

## **Romans 5:1-11      An introduction to walking in the Spirit**

Romans 5 begins with a big, *Therefore!* If there's a therefore, we should ask what it is therefore! The answer here is that it marks the beginning of a new section in the book of Romans.

The main theme of 1:18-4:25 has been our need for justification, for both Jew and gentile. Now that Jesus has come, gentiles don't need to become Jews, and in Paul's mind it wouldn't even had been a question that Jews needed to become like gentiles (see 1Corinthians 7:18). But both need to come to faith in the promised Messiah, Jesus, who has now come (Romans 3:25-26).

In the first century, for gentiles to become what Paul called, *fellow citizens with God's people and also member of his household* (Ephesians 2:19) they would normally have need to undergo the process of conversion to Judaism. But for Paul the resurrection of Jesus fundamentally changed things. A new age had dawned. Gentiles could now share in the faith of Israel through faith in Jesus. But this didn't mean they didn't have any obligations in the way they lived (Romans 8:12). They certainly did! Their obligations can be summed up in the phrase, *the obedience of faith* (Romans 1:5). This *obedience of faith* was a new way of the Spirit (Romans 7:6), a new way walking in the Spirit by the faith of the Messiah. This is what Paul teaches in chapters 5-8. Note, that ethnic differences are overcome not by saying everyone is the same or that they don't exist, but by the new way of the Spirit which involves dying to selfish interests and living for God (Revelation 5:9). One of the joys of being a Christian is meeting people from all sorts of nationalities, yet knowing we are all part of God's family in Jesus.

### **1. Being saved, or justified by faith (Romans 5:1-5)**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith ...* Paul begins to explain what this means, and what it doesn't mean, in very practical terms. First, being justified, or converted, is the just beginning of the Christian life. There's a lot of growing still to do, (2Peter 3:18), which continues until we are taken to glory. Second, being justified is to have peace with God. Most advice to achieve peace of mind focuses on what we must do to de-stress. But they never mention what God has done for us in Jesus. Jesus is the way to true peace, because He is the Prince of Peace. Thirdly, being justified means we have *access into this grace in which we now stand*. The gate has been opened because Jesus is the gate (John10:7). The way is clear because Jesus is the way (John 14:6). Therefore, to be justified means we *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*, we connect with the glory of God, which is our mountaintop experience.

But we soon find that walking in the Spirit isn't all roses, and Paul makes this clear: *but we also rejoice in our sufferings*. Dying to sin and self is a key theme in this section in Romans (chapters 5-8). We share not only in his resurrection but also in his death (Romans 6:3). Yet the reason we can still rejoice is because God has called us to the new way of the Spirit, so there is purpose even in our sufferings (Romans 5:3-5). God has the long view; he has eternity in mind; and He is interested in conforming us into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). We have hope and encouragement *because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us* (Romans 5:5). When we believe God gives us His Spirit (Romans 8:9), and we are to be filled with His Spirit continually (Ephesians 5:18).

### **2. Being saved while we were still powerless / weak (Romans 5:6-8)**

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly* (Romans 5:6). We can see from this verse that to be powerless, or weak, is to be without Christ and without the help of the Spirit, so that the new walk of the Spirit is impossible.

In our 21<sup>st</sup> century many are atheists, but in 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture everyone would have believed in God (Yahweh). So Paul distinguishes between those who believe in Messiah, the strong in faith, and those who do not, the weak in faith (see Romans 14). Paul says of Abraham, that *being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God* (Romans 4:19-20, KJV).

The strong in faith are those like Abraham, who believe in *the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not* (Romans 4:17); who believe in the same God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:24).

It's possible to believe in God yet still be weak in faith if we haven't believed in Jesus; and we can be weak in faith if the love of God has not been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. In a dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus noted that they didn't have the love of God in their hearts, nor did they accept Him (John 5:42-43). As always, it boils down to what we do with Jesus. For Paul, the Pharisees would have been an example of those who were weak in faith. But what about you? Have you accepted Jesus?

In 5:7-8 Paul shows the extent of God's love for every person. In these verses, remember that a righteous person is one who has been justified but that doesn't automatically make the person godly overnight! A good person is someone who has developed godliness in their life. But God has actually demonstrated his love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, while we were still *weak*, Christ died for ungodly. The serpent has plenty of plausible reasons God cannot be love! So whenever we are tempted to doubt the love of God we need just to look at the cross, which is God saying, I LOVE YOU! (Romans 8:32). Do you know that God loves you, personally? Has the love of God touched your life?

### 3. Being saved from God's wrath through His life (5:9-11)

Coming to faith in Christ isn't the end of faith but just the beginning. It doesn't exempt us from suffering in the present world, but we learn to see suffering in a different light and the Spirit is our Helper. These verses in this section underline twice God's commitment to us in our Christian walk by the words, *how much more*:

- a. *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!* (Romans 5:9) If God has gone so far as to give his Son in order that we may be justified, how much more will he continue to be with us and save us from every situation (Matthew 28:20). Although believers suffer, we should never forget that He saves us from His wrath, which is by far a greater suffering.
- b. *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!* God has loved His enemies, that's us, by sending His Son. If He has done that, of course He's going to save you from every situation through His life!

Therefore we have much to rejoice in through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11) because we have been reconciled to Him! He is the God of the *how much more*! There is no limit to His grace when we come to Him.