational Context: The implications of justification by grace through faith are now drawn out. The transition from wrath to grace transforms both the status and the experience of the believer.

Lesson Theme: Romans 5:1-5; Justification and reconciliation with God are concurrent in time. To be justified is to be reconciled or accepted by God and moves the believer from wrath to a relationship of peace with God. This is a one-time act and is therefore eternal in nature securing our hope of the glory of God.

1. Justified by Grace through Faith: Romans 5:1-5 (NIV2011) ¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Interpretation: With peace established, we now have access to God's presence. The wall of partition has been removed. This peace is not a guarded truce subject to new warfare. It is a permanent peace. New Testament hope is the assurance of something not yet fully experienced, and quite different from uncertain, wishful thinking. That this hope will not be frustrated is guaranteed here and now by the love of God that the Holy Spirit pours into believers' hearts. It confirms our confidence that the glory we hope for will one day be ours.

Paul does not advocate a morbid view of life but a joyous and triumphant one. Christians can rejoice in suffering because they know that it is not meaningless. Part of God's purpose is to produce character in his children.

Supporting Texts:

Romans 3:21 (NIV2011) ²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Romans 3:28 (NIV2011) ²⁸ For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Romans 8:18 (NIV2011) ¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

James 1:3 (NIV2011) ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

Discussion Starters:

What are the benefits of justification?

What does peace with God mean?

What does peace with God produce?

How does justification change our approach to suffering?

2. In Christ Our Substitute: Romans 5:6-8 (NIV2011) ⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Interpretation: Christ's love is grounded in God's free grace and is not the result of any inherent worthiness found in its objects (humankind). In fact, it is lavished on us in spite of our undesirable character. "Righteous" and "good" may be synonymous terms, or "righteous" may refer to moral uprightness while "good" goes beyond this to genuine concern for others. Of course, we were neither righteous nor good, but sinners, when Christ died for us.

Supporting Texts:

Galatians 4:4 (NIV2011) ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Ephesians 1:9-10 (NIV2011) ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV2011) ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV2011) ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Discussion Starters:

Who are the ungodly?

Why do we need a substitute?

3. Reconciled and Saved: Romans 5:9-11 (NIV2011) ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Interpretation: Paul argues from the greater to the less. If God would do for us the work of reconciliation, at the cost of the suffering and death of His Son, He will not withhold the final salvation that is "by him," and by "his blood" as the ascendant Mediator. Keeping for final salvation those who have already been justified is simply God following through His initial purpose of love to them. The decisive, and more costly, expression of this loving purpose was Christ's actual reconciling death, which guarantees the justification and glorification of those for whom he died.

Supporting Texts:

Romans 8:32 (NIV2011) ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Colossians 1:21 (NIV2011) ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Mark 1:15 (NIV2011) ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Discussion Starters:

How does a person receive reconciliation?

What happened to the wrath we are owed for our sins?

What does this truth have to do with boasting?