

It has been a privilege to welcome folks to visit our church from many different spiritual walks as of late. At such a time, it is important to *properly define* the Gospel which we present to visitors, to believers, church members, or unbelievers. There is no better way to define the Gospel we preach than to focus for two weeks on Christ's Person and Work and (more especially) to see how Romans 5 exalts Christ as the only Savior of fallen men. In the ultimate sense, our salvation is entirely tied up with the work of this One Man who stands over the wreck of time. May we sharpen our focus in our study of Scripture by putting Christ first and foremost in our thinking and living.

Mon/Tues: Read Romans 5:10-11 and Luke 1:67-68**Boasting through our Savior**

We begin this week with Zechariah's song where he rejoices in God's "visiting" His people. The word means that God *comes down* to inquire about His people's welfare. "To visit" can also mean to come down to examine our hearts: "You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night." (Psalm 17:3 ESV) Perhaps most beautifully, the word can refer to a Shepherd caring for His flock (Jeremiah 23:2).

But notice especially today, that in order to *visit His people* to redeem them, God must be reconciled to them by the removal of His wrath against sin. Only a reconciled God can come down in compassion to hear His people's cries to save them! This is the good news declared in Romans 5:10, where Paul declares that Christ's death reconciles us to God and ensures that Christ's ongoing life of intercession for us in Heaven will indeed save us. More than all this, verse 11 tells us we can even "rejoice" in God, with a holy boasting in our relationship with Him as our Father (though we used to be His enemies), because by faith we receive a finished work of reconciliation through Jesus Christ!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God the Father that *His* work of being *reconciled to us* has been completed by His Son! It was God's holiness that our sin offended, and our guilt which demanded a sacrifice to remove our guilt and absorb God's wrath against us because of our transgressions! Christ has accomplished *both* the once-for-all removal of our guilt, *and* the restoration of God's relationship with us. No longer estranged from us by our sin, God can rejoice in us as His people, and we can boast in Him as our God!

Weds/Thurs: Read Romans 5:10-11**A Sudden Salvation**

As believers growing day by day in our devotion to our Lord, we gratefully acknowledge that *of the many benefits of Christ's death*, reconciliation with God is among the *highest and best*. The meaning of this reconciliation is clearly understood when we realize that Christ's blood had to do something far harder and greater than simply to cover our sins and reconcile us to God! While it is true that *our sinful minds were at enmity against God* (Romans 8:7), the far greater problem is that our sin aroused the *holy and just enmity of God against us*. Such sin deserved the outpouring of wrath from the holy God whom our sin alienated! We were born by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and only the death of God's own Son can change that.

But the good news is that Christ's death has done it! Once and for all! Such reconciliation is now a gift we receive by faith (Romans 5:11). Yes, over a life-time, God patiently removes our distrust and enmity against Him. He subjectively changes us from discontented and isolated orphan children to sons and daughters whose hearts are reconciled to God in order to love Him more and more as our Father. But the miracle of the Cross is that it did not take a life-time to reconcile God to sinners. That one death of Jesus on the Cross did it all. In an instant, our darkness was turned to light.

Hear what the great Theologian John Murray wrote about this once-for-all accomplishment of reconciliation by Jesus' death:

The New Testament emphasizes the historic once-for-allness of the action denoted by reconciliation. It was in the death of Christ reconciliation was accomplished, and this was once for all. The tenses indicate the same thought — "we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10); "all things are of God who reconciled us to himself . . . God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:18, 19).

(And Professor Murray goes on to ask) Can this reconciliation through Christ's death refer to us being reconciled to God? No! Because a change of heart in men is not a once-for-all accomplished event... it is being continuously realized as reconciliation is applied.

Meditate and Pray: Let us give thanks that it is God who was reconciled to us through the death of His Son! While we were still sinners (Romans 5:8) and enemies (Romans 5:10), God was reconciled to us! In other words, we are to exult (when we hear the word "reconciled") that what God did in the death of His Son took place while we were still sinners, dead in sin, and by nature unable to take one step towards God. Christ's death changed God's heart once and for all towards us when we had not changed one iota in our hatred of Him! What an amazing demonstration of the love of God, to both justify us and reconcile us by grace – when we were still His enemies!

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Romans 5:12-21

Grace that Reigns

For the rest of this week, I ask you simply to read and reflect upon Romans 5:12-21, in preparation for next week's Bible notes. Suffice it to say that the basic contrast throughout the rest of Romans 5 is that between Adam our first parent, or the "First Adam," contrasted with Jesus Christ, our new Head, known as "The Second Adam." In one sense, what Paul does here is simply to sum up all of Redemptive history as really the history of only two men. As the Scottish pastor James Philip wrote in his commentary on Romans 5:12-21:

What Paul in effect is doing here is painting two pictures, of two different men, the first in Romans 1-3 of man the sinner, lacking righteousness, having fallen short of the glory of God, the image in which he was created marred and vitiated.

The second picture is of another man, Christ Jesus, the second Adam, who is all that man, the sinner, is not. He shared the common life of man, taking upon Himself our flesh and nature, living as man, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. In private life and public ministry alike He had the divine approval, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." It is this "proper" man, to use Luther's famous phrase, who stands in for us before God: His acceptability to God is reckoned to us or imputed to us, and counted as if it were ours in the death of the Cross. We are now justified by His blood, while in that same act our unacceptability is reckoned or imputed to Him, and counted as if it were His. An exchange takes place, in which the Lord lays on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6) and bestows on us His perfect righteousness...

Thus sin, death, judgment, wrath are traced to Adam, and justification, forgiveness, redemption, are traced to Christ. The phrase "in Adam" describes the prison house of sin in which all men are by nature held, while "in Christ" describes the glorious liberty of the children of God. And salvation is to be brought out of Adam into Christ. To be justified by faith is no longer "in Adam" but "in Christ." And

since Christ is the antitype and counterpart of Adam, as C.K. Barrett points out, “we can be as sure that we shall share in the consequence of Christ’s acts as that we do already share in the consequences of Adam’s.”

Meditate and Pray: Consider how the following hymns praise the Lord Jesus as our great Second Adam and Savior. First, the words of John Henry Newman (1865):

1 Praise to the Holiest in the height
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

2 O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

3 O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail:

4 And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine;
God's presence and His very Self,
And essence all-divine.

And from Isaac Watts, especially v 5 not included in *Trinity Hymnal* # 441:

1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

2 To Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head;
His Name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

3 People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His Name.

4 Blessings abound wherever He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blessed.

5 Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more:
**In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.**

6 Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen!