**Romans**

**Lesson 2: Man’s Greatest Need: Imputed Righteousness! Romans 5 through 7**

In Romans 1:18-3:21, Paul provides a compelling argument regarding *the need* for justification. Justification is a legal term meaning a man has been declared righteous in God’s courtroom the moment he believes; therefore, he no longer stands condemned but is in “right standing” with God. The declaration is both legal and permanent.

Then in Romans 3:22-4:25, Paul explains the way of justification. This imputed *righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe* (3:22). “Imputed” means “granted” or “attributed to another.” We learn from Paul that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is God’s way and the only way (John 14:6). After explaining the need for and the way of justification, Paul shares *blessings* and *privileges*   
enjoyed by the justified man. Paul wants every man who has been truly justified to see that he stands in a place of highest privilege—an exalted and privileged status as a true son of God (Romans 8:15-16).

In Romans 5:1-5, Paul reveals several blessings that accrue to the justified man. Chapter 5 begins with the word “therefore” as a response to verse 25 of the preceding chapter, which says, “He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” The first blessing that follows “justification” is peace with God. Paul contends, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.1). Notice that it does not say the peace of God. That is entirely different. The *peace of God* refers   
to the abiding peace man experiences when he walks with God through life in obedience to His Word. Peace with God comes via a peace treaty enacted at the moment of belief. At one time,   
we were all enemies of God (5:10), a condition into which all of us are born.

Contrary to claims of famous psychologists, we are not born with a clean slate (*tabula rasa*) but rather as enemies of God under His wrath. John 3:36 states, “Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” God’s wrath is removed from him when a man receives Christ into his heart by faith and truly believes. A peace treaty is declared between that man and God. Hence, the war is over. No longer an enemy, the true believer becomes God’s friend. What a blessing and privilege to be counted as a friend of God. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what   
I command” (John 15:13-14). Are you God’s friend?

In addition to peace with God, the justified man gains access to God’s grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (vv.1-2). In other words, we are introduced to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God! The justified man goes from a negative position of enmity to a positive one of friendship with God, an eternal relationship that can never be severed. He stands permanently in God’s grace—a place of highest privilege. God becomes the justified man’s heavenly Father, to whom he can go at any time with any problem, and know God hears and will respond. Hebrews 4:16 states, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

The justified man has peace with God, permanent access to His grace, and a third blessing—  
joy because he can “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (v. 2). The justified man has lasting joy as he anticipates the coming glory of God.

Finally, Paul makes an astonishing claim—since we have been justified by Jesus’ death, then how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him who is now alive in heaven (v.9). Verse 10 continues: “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Here is Paul’s point: If God saved us through Jesus’ death on the cross when we were His enemies, how much more will He save us now that we are His friends? This should give us great assurance. Both Jesus’ death on the cross and His empty tomb, discovered three days later, are historical facts. We have objective evidence of God’s great love for us, and later in Romans, Paul declares that *absolutely nothing* can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

**DAY 1. Peace with God Brings Great Privilege!**

1. Read Romans 5:1-11 (Optional) and pages 46-53 in *How to Be a Christian Without   
   Being Religious.*

Verse 2 says, “Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

* 1. How does a man gain access to God’s grace?
  2. Explain the phrase “this grace in which we now stand.”

1. Verse 6 says, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”
   1. What is meant by “we were still powerless” (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:1)?
   2. Paul uses three words (listed below) to describe the man who has not been justified. Explain what they mean to you.
      1. Ungodly (v. 6)
      2. Sinners (v. 8)
      3. Enemies (v. 10)
2. Verse 9 says, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”
   1. Why did Jesus have to shed his blood (Leviticus 8:15; 17:11; Isaiah 53:5-6, 10, 12; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-20)?
   2. What is meant by “shall be saved…from God’s wrath” in verse 9? When is this wrath coming (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:11-15)?
3. In verses 10-11, we see the words “reconciled” and “reconciliation.”
   1. What does it mean that we are “reconciled” to God
   2. Is reconciliation a present reality for justified believers? If so, explain.
4. Verse 18 says, “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” (Be careful not to interpret this verse to mean all are saved by Jesus’ one act of obedience. One must never interpret a single verse or passage of Scripture without considering the rest of the Bible.)
   1. What was the one act of righteousness that makes justification possible for all men (Romans 5:8)?
   2. What does justification bring to a believer?
   3. How would you define the *life* that only Jesus can give (John 4:13-14; 10:10;   
      11:25-26; 14:6)?

**Day 2. United with Christ!**

In chapters 1-5, Paul explained, theologically, what it means to be a Christian without being religious. True Christianity is not a religion. All religions are man-made and teach, in some way, that man must do something (deeds/works) to earn the favor and acceptance of God. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that man can do nothing to earn God’s favor.

However, in Christianity, God has provided a way to have a personal relationship with Him, and that way is justification through faith in Christ Jesus. By faith, a man can enter into a lasting relationship with God. When God sees biblical repentance and faith in a man’s heart, He declares him righteous. The result? Man has peace with God, stands in the grace of God, and has great hope in the coming glory of God.

Also, in chapters 1-5, Paul wrote, at length, about the believer’s secure position in Christ.   
This secure position includes blessings and privileges that accrue to a man when he places his faith in Jesus Christ and enters a new relationship with God. Paul provides a lot of theological information about the believer’s status. Still, until now, he has not offered any practical teaching about Christian life, growth, or discipleship, which leads us to chapters 6 – 8 of Romans. In these three chapters, Paul will explain:

1. How to Live a New Life in Christ (chapter 6)
2. The Christian’s Ongoing Struggle with Sin (chapter 7)
3. The Necessary Power of the Indwelling Holy Spirit (chapter 8)

The key concept in chapter 6 is union with Christ. In Ephesians, Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” more than thirty times because it is an *integral concept* of biblical truth. A believer |is united with Christ, or “in Christ,” and the Holy Spirit begins to live in his heart the moment |he believes (John 14:16-18). This union conveys to the believer all of the actions of Christ—his death and resurrection so that whatever is true of Christ is legally true of the believer. Legally, before God, our sin debt is paid because we are in Christ. Accordingly, Paul says, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). By his union with Christ, the believer died when Christ died and arose when Christ arose to live this new life.

1. Read Romans 6:1-25 (Optional) and pages 55-68 in *How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious*. Paul states in verses 1-2 that a believer cannot go on sinning, that is, continue in habitual sin. (This does not mean that a Christian never sins!) Why does he make this claim (vv. 3-4)?
2. How does baptism depict symbolically what happens to a believer through his union with Christ? Use the following verses to help answer this question.
   1. Romans 6:5-7
   2. Colossians 2:11-13
3. Verse 11 states, “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in   
   Christ Jesus.”
   1. What does it mean to “count yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ?”
   2. How should this “new mindset” change the way you view yourself? What impact   
      should it have on sin in your life?

In the first half of chapter 6, Paul explains that through the believer’s union with Christ, he   
died with Christ in his death, arose with Him in his resurrection, and now he lives this new life known as the Christian life. The man he once was no longer exists. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” The key to this new relationship with God is the believer’s **union** **with Christ**, which happens the moment he truly believes when he is born again (John 3). He has been set free from the law’s penalty and sin’s power and dominion. Now the believer is to consider himself dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ (6:11). He is no longer to offer the parts of his body (mind, hands, feet, eyes, etc.) to sin; instead, he is to use these parts of his body for righteousness. No longer living under condemnation of the law, he lives under God's immeasurable grace and mercy.

After this lengthy explanation, some still have a problem understanding grace. It seems too   
easy. If a man is free to live under God’s grace, why can’t he go on sinning? Paul addressed   
this question in the first fourteen verses of chapter 6. The believer cannot continue in sin because of his union with Christ, which was formed at conversion. Now, Paul will explain how a man’s actions correspond to his union with Christ. While verses 1-14 deal with what happens to the believer **internally**, verses 15-23 deal with what the believer does **externally**.

1. What does it mean that a believer is “under grace” and no longer “under the law?” Use the following to help answer this question:
   1. Romans 3:20-24
   2. Galatians 3:21-25
2. (Personal question) Have you ever felt or realized that you are a slave to something?   
   If appropriate, share your experience with the group.
3. How does slavery to sin lead to death (James 1:13-15)?
4. How does slavery to obedience (to God) lead to righteousness (life and peace) (Psalm 1;   
   1 John 1:5-7)?

**DAY 3. No Condemnation—Dead to the Law!**

How would you like to know that your sins will never be counted against you? How would you like to know that the law, the Ten Commandments, will never be used to condemn you? Haven’t you broken many of these commandments? If so, how is it possible to get off scot-free?

In chapter 7, Paul uses marriage to illustrate that the believer is no longer bound by the righteous requirements of the law. How is this so? It is because he has been set free through death. Marriage is a binding relationship, as long as both the husband and wife are living, but death changes everything. The Bible clearly states that a husband and wife are bound to one another “so long as they both shall live.” But if one dies, the other is free to marry someone else. Paul writes in verse 1, “Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?” Just as a married woman is no longer bound to her husband if he dies, so a man is no longer bound by the law if he dies. Death is the act that frees both. Paul is trying to explain this in the beginning of chapter 7, and it corresponds to what he stated in the previous chapter (6:2-7). Something supernatural has occurred—the believer’s death—and it all happened due to his union with Christ. Believers are united with Christ through faith in both his death and resurrection. When Jesus died to pay the price for our sins, all believers died with him. Thus, the old man is dead. Therefore, the believer is no longer under the law, meaning the law no longer has any hold on him, and he is free from any condemnation (Romans 8:1)! By faith, the believer is now married to Christ (rather than the law) and lives his new life in the power of Christ. For this reason, Paul wrote the church at Colossae: “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Paul continues, “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God”(Romans 7:4).As believers, we are united with Christ. We belong to him just as husbands and wives belong to each other. In this new relationship, we begin to bear fruit for God—the fruit of a holy, though far from perfect, life. As believers, we begin to live up to the righteous standards of the law, not out of duty, but out of love for our marriage partner, Jesus.   
As such, Paul wrote the church in Galatia,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Before we placed our trust in Jesus Christ and were born again (John 3), we were controlled by our sinful nature. Continuing in chapter 7, we read,

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (vv. 5-6).

If we are honest, all of us must admit we were born with sinful desires that derive from a sin nature that loves to do what it is told not to do. You may have noticed you don’t have to entice a two-year-old to disobey—it just comes naturally! Moreover, when you tell him not to do something, he just wants to do it more! This is the nature of sin. The law actually works to arouse our desires to do what we are told not to do, but as we live out our sinful desires, we die physically and spiritually. *The wages of sin is death*! But now, through Christ, we have been released from the law to serve Christ in a whole new way—not out of duty but in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8).

Thus far, in Romans, Paul has explained that the law defines sin for us. We would not have known what sin is except for the law. Furthermore, the law not only reveals sin in us, but it actually stimulates sin. Thankfully, through Christ, believers have been set free from the law. Now, given all that Paul said about the law, some in Paul’s audience may have begun to wonder if the law was actually bad, which is why Paul writes, “What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet’” (verse 7). Remember, Paul had been a Pharisee, and Pharisees meticulously kept the law outwardly.   
He probably considered himself innocent regarding trespassing the first nine of the Ten Commandments. But, when he began to think about covetousness, the Tenth Commandment,   
he realized he had broken the law internally and in his heart. Paul confessed,

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every   
kind of covetous desire. For apart from the law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from   
law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment   
put me to death (vv. 8-11).

Now Paul, being in Christ and indwelt by the Spirit, was convicted of breaking all the Commandments. Thus, he realized that the law condemned him to death because the wages of sin is death (6:23). Paul concludes, “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good”(7:12). Keller expounds, “The flaw was not in the law—quite the reverse: the flaw was in Paul, the sinner. Externally, he may be very good; internally, he could not be anything other than a sinner.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

This thorough examination of the law leads Paul to ask, “Is the law a killer?” He writes, “Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful” (7:13). Sin is the killer rather than the law. God uses the law to reveal sin in us so that we might see our need for Him. That is the real purpose of the law. The Holy Spirit uses the law to convict us of sin so that we can see how utterly sinful we are. And, with that insight, the Spirit draws us to Christ. Thus, the law is good. In fact, it is wonderful because it is the tool the Spirit uses to drive us to Jesus. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul contends,

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (3:23-25).

1. Read Romans 7:5-6 (Optional) along with pages 61-63 in Ridenour. Paul uses marriage to illustrate how a believer is no longer bound to the law.
   1. Explain his illustration using verses 1-3.
   2. What releases a woman from her obligation to her husband, thus setting her free   
      to remarry?
   3. Read verse 4.
      1. As a believer, what event releases you from being accountable (bound) to the law?
      2. What does it mean to you that the law can no longer be used against you (legally) to bring condemnation (Romans 8:1)?
      3. To whom does a believer belong once freed from the law?
      4. A believer no longer lives under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14). What does this mean to you?
2. Read Romans 7:5-6 says “*For when we were controlled by the sinful nature (ESV ‘the flesh’), the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death*. *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”*
   1. How does one serve in the “old way of the written code?”
   2. How does one serve in “new way of the Spirit?”

**DAY 4. What About the Law?**

1. Read Romans 7:7-13 (Optional) and pages 64-68 in Ridenour. After showing that the law actually arouses our sinful desires and how believers are freed from the law, Paul anticipates the response of some who may deduce that the law is bad (sinful). After all, Paul told them that rather than giving life, the law brings death and condemnation and, instead of producing holiness, it stimulates sin. Therefore, some may wonder, “Is there anything good about the law?” How does Paul answer in verses 7 and 12?
2. What three things does the law do?
   1. Verse 7
   2. Verse 8
   3. Verses 9-11
3. How does the law lead one to Christ?

**The Great Internal Civil War!**

In the last half of chapter 7, Paul begins to share his personal experience as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Theologians have debated for centuries: Is Paul writing about his life before or after his conversion? Personally, I believe that Paul is describing the ongoing civil war that takes place in the heart of every believer from the moment of conversion. This has certainly been my experience. Before a man places his trust in Jesus Christ, he belongs to Satan, and he is under Satan’s control. The apostle John reminds us, “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). On the other hand, the moment a man hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and believes, he is sealed (indwelt) by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). From this point on, there is a power within the believer working against the power of the evil one. These two powers are at war with one another. Hence, a battle rages within the hearts and minds of all believers.

The Christian life is not easy. We have an enemy who seeks to destroy us, and the moment we commit our lives to Jesus Christ, Satan comes after us. He already has unbelievers, so he doesn’t have to worry too much about them. However, believers are a threat to his kingdom. Thus, we are on his radar and must be aware and prepared. For this reason, we are told, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Chapter 7 concludes with Paul’s description of the civil war within. He says,

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (vv. 21-25).

**A Personal Word:**

As a believer, I have experienced God’s grace and mercy. In addition, I know the Holy Spirit lives in me, and I have eternal life. I know Jesus personally as my Lord and Savior. He’s been my friend (John 15:14-15) since I invited him into my heart when I was about ten. However, from that moment, a battle has raged within me. I wish I could say it gets easier as I get older, but that has not been the case. My heart and spirit want so much to obey God, but Satan has proved to be a mighty warrior. As time passes, I become more aware of the sin that still exists in my heart. I totally understand how Paul must have felt. What a wretched man I am at times. Like Paul, sometimes I cry out, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” I know the answer is Jesus Christ, my Lord! When all is said and done, I know this truth: In His sight, I am forgiven. He has cleansed me completely. When God sees me, he sees the righteousness of His Son in me and covering me. I am reminded of the words of Isaiah: “I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness” *(*61:10).

One day, I will see Jesus. In that day, I will be like him (1 John 3:2). Oh, how I long for that day! In the meantime, I am trying to live more and more for Christ, and the only possible way is by living each day in the power available to me. That power is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. It is the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Romans 8 is all about—life through the Spirit. Unbelievers have no choice. They are controlled by their sinful minds. But, if you are in Christ, as I am, you have a choice. Believers can submit to God’s law by the Spirit as they surrender to his control.

Here’s the good news that leads us to the next chapter of Romans: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (8:1-2). I know the Lord has forgiven me, and though I stumble and sin, Jesus picks me up and sets me back on the right course. I love the grace of God, which I have experienced many times. I hope you have, too! If you have not trusted Jesus Christ and experienced his grace and mercy, why not do so now?

All you have to do is receive him into your heart by faith (John 1:12-13). In that moment, he will seal you with his Holy Spirit, and you can begin to live this new life in the power of He who has saved you.

**DAY 5. A Walking Civil War!**

1. Read Romans 7:14-25. Verses 14-20 deal with the struggle in Paul’s life. Do you think Paul is describing his life before or after his Damascus-road conversion (Acts 9; before Christ or after Christ)? Explain your answer.
2. A non-believer has only one nature, a sinful nature (A Christian (believer) has two natures (ESV, a *new nature* and *the old flesh*). What are they (John 14:16-17; Romans 8:5-8; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Peter 1:4)?
3. To whom did Paul look to rescue him from this “body of death?” How does Jesus give us victory over sin? Have you experienced this?

In Romans 8, we will study the key to victory over sin. Warren Wiersbe says, “The old (sinful) nature knows no law, and the new nature needs no law.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The best is yet to come! Chapter 8 explains the work of the Holy Spirit to overcome the bad and produce good. Have you been rescued from this battle between the old, sinful nature and the new, spiritual nature? Can you say, along with Paul, “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ (my) Lord?”

1. Ibid., 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary Volume,* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot Victor

   Publishing, 1989), 538. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)