

Rom 5:18-21 So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. ¹⁹ For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Introduction: Thousands of babies and mothers could have been saved if physicians had only listened to Dutch scientist and doctor **Ignaz Semmelweis. There was a problem in the maternity ward in at the General Hospital of Vienna** where Semmelweis had been recently employed. Thousands of women and babies were dying of **Postpartum fever**—which today is very rare.

Semmelweis noticed that the incidents of child and mother death were far ***higher in the physician's ward than they were in the Midwives' ward***. So he ran a number of observational experiments to determine what the differences were between the midwives and the physicians. While they employed different techniques, ***none of them were determinative as the cause of death***. And then he stumbled on the problem. He noticed that the same doctors who were performing autopsies all day on cadavers were being called away and rushed to deliver babies.

The physicians, it turns out, were transferring what at the time he called, ***"small particles of death"*** what we now know as Germs. He had the physicians and their assistants scrub their hands and instruments before touching the children and mothers in the Maternity Ward—and Shazzam! Eureka. He discovered that their failure to wash their hands and their instruments was likely causing these high incidents of mortality. Hand washing saves the world. In 1860 Luis Pasteur discovered Germs and Semmelweis was proven right.

Death is the order of the day—until and unless ***we discover and intervening principle***. And the intervening principle is to be washed clean—to be made righteous in God's sight—then we stop perpetuating the cycle of death all around us. ***The Problem is that we carry around in our fleshy nature death***.

Transition: We're beginning our series through the book of Romans this morning. We begin by introducing the problem that the book seeks to address—by diagnosing our deepest wound, our most pressing problem, our gravest challenge.

Now if we fail to understand or misdiagnose the heart of the problem then we will be lost—castaways, hopeless.

Paul's first purpose: Is to answer the question, "Why do we need the Gospel of Jesus?" Romans addresses the problem the entire human race... From Adam to Christ, we have been under the "reign" of sin and death. Christ inaugurates the "reign" of life and grace through faith."

Let's look again at our summary passage today...

5:20-21 "The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more ²¹ **so that, just as sin reigned in death**, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, along the way we'll find that Paul has an awful lot to say about Jew and Gentile tensions in the church. However, Romans addresses, not merely a Jew or a Gentile ethnic tension, not only a male or female tension, or a poverty vs. privileged class challenge.

Gen 2:16-17 "And the Lord God (YHWH Elohim) commanded (Yetsar: to decree) the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.'"

There are three dimensions to this death warning—three ways in which mankind will die: (1) This death involves physical death (**expire** biologically), (2) relational (**exile**) and (3) spiritual (**existential**).

1 Corinthians 15:26 "The last enemy to be **abolished** is **death**." Now in context he's talking about physical resurrection—meaning, the last enemy is bodily death.

Right now, Jesus imparts life to us to reverse the curse of Genesis: He restores us to holy communion with God—being given a renewed and revived spiritual faculty to engage relationally with God; he restores us to holy community—being given initiation into the family of God. And the last enemy, Paul says, is physical death—he restores our bodies.

2 Tim. 1:10 "This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has **abolished death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Paul's letter to the Romans addresses the universal dilemma—it's the dominion of sin and death vs. the dominion of grace through the righteousness of God resulting in life everlasting for all those who believe.

It is bad news that death reigns in the human experience through universal sin. "All have sinned" he says definitively, "and have fallen short of the glory of God." And this issue applies equally to those who inherited the law, the covenants, and the promises—who were born with a fine Abrahamic Pedigree—and it applies to those who were born without any of that. Romans, Arabs, Africans, Europeans, Afghans, Asians, Latin Americans.

So, the Kingdom of God is the in-breaking of God's sovereign reign of grace through Christ's righteousness, resulting in our life.

Chapters 1-12 are essentially summarized in two statements:

- First Summary: Because we have been justified by grace through faith, we are saved from sin's penalty.
 - Rom 5:1 **Therefore**, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Justification is the forensic, legal declaration that you are in the right. It is a legal change of status.

Faith, as we will learn, is "trusting reception"—it involves mental agreement with the message, and a response to receive justification with empty hands—offering nothing, no virtue, no works, no intent as payment or a fee for that which we receive freely by his grace.

Peace: He's not just saying that we have this tranquil, sort of blissful feeling. He's teaching the doctrine of our reconciliation. Reconciliation means to make peace between two parties who are in a state of enmity. The way in which God makes peace with us is to provide for our justification.

Everything mentioned here in this summary statement of Romans 5:1 is a change of status. A legal declaration that restitution has been made and we the beneficiaries. A change from unbelief to trusting reception. Resulting in our peace—a reconciled relationship—now we are sons and daughters of the God with whom we were previously at war as rebels in his realm.

So, we are saved from the legal penalty under which we once stood condemned.

The second summary of chapters 1-12

- Second Summary: Because grace reigns in the life of the believer, we are freed from sin's power over us.
 - Rom 6:6, 12 "For we know that our **old self** was **crucified** with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin...12 **Therefore** do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. Other than one more summary (Ch. 8) Paul will have nothing else to say about justification.

If we only see this book through the lenses of our having been justified by faith, we will not have much to talk about after chapter 6.

Old self: Now, notice what he doesn't say, "Don't worry, sin is no longer present in your mortal body." He doesn't say that. He tells us not to allow sin to reign in this mortal body. That said, if one only reads the letter through the lenses of our forensic and legal declaration of right standing before God, then we will tragically miss out on the application of that glorious truth. Because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has set me free** from the law of sin and death—I am, Paul says, no longer obligated to live a life under the power and enslavement of sin. I'm free from sin's damnation, and free from its domination over my choices.

Illus. Old tenant who refuses to move out, even after being served a legal eviction notice.

Crucified with Him: In Spirit baptism, we are buried and dead to the old life, raised and freed to live the new life.

Do not allow sin to reign: Now we have a choice—to walk according to the Spirit or the flesh. To become obedient to the desires of our flesh or the will of God's Spirit.

The Grace that saves you will also sanctify you so that sin will no longer reign in your mortal bodies.

Now that the debt has been paid, the Holy Spirit is present to conform us, not to the pattern of this world, but to transform us into the pattern of godliness—by the renewing of our minds in God’s Word.

Paul’s second purpose: Is to prepare the Romans for his eventual arrival in order transition his ministry base there. God called Paul to take the gospel into new frontiers—to pioneer new churches in places where the gospel has not yet been preached. Rom. 15:19-24 As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else’s foundation, ²¹ but, as it is written, **Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.** ²² That is why I have been prevented many times from coming to you. ²³ But now I no longer have any work to do in these regions, and I have strongly desired for many years to come to you ²⁴ whenever I travel to Spain. For I hope to see you when I pass through and to be assisted by you for my journey there, once I have first enjoyed your company for a while.

Up until this time, Paul had launched his mission trips from the city of Antioch, which was strategically positioned to reach the larger Mediterranean coastline.

But Rome will be ideally situated for launching the gospel into this strange frontier—to reach Europeans.

He says in Rom 15:19 “my aim is to preach the Gospel.” In Chapter 1 he begins with “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...15 So I am eager to preach the Gospel among you Romans as well. 16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation—first to the Jew then to the Gentile.”

Paul’s aim was to preach the Gospel in Rome where it had already taken hold, and then pushing into new frontiers where the Good News of Jesus was not known.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the royal announcement that God's rightful King and Son has come into the world to save us from our sins. Born into David's royal line, he lived a sinless life, died on a cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to the throne of heaven, pouring out the Spirit on all who believe.

It is "good news" because it announces the end of the reign of sin and death for all who believe. Caesar August's "gospel" was that he had brought peace to the warring tribes of Rome—bringing an end to civil war within the country and bringing his peaceful reign to bordering tribes and nations. **It is the announcement of his birth, his saving, peaceful reign, and his benevolent lordship.** But of course we know his claim to these titles is a sham—the world's true Lord and Savior is Jesus the Messiah king of Israel. The true saving grace is that he makes peace between rebels and God, so that dead men can be made alive again.

Understand that sin does not just mean that you "missed the mark"—but that you live under your own authority and rule. Meaning, they are rebels in God's realm. This is why God defines sin in Isaiah 1 as rebellion to his rule.

Now the means by which God has procured our salvation, the means by which he has bought and paid for us, redeemed us, reconciled with us is through the obedient-sinless life of Jesus the Messiah; his obedience to death on a cross for our sins; his burial and resurrection from the dead—to vindicate his claims, and defeat the power of sin and death for us.

And to begin the project of new creation—in Gen 3 humanity and the world was lost—and now God is bringing humanity and the world back on track—setting us right, renewing all things—beginning with the man, the woman through faith.