

ABRAHAM'S GREATEST DISCOVERY

Romans 4:1-5

Intro: Today we are getting back to our studies in the book of Romans. For those of you who are visiting with us, we began our studies in this great epistle the first Sunday in September, and we have covered the first three chapters so far. And so we are ready to begin chapter 4. But before we look at chapter 4, let me briefly review what we have learned so far. This will be good for all of us since it has been three weeks since we concluded chapter 3.

The theme of the book of Romans is salvation! After Paul's introduction in the first seventeen verses of chapter 1, he showed very conclusively that everybody needs a Savior. This takes us through verse 20 of chapter 3. That doctrine is stated and explained more thoroughly in Romans than in any other book in the Bible. However, when we read the epistle, we find that the word salvation does not just speak of how a person can get right with the Lord, or how, as we say, a person is first saved, but it includes all that God does in our hearts from the time that He chose us for Himself before the foundation of the world until we stand before God perfectly conformed, or transformed, into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The three Biblical words which make up the whole truth of salvation are justification, sanctification, and glorification.

At the present time we are in the section of Romans which deals with justification. Paul's treatment of this subject begins at chapter 3, verse 21, and continues on to chapter 5, verse 21. Justification is what is sometimes referred to as salvation in the past tense. That is, justification describes how guilty, defiled, and hopeless sinners can find full and eternal acceptance with the God. This makes it possible for us to say, "I was saved." We mean that at some time in the past we were brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. I hope all of us can say that with real assurance in our hearts and evidence in our lives that it is true.

When we get to chapter 6 we will be considering sanctification. This is salvation in the present tense. We are testifying of this when we say, "I am being saved." When we first come to Christ, we are forgiven, cleansed of our sins, we become the children of God, and come into the possession of every spiritual blessing in Christ. But once we are saved, we need to grow in the Lord. And so all of us who know the Lord can say throughout our lives that we are being

saved. The Lord continues His saving work in all of us, a work which will finally be finished when we are "with the Lord."

This middle word of salvation is discussed by Paul from the first of chapter 6 to the seventeenth verse of chapter 8. At that point Paul went on to talk about what we might call the third phase of salvation: glorification. Glorification means that we will finally be like the Lord. Actually this takes place when the Lord comes and we are perfected in our glorified bodies. When we are speaking about this phase of salvation it is right for us to say according to Scripture that we will be saved. Paul's explanation of glorification takes us to the end of chapter 8.

I won't go any further in discussing the book today, but I do want all of us to understand what Paul did in writing this epistle, and that today we continue to deal with justification, that is, how we can be made acceptable to God. Let me repeat: This is discussed in Romans from chapter 3:21 to 5:21. And so our text for today, Romans 4:1-5, is a part of that section.

In the latter part of chapter 3, from verse 31 on, Paul gave a very complete statement of what justification is. Then starting with our text for today he began to prove what he had stated in chapter 2 about justification. He had already shown that salvation was not by the works of the Law. The Law condemns; it does not justify. The Law condemns; it does not sanctify. And if the Law can neither justify nor sanctify, we can be sure that it has no part in our justification.

However, one thing that we learn about salvation from the New Testament, is that it is just the same as salvation in the Old Testament. God does not have many ways of saving sinners. He has only one way. And so, while He may have dealt with His people in OT times differently from the way He deals with us today, yet salvation has always been the same. To teach this and to prove this Paul went back at this point in the epistle to Abraham. And here in verse 1 we have a question which asks about a discovery which Abraham made. It was the greatest discovery that he ever made, a discovery which every person must make who expects to get to heaven some day.

But you might ask, "Where do you read about a discovery in Romans 4:1? It is indicated by the word "found." (Read verse 1.)

I. THE BEGINNING OF ABRAHAM'S SEARCH (Rom. 4:1).

This word "found" tells us a great deal about Abraham's early life before he was called by God in Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan.

Abram (as he was originally named) was raised in an idolatrous culture, grossly idolatrous. And, as is always the case, immorality was a part of the idolatry. How involved in idolatry Abram was, we do not know. We do know what Joshua told the Israelites at the end of his life and ministry when he said to them,

Now therefore fear the Lord,
and serve him in sincerity and in truth;
**and put away the gods which your fathers served
on the other side of the flood** [the Euphrates],
and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.
And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
choose you this day whom ye will serve;
**whether the gods which your fathers served
that were on the other side of the flood,**
or the gods of the Amorites,
in whose land ye dwell:
but as for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:14, 15).

This seems to be clear evidence of the kind of a culture that Abram was raised in.

Add to these verse what Isaiah wrote later about Abraham when he said,

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness,
ye that seek the Lord:
look unto the rock when ye are hewn,
and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.
Look unto Abraham your father,
and unto Sarah that bare you:
for I called him alone,
and blessed him, and increased him (Isa. 51:1, 2).

I doubt very much if the Isaiah was speaking about Abraham when he used the expression, "the hole of the pit." But he was speaking of the idolatrous environment into which Abraham was born and in which he lived his early life.

But notice the words, "I called him." What would this have meant in Abraham's life?

It meant that in some way which probably Abraham himself did not understand, and surely his family did not understand, God began to work in his heart. He must have been an idol worshipper, but the day came when he started to see the corruption of idol worship, and the emptiness of it all. And he began to search for some answers to life and its purpose! His soul was not satisfied with the idols. He had no peace

in his heart. But we must remember that the search did not begin with him; it began with God and the result of the call of God upon his life. God began to seek Abram, and then Abram began to seek the Lord. Undoubtedly God began to make him see his sin, and to see that he was a sinner. He was distressed because he knew that forgiveness of sins had not come to him through idols, and the worship of idols.

What did he find?

II. ABRAHAM'S GREAT AND GREATEST DISCOVERY (Rom. 4:2-5).

What we are about to consider in these four verses gives us a picture of God's dealing with Abraham's soul. To Abraham it was a discovery, but in reality Abraham could only discover what God was pleased to reveal to him.

The first thing that he learned, that he discovered, was:

A. He could not be justified by anything that he did.

I read just recently that there is one way that you can tell truth from error in matters relating to God because all false ways that claim to lead us to God have this one characteristic: They all make pleasing God dependent upon what we do for ourselves. Only the Gospel teaches us, only the Gospel enables us to discover, that salvation is "not of works" (Eph. 2:9).

There is no doubt but that the worshipper of idols expects that some day his acts of worship, his sacrifices, and whatever else he does, will bring peace to his soul. But that day never comes. No good works of any kind will make us acceptable to God--none whatever!

That was a part of Abraham's discovery, a part of what God was teaching him.

The second part of his discovery was this:

B. The only acceptable way of salvation was the way that gave all of the glory to God.

See the latter part of verse 2.

The word "glory" means to boast, or to rejoice in. God will never give His glory to us. The salvation of every person who ever has been saved, or who ever will be saved, must be for God's glory alone. If God does part, and I do part, God gets no glory for my part, and so He will not accept it. God has designed salvation for His glory, and that alone

eliminates our works.

I hope we all understand these points that Paul was making, and that if any have not understood these before, I trust that the Lord will make them plain to you today. If you are still seeking peace with God through what you are doing, perhaps the Lord will help you to discover what Abraham discovered so long ago.

Now let me skip verse 3 for a moment, and go on to verse 4. Then I will come back to verse 3 and deal with it and verse 5 at the same time.

And so the third part of Abraham's discovery was this:

C. We can never make God indebted to us.

This is what Paul was pointing out in verse 4. If salvation is even in part the result of what I do, then God is indebted to me.

Let me illustrate it this way: In Matthew 20 we have the record of a story that our Lord told about a man who hired workers to work in his vineyard for a whole day, and he agreed to pay them "a penny a day" (Matt. 20:2). A penny does not sound like much to us, but it was equal to what workers would earn today for a whole day's work. So it was a reasonable wage for the owner of the vineyard to offer them. Now at the end of the day that vineyard owner was obligated to pay all of his workers a penny. He had no choice. He had made a working agreement with them, and so if they did the work, he had to pay! And the Law said that he had to pay at the end of that day's work; he could not wait even until the next day.

Salvation is not like that. God does not pay us with salvation for work that we do for Him. He does not pay us with salvation for going to church. It is an excellent thing to go to church because that is where you are most likely to hear how to be saved. But God does not pay us with salvation for going to church--nor for giving our money, or our service. These are not the ways to find peace with God. We can do nothing to make God our debtor and so obligated to give us salvation.

Abraham was discovering these important things. It was not the way he had been taught to think about the gods, but it was the truth of God. And somehow as the Lord began to open Abraham's eyes to the truth, it all began to make sense to him. He began to see things which he had never understood before. But all of these added up did not give Abraham the

information that he really needed. They showed him the mistaken ideas he had, but these facts together were not really enough. What remained? This is where I want to bring together verses 3 and 4. Here we can see that Abraham discovered by the grace of God that:

D. Salvation is by faith, and by faith alone.

See verses 3 and 5. (Read.)

Verses 3 gives us one of the most important statements in all of Scripture concerning how guilty sinners can get right with God. It is found originally in Gen. 15:6, and then it is quoted in Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23; and here in Rom. 4:3.

Abraham, a man raised in idolatry, chosen and pursued by the God of grace, discovered that justification does not come to us by works--by what we do, but by faith--by what God does for us. This is what he "FOUND."

This is what the Scriptures teach, the Scriptures of the OT and the Scriptures of the NT. It only needed to appear in Scripture once, but instead, we have it four times. How else could God have shown us how important it is?

What does it mean that Abraham believed God? What did He believe?

Although the details of salvation were not as clear to people in the OT as they are now, yet the promise of a Redeemer was first given to Adam and Eve, and gradually enlarged upon throughout OT times. There can be no doubt but that Abraham believed the promise of God that a Redeemer would come, that He would be "the seed of the woman," that He would die a sacrificial death, and that by that death all who trusted in that Redeemer and His sacrifice would be declared righteous in the sight of God. Abraham had to know that "the wages of sin is death." The Lord made that perfectly clear to Adam and Eve. And so Abraham put his faith for salvation in the One Who would come, who by His death would provide righteousness for all who would trust in Christ.

Spurgeon and many others have pointed out in absolute truth that faith involves three things:

- 1) Knowledge.
- 2) Belief.
- 3) Trust.

He knew of Christ. He believed the promise of His coming and of His death. He trusted in the Redeemer to cleanse Him from his sins by His death, and to clothe him in the righteousness of God.

But let us remember that even his faith was a gift from God. God brought the truth to him. God convinced him that it was the truth, and that it was the only way of salvation. And it was God Who moved upon Abraham's heart to trust only in Christ for his justification before God.

Notice in verse 3 the word "counted." And in verse 4 notice the word "reckoned." And in verse 5 we have the word "counted" again. All of these words are the same verb in the Greek text. This verb is found 41 times in the NT, 35 of which are in Paul's epistles, and of the 35, 11 are here in chapter 4.

William R. Newell says in his commentary on Romans that this word "counted," or "reckoned," or "imputed" as it is sometimes translated, is a court word. We all are charged with sin which demands the death penalty. A righteous God cannot simply overlook the charge against us any more than a judge can fail to demand that the laws of the land be satisfied, or established, because of a crime committed. However, the good news of the Gospel is that Christ has died for sinners, and that those who trust in Him have His righteousness put to their account, and because of Christ's death for us, the righteousness of God is placed upon the record for us, the charges against us are dismissed, and our case will never be brought up for review. We can never be tried again.

Concl: This is what Abraham "found." And this is the greatest of all discoveries that a person can make. This is the greatest of all truths which it is possible to know. The tragedy is that countless numbers of people have never "found" this out. And they never will find it unless they seek the truth from God Himself.

At one of our services recently we sang that great old hymn which expresses exactly what we need in order to find Christ, to find salvation, to find the righteousness which alone can make us acceptable with God, not only for a while, but forever. Listen to these words:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my heart to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
No, I was found of Thee.

The second verse ends with these two lines:

'Twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

Most of us here today we have made the discovery which Abraham made. By the grace of God may no one go from this service today without making the same discovery.

DAVID'S GREATEST BLESSING

Romans 4:6-8

Intro: Last week we considered ABRAHAM'S GREATEST DISCOVERY.

I sought to trace from the word "found" in verse 1 the work of God in the heart of Abraham who had been born and brought up in idolatry. Somehow by the grace of God Abraham became dissatisfied with idol worship. It had failed to satisfy his soul, the need that he felt in his heart to find the true God, and to make peace with Him. His search, led by the Spirit of God, brought him to the truth. He discovered that the Lord God was the true God. And he also discovered that peace with God and the forgiveness of his sins, was not given as a reward for works that he would do, but were given to him as a gift by faith. More than that he found that righteousness, the righteousness of God, was placed in his account in heaven. He would no longer be charged with the sins he had committed. In God's own time a sacrifice would be made which would satisfy God and meet the needs of the greatest sinner. Abraham knew what justification means.

All that we are concerned about in the first five verses of chapter 4, dealing with the life of Abraham, takes us back 2,000 years before Christ.

When we leave Abraham and go to David, as we do when we move from verse 5 to verse 6, we are moving 1,000 year ahead in time, which would make it 1,000 years before Christ. This is when David lived.

And so there was no possibility that these two men knew each other. David would have known about Abraham, and God's dealings with Abraham, but, of course, Abraham would not have known about David, nor would he have known that the promised Redeemer would not come in the next 1,000 years. Actually 2,000 years would go by from Abraham's day to the coming of Christ. But the Apostle Paul, who wrote Romans, was actually acting as an expositor of the Old Testament in the passage before us. And the question that we are concerned about is, Did David believe what Abraham believed about how a person could be declared righteous before God? If we were to find out that Abraham believed one thing, and David another, although they both claimed to worship the same God, then we really are in trouble.

Last week I tried to trace briefly the little that we know about the early years of Abraham. Today let me briefly trace the early life of David. His situation was entirely different from Abraham.

David was raised in Israel. He must have known what idolatry

was because, sad to say, many of the Israelites up to the time of David had gone back to idol worship. But there is no evidence of that in Jesse's family. Jesse was David's father. David had been raised in what we would call today a godly home. He was trained in the Law. He knew the rich promises which God had given to His people throughout the year's of Israel's history. We can see that he had a strong faith in God even as a shepherd boy. He fearlessly faced Goliath when no one in Israel's army dared to face the giant. And he killed Goliath. Then when Saul had displeased the Lord to the extent that he was going to be replaced as King of Israel, the Lord made it clear that David was His choice to be the King.

The story of David is one of the most wonderful in all of the Word of God.

Now I draw this contrast to show one thing. Abraham, born and raised in heathen idolatry, and David, born and raised in Israel in a godly home, were both sinners, and both needed a Savior. This is an important truth which none of us should miss. We can draw that same contrast today. Many people today are born in homes right here in America where they never see a Bible, they know nothing about God, or sin, or their need for salvation. But they all need to be saved.

Then there are others (not nearly so many), who are raised by parents who know the Lord, who teach their children the Word of God, and who take them to church where they can hear the Bible preached, and where they can be with people who know the Lord. But these people need to know the Lord, too---just as much as those who have never seen a Bible nor been in a church.

David was not justified by God, his sins were not forgiven, because he was an Israelite. Nor was he a child of God because his parents were believers in the true God. Nor was he justified before God because he knew a lot about the Scriptures, as much as they had in those days. If we are on the right track by what we have learned about Abraham, then we need to recognize that it was necessary for David to come to God the same way Abraham came. But, as I have said, if David teaches us something different from Abraham, then we really do not know where we are as far as the truth is concerned.

Before we get to that, however, let me impress upon our minds what we have learned about David when we compare him with Abraham who was brought up in entirely different circumstances. We have people in our church who were like Abraham, that is, who were not raised in Christian homes, and

who did not hear the Gospel until later in life. And we have also those of you who have Christian parents, and who were raised in church and under the teaching of Scripture. I am in that latter category. My parents were both Christians, and I can never remember a time when I didn't go to church. We had prayer and Bible reading in our home. We learned Bible verses, and I grew up being taught the stories and the doctrines of the Bible. However, the time came in my life when I learned what David had to learn, and that was that I was not a Christian, nor would I ever be a Christian, just because my parents were Christians, and because I went to church. I had to learn that I needed to trust Christ as my Savior.

I hope all of you children and young people who are here this morning know that. Don't think for a moment that you are a Christian because your parents are Christians. If your sins are to be forgiven, and if you are going to be in heaven some day, you must trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. The Lord made David realize that, and He will make you realize that, too. I continually pray that the Lord will make that clear to everyone who comes to Trinity Bible Church, and everyone who visits any of our services. I hope that is clear to everyone who listens to our radio broadcast over KPDQ. Many people are deceived about this because they do not understand the Bible, but I want to make that perfectly clear this morning. Nobody will be saved just because his or her parents are saved. And one place we learn that is from the life of David. It is wonderful that the Lord has made this so clear in His Word. And I hope that it is clear to everyone who hears my voice today.

But now let me get back to David. Did David, one thousand years after Abraham, believe what Abraham believed about salvation?

I. WHAT DID DAVID BELIEVE?

The first four words of verse 6 give us our answer: "Even as David also..." This means that David was in full agreement with Abraham. David did not believe that we get right with God in a way that was different from Abraham. He believed the same thing. So this means that there had been no change in salvation during those 1,000 years. And, since the Apostle Paul was writing approximately 1,000 years after David's time, we can see that in those 2,000 years after Abraham, salvation was then just what it had been before. Christ had come, and it became clearer than ever that salvation was by faith without works.

We will look at David's description in just a moment in

verses 7 and 8, but notice what Paul wrote here in verse 6 about David's belief about salvation.

Look at the expression, "the blessedness of the man."

Although he used the word "man" here, he was not limiting salvation just to men. The word could actually be translated, the human being. That is, David spoke of salvation as being a gift which God has provided for women as well as men, and for girls as well as boys. The point is that there is not salvation just for men, nor is there a salvation that is different for women, but there is just one salvation for men and women, boys and girls.

But how does this salvation affect people?

It is called here, "blessedness." Now that is not a word which we used very often today, but it is a word which is used very much in the Bible. And it means happy! Or, it really means that you can say that no person is more greatly blessed, no person has any greater reason to be happy, or no person can be more highly honored, than the person "unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

Now, if it is "without works," it means that this is an honor which God bestows upon people who really have done nothing to deserve the honor nor the happiness which it brings. David found his greatest happiness in knowing that God had forgiven his sins, and imputed righteousness to him.

We had that same truth in our text for last Sunday. You have it in verse 3, verse 4, and verse 5. What does it mean that something is imputed to us? Let me see if I can explain it so that we can all understand what it means.

From the beginning of Romans we have been talking about sin, haven't we? And we have seen the conclusion that Paul reached in Rom. 3:19--"that all the world may become guilty before God." This means that all of us, regardless of who we are, or where we live in this world, or what language we may speak--all of us are "guilty before God." We are guilty because we are sinners.

Now, if we are to be accepted with God, something has to be done about our guilt. That was what Abraham was trying to do when he worshiped idols. But his heart told him that he was not doing enough, and he could never have done enough. In fact, all that he did was only adding to his guilt.

We learned in the latter part of chapter 3 here in Romans that the Lord Jesus Christ came to die for the sins of

sinners. And that He took the penalty of our sins which should have fallen upon us. He fully paid for the sins of all who would ever trust in Him. And now instead of having "guilty" written by our names in heaven, we have the word "righteous" written there. Because Jesus Christ died for us His righteousness has been put to our account, and so we are free from ever having to pay the penalty for our sins.

So because of Christ, God's righteousness has been put on our account in heaven, and that is what it means to be saved. We didn't earn it. We could never deserve it. It is ours through Christ as a free gift, and that is why we have to put our trust in Him.

I don't think we are going to have to identify ourselves when we get to heaven, but if an angel were to ask us why we think we should be admitted to heaven, our answer will be, "Because Christ died for me, and my sins have all been forgiven."

That is what Abraham believed. That is what David believed. That is what the Apostle Paul believed. And that is what you and I must believe. We don't go to heaven because of what we have done. What we have done would send us to hell. We will go to heaven to be with the Lord because of what Christ did for us when He died for our sins on the Cross.

But let us move on to verses 7 and 8. Here we have:

II. DAVID'S DESCRIPTION OF SALVATION.

Verses 7 and 8 are a quotation from Psalms 32:1, 2, a Psalm which was written by David. And yet it is not just David's word; it is the Word of God because the Holy Spirit caused David to write what we have in these two verses.

It is thought that this was one of the Psalms which David wrote after he had committed a very great sin, his sin with Bathsheba, another man's wife. He knew better than to do what he did, but he did it. David was already a child of God at this time, which makes his sin that much worse. But when he sinned, he was brought back to the realization that there was forgiveness with God for all of his sins, those he had committed before he first trust in the Redeemer as well as those he would commit afterwards.

But what we need to notice here is that Paul quoted these two verses to show how happy any person should be to know that his "iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

"Iniquities" are violations of God's Law, His Word; "sin" means that we have failed to glorify God, we have missed the

mark for which we were created, and for which we were saved. "Forgiven" means that the debt has been paid. David had to suffer some of the consequences of his iniquity, but the debt was paid. And his "sins" were "covered." "Covered" in the sense that they were completely hidden from God's eyes, and would never be uncovered again. In other words, they were G-O-N-E, GONE!

Verse 8 states the same truth in a different way. Instead of having "sin" charged to our account, we have "righteousness." Instead of being rejected by God, those who trust in the Redeemer have full and eternal acceptance.

Concl: But some might say, How could Abraham and David be justified, declared righteous, before God when Christ had not yet come?

The answer to that question is that they believed that a Redeemer would come, and that when He came He would become a sacrifice for their sins so that they would be forgiven even though they lived hundreds of years before He came. Now He has come. We know that His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. And salvation today is just what it was then: faith in the Savior Whom God sent to die for our sins.

Did you notice in verse 6 that Paul said that it is God Who "imputeth righteousness without works." Abraham did nothing to contribute to his salvation. Neither did David, and neither did Paul. And neither can you and I contribute to our salvation by anything we do. God saves us completely by grace when we place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save us from our sins.

Can you say that "righteousness," the righteousness of God, is on your account in heaven? This word means that in God's sight you are looked upon in Christ as being all that you ought to be in order to be accepted with God. If Christ is your Savior, you need nothing else. If Christ is not your Savior, all of the good works in the world can never make you acceptable with God.

Make sure today that He is your Savior. No one else can save you. He is "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by" Him.

THE HAND OF GOD IN HISTORY
Romans 4:9-12

Intro: One of the greatest kings ever to rule on the face of the earth was Nebuchadnezzar, the king of ancient Babylon. He lived between five and six hundred years before Christ. He was a man who was very powerful, and very arrogant. Those two characteristics seem to go together. Power produces pride.

Those of you who are acquainted with the book of Daniel in the Bible, know that Nebuchadnezzar had a huge image of himself made, 90 feet high, and demanded that all of his subjects worship the image. A musical signal was to be given, and everyone was to stop what they were doing, fall down, and worship the image.

We are told in Scripture that there were three young Jewish men whose conscience would not allow them to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar even though they knew that the penalty for not doing as the king had commanded was that they would be cast into a furnace of fire. They remained true to their God, were cast into the furnace which had been heated seven times more than usual. The heat was so intense that the men who threw those young Jews into the furnace were killed, and yet God miraculously spared Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When they walked out of the fire their hair had not been singed, nor was there even the smell of fire on their garments.

Nebuchadnezzar was very impressed. He declared that no one should speak against the God of those three men because he had been convinced that no god, except their God, could deliver like that.

But Nebuchadnezzar was not impressed enough so that he was changed. Sometime afterwards he had a dream. I won't go into the details of the dream. You can read them in Daniel, chapter 4. In the dream Nebuchadnezzar was told that for "seven times," probably seven years, he would become like an animal, would eat grass, and the dew of heaven would be upon him. All of this came to pass. His hair grew like an eagle's feathers, and his nails looked like the claws of a bird. And all of this came to pass. So the greatest king was reduced to the state of an animal--for what purpose?

Listen to what Daniel told him. He said that he would remain in that condition **"till thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever he will"** (Dan. 4:25b).

When that dreadful and humiliating experience was over, Nebuchadnezzar spoke like an OT prophet. Whether or not his heart had actually been changed, I don't know, but I do know that he has given us one of the finest statement in all of Scripture regarding the sovereignty of God over the nations. Let me read to you what he said. His words are recorded in Dan. 4:34, 35:

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar
lifted up mine eyes to heaven,
and mine understanding returned unto me,
and I blessed the Most High,
and I praised him that liveth for ever,
whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom is from generation to generation.
And all of the inhabitants of the earth
are reputed as nothing: and he doeth
according to his will in the army of heaven,
and among the inhabitants of the earth:
And none can stay his hand, or say unto Him,
What doest thou?

What a tragedy that Nebuchadnezzar had not known what Solomon had written in the book of Proverbs almost five hundred years before:

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
as the rivers of water,
he turneth it whithersoever he will (Prov. 21:1).

In Jer. 10:7 the prophet called the Lord **the "King of nations."** And then in verse 10 of the same chapter he said,
But the Lord is the true God,
he is the living God, and an everlasting king:
at his wrath the earth shall tremble,
and the nations shall not be able to abide
his indignation.

These and other Scriptures indicate that God is sovereign over the affairs of the nations, over all nations, from the beginning to the end of time. No one is greater than He. He is carrying out His will throughout human history. And the same will be the case until the end of time. Paul told the Ephesian church that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

This is good for us to remember during this week when a new President will be inaugurated in our country. Asaph said long ago in Psa. 75:7,

But God is the judge:
he putteth down one, and setteth up another.
This does not mean that the one He puts down is bad, nor that the one he sets up is good. It is simply a statement of

truth that God's hand is in the affairs of all nations. No person really can approach an understanding of history who does not recognize this fact. God is sovereign. God is personally involved in the affairs of every nation on the face of the earth. And He is moving all things toward the ultimate fulfillment of all of His purposes for the earth.

The same thing is true with regard to salvation. God is sovereign! He was sovereign in determining that there would be salvation. He is sovereign in determining how sinners would be saved. He is sovereign in deciding who will be saved. He is sovereign in determining what the purpose of salvation will be. All of these things are in His hands.

I have spoken about the sovereignty of God today because it applies to our text. From Romans 3:21 on the Apostle Paul was explaining what salvation is, how it is obtained, and how it is not obtained. We have seen that it is by faith in the blood of Christ. We have seen that we cannot contribute to our salvation in any way by works that we do. And Paul has taken us back to Abraham, and then to David, and has shown us that they both believed in salvation by faith completely apart from any good works that they might have done.

Today we are going to see how God specifically ordered the rite of circumcision to give us a further proof that (1) salvation is by faith alone, and to show us also that (2) salvation is not just for the Jews, but is also for the Gentiles. This brings out the fact that God was not only sovereign in choosing and calling Abraham, and sovereign as to how the truth of salvation would be revealed, but also sovereign in the timing of the revelation of matters relating to salvation.

It will be good for us at this point to review what Paul said about circumcision in Romans 2, verses 25 through 29. (Read.)

My text is Romans 4:9-12. Now let me read these verses to you again. (Read.)

Notice the question which Paul asked at the beginning of verse 9. (Read.)

I. IS SALVATION ONLY FOR JEWS? (Rom. 4:9).

One way in which Jews were distinguished from Gentiles was by the terms circumcised and uncircumcised. Circumcision was practiced by the Jews, but, for the most part, until perhaps in recent years, it was not practiced by the Gentiles. And so Jews were called "the circumcision."

Abraham was the father of the nation Israel. David was her first king. So we might assume from what Paul, also a Jew, had written in the first verses of this chapter that salvation was for Jews only. Read the last statement of verse 9 emphasizing the word "Abraham."

Paul's reasoning runs like this: If God saved Abraham, and he was a Jew (although the title was not used until much later), and God saved David, and he also was a Jew, then it seems that salvation was only provided by God for Jews. And so there would be no point in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Something like this was being taught in the early church. Please turn with me to Acts 15. Let me read the first five verses. (Read.)

In verse 1 we see that they were teaching that a Gentile would have to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, that is, according to the Law, in order to be saved. And then in verse 5 we see that they were also required to keep the Law. Were these "men...from Judaea" and "certain of the sect of the Pharisees" teaching truth, or error?

They were teaching error! And let me point out one big mistake they made which would have kept them from error.

They did not go back far enough in their teaching.

Circumcision did not begin with Moses; it began with Abraham. If they were going to make not only circumcision but also the Law necessary for salvation, then they would have to say one of two things:

- 1) Either that God had changed the way of salvation between the time that Abraham lived and the time that Moses lived, or
- 2) That Abraham could not really have been saved because he did not have the Law. The Law came with Moses.

But we have already learned, haven't we, right here in Romans 4 that Abraham and David were saved the same way--by faith in the promise of God. Time-wise Moses was midway between Abraham and David. Abraham lived 2,000 years B. C. David lived 1,000 years B. C. Moses lived 1,500 years B. C. So if God changed things with Moses, then not only was Abraham not saved because he did not have the Law, but David was not saved because He believed that he was saved the same way that Abraham was saved. Neither Abraham nor David believed that works entered into the obtaining of salvation. Both circumcision and Law-keeping would have to be considered as works.

So you see if works enter into salvation, then we have no consistent teaching about salvation in the OT, and we have a

God Who changes His mind, and Who might still change His mind even more, IF those Jewish teachers in Acts were right. Let us go on to see how Paul answered this important question.

II. THE ANSWER FROM BIBLICAL HISTORY (Rom. 4:10).

This is where I want you to see that God is the God of history, not only in His dealings with the nations of the earth, but with regard to salvation, and the historical timing of His revelation concerning this most important of all subjects. If we are wrong about how to be saved, it makes no difference how right we might be about other things. It is absolutely essential that we be right about salvation!

Paul asked another question in order to answer his first question. His question was this: When it was declared that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," was he circumcised, or uncircumcised?

The only way this question can be answered is by going back to the book of Genesis. In what chapter is it declared that Abraham was justified, and in what chapter was he circumcised?

An examination of Scripture shows that the declaration of Abraham's justification was made in Genesis 15. But he was not circumcised until Genesis 17, two chapters latter.

We really do not know how old Abraham was when it was stated in Genesis 15 that he was saved, declared righteous before God. However, the last verse of Genesis 16 tells us that he was 86 when Ishmael was born, but chapter 17 tells us that he was not circumcised until he was 99. So what we can say for sure is that it was more than 13 years between Genesis 15 and Genesis 17. Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran to go into the promised land. See Gen. 12:4.

So what are we to say about the justification of Abraham?

We can only say that in Genesis 15:6 when it is stated that he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, he was more like a Gentile than he was a Jew because he was not circumcised at the time. And God specifically ordered it this way "that he might be the father of all them that believe, **though they be not circumcised.**"

So historically, the timing of Abraham's justification, before he was circumcised, was one way God had of saying that salvation was for any person who would believe, whether he be Jew or Gentile. Furthermore, if circumcision had been a requirement for salvation, then only men could be saved.

You see how carefully God revealed the great truth of our salvation! If circumcision had come before Gen. 15:6 instead of in Genesis 17, or if it had come at the same time as Gen. 15:6, then those who wanted to claim that you have to be circumcised in order to be saved, would have had a point that would have been very difficult to deny. But since God waited to reveal circumcision until later, there can be no question but that salvation is by faith alone.

But this leads to another question:

III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MEANING OF CIRCUMCISION? (Rom. 4:11, 12).

In Paul's words, circumcision was a "sign" and a "seal." What are we to understand by these two terms.

"Sign" is the same word that is used in John's Gospel with reference to the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. John 20:30, 31. The miracles did not make our Lord the Son of God; they were evidence that he was the Son of God. Circumcision is called in Gen. 17:11 "a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."

Circumcision quickly became a meaningless ritual among the Jews, but originally it was binding upon a father to show in this way that salvation was by faith alone. It did not save the child any more than the father was saved by circumcision. It was the father's way of confirming that the Jews, the natural descendants of Abraham, were the original custodians of salvation provided by God which is by faith alone.

"Seal" (which Paul used also in verse 11) means that it was actually a confirmation which God gave to Abraham that his seed was to be custodians of the truth, and witnesses to the Gentile world of the salvation which was established by God's covenant with Abraham.

Verse 12 seems to indicate that it also was to show that the evidence of salvation was not Abraham's circumcision, but Abraham's walk. Salvation begins by faith, and it continues by faith. A profession which is not followed with a godly walk is not a true faith. It is easy for someone to say that he believes, but the evidence is a changed life.

Concl: Let me say in conclusion that circumcision does not have anything to do with infant baptism. Those who believe in infant baptism sprinkle baby girls as well as baby boys; circumcision had only to do with boys. The Bible makes no connection between the OT rite of circumcision and NT water baptism. In fact, as far as I understand the

Scriptures, the Bible does not teach anything but the baptism of believers as a testimony of their faith in Christ. Many well-meaning people believe that if they have their children sprinkled, it guarantees that they will finally be saved. There is no such teaching in Scripture.

What we need to learn from the passage we have considered today is:

First, that God gave to circumcision to Abraham years after he had been declared righteous so that no one would think that circumcision was a requirement for salvation. He is THE GOD OF HISTORY, and made sure the message of salvation was clear.

Second, God declared Abraham justified before he was circumcised, long before he was circumcised, so that the Gentiles would know that salvation was for them, too.

Third, circumcision was a secret "sign" and a "seal" given to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, to keep before them their calling to carry the Gospel to the Gentile world. This is why it became mandatory from the very beginning. It was a personal reminder for every man. It expressed the real purpose for the existence of the nation Israel and her mission in the world--to give us the Word, and the Savior, and to be witnesses to all nations of the true Gospel message.

In this connection it is most significant that our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised. Cf. Luke 2:21. He more than anyone else came with those purposes in mind which were involved in salvation: That it was a confirmation of faith.

That it spoke of salvation also for Gentiles.

That He was commissioned to carry salvation to the world.

That purpose for the Jews as a nation was completed with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is certainly binding upon us as believers today--separated from any rite or ceremony whatever. We who know the Lord are messengers:

- 1) To the whole world.
- 2) That salvation is by faith alone.
- 3) That salvation is for Jew and Gentile alike, and needed by both, and obtainable only through Christ.

Israel failed in her mission, and failed even before that in understanding her message. The Church has had her times of glory, but mainly has failed, too. May the Lord arouse us to our calling, and by His grace enable us to be faithful to what we are in this world to do.

GOD'S PROMISE GUARANTEED
Romans 4:13-17

Intro: I have often envied those who first learned about salvation by reading the book of Romans. In my case, I knew what salvation was before I had ever read this epistle. I learned it from my parents, from my Sunday School teachers, and from my pastors. And all of this was when I was a child. But, as I grew older, and started reading books of the Bible, the reading of Romans confirmed what I had been taught in my earliest years. I will always be thankful for the good teaching I had as a child, but I think that those who find out what the Gospel is from a book like Romans have a very unique and wonderful experience. Perhaps that has been the case with some of you. We should never hesitate to encourage people who do not know the Lord to read this book. They will never find a clearer presentation of the Gospel anywhere else in Scripture.

One thing that has impressed me in going through this epistle again has been the way in which Paul has been careful to explain what the Gospel is not, as well as what it is. There has always been much confusion in people's minds about how people can get right with God. Some say one thing; others will say other things. And so it is easy for people to get confused, and perhaps confused to the point where they will feel that it is impossible to know who is telling the truth.

This is why we need the Bible. The ultimate authority as to what salvation is, is the Bible, which is the Word of God. When we read Romans, we are not reading just what Paul's ideas were about salvation. We are reading what the Holy Spirit directed him to write about salvation. This is just another way of saying that Paul has given us the Word of God. And one way we know that this is the Word of God is because the whole Bible gives us the same message of salvation--and this covers hundreds of years.

We have learned from this fourth chapter of Romans what Abraham was told by God about salvation 2,000 year before Christ. And then we have also seen that David, 1,000 years later believed exactly the same thing. And here in the book of Romans Paul was teaching what Abraham believed and what David believed and what he had be taught by the Lord that he must believe in order to be saved. So I repeat: We are not just reading what Paul believed. He did believe it in the depths of his soul. But he has given us in this book the Word of God, the ultimate authority about salvation. This is the best place for anyone to come to learn how to get right with God.

Now the Jews through the years had picked up some erroneous ideas about salvation. And so Paul had to deal with these ideas because he did not want anyone to be trusting in a false hope. Salvation has to do not only with time, but with eternity. And so it is extremely important that we know the truth about salvation. If we are wrong here, it is the most tragic mistake that we can make. But there is no reason for us to be wrong since we have the Word of God.

What were some of the false ideas that people had in those days about salvation—and now we are speaking mainly about the Jews, although the wrong ideas of the Jews had greatly influenced many Gentiles.

One false idea was Abraham was saved because he was Abraham, that is, that there was something good in Abraham that caused God to save him. But that is not true. Abraham was a sinner just like everyone else, and what he deserved is what every sinner deserves: judgment. So we can say that no one is saved because he deserves to be saved.

Another false idea is that Abraham and David were saved because of the good works which they did. But neither is this true. Nobody can atone for past sins by doing present or future good works. The penalty for sin is death, and no one can avoid that penalty by any amount of good things that he might do.

After the Law was given through Moses about 1,500 years before Christ, there were many who believed that salvation could be earned by obeying the Law. And yet no one ever kept the Law perfectly except our Lord, and He is the One Person Who did not need to be saved. The Law condemns us; it does not, and cannot, save us. It has never saved anyone, and was not given for that purpose. It was given to the Jews to show their guilt before God so that both Jews and Gentiles would know that they needed a Savior, nor a Law-giver.

Last week we considered verses 9 through 12 in this chapter where circumcision was the subject. Paul took this up because there were Jews who believed that circumcision brought salvation. And they tried to make Gentile men be circumcised saying that they could not be saved if they were not circumcised. But this was wrong. It was said about Abraham that he was declared righteous before God years before he was circumcised.

Since Paul's day people have continued to talk about good works for salvation, and baptism, and church membership, always adding something for man to do. It is the hardest thing in the world for people to realize that there is

absolutely nothing that they can do to make themselves acceptable to God, or at least more acceptable than they would be if they had not done certain good works.

Paul stated the truth about salvation very clearly in Ephesians 2:8, 9 where he wrote,

For by grace are ye saved through faith;
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Often our hymns teach us the truth. This is true of the hymn, Just As I Am. The words go like this:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am! thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Today we take a step further in our understanding of what salvation is. We have seen that a person is not saved because he is an Abraham or a David. Neither can we be saved by doing good works--helping people, giving money and time to charitable causes, joining a church, teaching a Sunday School class, or even being a pastor. And not even trying to obey the Law given by Moses can save us. Baptism cannot save us. Nothing we can do will save us.

But at Romans 4:13 we come to a word, which has only been used once before in this epistle, and which is used also in verses 14, 16, 20, and 21 which helps us to understand more clearly how we are saved. It is the word "promise," or "promised." The only other time before this that Paul used the word was in chapter 1, verse 2. (Read.)

And so Paul is now telling us, although this has certainly been implied in what he has said before, that in salvation we are concerned with:

I. THE PROMISE OF GOD, NOT THE LAW OF GOD (Rom. 4:13-15).

This Gospel was something which God "promised."

The word which is prominent in the OT, and used once in Romans (11:27) is covenant. A promise is a covenant, and a covenant is a promise. Both constitute an agreement. But both are different from a law. And you will notice that Paul spoke of both the promise and the law in our text.

Now let me point out that there are two kinds of promises. There is a conditional promise, and there is an unconditional promise.

A conditional promise is a promise where I make a promise, but you have to do something or I am not obligated to keep the promise. In the story the Lord told about the man who hired laborers, he promised them if a day's wages if they would work for a day. Cf. Matt. 20:1, 2. If they did not work, he was not obligated to pay them anything.

An unconditional promise is a promise where the one receiving the promise has nothing to do. This would be like the leper who came to the Lord and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Matt. 8:2). And the Lord said, "I will; be thou clean" (Matt. 8:3). The leper didn't have to do anything. He didn't have to pay anything. The Lord just promised to make him clean, and He did! The Lord made him an unconditional promise.

Now notice what Paul wrote in Rom. 4:13. (Read.)

This means that God did not make the promise of salvation to Abraham "through the Law." Anyone who reads the Bible carefully can understand this. The promise of salvation was given to Abraham in Genesis, but the Law was not given until 500 years later in the book of Exodus.

To state this another way, when God gave Abraham the promise of salvation, He did not say anything about what Abraham was to do. He simply made Abraham an unconditional promise.

Now think with me for a moment about the difference between a promise and a law. If I make a promise to you, an unconditional promise, the fulfillment of the promise depends upon me. In that promise I am telling you what I will do. But, if I give you a law, I am not telling you what I will do, but what you must do. So the promise rests upon the one who makes the promise; the law lays the burden upon the one who is under the law.

And so the promise of righteousness which God gave to Abraham, He gave to be received by faith. He did not ask Abraham to earn it by keeping the Law. Do you see the difference, and the point that Paul was making?

Now look at verse 14. (Read.)

If salvation is given because of a person's obedience to the Law, then there was no need for God to make the promise that He made to be received by faith. The Law does not ask for our faith; the Law demands our obedience. If you are speeding down the highway and a policeman stops you, and you start to tell him how much you believe in the law, he will quickly tell you that he doesn't care whether you believe in the law or not; you are going to obey it!

So if the Law is brought in as a condition of salvation, it makes void the promise, and the result is that we do not have any salvation at all.

Now read verse 15. (Read.)

"The law worketh wrath." This is what Paul said back in Rom. 3:19, 20. The Law makes demands of us, but the Law does not help us. And so, when we cannot live up to the Law, instead of saving us, it condemns us to the wrath of God.

And if this is true about the Law of God, which is the greatest of all laws, then you and I will do no better under our own self-imposed law, or a law under which some church may place us.

Now we are ready for Paul's conclusion on this subject of salvation by faith.

II. WHY DID GOD DESIGN SALVATION TO BE BY FAITH? (Rom. 4:16, 17).

The first answer that we would give to that question is, Because there was no other way we could be saved. If we don't deserve to be saved, and if we can't earn in any way, then God must do the work by Himself or no one would ever be saved. Remember faith is not a work. Faith is trusting God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and, beyond that, the Scriptures teach that even our faith comes from God. So Paul is teaching here that salvation is all of God, and that no part of it comes from you or from me.

But there is another answer to this question, WHY DID GOD DESIGN SALVATION TO BE BY FAITH? This answer is given in the second statement of verse 16: **"To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."** What does this mean?

When you buy a product, whether it be a home, or a car, or a small appliance, or whatever it might be, you are given a warranty, a guarantee. If it is a warranty on a car, it is

only for so many miles, and covers on so many parts of the car. One expression we are seeing today in this connection is the statement, Limited Warranty. If you misuse a product, the company is not responsible to cover it with a warranty.

God has put a guarantee on His salvation. We could translate the statement from verse 16 which I have just read to you, That the promise might be GUARANTEED to all the seed.

God has placed a guarantee upon His salvation, not just for time, but forever! For all eternity! But He could not give us such a guarantee if our salvation were in any way dependent upon us. He saves us by His promise through grace by faith, and a guarantee is thus issued "to all the seed." No person who is truly saved will ever be lost. This is God's guarantee.

If our salvation were in any way dependent upon our keeping the Law, no such guarantee could be given. But it was given to Abraham by faith, and to us by faith, meaning God is responsible to save us. And He will stand forever behind His guarantee. Our salvation is S-U-R-E, SURE!

But before I leave this text I must deal with verse 17 which gives us a third answer to the question, WHY DID GOD DESIGN SALVATION TO BE BY FAITH?

In Paul's dealing with the life of Abraham, he has not gotten us beyond Genesis 17. If you have started learning our Bible Memory verses, you know that before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees the Lord promises that through him "all families of the earth" would "be blessed." This meant that God's salvation was not something that would involve just a few people, but generation after generation it would include people throughout the whole world. And yet when Abraham was 99 years old he still did not have that long-awaited heir, and physically there was no hope that he at 100 and Sarah at 90 would have a child. However, God promises that Sarah would be "a mother of nations," and we know that her greatest Son was to be our Lord Jesus Christ. Hopeless? Yes, with them, but not with God.

And so Abraham believed God, not only for his own salvation, but he believed that this glorious salvation about which God had been speaking to him for years would ultimately result in a tremendously large host of people who would all be drawn to the Savior the same way Abraham came, and that not one of them would be lost.

Was this not what our Lord was revelling in when He prayed to the Father? He lost none of those whom the Father had given

to Him. Cf. also John 10:27-30, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me..."

Concl: Isn't the salvation of God almost too good to be true? Who of us would have designed such a salvation as we have in our Lord Jesus Christ? Think of it: God has designed salvation the only way that it could possibly be, and in making it totally dependent upon Himself, He can provide us with the longest and most complete guarantee that has ever been written.

But you will usually hear someone say, "If I believe that about salvation, I would go out and live any way I want to live, and do whatever I want to do."

Let me respond by saying three things:

- 1) If you don't believe in God's guarantee, then you don't believe God's Word. It is right here in the Word of God.
- 2) If you don't believe in God's guarantee, then it is not surprising that you keep wondering about whether or not you are saved.
- 3) If you are really saved, you won't be talking about doing what you want to do. True salvation doesn't work that way. A true saved person wants to please the Lord, and is grieved whenever he does commit a sin.

This passage was evidently written to give greater assurance to all of us who really know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

But it was also written for those who do not know the Lord, that they might see that there is hope, eternal hope, for anyone who comes to God, not on the basis of personal merit nor of good works, but trusting in God's love and grace extended to guilty sinners by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. If you do not know Christ as your Savior, trust Him now. He has promised that He will never turn away anyone who come to Him to be saved.

THE STRENGTH OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH
Romans 4:18-22

Intro: This chapter begins with Abraham, goes on to David, backs up to the Law which was given through Moses, and then returns to Abraham. It is very clear that God's dealings with Abraham form the basis for the entire doctrine of justification. And it is such passages as this in the NT that should make us realize that salvation in the OT and in the NT are the same. If this were not the case, it would be pointless for the Apostle Paul to go back in His writing to Abraham, Moses, and David.

With regard to Abraham, we have seen that the Apostle Paul focused his attention on two chapters in Genesis, the book where we have the record of the life of Abraham. Those two chapters are Genesis 15 and 17. In chapter 15 we are told that Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). But Abraham was not circumcised until chapter 17 which was more than 13 years later. It is important to note this fact of history because this would mean that Abraham's circumcision was not necessary for his justification before God. If Abraham had died at any time during those 13 plus years, he would have been saved. And so those people in Paul's day who were trying to make circumcision necessary for salvation were revealing that they did not know the teaching of the OT as they should have known it. Salvation in the OT was by faith alone; salvation in the NT is by faith alone. And when we say that it is by faith we mean that salvation is a work of God without any help from anybody. If circumcision were necessary, or baptism, or good works, or anything else, we would have to say that salvation was partly a divine work and partly a human work. But that is not what Scripture teaches. Salvation is not of works, but it is all of grace—undeserved, unearned, a gift of the love of God.

However, going back to Genesis 17 we can easily see that Abraham was faced with a problem.

When God called Abraham according to the words given in Genesis 12, he promised him that He would make of his descendants "a mighty nation," and that in him should "all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3). Some of you have just memorized those verses at the beginning of Genesis 12. But this was the problem: Abraham and Sarah did not have a son. In addition to that, they were both too old to have children. Abraham was 99 in Genesis 17, and Sarah was 10 years younger than he was. The promise had first been given to them before they were 75 and 65, but more than twenty-five years had gone by and they still did not have a

son. In between chapters 15 and 17 of Genesis we learn how Sarah felt that she was not going to have a child, and so she suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar, her maidservant—a practice which was very common in those days. But it was not the will of God. They were running ahead of the Lord. And so God made it clear to Abraham when he was 99 that Sarah would have a child. Abraham laughed. And in Genesis 18 where Sarah was told that she was going to have a son, she laughed, too. This was all before Abraham and Sarah felt the way they are described in the last verses of Romans 4. I just touched briefly on the problem last week. Let me read what Paul wrote in the last part of verse 16, and then in verse 17. (Read.)

God was speaking to Abraham as though he was already the father of a great nation, and the father of many spiritual heirs when he did not even have one son. And so the fulfillment of the promise depended upon God being able to bring into being that which did not exist, and, from a human standpoint, never could exist. All he had to go on was **the promise of God!**

When you read the account in Genesis, and then read the latter part of Romans 4, you might be inclined to think that Paul had his history mixed up. I say that because from Genesis 17 it does not seem that Abraham believed God, nor does it seem from Genesis 18 that Sarah believed God. How can we explain the difference?

There is only one way. We have to believe that it was God who brought Abraham and Sarah, not only to faith, but to a strong faith, that God would be faithful to His promise. If God's promise had not been fulfilled, Christ would not have come. Christ was a descendant of Abraham, the most important descendant that Abraham ever had. If Christ had not come, there would be no salvation. And so you can see that you and I and our salvation were involved in the promises that God gave to Abraham.

We need to remember that the people we read about in the Bible, with the exception of our Lord, were people with the same doubts and fears and inclinations toward unbelief that we have. God had to work with them just as He has to work with us. I was moved in my own heart in reading the story of Joseph to see how moved he was when Judah made such a fervent plea for Benjamin. It was more than Joseph could take, and he wept for joy as he saw the evidence of what the Lord had done in the heart of his brother Judah. Let us remember that Philipians 1:6 not only applies to us, but it applies to all believers. And so let us not be surprised when we see how God has been working in the hearts of people we may have felt

could never be changed.

Let us examine what Paul had to say about Abraham's faith.

I. HE WAS HOPELESS, YET HOPEFUL (Rom. 4:18).

This sounds contradictory, doesn't it? How could he be hopeless, and yet hopeful? Let us look at the word "hope" although most of us have considered it many times before.

When we say that we hope that something will happen, or that something will not happen, we mean this is our wish, our desire, but we really have no guarantee that we will get what we hope for. There is usually an element of uncertainty in anything that we hope for on our own!

The Bible uses hope in a different way. A hope in Scripture is an expectation which we have from God, which we anticipate with pleasure, and which we have absolute confidence will eventually come. Read verse 18 and you will see that Abraham's hope was based upon the promise of God--and that was really all that he had! He had nothing more, just God's promise!

Now let us ask,

II. WHAT WAS HIS PROBLEM? (Rom. 4:19).

I have already told you what it was, and most of you knew before you came to this service. He and Sarah were too old to have children! The promise had sounded good at the beginning, so good, in fact, that Abraham and Sarah had left home on the basis of the promise not actually knowing where they were going. But God waited, and waited, and waited, and waited... Most of us have at some time in our lives had the feeling that God has waited too long to do what we have needed. We may not have had the promise that Abraham and Sarah had, but we have had some special needs which God has done nothing about until it has appeared to us to be too late. That is how Abraham and Sarah felt when God continued to tell them that they were still going to have a son. They wanted to believe, and yet they had to believe against all reasonable hopes that they would ever have a son.

How did Paul state it in verse 19?

You are going to find that this verse is translated differently in different versions. And the difference centers in the word "not." Some versions say that he did consider "his own body now dead, ...and the deadness of Sarah's womb." Others say that he did not consider his body and Sarah's

body.

If you think about it for a moment, you will realize that it really doesn't make any difference which way you read it. If he did consider his body, he was able to get beyond that problem. And if he did not consider his body, it was because his faith carried him beyond the difficulty. I am inclined to think in the light of what we have been told in verse 18 that he did consider it. The Genesis account seems to indicate that he did. To consider means to think about it very carefully, and to understand what the implications were. He knew that God was going to have to do something special, not only for him, but also for Sarah, and so he did not let these obstacles stand in the way of his believing God. The verse begins with the words, "And being not weak in faith, ..." Obviously these statements take us beyond Genesis 17 in God's dealings with Abraham.

Could I point out something here which should be for the encouragement of each one of us? Isn't it interesting that the NT does not record the weakness of Abraham's faith, but its strength. It does not record Abraham's first reaction to the re-statement of God's promise, but it records Abraham's attitude when the Lord had brought him to see that the promise was still true and that it would most surely be fulfilled. We get to see both sides of Abraham's reaction to the Word of God, his unbelief first, and then his strong faith, in order that we might glorify God for His work in Abraham, and so we might be encouraged to believe that God can take us from unbelief to belief, too. The Lord does not delight in showing our weaknesses; He delights in showing the results of His grace in our hearts. This ought to encourage us.

So far we have had two statements to show what God had done in the heart of Abraham:

- 1) "Who against hope believed in hope" (v. 18).
- 2) "And being not weak in faith" (v. 19).

But now we come to two verses which really show us:

III. THE STRENGTH OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (Rom. 4:20, 21).

We have three statements in these two verses, one negative, and two positive, which bring out THE STRENGTH OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH. The first is this:

- A. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief" (v. 20a).

Several years ago Lucille and I were down in Guatemala, and I

had been asked to speak to a group of Guatemalans at the Central American Seminary. Since my Spanish was not sufficient for such an occasion, I was given an interpreter, a Guatemalan who had his doctorate from Dallas Seminary, and who eventually became the President of the CAM Seminary. I don't remember if I was speaking on this passage, or just spoke of being "staggered" by something, but it was the one place in my message that my interpreter did not know what to say. He told me afterwards that all he could think of was a drunk staggering, and he knew that was not what I had in mind—and it wasn't! I think I meant what Paul meant when he used the word "staggered" here.

This is a verb which means to doubt, or to waver. James used this word in Jas. 1:6 when he was speaking about asking the Lord for wisdom. And he said this in verses 6 through 8:

But let him ask in faith, nothing **wavering**.

For he that **wavereth** is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

So even though Abraham looked at the impossibility of the situation, he did not waver, he did not doubt. He remained firm.

Why did he not stagger at God's promise? Why did he not say either that God will not do it now, or He cannot do it?

It was because:

- B. "He was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (v. 20b).

He did not give way to unbelief because "he was strong in faith." And it would seem from the statement, "giving glory to God," that he was "strong in faith" because he remembered Who it was Who had given the promise. If it had been something which he and Sarah were to have done for God, he would have given up. He would have had to give up. Their bodies reproductively were dead. Humanly speaking they could no longer have children. But Abraham listened to the promise, and then looked at the One Who had made the promise, and this is what strengthened his faith.

Is this not what the writer of the book of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..."?

Next Sunday I want to make the application of all of this to

our salvation, but let us think today about how the Lord strengthens our faith. He does it through the Word, doesn't He? Ephesian 6 makes that clear. He strengthens our faith by prayer. Cf. Isa. 40:31. Think of Phil. 4:13 and Psalms 27:1 and Psalm 46:1.

All of this led to a third thing which has to be the result of what has gone before:

C. He was fully persuaded about God's promises (Rom. 4:21).

This is why he did not stagger at God's promises. This is why he was strong in faith. He was "fully persuaded" about the promises of God.

What does it mean to be "fully persuaded"?

He was absolutely convinced, fully assured. There was no doubt in his mind about God's ability to do what He had promised. And the verse would imply also a willingness and an intention to fulfill the promises or God would never have made them. "Perform" is the common Greek verb for do. And it means that God could do what He had promised successfully and just as speedily as the situation required. No obstacle was too great for Him. The things that are impossible with us are not impossible with God. Cf. Luke 18:27.

Put the deadness of Abraham and Sarah along side of the omnipotence of God, and you have the answer to every problem and the provision for every need.

The final verse of our text has to do with:

IV. THE CONFIRMATION OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (Rom. 4:22).

What we have been dealing with took place in Genesis 17 and 18. But the statement of this verse is found only in Genesis 15:6 in the OT. Why did Paul repeat it here? He had already referred to it in verse 3 of Romans 4.

Let me answer that question by asking some other questions. What would we think if Paul should have told us that neither Abraham nor Sarah believed God? Where would that have left us as far as the doctrine of salvation is concerned? What could we have believed about the salvation of Abraham and Sarah?

It seems to me that this statement is repeated here to show that after all the years of waiting, and disappointment, and frustration to the point of despair, every obstacle to faith

was overcome by the grace of God, and we have Abraham and Sarah emerging from this long delay, strong in their faith, absolutely convinced, that, although the promise was out of their reach, it was well within what God could do. And so we find this couple continuing on in their faith in God, stronger than ever!

Concl: I think that I would have to say that the saddest thing that I have experienced in over forty years of ministry have been those times when I have seen professing believers turn, and, like the disciples of John 6, walk no more with the Lord. If they go and stay away, we can only come to one conclusion, and that is the explanation given by John in 1 John 2:19.

On the other hand, how wonderful it is to see people going through great trials of faith, and yet saying like Job of old, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

Let us remember those wonderful words which Solomon wrote so many years ago now in Ecc. 3:14, and apply them to salvation:

I know that, whatsoever God doeth,
it shall be for ever:
nothing can be put to it,
nor any thing taken from it:
and God doeth it,
that men should fear before him.

How thankful we all should be that we can sing those wonderful words of Isaac Watts,

Thro' many dangers, toils and snare,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

GOD'S WORD -- PAST AND PRESENT
Romans 4:23-25

Intro: Today we come to the last three verses of chapter 4 in Romans. We have come to this point after learning in chapter 1 that the Apostle Paul had been appointed by God to proclaim the Gospel of God. And he declared in the opening verses of chapter 1 that it is this Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). And then he went on in the following verse that in this Gospel we see "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. Then he quoted Habakkuk 2:4 in the OT which says that "the just," of those who are righteous, "shall live by faith." This was all by way of introduction.

But then, from verse 18 on in chapter 1, all through chapter 2, and down through verse 20 of chapter 3, he showed first that **all Gentiles** need to be saved because of their sins against God, and then he went on to show that the same is true of **all Jews**. This means that everyone needs to be saved. All people are sinners, and under the judgment of God. No one by nature is righteous in God's sight. No one is seeking God. Instead, man follows the sinful inclinations of his own heart in moving farther and farther away God.

These are truths that no one understands until he is exposed to the teaching of Scripture. Man generally knows that something is wrong, that many things are wrong, but he will steadfastly refuse to believe that it is sin. He doesn't understand sin because he doesn't know God.

The picture of the human race which God has given us in His Word is not only dismal, but it is hopeless. Man does not possess the power, nor the wisdom, nor the even inclination to make things right with God. He might even spend his time trying to convince himself that there is no God because if there is no God, then we have no absolute standard for knowing the difference between right and wrong.

However, after showing us how hopeless man's condition is, we begin to learn from Rom. 3:21 onward that God has done all that is necessary to correct man's sinful condition. And we learn in the latter part of chapter 3 that God, through the death of His own beloved Son, has made provision for man so that he can be acceptable to God. That state is a state of righteousness. It is also called justification in the Bible.

In chapter 4 Paul took us back to Abraham, 2,000 years before Christ. He showed how God promised a Redeemer through Abraham, and when Abraham believed that promise, putting his

faith in that Redeemer (Whom we now know to be the Lord Jesus Christ), God placed righteousness to Abraham's account in heaven. It wasn't Abraham's because he worked for it. There is no evidence that he was even looking for such a thing. It was His by the mercy and grace and love of God.

Then Paul did something else very interesting, and very important. He jumped ahead in time from Abraham to David, 1,000 years later, and still 1,000 years before Christ came, and Paul showed us that David believed the same thing about salvation--that it was not something that we deserve, nor was it something he could earn. David believed that he was made fully acceptable to God when his sins were forgiven through the coming Redeemer. So Abraham and David believed the same thing about salvation.

But then Paul did a third thing. He moved back to Abraham again to show that Abraham's circumcision was not a condition of his salvation. God gave the rite of circumcision to the Jews as a sign of the righteousness they had by faith, but nowhere in Scripture can you find that God made salvation dependent upon circumcision. And dealing with circumcision brought Paul to the Law, given by God to Moses who lived midway between Abraham and David: 1,500 years before Christ.

So these three important men from Old Testament history, who lived at different times, all believed that it was God Who justifies us, not as a reward for anything that they did, but just by simple faith in the promise of God.

In the verses which we considered last Sunday, Romans 4, verses 18 through 22, we saw that in even God's dealings with Abraham and Sarah, we have a marvelous picture of what it means to believe God. God had promised to make Abraham a mighty nation, and had promised that through his seed, Abraham's seed, salvation would be provided for Jews and Gentiles alike, and on the same basis. But you can't become a nation until you have a son. And so we learned that God waited until Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children before He gave them a son so that they would understand that "what" God "had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21).

And so we read in verse 22 of our chapter, "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." God provided salvation by His promise. You don't obey a promise; you believe a promise. And so it is firmly established by these ancient dealings of God with His ancient people Israel that salvation is a gift of the love and mercy of God, not a reward for anything that any man can do.

My text for today brings Paul's teaching up-to-date. Notice what he said in these three verses, Romans 4:23-25. (Read.)

This comes in the form of both a conclusion and an application. In one verse Paul jumped from Abraham to his own day. Or we could say, from the past to the present. I have told you before that Abraham lived as long before Christ as we live after Christ (speaking in round numbers). Abraham lived 2,000 years before Paul.

Look with me now at verse 23. (Read again.)

This verse summarizes all that Paul has sought to teach us about Abraham's salvation. Let us think for just a moment about:

I. ABRAHAM'S SALVATION (Rom. 4:23).

Paul makes a negative statement here because he has something positive to say about Abraham's salvation in verse 24. But let me make a positive statement to emphasize what we have learned, or should have learned from Romans 4.

Will you notice in the first place that the account of Abraham's salvation has been written.

A. It is written.

Where has it been written? In the book of Genesis. Who wrote it? Moses did. Both in and out of Scripture the first five books of our OT have been called the books of Moses because they were written by Moses.

Well, we can understand that about Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, the last four books of Moses, because they deal with the lifetime of Moses. But Genesis deals with things that happened hundreds of years before Moses was born. What reason do we have for believing that Moses was right in what he wrote? After all, historians are not infallible. And even though much was passed on in those days by word of mouth, and undoubtedly some records were written down even before Moses' lifetime, yet can we be sure that God made those promises to Abraham, and that it all happened the way Moses said that it did when he wrote Genesis?

My answer to that is this: "Yes, we can be absolutely sure." I say this because Moses was writing, as all of the writers of the Bible wrote, under the careful, sovereign, infallible direction of the Holy Spirit in which the Holy Spirit led Moses in the selection of every word which he wrote. And so

when Paul spoke of a written record, he was speaking of the words of Moses, but more than that, he was speaking of the very words of God! Cf. 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.

And so God Himself has preserved for us how He called Abraham, how He ordered Abraham's life, the promises He gave to Abraham, and how Abraham responded to them.

So it is all a matter of permanent record in the Word of God, an infallible, inerrant record. You can believe all that it tells you about Abraham and his justification with God because it is all in God's Book! Believe with total confidence.

So it all has been written.

But notice a second thing:

B. It was written for Abraham's sake.

Now I know that Paul stated all of this negatively when he said that "it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him." We will see in a moment what else Paul had in mind. But he was saying that what he had been explaining was written, and that it was written for Abraham's sake. And Paul quoted Scripture to prove it.

But what did Paul mean that it was written for Abraham's sake?

He may have meant a number of things, but one thing I am sure he meant was that it was written so we would know that Abraham was saved! Abraham was forgiven of his sins, and was declared righteous before God. Paul was saying that it was written for Abraham's sake so that we would know that Abraham had what every person needs, and that was salvation.

How wonderful it is that we can know that Abraham was saved! He was made acceptable to God before he died. If he had waited until he died, it would have been too late. And God has said in His Word that Abraham "believed in the Lord, and **he** [the Lord] counted it unto him for righteousness." The words guilty and condemned were blotted out, and in their place Abraham's record read forgiven and justified.

You know, it is a wonderful thing to leave no doubts behind us when the time comes for us to die. God not only changed Abraham's account in heaven because Abraham was trusting in the coming Redeemer, but He wrote it down in His Word so we would know where Abraham is.

However this is not the end of the chapter. Look at verses 24 and 25. (Read.)

Now let us spend a few minutes talking about:

II. OUR SALVATION (Rom. 4:24, 25).

It was not only written for Abraham's sake, "but for us also."

God never did deal with any other person in exactly the same way that He did with Abraham. He didn't need to. What He did with Abraham was meant to be a message for all of the world in every generation to the end of time!

And remember "it was...written." "It was...written for his sake...but for us also"! "For us." Paul said it was "for us" to the people of his generation. And every time this book has been read from the first century down to this twentieth century, those who have read it should have paid careful attention to those words, "For us also." I read it for myself, and for you today. The Bible is "for us also." The story of Abraham and how God saved him was written "for us also" because if we are going to be saved, if we are going to have righteousness placed to our account in heaven, it has to come to us the same way it did to Abraham--not because we deserve it, not because we earned it, but because God gave His Son and we are trusting in Him. We have a great advantage over Abraham because the Redeemer has come, and the Book which tells us about Him has now been completed, and it is all "for us." Say those words until they are written on your heart: "For us...for us...for us...for us..."!

Why?

Because if you and I are to be saved from the wrath of God because of our sins, it has to be the same way that Abraham was saved and declared righteous by God.

This is what verses 24 and 25 tell us. We can have righteousness placed to our account, imputed to us, "IF WE BELIEVE ON HIM THAT RAISED UP JESUS OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD; WHO WAS DELIVERED FOR OUR OFFENCES, AND WAS RAISED AGAIN FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION."

I want you to note that Paul was saying that what we believe is important, but will you notice that he placed the emphasis upon the One Whom we believe!

We believe God! We believe His promise! We believe that He did exactly what He promised Abraham that He would do, and

that was that He would provide a Savior for guilty sinners.

Notice that Paul placed his emphasis upon Who it was Who died, "Jesus our Lord"--God Who became Man--and that He did die, and that God raised Him from the dead.

Notice: "Jesus our Lord." If you don't believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God Who came in human flesh, then nobody will ever be able to convince you to trust in Him. If He were not God come in human flesh, then He would have been a sinner just like you and I are, and He would have needed a Savior just like we do. Don't tell me that He was a great Teacher and a great Example if He lied about Who He was. He would have been history's greatest impostor. But, thank God, it is written in this same Book that He has always been the Son of God, and that He came from heaven to be the Savior of sinners.

Why did He die?

Not because His enemies finally got the best of Him. He "was delivered for our offences" Paul said to the believers in Rome--and the same is true for all who ever have believed, or who ever will believe. He died for us, "our offences."

This means that He died for the things which we have done which are an offence to God, an outrage against His holy character. It takes the Bible to get people to see that sin is anything that is displeasing to God. God is the One Who determines the difference between right and wrong. And when we try to do away with God, as we have in our country, right becomes wrong and wrong becomes right, and we really don't know where we are. The Lord was not to blame for our offences, but He took our penalty upon Himself. Actually our verse says that He "was delivered," that is, God gave His Son to be the sacrifice that was needed to cleanse guilty sinners from their sins. Isa. 53:6 tells the story. And so does 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins..." God made our Lord a sacrifice for our sins.

But look at what the resurrection of Christ means according to what the Holy Spirit directed the Apostle Paul to write here: He "was raised again for our justification."

If you let your eye run down in Romans 5 to verse 9 you will see that Paul said there that we are "now justified by his blood," which means that we are justified by the death of our Lord. How can we reconcile that with Paul's statement here in Rom. 4:25 that He "was raised again for our justification." Are we justified by His sacrifice on the Cross, or are we justified by His resurrection. Paul said both.

We are justified by the death of Christ. There is no question about that as far as Scripture is concerned. What Paul was saying here at the end of chapter 4 is that God raised Christ from the dead as a testimony that He had done everything necessary for the justification of every sinner who will ever trust in Him, or who has ever trusted Him. The resurrection was God's way of testifying to His people that the Lord Jesus had really done what He came to do. His work was completed, and His work was fully accepted by God.

Therefore, when our faith is in God Who raised His Son from the dead, we know that we have the only salvation that it is possible to have, the only salvation that is acceptable to God.

Concl: These leads me to say one thing before I close.

So often when you speak to someone about salvation, you will find out that they think there is some other way that is just as good as coming to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. You can always be sure when people talk that way, they are showing their ignorance of the Word of God.

But here is a good question to ask them. Ask them this: What does God think about your way of salvation? Or it could be stated like this: What guarantee do you have that your way will really make you acceptable to God? God has given us His Word so that we won't go wrong. And yet people are so blinded by their sins that they deliberately ignore the Word of God, and go their own way anyway.

Long ago, King David's son, Solomon, wrote a book with a lot of sound, godly advice. And this is one thing that he wrote: There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12). Many people have done that in the past, and many are doing that today. They will choose their own way with no guarantee that what they believe is right, and ignore the plain teaching of the Word of God. A mistake here is not a mistake that you can correct after you die. If you are wrong while you live, and die believing nothing or something besides what the Scriptures teach, it means eternal damnation.

There are many things in history which are not recorded in this Book. But there is nothing about the eternal welfare of your soul which is left out. It is all here. Put your trust in Christ, and you are safe. Trust in anyone else, or anything else, and you will suffer the judgment of God forever. Come to Christ today. Put your trust in Him now. Forget about your own way; come God's way through Christ. God's way means forgiveness for sins and everlasting life.

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION

Part I: "Peace With God"

Romans 5:1-5

Intro: Today, as we begin Romans 5, and are faced with the words, "being justified by faith," I would like to take you back to the first time the just were mentioned in this book of Romans. It is in Romans 1:17 where we read Paul's quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, "**The just** shall live by faith."

Now I want you to look at the first part of that same seventeenth verse. It begins with these words: "For therein is **the righteousness of God** revealed from faith to faith."

You can't see the similarity in English between the words "righteousness" and "just," but, if you could see them in the Greek text, you would realize that they are both from the same root. By this I mean that we could very accurately translate Romans 1:17 this way:

For therein is **the righteousness** of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written,
The righteous shall live by faith.

Or we could read it this way:

For therein is **the justification** of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written,
The just shall live by faith.

So to be righteous before God is to be just, and to be just is to be righteous. And when we speak of a person who has been declared righteous by God, we mean that he has been justified.

And when you read Romans 1:16 with verse 17 you can see that salvation means that we are just before God, or that God has declared us to be righteous in His sight. Before we were saved we were unrighteous. This is what Paul was teaching in Romans 3:10. But after we are saved we are righteous, we are just in God's sight, no longer guilty and under the judgment of God, but cleared of all the charges of sin that were against us in the court of heaven. Instead of being guilty, we are declared righteous. And this is not because of anything that we have done for ourselves, but because of the death of Christ for us. We trust in His sacrifice, and are forgiven and cleansed of all of our sins. To be righteous, or just, before God, means that we are all that we need to be in order to have God's acceptance of us. I want to be sure that we all understand this.

So when we talk about justification we are talking about how guilty sinners can become just, or righteous, before God.

And this is really the Gospel. It is in the Gospel that we have that revelation made. We don't become righteous in God's sight by promising to do better in the future. Such a promise, besides being impossible to keep, would do nothing about past sins. God declares all sinners who are depending upon Christ and His sacrifice for the removal of our sins, to be righteous in His sight.

This is our standing before God. It is perfect. It is a standing equal to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not holy yet, but we are righteous. When we get to chapter 6 we will find out about how we can live be holy in character and live holy lives. That doctrine in Scripture is called the doctrine of sanctification. But we will learn more about that later.

Paul was describing our justification in 2 Cor. 5:21 where he wrote,

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

It is in Christ, in our relationship to Him, because of our faith in Him, that we are righteous, are just in the sight of God. God, although He loves those of us whom He has determined to save, cannot excuse or overlook our sin. He has to save us in a way that will not violate His righteousness. That way is through Christ. That is what we were told in Romans 3:26:

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:
that he might be just, and the justifier
of him which believeth in Jesus.

No person can ever be righteous before God by himself. It is only through Christ's death that we are given a righteous standing before God, and that makes our standing perfect. Nothing else needs to be added to what Christ has done for us. And so, as I have said, this is our standing before God.

But someone might say, "Isn't it possible for us as Christians to sin?" And we have to say, "Yes, it is possible for Christians to sin!" And then the questioner might respond by saying, "What happens to the Christian when he does sin?" The Apostle John answered that question in 1 John 2:1, 2, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not..." Sin in a Christian's life affects his fellowship with the Lord, and needs to be confessed and forgiven. But it never can change our standing before God.

Charles Wesley was expressing the truth of our standing before God, our justification, when he wrote that wonderful old hymn, "Arise, my soul, arise." Listen to the words of

the third stanza:

Five bleeding would he bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me;
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die."

We never need fear about our security in Christ because it rests upon the perfect sacrifice of our Lord.

I felt that I should spend some time dealing with this subject today so that we can all see what a wonderful truth justification is. We are declared righteous, perfectly righteous, before God because of the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the time Paul got to the end of Romans 4, he had covered this subject sufficiently so that there should be no question about what it means to be declared righteous, or just, before God. It actually is a legal term leading not only to forgiveness, but positively to a new and perfect standing before God.

Now let us come to Romans 5.

- In the opening five verses of this chapter, and to some extent scattered through the remainder of the chapter, we have THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION. It might have been better for me to say, SOME OF THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION, because they are not all here. In some respects this is like the first fourteen verses of Ephesians 1 where Paul sought to mention the spiritual blessings, or some of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. Neither list is exhaustive, but they both show us how much Christ did for us when He died on the Cross.

I am going to take some extra time with these blessings which are mentioned in Romans 5, verses 1 through 5. You could pick out the blessings which Paul has mentioned in this passage, but let me help to identify them for you. Then you will see where we are going for the next few Sundays, the Lord willing.

The first blessing is the one I want to take up today: "peace with God," in verse 1. The second is, "access by faith into this grace where we stand," in the first part of verse 2. The third is that we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," in the second part of verse 2. The fourth blessing is that "we glory in tribulations also," in verse 3 and 4. The fifth blessing has to do with "the love of God...shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." And this is in verse 5.

As I have said, this is not a complete list, but they give us the basis for much blessing and encouragement as we will consider them together in the days ahead, if the Lord sees fit to give us this time together.

For now I want to call your attention to verse 1. (Read.)

First, let me call your attention to the word which links chapter 4 and chapter 4 together:

I. THE WORD, "THEREFORE."

If it were not for the fact that we need the chapter and verse numbers to help us find our place in the books of the Bible, it would be better not to have them. They often can interrupt our thinking so that we do not see the flow of truth in the Word, or how the writers of Scripture move progressively through what they are saying, tying what they have said with what they were about to say.

It is a word which tells us that Paul has given us enough material so that we all should know what it means that we are justified, or declared righteous before God. At this point he was preparing to tell us more in detail about the blessings which always come when anyone is justified before God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, as Spurgeon used to say, the "Therefore" is there for a purpose.

However, he immediately gives us:

II. SOME ADDED LIGHT ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

It is to be seen in those four words which are a translation of three words in the Greek text: "Being justified by faith." Actually the order of the words in the Greek would lead us to translate it like this: "Being justified therefore by faith..."

I am constantly amazed at how much truth can be packed into a few words in our Bibles. In this short expression, "Being justified by faith," we have at least three major truths given to us to strengthen what the Apostle Paul has already told us about this great doctrine of justification. I hope that you will note these carefully, and profit from them.

The first is this:

A. Christ did not die in vain.

We are going to learn more about this as we get on into the epistle, but it is wonderful to see that His death was not in vain. Christ's death was absolutely effective in accomplishing what the Father sent Him to do. As a result, there were many in Paul's day who were living testimonies to the fact that they were righteous before God.

In addition, we have just finished a chapter dealing with Abraham and Sarah, David, and Moses, and a host of people which we call Old Testament saints, and we can see in the work of Christ that their faith was not in vain.

You see, the death of Christ would have been in vain if He had been dependent upon man to accept it for Himself. But God knew far better than we that if the choice of salvation were left up to man, no one would be saved, and the death of His Son would have been in vain. Abraham did not seek God; God sought him. David did not seek God; God sought David. Moses did not seek God; God sought him--and even had to go into Midian to bring him back to Egypt to finish his work. And we all know that Saul of Tarsus was not seeking the Lord; the Lord sought him. And the same is true of each one of us. And the very fact that Paul could write to Roman believers and say, "Therefore being justified by faith," was evidence that there were many who were right with God so that we know Christ did not die in vain.

But then notice this second point about justification:

B. Justification is a present possession.

Paul did not say that they were being justified. Nor did he say that they would be justified at a later time--when they died, or after they died. He spoke of justification as that which those Roman believers had even as Paul was writing to them, and even before they got his letter.

We talk about being saved now. We can say the same thing about our justification, because justification is a major part of salvation. So Paul was not telling them even that they needed to be justified. He might have told some other group that, but he was writing to those who already were justified, as justified as they would ever be.

Third, there is implied in Paul's statement the truth that:

C. Justification is a permanent possession.

This will be brought out by the fourth point I want to

mention in a moment, but from Paul's discussion of this doctrine of justification, past (looking into the OT), or present (as he was writing), there is not the slightest evidence that this was a standing which anyone could lose. To state it in a legal sense, each case had been tried, and a permanent verdict had been given: "Justified."

It is stated here in a tense which enabled Paul to state this action in its entirety. They were justified, and they would never be un-justified, and we can say that because of the basis upon which they were justified. It was not their work, but the work of Christ.

And this leads me to the fourth point about justification:

D. Their justification had been provided for them.

Paul did not say that they had justified themselves. He said that they had been justified. And it was "by faith," meaning that they were trusting Someone else for their justification, and that Someone was the Lord Jesus Christ. There would have been no need to believe in Christ if they could have justified themselves. Christ by His death did all that was necessary for the eternal justification of every sinner who would ever trust in Him.

As I have said, what an amazing bundle of truth we have in those words, "Being justified by faith."

But, possessing this justification, what was the first blessing that Paul mentioned? It was:

II. THE BLESSING OF "PEACE WITH GOD."

We could not have peace with God apart from justification, but justification, on the other hand, has to bring peace with God or it is not justification.

Earlier in chapter 3 when Paul was charging man with sin, one of the saddest things that he had to say was this: "And the way of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:17).

Man is continually looking for peace, but he never realizes, unless the Lord teaches him, that "peace with God" is the only foundation for any other peace. The Bible speaks of "the peace of God" (Phil. 4:7), but we cannot enjoy "the peace of God" in daily life until, first of all, we have "peace with God."

This is the only time this expression, "peace with God," is found in Scripture. But the same idea is expressed in other

ways, and one of them is in the verses of our Scripture reading this morning. "Peace with God" is reconciliation. Let me read to you again verses 10 and 11 of Romans 5. (Read.)

A few moments ago I read to you from 2 Cor. 5:21 which gives us another definition of justification. In the verses just before that we have the doctrine of reconciliation. Please turn to 2 Cor. 5, and let me read verses 18 through 20. (Read.) This is "peace with God." We not only have "peace with God," but to us has been committed "ministry" of reconciliation, beseeching people everywhere to see "peace with God" through Christ--for there is no other way!

Be sure to recognize that Paul was not speaking of "the peace of God" which we can enjoy in our daily lives. Nor was he speaking of the peace that we as believers enjoy with each other. He was putting first things first. If we do not have "peace with God," there is no need to expect any real peace anywhere else in our lives. Sin has set us at enmity with God. It has alienated us from God. Christ by His death brings God and the believing sinner together in a most precious fellowship. The enmity is gone, removed by God Himself, and He has removed the barriers to our peace with Him through the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross.

Some MSS read, "Let us have peace." But such a translation is completely out of character with Paul's explanation of what it means to be justified. It is not something that we need to seek after we are justified, but we need to know that we have it, that this is what it means to be justified with God.

Concl: To have "peace with God" means that our enmity toward Him has been removed, and we have been brought together as friends. We are no longer under His wrath, facing certain judgment because of our sins. We are now at "peace with God," and need have no fears of the judgment which awaits all who have not trusted in Christ for their salvation.

Paul was writing as a believer in Christ to people in Rome who also believed in Christ. What Paul said about them, applies also to us if we believe. Make sure that this is what you have. If you don't have this, you don't have anything. Make sure that you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to make you right with God. When you are sure of that, you can be sure also that you have "peace with God," but not until He is your Savior. Only Christ can bring us to God. And when He does, we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION
Part II: Access to God's Grace
Romans 5:1-5

Intro: Last Sunday we learned that one of the great blessings of justification is that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This truth is found in the first verse of Romans 5.

Much more could be said about "peace with God" than I said. It has difficult to think of any blessing that could be greater than this because all other blessings rest upon this one. This was the chief purpose of justification. This is why our Lord died for us, that we might be reconciled to God. This is a blessing which we have and continue to have! The very truth itself should be a greater blessing to us every time we think about it. It speaks of the forgiveness of our sins because it was our sins which kept us from having "peace with God." This blessing means that the door is opened for us to have fellowship with God. "Peace with God" means that there will be in the heart of every child of God a fear lest that peace be violated on our part. Knowing that we have "peace with God" should keep us from sin. It should cause us to delight in our times of prayer. And, when the time comes for us to die, it is this truth which will be used by the Lord to enable us to die in peace.

"Peace with God" is the foundation of true joy. All other joy is just a fleeting pleasure. "Peace with God" should be one of the main reasons for praising the Lord every day that we live. I trust that you can say, borrowing the words of the Apostle Paul,

Therefore being justified by faith,
I have peace with God
through ~~my~~ Lord Jesus Christ.

Make that first verse of Romans 5 just as personal with yourself as Paul did for himself and all of the believers in Rome. This is a truth which applies to you from the very moment that you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. These are not the words of a dreamer; this is a basic truth of Scripture which applies to every child of God. "Peace with God."

Today, however, we want to go on to another blessing, a blessing which is equally wonderful, and one that always comes with justification and "peace with God." Listen to Paul's words:

But whom also we have access by faith
into this grace wherein we stand.

We will just go that far in the verse today, and save the last statement of the verse for our consideration next Sun-

day, the Lord willing.

The truth of this verse may have escaped our attention if at some time we have not deliberately taken time to find out what it means. I want to examine it carefully with you today and I hope that in doing so it will become one of those friends in Scripture which you will come back to time and time again.

Let me call your attention, first of all, to the words,

I. "THIS GRACE."

"Grace" is a word which is very precious to every child of God. It is the word which describes the only basis upon which God could have any dealings with us. As I have mentioned before many times, grace really means two things:

- 1) It means that God does not give us what we really deserve.
- 2) On the other hand, it means that He does give us what we could never deserve.

When we place Paul's description of man in Romans 1, 2, and 3 alongside of what we have seen about justification so far in chapters 3, 4, and the first verse of chapter 5, the only way that the two can be brought together is by grace! Grace is written all over those chapters. Man deserved death, eternal death; God has provided life and forgiveness, and, as we have learned, "peace with God." So God has not given us death, but life. He is not going to make us pay for our sins because our Lord has paid for our sins. We deserve Hell; but we are looking forward to Heaven. The Lord should make us pay for all of our sins. Instead, He has forgiven us, and promised that they will never be remembered against us any more. This is grace! But remember that what God has done is not because He has agreed to close His eyes to our sins, and overlook them. It is because the Lord Jesus Christ took our penalty upon Himself when He died for us on the Cross. Why did He do this? The only answer is, the grace of God.

Many of our hymns dwell upon this wonderful truth of grace. One of them has been taken by the world, and I am afraid that it is often sung by those who know nothing about the grace of God. I am referring to Amazing Grace. Haven't you heard entertainers singing John Newton's words,

Amazing grace--how sweet the sound--
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found--
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

I have often wished I could stop some of those entertainers to ask them if grace really is a sweet sound to them. Do they really feel that they are wretches? Have their hearts ever feared the judgment of God? Have they really believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? And if they have, then why do they sing the other stuff that they sing? It is nothing but sheer blasphemy for anybody to sing this song just to entertain some worldly crowd. It is a song which can only be sung by those who have experienced the grace of God in salvation. Perhaps these entertainers sing Amazing Grace to ease their consciences about other things that they sing.

Horatius Bonar has this to say about the grace of God in one of his wonderful hymns:

Not what my hands have done can save this guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears
Can bear my awful load.

Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, and set my spirit free.

And then listen to this:

Thy grace alone, O God, to me can pardon speak;
Thy pow'r alone, O Son of God,
Can this sore bondage break.
No other work, save thine, no other blood will do;
No strength, save that which is divine,
Can bear me safely through.

The last verse goes like this:

I praise the God of grace; I trust His truth and might;
He calls me His, I call Him mine, my God, my joy, my light.
'Tis He who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;
I love because He loveth me, I live because He lives.

The very mention of the grace of God should cause every person on the face of the earth to fall in repentance before the living God, to glorify Him who has shown such love for guilty sinners.

When Paul was teaching justification in Romans 3, he said in verse 4,

Being justified freely **by his grace** (God's grace)

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And Paul brought out in Romans 4:16 that it is only because we are saved by grace that salvation can be guaranteed.

In the light of all of this let me say one more thing about the grace of God in salvation. Grace not only means (1) that God does not give me what I do deserve, and that (2) He gives me what I do not deserve, but it means (3) that He does the work of saving us! "Jesus paid it all..." Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

But notice what Paul said about "this grace" here in our text. He said that we stand in it. What did he mean by this expression? "This grace wherein we stand."

This word "stand" is translated "continue" in Acts 26:22. It means that in this grace we are established, we continue to hold the place which has been given to us by grace. Or, to say it another way, we got our start with God by "this grace," and we continue "in this grace."

Paul was saying that we are not only saved by grace, but we live by grace. This is where we stand. This is where we live. We are saved by grace. We are kept by grace. We continually depend upon the grace of God to become what He intends for us to be.

I hope you have no question in your mind about what I have been saying. But now let us go on to another part of our text. And this has to do with the word:

II. "ACCESS."

Paul declared here that "we have access into this grace wherein we stand." What did he mean?

The dictionary defines "access" as meaning "the right to enter or make use of." Lit., Paul said that we have had access into this grace, and that we continue to have it. It is not something that we had, but have lost. Nor is it something that we need to seek. We have had access from the moment we were saved, and it continues to be ours--and always will be ours! We have a life membership, so to speak, in our fellowship with God, and so we have access into this grace in which we stand.

Paul meant by all of this that the grace of God which saves us is the same grace which sustains us. One thing that we can be sure that we will need every day that we live is the

grace of God.

This is one of the purposes of prayer. Cf. Heb. 4:16.

This is our recourse in times of testing and trial. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9. Here "grace" means strength.

We should also notice along this line verses like 1 Cor. 15:10 and 2 Pet. 3:18.

The word grace teaches us that in our lives as Christians we are to depend upon God to strengthen us, to meet our needs, to enable us to do His will. Much teaching today that is given to Christians is no more than human psychology with some Scripture references thrown in. I recently heard a well-known preacher, speaking on television about problems of marriage. The basis of his message was not the Word of God, but a recent study which had been made on various marriage problems. He cited certain verses of Scripture to confirm the rightness of the report, but there was no attempt to get husbands and wives to rely upon the grace of a sufficient God. And this is what much present-day counselling is: working out your own problems with the understanding that you can fall back on the help of God when you need Him.

This was not what Paul was teaching. He taught that the solution to our problems is to be found in the grace of God, not as a last resort, nor as a stand-by solution, but as our first resort. The word grace teaches us what our Lord said to His disciples shortly before He died. He said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5b). Just as it would be impossible for a branch even to live if it were cut off from the vine, so Christ is our life. "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5b). Even as far as the ministry of the Word is concerned, the Apostle Peter said, "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth" (1 Pet. 4:11m). This is the equivalent of saying, Let him do it as of the grace which God giveth. And why is it this way? Because of our very insufficiency. And also, as Peter continued, "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11b).

Man's way and man's wisdom gives the glory to man, either to the one who gives the wisdom, or to the one who uses it successfully. But as we learn from Isa. 42:8, God does not give His glory to anyone. He is jealous for His glory. And that is the reason that He has made us absolutely dependent upon Him and His grace. It is only when we are drawing upon the grace of God that we find that "the things which are impossible with men (and practically everything is) are

possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

But we are not finished with our verse. We have seen the meaning of grace, and also what it means that we have access into that grace. Now we need to find out:

III. THE WAY OF ACCESS.

It is one thing to know that help is available; it is another thing to know how to find it. We may know that a great treasure is buried somewhere, but it does us no good unless we know where it is. A man may want to find God, but he never will find Him unless He knows the way. We may think that we are right, but are we? Solomon said,
There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12).

Think about that verse in connection with the troubles you face in your life. Think of it in your battle with sin, or in dealing with your own spiritual weaknesses. Good people can give you bad advice. And the only true way is God's way. Where do we find God's way? In the Word of God.

What does our text tell us about the way of access?

Let me call your attention to two phrases in our text. Paul said,

- 1) "By whom," and
- 2) "By faith."

The whole statement is,

By whom we have access **by faith** into this grace wherein we stand.

A. "By whom."

When he said, "By whom," to whom was he referring?

It is easy to answer that question. The last words of verse 1 are "our Lord Jesus Christ," followed with the words, "by whom." So it is, "our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom..."

Everything that God has for us comes to us through "our Lord Jesus Christ." God does nothing apart from Him! Paul told the Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 2:13). It is through Christ that we have been saved, and it is through Christ that we live, and grow, and find strength, and through Him that we will eventually become what God saved us to be.

Therefore, in the problems of life, I am not to look to myself, nor to any other person, unless that person points me

to the Word of God, and to Christ! Only Christ can meet my needs. there is not a more important lesson for us to learn when we think about the problems we have in daily living.

But does our help come automatically? No! And this takes us to the second of those prepositional phrases:

B. "By faith."

What is faith? It is trust. It is dependence. It is putting our confidence in another. And the One in Whom we are to put our confidence, our trust, our faith, is "our Lord Jesus Christ." We go to Him for help. He may use some godly person to point us in the right direction, but the answer is not to be found in following someone's formula for a happy home, or a victorious life. The answer is to be found in trusting Christ.

And where does our faith come from? It comes from Him. Cf. Heb. 12:2. And it comes from Him through the Word, and is expressed toward Him by prayer and by a steadfast refusal to seek our help anyplace else.

Concl: What a tremendous statement this is! This first part of Romans 5:2 actually contains the Gospel as well as the truth about how to live a Christian life. And it is when we are justified through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (as we are told in verse 1) that we learn that our lives are going to be made right with God when we take advantage of the access we have to the grace of God by continuing to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to meet our needs. We are saved by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and we live by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is as simply as that. We start out in our relationship with God "by faith," we continue "by faith," and some day our faith will be turned to sight when we see our Lord Jesus Christ face to face.

Paul did not tell us that we ought to seek this access; he said very clearly that if we are justified, we have access. We have "access by faith **into this grace** in which we stand." So the question is not, Do we have it? The question is, Are we using it?

If we are, then there is blessing. There will certainly be trials, but there will be blessing, and joy, and peace. But if we are living on our own resources, or upon what people tell us to do without taking us to Scripture, there may be hope for a little while, but it will not last. Only by trusting Christ can we become what we ought to be, just as only by faith in Christ could we be saved. Whichever of these two needs is your need, for salvation or for strength

to be what you need to be as a Christian, remember that Christ is the One you need.

But always remember to keep these in their proper order. There are many people who are trying to live like Christians who have never become Christians. Paul was writing to believers in Christ when he wrote this verse we have been considering today. Even though it might seem unnecessary to say this, I am going to say it anyway because I don't want a single person to away without understanding this: Christ must be your Savior because He will be your life.

So, if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins today. Trust Him now. Turn from your sins, and turn to Christ. Then you will find the way open to the limitless supply of the grace of God to help you with every need you face in your life. Some people just want help in one problem. The Lord does not work that way. He works with us with all of our needs. We don't usually understand all that has to be corrected in changing our lives, but the Lord knows it all. And He will help us with it all. So let us look to Him, as Paul did, and find out for ourselves the sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ.

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION
Part III: The Hope of God's Glory
Romans 5:2

Intro: My text for today is the last nine words of Romans 5:2: "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is the third blessing which Paul mentioned in connection with justification.

The first was that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The second was that "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Now we are ready to consider the third, that "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

There is a very similar expression in Rom. 12:12, "Rejoicing in hope." However, it is simply "rejoicing in hope," not rejoicing in the hope of God's glory, which adds a special dimension to what Paul was saying. And we will see what that is, hopefully, in a few minutes.

But let us look at each expression in this verse, and see, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what it was that Paul had in mind.

First, let us look at the word:

I. "REJOICING."

Comparing this with the first two blessings which Paul mentioned in this chapter, the first spoke of what we have. The second spoke of a great privilege which we all can exercise, but which many do not use. This third one speaks of what we are to do! Our translation is a good one although the Greek says that we are rejoicing. And implied in Paul's statement is that this is something that we all are to do, and to do as a habit of life. We are to be doing this all of the time. That is a feature of this exhortation which is important for us to notice. Our text describes what is to be, what ought to be, one of the characteristics of our daily lives. We are to be rejoicing continually in the hope of the glory of God.

This word also conveys an idea in addition to that of rejoicing. It can be expressed in a word which we do not hear very often anymore. It is possible that some of you have never used it, or even heard anyone else use it. It is the word, exult, spelled e-x-u-l-t. It means to rejoice greatly, to be jubilant. A good illustration is what a little child might do when he or she is told that we are going out for ice cream, or going to the zoo, or doing something else that children like to do. They will jump up and down, clap their

hands, and say, "When are we going?" It is something that not only causes joy, but excitement! This is what Paul was talking about.

And so it means that "rejoicing" is a word which calls for some display of happy emotion. It means that we cannot think about this without getting excited about it. It not only makes us happy; it makes us very happy! Be sure to keep this in mind.

The second word I want to call your attention to is the word:

II. "HOPE."

I have spoken of this word many times as we have looked at different passages of Scripture, but here it is again, and I want to be sure that everyone here understands what it means.

When we use this word we are speaking of something that we want, or do not want. It is something that we desire, or do not desire. I was speaking recently on the telephone to a mother who had a couple of sick children, sick with colds, and she expressed to me that she hoped she would not get a cold from them. But she did! She didn't want it, but she got it anyway mainly because she had no control over it.

However, our dictionaries also tell us that hope means to look forward to something with confident expectation. We all know that we have no control over the future, but sometimes we have strong reasons for believing that something is really going to take place. This is the way that the word is most often used in the Word of God.

Let me give you some examples from Scripture.

Please turn in this book of Romans to chapter 8, verses 23 through 25. (Read and explain.) We know that our bodies are going to be glorified because God has said that they will be, but they are not glorified yet, and so we speak of that promise as a hope. Do we mean it is uncertain, that it may not happen after all? No! We know it will happen. We call it a hope because it hasn't happened yet, and we don't know when it will happen, but we know that it will.

Let me give you another illustration.

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 John 3:2, 3. (Read.) What did John say that "we know"? He said that we know that the Lord is coming back—that is the first thing. He said that we know also that when He does come, and we see Him, we are going to be "like him." But so far He has not come, and

therefore we are not completely like Him. But will He come, and will we be like Him? Yes! How do we know? Because we have His promise that both of these things will happen. But they have not happened yet, and so we call this our hope as John did in 1 John 3:3.

We have had this word hope just recently in our study of Romans. Look back at Rom. 4, verses 17 through 21. Here we can see as clearly as anyplace in Scripture that our hopes are those expectations that we have because God has promised something. God promised Abraham and Sarah not only a son, but He promised to make of him "a father of nations." In fact, our whole salvation was dependent upon God doing what He promised Abraham that He would do. But God waited until it was too late for Abraham and Sarah to have children. Did that mean that they would not have a son? No! If God promises something, it is going to take place. And so the Apostle Paul wrote that Abraham "against hope believed in hope." This means that his age and Sarah's age were against them ever having children. But, in spite of that, Abraham "believed in hope" because he was "fully persuaded," according to verse 21, "that, what he [God] had promised, he was able also to perform."

Paul had circumstances like this in mind when he wrote in Rom. 15:4,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime
were written for our learning,
that we through patience and comfort
of the scriptures, **might have hope.**

So when you think of hope in Scripture, think of the promises of God because the promises of God give us a certain hope that God's promises will be fulfilled! When, we do not know, but that they will be fulfilled, we do know. That is our hope!

So, when we put "rejoicing" together with "in hope," this means that we are always to be filled with exciting joy about the fulfillment of some promise that God has made. Actually we can be excited about the fulfillment of any promise, but it is one particular promise that Paul had in mind here.

What is the promise that we are to be excitedly happy about?

Here it is:

III. "THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD."

Before we learn what that is, let me ask a question which we all need to answer. What is it about the future that fills

your heart with the greatest joy and excitement?

There is much to fill our hearts today with uneasiness and possibly with fears about the future. A terrible event took place on Friday in the Board of Trade Building in New York City which ought to make us feel very uneasy. Life in our country may never be the same again. It appears, from what the authorities are saying, that this was done by terrorists. And so security is tightened everywhere, and security measures will probably be taken all over the country where there have been none before.

I think we are all uneasy about changes that the new administration is trying to make. We could well be at the most crucial time in our nation's history. We can't be very happy about the prospects.

There are many things that can cause us to be greatly concerned. It is wonderful to be able to turn to the Word of God to see that there are some things we can be excited about, some things that can make us very happy.

One thing that excites me with great joy very often is the possibility that God may answer some of the prayers I have been praying. I am often moved to tears of joy as I pray in my study when I think what it would mean for God to answer some of my prayers. I am thinking about couples who are having serious problems, and who probably will get a divorce if the Lord does not intervene. It makes me happy beyond words to think of God answering those prayers. Or, I think of those who are seriously ill, and what it would mean if the Lord should raise them back to health if that should be His will. That makes me very, very happy. Or, I see a young person who is about to make a tragic mistake in marrying the wrong person, and I think of what it would mean if the Lord should step in and change that person's heart so that the marriage would be stopped. I have people I have prayed for for years who are not saved. And I weep with joy sometimes thinking of how wonderful it would be if they would be saved.

I'll tell you other things that make me happy. We have been speaking of justification, I am so thankful that I am right with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I rejoice in that continually. I am thankful that I am saved, that my sins are forgiven, that I am a child of God. I am just as thankful that my children are saved, and that I see evidence that my grandchildren are coming to the Lord. I am very thankful for that. It gives me great joy to know that you are saved. I am very, very thankful for everyone of you who knows the Savior, and I have real joy in praying that we will all be in heaven some day.

In this wicked world I am thankful for the peace and joy and protection that the Lord gives us. I am thankful for the way He protects us. When you think of terrorism in our country, we know that any of us could be affected, but isn't it worth getting happily excited about the way the Lord cares for us, and lead us, and meets our needs, whatever conditions we may have to face.

I am thankful to know that the Lord is coming, and that you and I who know Him will be made like Him. That makes me very happy. I am thankful that we will have a place in heaven for all eternity, and I am thankful that nothing is going to stand in the way of our being there.

We have a lot to get excited and happy about, don't we? In fact, joy and rejoicing and thanksgiving are to be among the main characteristics of those of us who know the Lord. We are to rejoice always. We are to give thanks always. The Lord wants our joy to be full, our cups to be overflowing. But what one thing did Paul single out in this passage for which we should be constantly rejoicing? We are to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

What did Paul mean by this? Or I could ask it this way, What did the Holy Spirit mean by this because it is what the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write.

Let me explain it by referring to a Gospel song we used to sing when I was a child. It is not in our hymnal, but it still appears in my hymnals. I am sure that most of you know it and have sung it many times. These are the words,

When all my labors and trials are o'er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will through the ages be glory for me.

The second verse:

When, by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face,
Will through the ages be glory for me.

Verse three:

Friends will be there I have loved long ago;
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know,
Will through the ages be glory for me.

And then the chorus goes like this:

O that will be glory for me,
 Glory for me, glory for me;
 When by His grace I shall look on His face,
 That will be glory, be glory for me.

Now there isn't a word in that song that I disagree with. I remember our song leader at the First Baptist Church in Tacoma leading a large congregation in that hymn, and on the chorus he would slow down the singing, and emphasize and hold on to that word "glory"--"That will be glory, be glory for me!" Even though I was less than ten years old at the time, I will always remember how my young heart felt the excitement of that great truth. And I still love that great Gospel song.

But time went on, and the day came after Lucille and I were married and had Dwight, our first son, that we went to Dallas, and I enrolled as a student at Dallas Seminary. And there, in the providence of God, I came under the influence and ministry of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. Dr. Chafer was not only a theologian and a great Bible teacher, but he was a musician. He and Mrs. Chafer used to sing for the great evangelistic meetings in the early days of this century when the evangelists were Bible teachers. Usually once every two weeks Dr. Chafer would take a chapel service, and lead us in singing some of the great hymns of the church. It was there that I first got acquainted with many of the hymns that are in our hymnal, and I will always be grateful to Dr. Chafer, who is now in glory, for the love he gave me for those hymns.

However, it was not in chapel, but in one of his classes, that he was teaching one day on heaven, and glory, and he mentioned this hymn, "O that will be glory for me." And he said something like this--(I don't remember his exact words, but these are close)--he said, "There is another way to sing this song, and let me tell you what it is." And then he recited the first verse and chorus with this slight change:

When all my labors and trials are o'er,
 And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
 Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
 Will through the ages be glory for HIM!

O that will be glory for HIM,
 Glory for Him, glory for HIM,
 When by His grace I shall look on His face,
 That will be glory, be glory for HIM.

This, in part, is what Paul was speaking about in our text,

"Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." He was not thinking just of what it is going to mean to the Lord when we are with Him, when there will be no more sinning, no more sorrow, no more death, no more wars, no more crimes. Paul was thinking of how the glory of God will be displayed, and how our very presence in heaven will bring glory to our God, our Savior, and the blessed Holy Spirit.

Paul has told us earlier in this book that none of us sought God. We did not want Him. We would have been content to live our lives without Him. But through His sovereign grace, He bought us, He sought us, He brought us, and He keeps us. And then what did Jude write for us?

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless
before the presence of his glory,
with exceeding joy,
To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen (Jude 24, 25).

Do you remember how Moses prayed that the Lord would show him His glory? Cf. Ex. 33:18. David, with eyes to see what others could not see, said in Psa. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and..." And do you remember what John wrote in John 1:14? "And the Word was flesh...and we beheld **his glory...**" When our Lord described His coming to the earth to reign, he said that people would see "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and **great glory**" (Matt. 24:30). John tells us in the book of the Revelation that when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, it will have "the glory of God" (Rev. 21:11). And then he went on to say that there is not need for light in the city "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23).

We don't see God in His glory today, but someday His glory will be seen throughout the heavens and the earth. What a day that will be! And this is what we are to rejoice in, the certain prospect that the day will come when God will manifest Himself in all of His glory. What is His glory? His glory is the Lord Himself. Before we were saved, God meant nothing to us. Now that we are saved, we are to be excited about this more than anything else, that the day is coming when His glory shall be revealed.

Concl: Would you think me unkind if I said that there aren't many of us, if any, who have really been living like this, "rejoicing... Let us pray that today, and the rest of our days, will be different.

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION
Part IV: A Different Kind of Joy
Romans 5:3, 4

Intro: For the past three Sundays we have been looking at some of THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION which we find in the first five verses of Romans 5. The first one was that we have peace with God. The second, that we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. The one we considered last Sunday was that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Today we come to a blessing of a special kind. Like the others, this is a blessing which belongs in a special way only to the people of God, and it is a blessing which only the Lord's people can possibly carry out. I am speaking of glorying in tribulation. The way Paul stated it here in Romans 5:3 is that "we glory in tribulations **also.**" You might wonder why he said "also" until you realize that the verb "rejoice" in verse 2, and the word "glory" in verse 3, are the same verb in the original text.

Now I want to do today what I have done in my past messages, and that is to examine the text very carefully in the hope that we all can understand what Paul meant when he wrote these wonderful verses. And so, first, let us think about:

I. GLORYING IN TRIBULATIONS (Rom. 5:3a).

I spent quite a bit time last Sunday talking about what it means to glory, to exult, to be jubilant and excited about something. And we can understand why we should get excited about "the glory of God." His glory is going to mean glory for us. We shall be like Him when we see Him. That will be glory for Him, and glory for us, too. And that is something to be genuinely excited about. But what about feeling the same way about "tribulations"?

What is "tribulation"?

I think we all have some idea of what it means, but let me define it for you and tell you how this word is translated in our Bibles.

Basically it means pressure. This word is sometimes translated affliction, sometimes trouble, sometimes persecution, sometimes anguish. It is probably most often used in Scripture of persecution for Christ's sake.

We are getting ready to start 1 Thessalonians in our Tuesday Class. In that epistle Paul said this in chapter 1, verse 6:

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord,
having received the word **in much affliction,**
with joy in the Holy Spirit.

He meant by this that becoming Christians had meant much trouble for them, much tribulation and persecution. It has not been easy. And in chapter 3, verse 3, Paul expressed his concern that the Thessalonians would not be "moved by these afflictions," and then went on to add that all believers are actually "appointed" for these things.

Everybody has tribulations. Everybody has troubles. They often come in the form of physical illness. These troubles sometime take the form of trials of our faith. Marriage problems are trouble, tribulations. The concern that parents have over their children who turn away from the Lord, is tribulation. None of us likes tribulation. We pray to get out of our troubles. If they persist, they can take the joy out of life UNLESS we learn to glory in them.

Does this mean that Christians are a really queer lot, that we can actually glory in tribulations? Do we like it when we are ostracized because of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ? I don't know what may be the particular kind of pressure you are under today, what trials are giving you trouble, but, whatever it may be, or they may be, bring them to this verse today--and I will seek to do the same. Job said,

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;
Yet man is born unto trouble,
as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:6, 7).

The Lord does not spare His people from troubles. We have them like anyone else does. And we have a natural aversion to them. If we knew when and how they were coming our way, we would do all that we could to avoid them. But we can't! We have had our troubles. We have some now. And we are going to have more in the future.

Why would Paul say that we as the people of God can glory in them instead of hating them, and complaining about them all of the time?

Because of one thing: we know something very wonderful. We know it not by intuition; we know it by revelation--the revelation of God's Word. And this passage is one of the places where we are told a wonderful secret. What is it?

The secret is that our tribulations WORK FOR US!

How different the lives of the Israelites who traveled from Egypt to Canaan would have been if they had only known this

truth! They treated their testings, their trials, their tribulations, as enemies when all of the time they were friends. "Knowing that tribulation **worketh.**" It is hard for us to believe this, but it is true. It has to be true because it is in the Word of God. And the peace of God will come into our hearts to the degree that we believe this.

It is interesting that both of these verbs are in the present tense. We are to continuously be glorying in our tribulations because our tribulations are continuously working for us. This is the idea that Paul was seeking to get across to the Roman believers.

And, when Paul said that our tribulations work for us, he expressed it in such a way as to indicate that they would really accomplish the very thing in our lives which they were meant to accomplish.

We here at Trinity Bible Church love the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. We believe that God has been sovereign in our salvation. We believe that we did not originally choose Him, but that He chose us--before the foundation of the world. We know that we did not seek Him; He sought us. We know that we were not interested in Him, that we did not love Him. Instead we know, as hard as it is now for us to understand that He was interested in us, that He wanted us, that He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. We attribute our salvation to the marvelous sovereignty of God!

But do we believe that the Lord is sovereign in our troubles, even when we can see that we have had a hand in bringing some of our troubles upon ourselves? It may be that today you are chafing under the heavy load of responsibilities that you have, a load which seems almost, or altogether, too heavy for you to carry any longer. Life is just too full. Can you somehow see the hand of the Lord in your life at this very moment? Can you (and I) believe that God has at least allowed them, and that He is working in them for us?

It was in the context of writing about "the sufferings of this present time" that Paul wrote Romans 8:28. (Quote the versions that say that it is God Who is working.)

Paul used this same word, tribulation, in 2 Cor. 4:17 where we read,

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,
worketh for us a far more exceeding
and eternal weight of glory;
While we look not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen:

for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal.
This, too, was written in the context of speaking about
suffering because of our relationship to the Lord.

Paul told the Philippians that "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And as often as not He does this work through our tribulations. They work for us. God sees to that. He never leaves us at the mercy of other people, or even to face unpleasant circumstances alone. He is always working for us, and often doing the greatest and best work through the very things that we don't like.

I want you to see the connection that Paul made between this statement in verse 3, and what he had already written in verses 1 and 2.

We have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and so that should prove to us that God is on our side, working for us, not against us. And He is great enough so that He could keep any trial away from us that has gotten through to us. More than that Paul said that **"we have access by faith into this grace where in we stand."** This grace was sufficient to save us; is it not sufficient to keep us? Was God's grace sufficient for Paul, but not for us?

But this is not all. Paul also said that "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now this means that the goal is certain. When God is glorified, as I have said, we will be glorified. And when we are glorified, His work in us will be finished! So we can assume from that that our present tribulations are not going to ruin us. And so when we add to that the secret which God has made revealed in His Word, that we know something great about our trials, then we really can rejoice in them. Not many of us live on this high ground, but this is where we need to be. We know it. We are sure of it. We understand that this is the truth.

Even though we have been taught this, we often forget it in the heat of the battle. However, the Lord is going to bring us back to it, so that we can rejoice in it. Remember those wonderful words of our Lord in the last verse of John 16--the sixteenth verse:

These things I have spoken unto you,
that in me ye might have peace.

In the world ye shall have tribulation:

but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

That word ought to encourage all of us.

But we are not through. What we have seen is truly wonderful,

that our trials are not mistakes, nor accidents, but instruments in God's hands, working for us. But what do they accomplish? Let us look at:

II. GOD'S WORK THROUGH OUR TRIBULATIONS (Rom. 5:3b, 4).

Look at these verses and you will see three things which God does for us through our trials. I don't think that he meant this to be a complete list, but it is a representative list. And if nothing more could be added, what we have here makes it well worth the trials that come.

The results of our tribulations under the blessing of God, as we trust Him to work in them for us, are:

- 1) Patience.
- 2) Experience.
- 3) Hope.

Let us see what they are, and what they mean.

A. "Patience."

None of us was born with this quality. We are impatient by nature. We don't like to wait. We are inclined to give up. And so one of the greatest things that God does in any of us is to work in us this godly characteristic, patience.

Many of you will remember James' words in James 1:2-4 where we read:

My brethren, count it all joy
when ye fall into divers temptations:
Knowing this, that the trying of your faith
worketh patience.
But let patience have her perfect work,
that ye may be perfect and entire,
wanting nothing.

These words sound like Romans 5, don't they? How wonderful it would be if we could really taken this in! The word patience not only means the ability to wait, but to wait joyfully, and to persist in what we can do, and need to do, while we are waiting. James says that when we learn perfect patience we will be perfect. One of the traits of holiness is patience. God is going to fill heaven with patience saints.

Think of the Scriptures that tell us to wait on the Lord. Cf. Psalms 37:7a; 40:1. And Isaiah 40:31. Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail are good examples of patience--hurting, unable to sleep, but happy, singing hymns, and waiting on the Lord.

What is the second word?

B. "Experience" (Rom. 5:4).

This word may not mean a great deal to us. Actually it is an Old English expression which we do not use in the same way. However, I looked up experience in my English dictionary, and I learned that this word is not as "old" as we might think. Let me see if I can illustrate it for you.

One of the biggest trials a person can have when he sets out to find work is that he lacks experience for the job he may be seeking. That question usually comes up, doesn't it? The employer usually asks, "What kind of experience do you have?" Or, "How much experience do you have?" What does he mean?

He means, have you been tested and tried so that you know you could do this job in a way that would be satisfactory to us? "Experience" means tested and proven to be genuine and able. That is the word that Paul used here. He was talking about a child of God who has proven by his "experience" that he really does know the Lord.

You know, there are so many who fail when the test comes. When I am faced with what I want to do in contrast with what God wants me to do, and I chose my way, I have failed the test. "Experience" means proof. And that is the way this word is translated in Phil. 2:22 where Paul was writing about Timothy. Let me read from verse 19. (Read.) Paul had no hesitation about sending Timothy to Philippi because he had proved himself to be a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing marks us out as trustworthy servants, tested and tried, more than the ability to wait for the Lord to work.

But there is a final word.

C. "Hope" (Rom. 5:4b).

We come again to our friend, hope! We had this in verse 2, and before that in 4:18. And we will come to it again in Rom. 8:24, 25.

Hope means a certain, a guaranteed, expectation. It is used of the coming of the Lord. It is used of what we will be when the Lord does come. But it also applies to our confidence in the blessing of the Lord NOW. One of the characteristics of love is that it "hopeth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7m).

I don't know all that Paul had in mind when he wrote about our "hope," but perhaps I can point out at least a part of what he meant. In the context of tribulations, it would seem that Paul meant that his testings made him expect nothing

except from the hand of the Lord. Tribulations have a way of showing us how weak we are, how foolish we can be, and how much we need the Lord, and only the Lord. Was this not what David meant when he wrote,

My soul, wait thou only upon God;

for my expectation is from him (Psa. 62:5).

Trials teach us to hope in the Lord. Trials also make us more interested in heaven, and getting there. So, whether we are thinking of the here or the hereafter, trials help us to focus our expectation upon the Lord.

Concl: Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, in his commentary on Romans, likened the words of Paul here in the beginning of Romans 5 to the links in the chain. And he said that that chain cannot be broken if we are to find the full blessing in daily life which Paul was describing. We start out with salvation, and peace with God. We learn to use our access to the grace of God, and rejoice in the great prospect of being with the Lord, and like the Lord. But tribulations come along, and they keep coming--trials of different kinds. And we soon realize that God is in them, and is using them. He is working for us, and in us. We begin to learn to wait on the Lord, waiting happily, expectantly, enable by His grace not only to show that we are saved, but that we are faithful children of God and servants of God. All of God's work strengthens our faith of His blessing in the present, and faith in the ultimate hope that we have in being where the Lord is, and being like Him.

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His Word;
Just to rest upon His promise;
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust Him more.

Yes, this is A DIFFERENT KIND OF JOY, or a different reason to be joyful, which only God's people can know.

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION
Part V: The Gift of the Holy Spirit
Romans 5:5

Intro: We have been considering the first five verses of Romans 5 under the heading, THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION. There are five blessings in all:

- 1) Peace with God, v. 1.
- 2) Access by faith into the grace of God, v. 2a.
- 3) Rejoicing in the hope of God's glory, v. 2b.
- 4) Glorifying in tribulation because we know what God is accomplishing in us through our trials, vv. 3, 4.

Today we come to the fifth blessing: THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I have devoted one Sunday to each of these blessings in the hope that all of us, I as well as you, will think over these blessings every time we read Romans 5. These are not the only blessings that we have because we are right with God, but these are the blessings which are important for us to know as we go through Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Now let me begin my message about the Holy Spirit by pointing out that:

I. WE ARE INDWELT BY THE SPIRIT.

It probably is not news to many of you that we have the Holy Spirit. This is one of the unique blessings which we all enjoy under the new covenant. Our Lord described the relationship of His people to the Holy Spirit before Pentecost as one in which the Holy Spirit was with them. Cf. John 14:17. From Pentecost on that relationship could best be described as one in which He, the Holy Spirit, was in the Lord's people. And our Lord indicated that this was to be a permanent relationship. We have these words in John 14:16 and the first part of verse 17:

And I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another Comforter,
that he may abide with you **for ever;**
Even the Spirit of truth...

One of the titles given to the Holy Spirit in this book of Romans is "the Spirit of Christ." In Romans 8:9b we read,
Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,
he is none of his.

By these words he meant that if a person does not have the Holy Spirit, it means that he does not belong to the Lord, or, as we could also say, he is not saved.

And so I hope that we all understand that every child of God

today has the Holy Spirit. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the very moment we are born again. We do not need to seek Him, nor to pray that He will come to us; He comes when He regenerates us, and He comes to stay!

When the Apostle Paul was writing his first letter to the Corinthian church, he had to deal with many problems, serious problems. And you would think that if the Holy Spirit would ever depart from believers, it would have been the believers in Corinth. But that was not the case. In fact, Paul pointed to this truth as one which would be used by the Lord to draw them back into fellowship with Himself. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 6:19:

What? know ye not that your body is
the temple of the Holy Spirit,
which is in you, which ye have of God,
and ye are not your own?

The Holy Spirit had certainly been grieved by the behavior of the Corinthian believers. They had without doubt quenched Him. But He had not left them, and would not leave them. He was in them even when their lives were far from being pleasing to the Lord. This is very important for us to know!

Let me mention another thing about the Holy Spirit.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON.

Our text for today speaks of "the Holy Ghost [or Spirit] **which** is given unto us." I call your attention to the word "which." We call this today an impersonal pronoun. We mean by that that we would not use it of a person. Because of this many people have gotten the idea that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but probably some kind of power which comes to us from God--but not a person. We would not say that it was Dr. Lockwood which led us in our singing; we would say that it was Dr. Lockwood who led us in our singing. Dr. Lockwood is a person, and so we would refer to him as who, not which.

Why then do our Bibles in the KJV say, "the Holy Spirit **which** is given unto us"?

It may have been that some who worked on the KJV did not believe that the Holy Spirit was a person. But I think that the main reason is because the word spirit in the Greek language is a neuter word, and a neuter word would normally take the pronoun which. However, since we know He is a Person, and the Scriptures make this clear in many passages, we can accurately translate the last part of our text by saying, the Holy Spirit **who** is given unto us.

The same explanation applies to the Corinthians passage I

read to you a moment ago. Our KJV says that "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit ~~which~~ is in you, ~~which~~ ye have of God." But we know that we can accurately translated those statements by saying that "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit ~~WHO~~ is in you, ~~WHOM~~ ye have of God."

It is important for you to know why our translators did this so you will recognize that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He lives. He speaks. He teaches. He can be grieved. He leads us. He prays for us. He is One of the Members of the Godhead along with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is a Person just like They are.

So we are dealing today with a most amazing truth. You and I would never think that such a thing could be possible. But it is because this is the teaching of the Word of God. And what makes this truth even more amazing is that Paul did not mean that you have a little bit of the Spirit, and I have a little bit of the Spirit, so that we all share the Spirit. But he meant that I have all of the Spirit, and you have all of the Spirit, and each believer throughout the world has all of the Spirit! Don't ask me how that can be because I don't know. I believe it, not because I can explain it, but I believe it because this is what the Scriptures teach. He, the Holy Spirit, has been given unto us. He indwells us permanently. He is a real, living Person--Deity, a Member of the Godhead. No person is ever named with God and with Christ except for the Holy Spirit.

Paul will have much more to say about the Holy Spirit in this epistle to the Romans, but these are truths about the Holy Spirit which we all need to know, and to remember.

But not let us look at what our text says about the Holy Spirit. (Read Rom. 5:5.)

It is very clear that the word "hope" has a prominent place in these first five verses of Romans 5. It is in verse 2, and again in verse 4, and then is mentioned again in our text, verse 5. We have seen that it speaks of our future hope, the time when our Lord will come and God will be glorified when we are glorified. When we think of the coming of the Lord, our "blessed hope," we must not just think about what it is going to mean to us, but what it is going to mean to our God and heavenly Father. This was what we learned in our third blessing.

Last week we saw that our tribulations and testings here on earth are designed to make us look forward to the realization of our hope. Trials have a way, in the hand of God, of making us more heavenly minded.

Now when we stop to think about the blessings we have because we have been declared righteous by God through Christ, it all is most amazing. In fact, we would say that it would be most unbelievable if it were not in the Word of God! Do we really believe that we are going to be in heaven some day? And do we really believe that we are going to be like our Lord Jesus Christ? How are we going to get to heaven? Will it be by some space ship? Paul didn't know anything about what has become common knowledge among us today. He did not think in terms of walking on the moon. But he went beyond that. He taught that we are going to be caught up into the heavens, and taken to heaven itself to be "for ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). You have to be sympathetic with people who do not know the Lord if they say that they think that this is a lot of fanciful dreaming, that such a thing never could be!

Let me ask you a question: Has the thought ever crossed your mind that these things, after all, might not be true? I would have to say that such a thought has crossed my mind. The whole Gospel message, and all of the promises connected with the Gospel, are so amazing that it is a wonder that anyone believes it. But we do! We have no doubt about it! The Lord has convinced us that our hope is not a hope that we need not worry about. It is going to be realized, and, when it is, it is going to be more glorious than any of us has ever imagined.

And so we read that:

III. "HOPE MAKETH NOT ASHAMED" (Rom. 5:5a).

What did Paul mean by this?

Well, I don't know that anyone can give a full answer to that question. But let me suggest a couple of things which seem to be implied in Paul's words, "And hope maketh not ashamed."

He certainly had to be indicating that we are not, after all, going to find out that we have hoped in something that is never going to take place. We are never going to have to go to our non-Christian friends to tell them that we were wrong. We are not going to have to tell them that there is no heaven, no Christ, no glory. In fact, about a thousand years before Christ came King Solomon penned these words, and you will find them in Prov. 4:18:

But the path of the just is as a shining light,
that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

That statement, too, contains a lot of truth, but one thing it does mean is that the longer we know the Lord, the stronger is our conviction that these promises for the future, this hope, is absolutely true. And the certainty of

heaven and the hope of the Lord's return has sustained countless numbers of the Lord's people in their dying hours.

Here is one of the many truths in Scripture that you and I will never be ashamed that we have believed. "Hope maketh not ashamed." You will never have to tell anyone that you were wrong.

But the second thing that I would mention about this is that this hope sustains and strengthens us in our trials now. None of us knows what is ahead of us. The Church may once again experience severe testings. But the One Who can never be taken away from us is Christ. Our hope is centered in Him. And so we continue to profess in this wicked world the certain hope that we have in Christ. It does not make us ashamed; it gives us faith and boldness and peace throughout our lives here on earth.

"But," someone might say, "what is your proof?" The answer is found in the rest of our verse.

IV. THE PROOF THAT OUR HOPE WILL NEVER MAKE US ASHAMED (Rom. 5:5b).

It is because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us."

It seems to be that, when Paul spoke of "the love of God" in this verse, he was speaking not of our love for God, but of His love for us. And I would support that opinion by what we read in the eighth verse of this chapter:

But God commendeth **his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I know I am using the word amazing a great deal today, but how else can you describe the truth of this passage. What is more amazing than the love of God, the love of God for us, the love of a holy God for sinners such as we are—that unchangeable, unsearchable, unending love of God??? The Lord told Judah through Jeremiah at the worst time in their history up to that point,

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

I don't ever find it very comforting to think of my love for God (except for the fact that I do love Him). My love for the Lord is so imperfect, often so fickle—hot and cold! But I never cease to draw comfort from the fact that God loves me.

I love that old hymn which is usually called the children's

hymn. It captures the thought in this passage. We have sung it many times, and I hope we will sing it many times more. It speaks of Jesus' love, but there is no difference between Jesus' love and God's love; they are one and the same. Listen to the words.

I am so glad that our Father in heav'n
Tells of his love in the book he has giv'n;
Wonderful things in the Bible I see;
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Though I forget Him and wander away,
Still He doth love me wherever I stray;
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,
When I remember that Jesus loves me.

O if there's only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be,
"O what a wonder that Jesus loves me.

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.

If our hope for heaven and glory were dependent upon our love for God, we would never make it. But it isn't! It rests upon God's love for us. That is what makes our hope certain and secure.

But wait a minute. We are talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit has come to live in our hearts. Why is He there? There are many reasons, to teach us the Word, to empower us in times of temptation, to restrain us when we would sin, and many other reasons. But here Paul focused upon just one: He is in us to "shed abroad the love of God in our hearts." Actually Paul said that He has shed abroad the love of God in our hearts. It is done, but He continually reminds us of this truth which has to be the greatest wonder in all of the world.

Why do you and I know that we will never be ashamed of our hope, that we cannot possibly be disappointed, or find out that there is no such hope. It is because of God's love for us, not our love for Him. And it is "shed abroad," the same word which the Lord used in Luke 22:20 where it is recorded that He said as He instituted the Lord's Supper,
This cup is the new testament in my blood,
which **is shed** for you.
The Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God,

and it comes like a refreshing rain, or like the manna which fed and strengthened the children of Israel in the desert. And the end result is that His love for us stirs up in our hearts our love for Him. Do you want to love the Lord more than you do? Then meditate upon His love for you. And all of the time you are thinking about God's love for you, as we are this morning, remember that we are even now experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It does not just happen; the Holy Spirit does it.

Concl: The writer of the book of Hebrews had this in mind when he wrote those great verses which we find in Heb. 6:17-20. This is what he said,

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew
unto the heirs of promise the immutability
of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:
That by two immutable things,
in which it was impossible for God to lie,
we might have a strong consolation,
who have fled for refuge to lay hold
upon the hope set before us:
Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul,
both sure and steadfast,
and which entereth into that within the veil;
Whither the forerunner is for us entered,
even Jesus, made an high priest for ever
after the order of Melchisedec.

The Holy Spirit is in us to remind us of God's love for us, a love which was proven by the death of Christ, and a love which has made that same Lord Jesus Christ our Forerunner, guaranteeing that all of us will finally make it.

No wonder Paul could say that our hope will never make us ashamed. Let us thank God, and rejoice! And then let us spread the good news to others. The Father still has those whom He has chosen who are yet to hear His call, and come to Christ. Cf. Rom. 1:16, 17.

THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE

Romans 5:6-9

Intro: For the past five Sundays we have considered some of the blessings that we have because we have been declared righteous by God. These are found in the first five verses of Romans 5, and they are:

- 1) "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 2) "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."
- 3) We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
- 4) "We glory in tribulations also" because we know something about what God is doing through our testings.
- 5) God has given the Holy Spirit to each one of us.

Having seen what these blessings are, and having learned a little about them, it is important that we do not forget them. We need to enjoy them day by day. Each one should be a subject for praise to God, especially when we stop to think what our lives might be without them. So, as James exhorts us in his epistle, let us "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1:22). And then he went on to say that, if we are hearers and not doers, we are like a person who looks into a mirror and then forgets what he saw. On the other hand,

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,
and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer,
but a doer of the work,

this man shall be blessed in his deed (Jas. 1:25).

It is always a blessing to read the Word, or to hear the Word, but the blessing becomes complete when we live according to the Word. Let us not forget that.

But now we are ready to go on in the chapter. Today I want to consider with you verses 6-9 of Romans 5 where the Apostle Paul seemed intent on showing us THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE.

(Read Rom. 5:6-9.)

I like to link the verses of any text with its context. What is the relationship between the four verses we will be looking at today with the five verses we have been considering? The first word of verse 6 is "for," a connecting word, a word which introduces some kind of an explanation. It is like a link in a chain, to use Dr. Barnhouse's illustration.

Well, the connection is very easy to see, it seems to me. "The love of God" is mentioned in verse 5. Perhaps Paul reserved that to the last of the blessings of justification because it is the love of God which is responsible for those blessings. If God had not loved us, we would have none of

them. But He does, and the Holy Spirit has been given to us to keep that truth alive in our hearts.

However, as wonderful as those blessings are, and however much they may tell us about the love of God, they haven't told us all that we need to know. Verses 1-5 point to the blessings we have in the present. Verses 6-9 remind us, all of us, of what we used to be, and then in the last statement of verse 9 we look into the future and see how the love of God has provided for that. Since we are justified, Paul said, we know that "we shall be saved from wrath through him." Others will fall under the final judgment of God, but not those of us who are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.

And so, in a sense, we have the past, the present, and the future all brought together in these verses--the present, first; the past, second; and the future, third.

The idea of God proving His love for us is found in the word "commendeth" in verse 8. It means that God exhibited His love toward us, or showed His love for us, or proved that He did love us. Love cannot be quiet, or inactive. Love has to manifest itself. This is the whole point of 1 Cor. 13. Love which does not love is not love. It is as simple as that. If you love a person, you want to be with them. If you love a person, you want to do what you can for them. You will overlook the faults of a person you love just because you love him, or her. Prov. 10:12 says that "love covereth all sins." It is impossible to keep love quiet. It is going to manifest itself in some way or another.

Some people love those who love them. But this is not divine love. We are going to see in our passage today that the characteristic of divine love is that God loves when there is nothing lovely about a person, and no immediate prospect that the love will be returned. Therefore, if we want to understand the love of God we need to do two things: (1) we need to see who the people are whom He loves, and (2) we need to see what He did to prove, or show, or exhibit, or commend His love for them and to them.

So the point of the passage before us is to prove that God loves us. And so we need to look at:

I. THE PROOF OF THE LOVE OF GOD (Rom. 5:8).

It is found in verse 8 in those marvelous words, "**Christ died for us.**" I hope that we never grow accustomed to those words to the extent that they no longer move our hearts in a very powerful way. God loved us so much that Christ died for us.

I think it was D. L. Moody who used to say that the greatest word in the Bible was the word "so" in John 3:16. Who could possible explain the love of God "for us"? It is an amazing thing when one person gives his life to save another person. One person may die to save another from drowning in a river. Or a person may die saving another from a burning building. I have heard of people who were killed by a car when they rushed to get someone else out of the way of that very car. Sometimes people die trying to save someone who dies anyway. And so those who try to rescue others are not always successful.

But Christ was successful, and will be successful, in saving every person for whom He died. Do you think for a moment that any person for whom the Lord Jesus died will eventually be lost? The thought is ridiculous, isn't it? Of course He will save all for whom He died. You see, He died to guarantee the salvation of all for whom He died. He gave His life for the sheep. He loved the Church, and gave Himself for her. Paul was writing to the believers in Rome when he wrote that "God commendeth his love **toward us**, in that while we were yet sinners **Christ died for us.**" And this is why you and I are saved; it is because "Christ died for us." He put away our sins. Christ died for the very people whom the Father had given to Him, and He will lose none of them.

Let us remember that we have a sovereign God and a sovereign Lord Jesus Christ and a sovereign Holy Spirit. And They are going to accomplish the work which They planned to do before the foundation of the world. Don't ever say that certain people will be saved if they will let God save them! God is going to save all whom He has chosen for salvation. You and I would never have come to Him if He had not drawn us. And He drew us because "Christ died for us."

What a marvelous truth this is! It is not a truth that makes us proud; it is a truth that is most humbling. It was not just another human being who died for us; it was "Christ," the Son of God, One with the Father, God manifest in human flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to learn more about His death in this book of Romans, but for now let your heart focus upon this one thought: "Christ died for us." Think of Who He is. Think of what He did, and what it cost Him. And then think of yourself and marvel that the Lord Jesus Christ would die for you, and that this was exactly what the Father wanted Him to do. God loved you and me "so" much that He would even send His Son into the world as a Man in order that He might die on a Cross--"for us"!

However, Paul did not leave this great truth with just that simple statement, as glorious as it is. He also, in this passage, went on to describe our spiritual condition when He died for us. And so let me ask the question,

II. FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

I have already called your attention to the fact that He "died for us." That is, He died for His chosen ones. He died for all who have ever, or will ever, trust Him as their Savior. But I want to take you and me beyond that. How did Paul, in this passage, describe those for whom Christ died?

Paul described us with three terms, and I want to point those terms out to you, and then try to explain to you what they mean. They are:

- 1) "Without strength," in verse 6.
- 2) "The ungodly," also in verse 6.
- 3) "Sinners," in verse 8.

I trust that the Lord will help us to understand this Scriptural photograph of what we were before we were saved.

A. "Without strength" (Rom. 5:6).

We were strengthless. I don't know if you will find that word in your dictionary, but it is a good word nevertheless: strengthless.

Paul did not mean that they were physically "without strength." Some of them may have been very strong and handsome specimens of physical strength. Nor did he mean that they were mentally "without strength." Some of them may have been mentally very powerful. What he meant was that they were spiritually "without strength"! And being spiritually "without strength" affected them in four ways, and maybe more than four, but I will confine myself to four today:

- 1) They were not able to keep from doing those things that are displeasing to God.
- 2) They were not able to do the things that are pleasing to God.
- 3) They could not do what God required to cause Him to forgive their sins. Even if they could have started at a certain point and gone on to please God (which no one could do—but say that they could), they could never do enough to erase the past.
- 4) But they were also so completely "without strength" that they really weren't interested in making things right with God.

What Paul meant by this expression was that they did not have any desires toward God, and, if they had, their cases would

have been hopeless because spiritually they were "without strength." And that is true of every person who was ever born into this world, and it was descriptive of everyone of us before we were saved. If our salvation depended upon what we could do for ourselves, or do to make things right with God, we would still be lost.

So the condition of every sinner can best be described as hopeless.

But let us go on to the next expression in this same verse.

B. "The ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

This describes all people by nature: we are non-worshippers of the true God. We do not fear God. We are not concerned about pleasing Him. We are not interested in knowing Him. We do not feel that we need Him. We may think about Him when there is trouble, but for the most part we are content to live our lives without Him. Archbishop Trench makes it even stronger. He says that in his ungodly state man is guilty of positive and active irreligion, and this contemplated as a deliberate withholding from God of his dues of prayer and of service, a standing, so to speak, in battle array against him (Synonyms, p. 242).

An ungodly man is, therefore, not only content to live without God, but he opposes anyone who tries to bring him to God. This is the very nature of every human heart. We may try to deny it, but the evidence is altogether too clear from human behavior and speech.

But there is a third word:

C. Sinners (Rom. 5:8).

You have all probably heard sin described as a missing of the mark. That is basically the idea in the word that Paul used here. We mean by that that man is inclined to be devoted to his sin even though he is always making the wrong choices. He is devoted to sin which masters him. And he is not only unable to set himself free, but he is content in his sin. He knows that what he is doing makes him miserable, and yet he keeps on sinning, keeps on missing the mark.

When you think about it, man is a very miserable and pitiful character, and yet he refuses to think that his problems are due to the fact that God has no place in his life, and that he has no need for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in summing this up as we think of God's picture of the

people that Christ died for, look at verse 7 and see how it leads into verse 8.

Paul said that if all men were "righteous," even then it would be hard to find someone to die for them. This is the kind of a person who always tries to do the right thing. The Pharisee is perhaps not a good illustration of this kind of a person, but probably Saul of Tarsus before he was saved was this kind of a person. So also was the rich young ruler who came to the Lord to find out what he could do to inherit eternal life. There are many people who try to do right in their lives, but it is right as they see it. And Paul said that you could "scarcely" find a person to die for him with all of his good qualities. He meant that it would be difficult to find someone to die for a righteous person. It would be hard. It would take a lot of work to find a willing sacrifice for a righteous person.

Then Paul added the idea of goodness. This would be the kind of a person who was kind and gentle, wanting to be helpful to others. He is definitely a step above the righteous man. You would be attracted to a good man. You would feel that he would really be deserving if someone were to die for him.

But neither "righteous" nor "good" describes man. Instead, man is "without strength," "ungodly," and "a sinner." There is nothing about man that makes him deserving of salvation. Man can present no evidence to God as to why Christ would die for Him. It is all of grace. The reason that Christ would die "for us," is not found in us, but in the love of God. If we were righteous and good, there might be some explanation for the death of Christ, but since we are just the opposite, the love of God is placed on a higher level than we can fully comprehend. He died "for us."

We did not want Him. We delighted in our sin. We had no interest in pleasing Him. So why would Christ die for us? The answer is not to be found in us, but in the love of God. We all can sing, and need to sing,

I stand amazed in the presence
of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! how wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! how wonderful
Is my Savior's love for me!

But this is not all. I haven't gotten to verse 9 yet. Let

me take just a minute or two with it.

The love of God is proven, first, because Jesus died for us. In the second place, it is proven because Jesus would die for sinners like we are. But, in the third place, the love of God is proven because of:

III. WHAT THE LORD JESUS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US BY HIS DEATH (Rom. 5:9).

Paul mentioned two things in this last verse of our text. Do you see what they are? The first is present; the second is future.

A. NOW: We are "justified by his blood."

This means that every charge against us has been removed. All that separated us from God is forgiven. We are cleansed. We are fully accepted by God. All charges are dropped because our penalty was taken by Christ, and we have been declared righteous before God because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We deserved the worst; we get the best. And nothing can ever reverse our standing before God because it is in Christ. Our case will never be called up for a re-trial. That is the meaning of John 5:24--the words of the Lord Jesus Himself.

B. THE FUTURE: "We shall be saved from wrath through him."

What "wrath" did we need to be saved from? God's wrath. This meant that we were headed right for hell, but because the Lord Jesus Christ has intervened for us by dying for us, we have been saved from that awful judgment.

This is why we speak of being saved. This is why we call God's work in our hearts salvation! We have been saved from hell. We have been saved from eternal judgment.

Paul in writing earlier to the church at Thessalonica spoke of how they had turned "to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, **which delivered us from the wrath to come**" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

Concl: What a wonderful Savior we have, and what a wonderful God and Father, and what a wonderful salvation! We don't get what we deserve to get, but we get what only the love of God could provide for us: justification before God, and eternal deliverance from the coming wrath. How thankful we should be for the marvelous love of God.

RECONCILED TO GOD
Romans 5:10, 11

Intro: For several Sundays we have been considering together from this epistle to the Romans the great doctrine of justification by faith. This is the subject Paul discussed from Romans 3:21 to the end of chapter 5. When you think of justification, think also of righteousness because to justify is to declare righteous.

I think that it can be said that the main object of religion, the religions of the world, is to provide a way by which people can win the favor of whatever god they may be worshipping. And, with the exception of the Christian faith, the way of acceptance which is proposed by the religions of the world is by what people can do to make themselves acceptable. In other words, acceptance with their god is dependent upon their own works. Even the Jews in Paul's day had come to the mistaken idea that they would be saved from divine judgment if they obeyed the Law of Moses.

The Lord never told the people of Israel that they could be saved by their works. In fact, He had told them just the opposite. Salvation was by faith in OT just as much as it has been since our Lord died on the Cross. They were looking ahead by faith to the coming of Christ; we look back to Christ by faith knowing that He is the One Who has died for our sins. Paul had introduced this great subject in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1. (Read.) Justification is a part of that greater word salvation which Paul used in Romans 1:16. And the quotation from Hab. 2:4 at the end of verse 17 in chapter 1 shows that OT salvation and NT salvation are exactly the same.

In Romans 5, in the verses we have been concentrating on for the past six weeks, we have justification referred to in verse 1, and again in verse 10. Verse 1 says that it is "by faith"; verse 10 says that it is by "the blood" of Christ. Both statements are true. We believe in the blood of Christ, we believe that by His death our Lord did everything necessary to remove our sins and to make us fully acceptable with God. As I have been saying, through the death of Christ all charges against us in the court of heaven have been dropped. God has not just agreed to forget them, but the Lord Jesus Christ took the penalty that we deserved so that we could be fully accepted by God. And that acceptance is eternal! And so faith in Christ's death means that we are trusting in what Christ did for us, as our Substitute, and that we are not trusting in anything that we might do for God to atone for our sins. What a glorious day it is in any person's life when the Lord makes this truth clear to him, or to her!

Therefore, justification before God is by faith in the work of Christ on the Cross. I hope that is clear to all of us. And if you have not trusted in Christ for your salvation, do it now before another minute goes by. The Lord may have brought you here today to save you from your sins.

Verses 1 through 11 obviously form one section in Paul's discussion of justification, and today we come to the last two verses: 10 and 11. And to get at the meaning of these verses I have a very simple, four-point outline to give to you. I will give it to you now, and then we will consider each point together. This is the outline:

- 1) What we were.
- 2) What we are.
- 3) What we shall be.
- 4) What we do.

The first three points are in verse 10; the last one is in verse 11.

The first point, then, is:

I. WHAT WE WERE (Rom. 5:10a).

If you were here last Lord's Day, I hope you will remember that I pointed out three terms Paul used to describe what we are by nature, and still are to some degree:

- 1) We are "without strength," according to verse 6. You may remember that I used the word that someone made up to describe this condition: strengthless. We are not strong enough to stop our sinning, nor are we strong enough to do what needs to be done to atone for our sins. We don't even have the inclination to seek the remedy which God has provided for us in Christ.
- 2) We are "ungodly," according to verse 6. As far as the true God is concerned, we do not fear Him. We will not worship Him. We are not interested in knowing Him. We, in a very real sense, as one writer has expressed it, stand "in battle array against him" (Trench, Synonyms, p. 242). This comes very close to the term we will look at in our text for today.
- 3) We are "sinners," according to verse 8. This describes us as continually making the wrong decisions, which we know make us miserable, and yet we go on making mistakes anyway--and many times the same sins over and over again. We are hopelessly addicted to sin.

That isn't a very nice picture, is it? This is God's portrait of what every person in the world is by nature.

However, here in verse 10 Paul added another term to describe us before we knew the Lord. We still bear the evidence of

being "without strength," and "ungodly," and "sinners," and, I am sorry to say, that we still have occasional evidences that this still is in our hearts. Paul said here that "we were enemies"!

An enemy is a foe, the opposite of a friend. An enemy is a person who is hostile. This means that we would rather not have anything to do with God. Oh, people can appear to be very religious, but the God they are devoted to is a god of their imagination, not the God of Scripture, not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They want a God of love, but they are not interested in learning about a God Who is righteous and holy, a God Who cannot tolerate sin. Man is an enemy of the true God.

We see this also in the way we blame God so quickly when things go wrong, or when we don't get our way. I have told some of you about a professor of mine in a university I attended who was talking about the conditions in the world, and he said that we could blame man for all that is wrong. I could agree with that. But then he went on to say that if we want to go to the real source of the evil we should blame God because He made man the way He is. That was a lie! That man was showing that he was an enemy of God. He was at enmity with God.

Even though that statement came from a man who had at least one Ph. D. after his name, yet it was utterly foolish. And yet you and I have the same attitude in our hearts. Think of the children of Israel in the wilderness. And even think of Joshua when Israel was defeated at Ai. He blamed God for their defeat. And before Joshua, you may remember how, when things went bad for him the first time he went before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh only added to the burdens of the Israelites, that he said this to the Lord:

Lord, wherefore hast **thou** so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people;

neither hast thou delivered thy people at all

(Ex. 5:22, 23).

That was that old, nature, inborn animosity toward God raising its ugly head. It is surprising, isn't it, that the Lord does not strike us dead sometimes!

And even though we still have feelings like that in our hearts, yet isn't it wonderful that we are no longer at enmity with God. We know now that He is not our foe; He is our friend. And we love Him. Now we want to please Him. We really want to do His will. These new feelings that we have toward God are all traceable to the marvelous grace of God.

And it is not a change which we have made; it is a change which God made in our hearts when he saved us.

So this is what we were.

But let me go on to my second point:

II. WHAT WE ARE (Rom. 5:10m).

We "were reconciled to God"—but HOW? It was not a reward for our works. The credit does not belong to us. "We were reconciled to God **by the death of his Son**"!

The basic meaning of the word reconciliation is that those who have been enemies have become friends. The differences between them have been settled. They are no longer foes, but friends.

But that definition does not really state the case as far as our relationship to God is concerned. It is we who need to be reconciled to God; God does not need to be reconciled to us. The fault is on our side, not God's. He loves His people with an everlasting love, as He said in Jer. 31:3. God has done nothing wrong; we are the sinners. Our sins had to be removed so that we could be reconciled to God. We did not seek Him; He sought us. If God had not taken the initiative, we would still be at enmity with God. But thank God He chose us, and bought us, and sought us, and brought us into the fold of salvation. Now He is not only my Friend and your Friend, but He is my Father and your Father.

God did not wait until we wanted to seek His friendship. If He had, He would still be waiting. No, as our verse says, it was "when we were enemies" that "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." One of the greatest honors ever conferred upon a man, greater than any degree conferred by any university, or all of them together, was the honor conferred upon Abraham when God called him His friend.

James put it this way:

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith,
Abraham believed God,
and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:
and he was called the Friend of God (Jas. 2:23).

Cf. also 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8.

Maybe someone here today came to this service an enemy of God, and will leave, having trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's friend.

But let me move on to my third point:

III. WHAT WE SHALL BE (Rom. 5:10b).

I am thinking now of those words at the end of verse 10: "We shall be saved by his life."

In verse 9 we read that "we shall be saved from wrath through him." But this statement in verse 10 is even a step beyond that. In verse 9 Paul was thinking about the sacrifice of Christ; in verse 10 he was thinking about our Lord's resurrection following His sacrifice. The two, Christ's death and His resurrection, go together. Our Lord not only died on the Cross, and was buried as proof of His death, but He was raised triumphantly from the dead as eternal confirmation that God had accepted and was fully satisfied with what He had done for His people.

But I think that there is also another idea in these words, "saved by his life." Look at Rom. 6:3, 4. (Read.)

Several years ago when I was teaching Colossians, I had an occasion to say this: "When Christ died, we died with Him. When He was buried, we were buried with Him. When He arose, we arose with Him. And when He ascended, we ascended with Him." All that He did on the Cross and then rising from the dead, He did for us.

And now where is He?

Anyone studying the book of Hebrews as we are in Sunday School right now, should have no trouble answering that question. He is at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

And what is He doing there?

Hebrews 7:25 gives us our answer:

Wherefore he is able also to save them
to the uttermost that come unto God by him,
seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

We are being saved by His life in a twofold sense:

- 1) We live because He lives, and we will continue to live as long as He lives.
- 2) He is able to save us completely because He lives to intercede for us.

Not only the death of Christ, but also His resurrection, guarantees that we will never be lost, but also that we will never face the punishment which we so justly deserve because of our sins.

Did you notice that again we have the past, the present, and

the future in verse 10 as we had it last week in verses 6-9?

- 1) The past: We were enemies, and we were reconciled.
- 2) The present: We continue to be reconciled.
- 3) The present and the future: We shall be saved by his life.

In verse 11 we are back in the present. It deals with:

IV. WHAT WE DO (Rom. 5:11).

Paul was saying that we not only can be certain that "we shall be saved by his life," i.e., but Christ's life, but "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." The word "atonement" should be reconciliation.

Let me check what you remember about this fifth chapter of Romans. Look back to the latter part of verse 2 at the word "rejoice." And then look at the word "glory" in verse 3. Do you remember that I pointed out that these are the same verb in the Greek? And do you remember what I said about them, i.e., what they mean? I used the little-known word exult to describe what Paul was emphasizing in these statements. And then I went on to say that it means not only to rejoice, but to rejoice greatly, to be jubilant. It is a word which speaks of something that not only makes us happy, but very happy! It speaks of getting truly excited about something.

Well, the word that Paul used here for "joy" is the same word. So we have it three times in these first eleven verses of Romans 5. By what we have here we see the difference that it makes in a sinner's life when he is reconciled to God. He glories, he is very happy, he is excited about God. Once he was at enmity with God; now all of that is changed, and God has become his greatest joy.

But I want you to notice that Paul did not say that this is something that we ought to do; he said that it is something that we do. A believer does this without being told that he ought to do it. Oh, we have to say to our own shame that we do not act this way all of the time, but we should! We glory in God, we rejoice in Him, exult in Him, when we stop to think about what we would have been, and where we would have been, and where we would be headed, if it were not for the love of God shown to us in Christ. We glory in Him when we stop to realize that He has chosen us and saved us even though we never gave any indication that we wanted Him.

But notice this also about verse 11. Your joy and my joy mean nothing to God unless it is expressed "through our Lord Jesus Christ." God will not let us forget Christ. All that we are before God is because of Christ and what He has done

and continues to do for us. And be sure to notice that Paul used the full Name and Title of our Lord here: and not just the Lord Jesus Christ, but "**our** Lord Jesus Christ." No person can be reconciled to God, no person can ever get to God, unless that person comes "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Concl: What a lot of spiritual food there is in these two verses, 10 and 11! We need to come back to them again and again to think about what we were, what we are now, what we shall be, and what we ought to be doing every day that we live--and do it more and more all of the time. To be reconciled is to have "peace with God." This is what it means to be justified. We once were far off from God, and content to stay that way. But by the grace of God He drew us near, and through the blood of His Son has not only forgiven our sins, but cleansed them away so that they will never be remembered against us any more.

But I cannot close without speaking again to any of you who may still be in your sins, without God, without Christ, and without hope. The Lord may be dealing with your heart as I am trying, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to make you see your need of Christ. Come to Him now. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Place your hope for salvation upon Christ and what He did on the Cross. That is the only way that is acceptable to God. Come to God through Christ, and you will never be turned away.

A MAN TO REMEMBER

Romans 5:12

Intro: When we started our present consideration of the book of Romans, we saw that, after Paul's introductory remarks which included his powerful statements concerning his ministry and his message (the Gospel), Paul began the message of this epistle by dealing with the "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). And then he followed this with an unanswerable charge against both Jews and Gentiles, showing that their lives showed that they were sinners. Whether we like that word or not, that is what we are: sinners! Look at the life of any person, even the best of people, and you can see that God is absolutely right when He charges us with sin. We are all sinners. And because we are all sinners, we are all under the judgment of God. And any person who fails to recognize this, has not realized what his real problem is. And let me say this also: Any counselor, whether pastor or so-called "professional," who fails to recognize this, is not going to give you and me the help that we need. This is what the Bible teaches, and if our country is to be saved from total destruction, this is a truth that we must get back to, and accept!

Why is it that people will worship an idol, or some other god, before they will worship the true and living God? Because they are sinners. Why do people exalt themselves and refuse to recognize their need for God? Because they are sinners. What do people lie and cheat and abuse and kill? Because they are sinners. Why do some men choose another man for his sexual partner, and some women do the same with another woman? Because they are sinners. Why do we so freely take the name of the Lord in profanity? Because they are sinners. Why are we so determined to have our own way rather than submit to the teaching of the Word of God? Because we are sinners. Just pick up your newspaper any day in the week, or listen to any newscast, and you will have overwhelming proof of the truth of Scripture that man's problem in sin! Why are we having such a terrible problem with immorality among our young people, and even our children? It is because they are sinners? Why will people loot and burn and destroy their own communities? It is because they are sinners. Why do we have to have a police force, and an army to protect ourselves from foreign powers? It is because people are sinners.

But it seems that we are just so blind to the fact that the trouble with society today is where it always has been, in the hearts of people, that we are failing to see that only God has the answer to all of the problems we face. We are all sinners. We do not all sin in the same way, nor to the

same extent, but we are all sinners--all of us! And the remedy for our present-day troubles which are clearly out-of-hand is greater than man by himself has the ability to meet.

When in Romans Paul got to chapter 3 and verse 21, after showing the total folly of ever expecting that man can solve his own problems, he begins to emphasize a truth that can best be described by the word substitution. You see, as bad as our problems are on the human scale, this is nothing compared with the problem that man has in his relationship with God. And so Paul spoke from chapter 3:21 on with a greater emphasis upon the Lord Jesus Christ Who died that sinners might be forgiven of their sins, and cleansed from the sins, so as to be made acceptable with God. And this is his emphasis: We need to get right with God first; then we can expect that there will be a great improvement in our relationships with each other. But the person who ignored his need for acceptance with God, is a person who will never find a real solution to his present-day needs, and will only learn when it is too late that his sin has brought him, after death, to eternal judgment--when it will be too late to do anything about it. How important it is for every person to hear what the Word of God has to say about US! And it is equally important for every person to learn what Jesus Christ has done to deliver us from our sins.

Let me read again for you those wonderful words which we have just considered in the first part of Romans 5. (Read vv. 6-11.) Notice how the idea of substitution runs through this whole passage.

But now we come to our text for today: Romans 5:12. What was Paul doing when he wrote this verse? He was telling us why we do sinful things, why it is absolutely right that we be called sinners.

(Read Rom. 5:12.)

Now let me ask you a question.

I. WHO IS THIS "ONE MAN"?

From what is stated here, this "one man" has been responsible for the entrance of sin into the world. Who is he, or who was he?

Nowhere has Paul mentioned him up to this point in the book of Romans. And yet Paul was saying here that human sin is traceable to him.

Look on down to Romans 5:19 and you will see these words:

"For as by one man's disobedience ~~many were made sinners...~~"
 Whoever this "one man" was, the Word of God traces our
 sinfulness to him. "Were made" means that we were constitut-
 ed, or shown to be sinners. It means that because of what he
 did, we now have those elements within us which can best be
 described by the term sinner.

Who was that "one man"? His name appears twice in verse 14.
 Paul was speaking about Adam.

Of all the men in Scripture, there are two that soar in
 importance to us more than any others: one is Adam; the
 other is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our troubles with sin began
 with Adam; the remedy for our sin is to be found in Christ.
 Adam is A MAN TO REMEMBER. And yet most people never read
 the Bible, nor do they go to church, and so they have never
 heard the true story of Adam. In fact, about the only time I
 used to hear about Adam when I was young was when people
 spoke jokingly of the bump on the front of our necks and said
 that it was "Adam's apple," referring to the fruit which he
 ate in the Garden of Eden. But when you read about Adam in
 the Bible, you will find that it is no joke that he ate the
 fruit in the garden which God had forbidden him to eat. That
 is the point to which we can trace all of the evil that has
 ever come out of the human heart. It was Adam's sin that not
 only changed him, but it explains why we are sinners by
 nature. When David sought to trace the reason for his adult-
 ery with Bathsheba, he confessed that he was "born in sin,"
 that he had come into this world with a sinful nature.

Now notice how Paul spoke of:

II. THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD.

That expression, "sin entered into the world," has much in it
 that we need to learn.

Before we examine this verse in some detail, let me say that
 there are questions you may have about this sin of Adam for
 which neither I nor anyone else has the answer. But let me
 plead with each one of you to accept what the Bible teaches.
 We do not profit from Scripture because we can understand
 everything that we read in it; we profit from Scripture by
 believing what it says. So when the Word of God says that "by
 one man sin entered into the world," don't argue with it;
 believe it!

Now the expression that "sin entered into the world" means,
 first, that:

A. God did not create a sinful world, nor a sinful man.

God is not responsible in any way for human sin. The original creation was perfect; there was nothing sinful about it. It was all "good," as Genesis 1 says over and over. Therefore, you and I are not to blame God for sin. He did not bring it into the world; Adam did.

But I want you to notice a second thing about this verse.

B. The Devil did not bring sin into the world.

The Devil tempted Eve, and Eve succumbed to the temptation. Then she tempted her husband, and he ate the forbidden fruit. Go back and read the story in Genesis 3. The Devil is responsible for many bad things that have happened since then, but he did not bring sin into the world. The Devil was a sinner before man was. Sin had been committed in the heavens before it was ever committed on earth, but the Bible does not say that the Devil brought sin into the world. He brought the temptation to sin, but our text indicates that Adam was solely responsible for what he did.

And so let none of us think that the expression, "the Devil made me do it," is going to cause God to excuse us for our sins. It was "by one man that sin entered into the world."

And there is a third thing that is important for us to notice about this statement:

C. Eve did not bring sin into the world.

It is true that Eve sinned before Adam did. The Devil deceived Eve, and she ate of the fruit thinking that the result would be good, not bad. The Devil made her think that she would be like God if she ate of the fruit, that they she would know the difference between good and evil. But even though she sinned first, that is not what introduced sin into the world.

What would have happened if Adam had not eaten of the fruit although Eve did, is one of those questions we cannot answer because we are not told in Scripture. But let us not blame Eve with bringing sin into the world. Our text says, the Holy Spirit says, and the Apostle Paul said, that it was "by one man that sin entered into the world." Let us make sure that we understand what Paul was saying here, and that we do not place the blame upon anyone except for Adam. That is where the Word places the blame. The Devil was judged for his part, and Eve was judged for her part, but Adam was the one whose sin had such tragic results.

But now, just taking this one verse we are looking at this

morning (because more could be said than is said here), let me point out:

III. THE RESULTS OF ADAM'S SIN.

Verse 14 speaks of it as "Adam's transgression." Verses 15 and 17 and 18 call it an "offence." Verse 16 calls it sin. Verse 19 calls it "disobedience." Perhaps we will look at these words more closely next week, but we know that Adam stepped over the limitations that God had place upon him. He clearly disobeyed God. It was sin. One definition of sin is that it is disobedience to God.

But, in speaking of the results of Adam's sin, there is one other point that I would like for you to notice about the expression which we have been considering, that "sin entered into the world."

A. Paul spoke of sin, not just as entering man, but entering the world.

This means not only that man felt the effect of his sin, but that the whole world, all of creation, was affected by what Adam did. There was no part of creation in the world which did not show the effect of sin. The cosmos became a chaos. The ground was cursed. It would be a place of sorrow for man all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles would grow, and man would have to work, and work hard, work would become difficult for him.

And, although it is not mentioned in Genesis 3, we know from the NT that with Adam's sin the Devil assumed the role of being "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). This did not mean that the Devil became greater than God, but it did mean that within the limits of God's sovereignty, and ultimately for God's glory, the world would feel the terrible effects of the rule and influence of the Evil One. Before Adam sinned, that was not the case. But it was after he sinned.

B. Adam became a sinner by nature.

With Adam's sin, he became a sinner by nature, and the Scriptures teach us that he passed on that sinful nature to all of his descendants. This, of course, includes every person who has lived from that day until this. Paul told the Ephesian believers that we are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). And so here we really have two results: Adam became a sinner, and he has passed on that sinful nature to us.

Let me state it this way as far as we are concerned: We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

You and I did not become sinners the first time we sinned. We sinned because that is our nature. We never had to learn to sin. We never had to teach our children to sin. Our problem is not that we are too good; our problem is that we are bad, bad in God's sight.

But there is another tragic result of sin.

C. Adam died.

God told Adam when He warned Adam about the forbidden fruit, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17b). So we must assume from this that he did die when he sinned. He died spiritually because there was an immediate separation between him and God. Even Adam recognized this because he sought to hide himself from the Lord, and sought unsuccessfully to prepare himself for the presence of the Lord. Also, he began to die physically. And ultimately he did die. Cf. Gen. 5:5 tells that after he lived 930, "he died."

But what was worst of all, he came under the judgment of God and was condemned to die eternally.

The last thing that Paul mentioned in our text was:

D. We also died because we have become the inheritors of Adam's sin.

Look at the last part of our text: "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Or we could also translate the last words of the verse, "For all sinned." That is, since Adam was the head of the human race, what he did has affected us, and so it can be said that we sinned in him when he sinned.

People like to argue with that, but the only thing that your rejection of that statement will do for you is to seal your doom to eternal judgment. Again let me say, don't argue with Scripture. This is the Word of God. The Lord does not explain everything to us, and He does not expect us to explain it all. But He wants us to know what He has said, and to believe it. Believing it we can profit from it, and see that what we need is a Savior.

Concl: Paul does not state the remedy here in our text, but he has stated it many times over in the first chapters. Our condition is so hopeless that we can do nothing about it, but God has done all that we need. He sent His Son. The Lord Jesus died to save sinners from their sins. He died that we might have eternal life instead of eternal

death. He died that we might be fully acceptable to God. He did everything necessary for our salvation. This, too, we must believe, or face eternal judgment. Many of you, most of you, know this and you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. But we must all believe this. There is only one way of escape, only one way of salvation. And that is through Christ and His work on the Cross. It was there that He took the penalty for all who will ever be saved. And He has promised that none who come to Him will be cast out, or turned away.

Therefore, if Christ is not your Savior, come to Him today. Believe on Him. Quit trying to make yourself acceptable to God because that is something that you can never do. But Christ can cleanse away your sin. He can make you all that you need to be to be accepted by God. Call upon Him today for your salvation. He can, and He will, save you.

Adam is A MAN TO REMEMBER--more than any other person who has ever lived--with one exception. We need to know and remember Adam, or we will not understand our need of a Savior. But the One we need to remember the most is the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we are here today, and that is why we are going to remember Him just now in observing the Lord's Supper. Adam shows us our need; Christ shows us the only One Who can meet our need. Therefore, you and I who know the Lord Jesus Christ can come to the Lord's Table with praise in our hearts for the grace of God Who has given us Christ to save us from our sins.

Illus: What Abraham told the rich man who wanted someone to tell his brothers not to come where he was. Cf. Luke 16:29-31.

ADAM'S OFFENSE AND GOD'S FREE GIFT
Romans 5:13-17

Intro: Those of you who were here last Sunday will remember, I trust, that I drew a contrast between Paul's teaching about sin in the first two and a half chapters of Romans, and the teaching that we have in this latter part of Romans 5. To state it briefly again, in that first section Paul was dealing with the truth that man is a sinner from the fact that he sins. Here in chapter 5 he explained why we are sinners, sinners by nature, and therefore under the judgment of God. And the explanation is given in verse 12 of chapter 5. (Read.)

We learned (if we did not already know it) that the "one man" spoken of in Rom. 5:12, is Adam. Adam was the first human being created by God. And, as the first human being, he was the head of the human race. Some speak of him as the federal head. By this they mean that Adam was our representative. What he did affected not only him, but us as well. And so by his sin, he became a sinner, a sinner by nature. And by his sin, his sons were born sinners by nature. And that nature has been passed on down from generation to generation upon every human being from that time to this--whether male or female. So that it can be said of us, "When Adam sinned, we sinned." And the proof that we are sinners is that we all die. Likewise, the fact that babies die is evidence that you don't have to commit some act of sin before you become a sinner.

Of course, there always have been, and always will be, people who argue with Paul's teaching here in the book of Romans. But this is why we need to remember that this is not just Paul's idea; Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, telling us things which can only be known by divine revelation. This is basic Biblical psychology. Psychology is the study of human thinking and behavior. Man has his own ideas about man's nature and what makes him think and act the way he does. But there can be no true psychology which ignores the teaching about man which we have in Scripture. Man is a sinner by nature, a sinner in the sight of God, and consequently, under the judgment of God, the wrath of God. And no amount of reformation can change him. What he needs, as the Bible tells us, is a new nature. Change him from within, and his outward character and behavior will change.

I hope we all understand this. This is the truth Paul presented in this passage. He was explaining why it is that we sin. We sin because we are sinners, sinful by nature. And we received our sinful nature originally from Adam. That is why we speak of Adam's sin as original sin.

But now let us go on to consider the verses of our text for today: verses 13 through 17.

The first two verses of this passage speak of:

I. THE PERIOD FROM ADAM TO MOSES (Rom. 5:13, 14).

This was a period of about 2,500 years. It is a period covered very briefly in the Bible--in the book of Genesis alone, and even then not the whole period. The first eleven chapters of Genesis cover the first 2,000 years, down to the time of Abraham. From Abraham to Moses was another 500 years, but Genesis takes us only as far as the life of Joseph.

What do we know about that period from Adam to Moses as far as sin is concerned?

We know that all the people who lived during that time were sinners. How do we know it? We know it because they all died--with the one exception of Enoch who was raptured from earth to heaven. But all the rest died. What does this prove? It proves that they were sinners. They did not sin like Adam sinned ("not...after the similitude of Adam's transgression"), but they sinned, and so they died! "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." Death was in control. Death exercised a power from which no one was exempt, no one could escape.

But how are we to explain Paul's statement that "sin is not imputed where there is no law"?

To impute sin means to put that to a person's account, to charge a person with sin. Obviously they were charged with sin before God.

The best explanation I have seen of this is that although they were without the Mosaic law, they were not without law. God gave a law to Adam when He told him not to eat of the forbidden fruit. God gave a law to Cain when He sought to keep him from killing his brother. Enoch was a preacher of righteousness, and so was Noah. The flood stands as a reminder that God judges sin. Read Genesis 6. Look at the judgment of Ham after the flood. They obviously warned people about the things that were displeasing to God. And besides, man's conscience warned him against sin, things that were displeasing to God. So God was not silent about right and wrong. The people during that period knew about sin. And it is very clear from Genesis 12 on to the end of the book that people were charged with sin.

Therefore, the period from Adam to Moses is standing proof of the sinfulness of men, and that sin brought judgment. Sin became even clearer with the giving of the Law through Moses, but the Law did not mark the beginning of sin. As far as man is concerned, sin started with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

But let us move on to a second point:

II. ADAM, A "FIGURE OF HIM THAT WAS TO COME" (Rom. 5:14b).

"Figure" mean a type. He prefigured someone else who was yet to come. He was not only the head of a fallen race, but he pictured someone else who was coming to be a head.

Anyone who studies the Bible is familiar with types, types of Christ. Joseph was a type of Christ. The Passover Lamb was a type of Christ. The serpent on the pole which Moses erected was a type of Christ. The Tabernacle pictured Christ in many ways, as the Light of the world, as the Bread of life, etc. Types are OT pictures of NT truth, and especially of Christ.

Reading through the rest of our text, in fact, down to the end of chapter 5, when Paul spoke of "him that was to come," it is clear that he was speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how could Adam, who was the first sinner, be a type of Christ Who never sinned?

He was a type of Christ in the sense that as Adam was the head of a fallen race, so Christ would come to be the head of a new race. He pictured Christ, but Adam was a type in contrast. And this is what we are concerned about in the rest of our text.

In 1 Cor. 15:47 we read this:

The first man is of the earth, earthy:
the second man is the Lord from heaven.

"The first man" was Adam. "The second man" is our Lord Jesus Christ--not because He was the second man on earth, but because He was the second to be head of a race of people.

In 1 Cor. 15:45 we read of "the first man Adam," and then of "the last Adam" Who was our Lord.

And so before anyone gets upset by Paul's teaching regarding our sin being traceable to Adam, let us notice what is said about "the last Adam." And since our society today demonstrates how bankrupt we are for answers to our problems, it is time for us to listen to what the Word of God has to say about God's answer to man's sin. If we were more willing to recognize that our problems need to be called sins, we would

more readily see that God has given us the answer to our needs in Christ, not just for time, but for all eternity!

And so we all need to listen attentively as Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, explained:

III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN ADAM AND CHRIST (Rom. 5:15-17).

Notice that both verses 15 and 16 begin by introducing a contrast. The result of Adam's sin was bad, terribly bad, unspeakably bad; the result of Christ's work is infinitely good, overturning the bad which we received from Adam.

How are they described?

- A. The first description: "The offence" and "the free gift" (Rom. 5:15).

In verse 14 Paul called Adam's sin a "transgression," which means that he moved beyond the limit which God had placed upon him. He stepped over the line. But the word that Paul used throughout this passage, translated "offence" in verses 15-18, and again in 20, suggests a fall. He fell into sin. He fell out of fellowship with God. He fell under the judgment of God. Adam was totally responsible for his "offence" toward God.

"The free gift," on the other hand, has all the markings of grace upon it. It is completely undeserved and bestowed because of the grace of the Giver.

In what sense are they similar?

They both have affected "many"! In fact, the first, Adam's "offence" affected so many that no one but Christ was excluded. The second has affected, and will continue to affect, a multitude which no man can number. Paul speaks of this "gift" as abounding "unto many." This means that the gift is more than sufficient to cover the demands placed upon us before God because of our sins. So the Second Man was sent to remedy the trouble caused by the First Man. How can anyone be angry with God after this?

- B. The second description: "Condemnation" and "justification" (Rom. 5:16).

This word for "condemnation" which is used here and in Rom. 8:1 is only found in these two places, but the verb from which it comes is used many times in the NT. It speaks of having been tried and found guilty. Therefore, the verdict of God stands against the condemned. The "judgment" includes

the idea of punishment. All people are under the same judgment as Adam--condemned and awaiting the execution of the judgment.

"The gift" of God is "justification." This means that new evidence has been introduced for those for whom Christ died. It means that the guilty sinner has been cleared of all charges in the court of heaven, and that one who before was under condemnation is now declared to be all that he must be in order to have perfect acceptance with God. And this is in spite of the fact that "many offences" have been committed. It makes no difference how many there are; the gift of salvation through Christ covers them all. It is a "gift" because it is not deserved, nor can it be earned, and not even the slightest contribution can be made by the sinner. There is no need for any addition; Christ's sacrifice is fully sufficient for the justification of the chiefest of sinners.

C. The third description: Death reigned, now those who received grace reign in life, through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17).

Just as all people have been placed under the dominion of death by the sin of Adam, so through the righteousness of Christ, those who once were slaves to death now reign in life "through Jesus Christ."

By the grace of God we have received far more in Christ than we lost in Adam. There is a superabundance of the grace of God given to us. The death of Christ not only delivers us from the penalty we were under because of the sin of Adam, but by His death we "reign in life." Charles Hodge says that this means we are "gloriously exalted in the participation of that life of holiness and communion with God which is the end of our being" (Romans, p. 168).

Concl: And so Paul in this passage has pointed out not only our condemnation and hopeless condition in Adam, but the Gospel has to do with our glorious deliverance through Christ. It is threefold:

- 1) We have "the gift by grace," the gift being "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," according to Rom. 6:23.
- 2) Although we were in Adam, and, in addition to being charged with his sin, we have added our own "many offences," yet by the grace of God we have been cleared of all charges against us, and made perfectly and permanently acceptable to God.
- 3) The superabundance of the grace of God enables us to reign in life, instead of being under the dominion and fear of death.

Now I realize that this is what we could call, a very heavy passage of Scripture. That is, it takes a great deal of thought and concentration to follow the Apostle Paul in his exposition of these great truths. This is the Gospel presented in a different way so that we can understand the grace of God better than we have before. But in conclusion let me point out some things about this passage for which we should thank God.

First, we, and everyone else, should be grateful that the Lord has shown us what our great problem is. Without the Scriptures men grope hopelessly for the answer to the difficulties facing man. God says that we are sinners by nature because of our relationship with Adam in the human family. His sin brought judgement upon us. We may not understand that, but we must believe it. It explains why it is easier for us to do evil than to do good. It explains why the world is the way it is today, and why it will only get worse as time goes on. God has shown us what our problem is.

Second, how thankful we can be for the grace of God. If God were only righteous and holy, there would be no possibility of a change for any of us. But God is a God of grace. We would have been content to go on in our misery, but He was not content to let us go. And even though it cost the humiliation and death of His Son, He gave His Son to redeem us from our sins. We deserve to die, but He has given us life. We needed to be changed, and He has changed us. The change is not complete yet, but we are getting closer to it every day that we live. And all that is most dear to us is to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

And our gratitude for God's grace will only increase when we realize that to our part in the sin of Adam, we have added our own "many offences." And when we add together your "many offences" and your "many offences" and my "many offences" and the "many offences" of all of the people of God, they mount up to heaven and are a stench in the nostrils of God. And yet that which was an abomination to Him only moved His heart with greater compassion toward us. And He sent His Son to take them all away. They are gone, we are cleansed, and now we have perfect acceptance with God through Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

But let me mention a third and last thing.

I do not know all that Paul meant by reigning in life, but I do know that it means that here and now, before we get to glory, we are experiencing the liberating, victorious redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. He makes us new creatures. We are no longer slaves to our sins; we reign in life. We

have the assurance of knowing that God works "all things... together" for our spiritual good. We are "more than conquerors" through Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Even in death we have the victory because "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." In the midst of our trials we have "perfect peace" when our minds are stayed on the Lord Jehovah.

How thankful, therefore, we should be for what the Lord has delivered us from, for what He has taken away, for what He has given us in Christ, and for the glorious prospect of those things which lie ahead of us throughout all eternity. We deserve the judgment declared against us. But God has intervened through our Lord Jesus Christ. How thankful we should be for the love that sought us, the blood that bought us, and the grace that brought us to God.

Have I been talking about truths that are precious to you, or are you still a stranger to the grace of God, going on in your life in your sins, without God and without Christ? If so, perhaps the Lord brought you here today to change all of that. You must come like the rest of us have had to come, casting yourself upon the mercy of God, confessing that you are a sinner, and seeking God's mercy and grace through Christ. The promise is, if you come, He will not turn you away. Come to Christ today. Believe in Him for your salvation. Let Him deliver you from your sins and enable you to reign in life.

SUPERABOUNDING GRACE

Romans 5:18-21

Intro: I remember that many years ago in my teaching I found myself dealing the fact that the Bible is a revelation from God. And, like many before me, I asked myself the questions:

1) What is a revelation from God?

2) Why is a revelation necessary?

And I found the answers to these questions very interesting.

One book of the Bible is called The Revelation of Jesus Christ, but actually every part of the Bible is a revelation. We call the Bible God's revelation to man because it contains truth which we cannot find any other place. Throughout human history man has made some amazing discoveries, and has made great strides in learning many things. Our generation, more than any other has profited from man's investigations into the field of knowledge. If my parents could come back to earth today, knowing only what they knew when they died, they would be amazed at how human knowledge has advanced in many, many areas.

But, if man had all eternity to seek greater and greater knowledge of all things, there is one area of knowledge that could never really discover. I am speaking of truth which we could describe as the truth of God, truth that has to do with eternal realities. Paul was speaking of this when he wrote to the philosophically-minded Corinthians and said in 1 Cor. 2:9,

But as it is written,
[and he was quoting from Isa. 64:4]
Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man,
the things which God hath prepared
for them that love him.

We learn from what we see, and what we hear, and by what we comprehend with our hearts [which in this case would include our minds].

In verse 11 of that same chapter (1 Cor. 2) Paul said, "Even so the things of God knoweth no man." Not only does he not know them, but there is no possible way he could find out what those truths are. They are beyond him. He has no way to find out what they are, and, if he could discover them, he would not be able to understand them. Paul was saying things here that would have been a blow to the Corinthians who were inclined to worship man and his ability to penetrate into any area of knowledge.

We find people today who in reality worship man and his

ability to discover new things, and then explain them. And, as I have said, man has made great strides in many areas of knowledge, but there is one area that is closed to him. He cannot move into the realm of the truth of God. Many people have tried to, but what they come up with is false and damaging both to them and to those who follow them.

God has given us evidence that there is such knowledge as the knowledge of God. We have it in our consciences (as we learned in Romans 1), and we have it also in creation all around us (as we also learned in Romans 1), but that is mainly to convince us that there is such an area of knowledge which can be described as "the things of God."

Well, if we can't discover these truths, and yet know that they do exist, how are we going to find out what they are? And the answer to that is, God must reveal them to us. This is why a revelation is necessary. God reveals to us truth which He wants us to understand. AND THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE IN OUR BIBLES. The Bible is this revelation of "the things of God." To be sure, there are things in the Bible that do not need to be revealed, such as historical matters, but there is no place where those historical incidents can be put into the right perspective like they are in the Bible. And, in addition, there are many things in the Bible which you do not find anywhere else unless they are in books which have been written to explain the message of the Bible.

And so, after Paul wrote what we read in 1 Cor. 2:9, he went on to say this in verse 10:

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:
for the Spirit searcheth all things,
yea, the deep things of God.

God has revealed truth in the Bible that otherwise we would not know, nor could we know. It is true that He has used people to actually do the writing, but the Holy Spirit is the One Who told them what to write and how to write it, down to the very words which they used. And so that is the reason we can call the Bible, the Word of God.

In our Tuesday Bible Class we are going through Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. And this past week we got to 1 Thess. 2:13 where Paul said this:

For this cause also that we God without ceasing,
because, when ye received the word of God
which ye heard of us,
ye received it not as the word of men,
but as it is in truth, the word of God,
which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

People are inclined to reject the Bible because it does not agree with their way of thinking. They do not know that this Book, our Bible, is different from any other book that has ever been written because it is the truth of God, revealed truth, truth which we would never have known if God had not revealed it to the men who wrote it.

Now I have gone through all of that to point out why people naturally reject what the Bible teaches (1) about man's need, (2) about the hopelessness of man's need, (3) about the consequences of man's need, and (4) about God's remedy for man's need.

And this brings us to our text for today: Romans 5:18-21. Paul did not have the wisdom to figure us out. God, in a way not explained for us, taught Paul what to write, and guided him in the choice of every word which he used. And before we cast these words aside, let us listen to them. It is apparent from society today that we do not have the answers we need. Our troubles, instead of getting better, get worse! What did Paul have to say?

Basically it is this:

I. MAN IS IN TROUBLE WITH GOD.

We see this in the first part of verse 18. (Read.) We see it also in the first part of verse 19. (Read.) In verse 20 we read about "the offence" abounding, and "sin" abounding, and then in verse 21 we read about sin reigning unto death.

You can see that verses 18 and 19 speak of two men. If you were here last week you know that we learned that those two men are Adam, on the one hand, and Jesus Christ, on the other. Through Adam's sin we all have come under the judgment of God, and are condemned. Through Adam's sin we all "were made sinners." And since the time of Adam's sin, the offense and sin have abounded, this means that the damage which Adam's sin brought on the human race has gotten out of control. Sin reigns over man, and brings him "unto death."

That is not a very pretty picture, is it? But we see the evidence every day that what Paul taught about man and sin and the judgment of God, is the truth! We can argue about what is written here all we want to, but it is to our eternal loss if we do not listen to what Paul had to say. Man's problem is sin. Sin is anything that is displeasing to God, or anything that is contrary to God's nature. And sin brings the judgment of God upon us. This is the problem that is common to all people everywhere, and in every generation. We are SINNERS!

But, as you can see, I have not read all that Paul had to say about our problem.

II. GOD HAS PROVIDED THE ANSWER.

I mentioned a moment ago that Paul in this passage spoke of two men. One got us into trouble with God; the Other can get us out of trouble with God. The one who got us into trouble, trouble which we have aggravated by our sins, was Adam. The One, and the only One Who can get us out of our trouble with God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Just think, our sin was so great and our condemnation so inescapable that no one but the Son of God could save us, and it cost Him His life to do it.

Notice what our text says.

Look at the latter part of verse 18. (Read.) Then look at the latter part of verse 19. (Read.)

It is through the righteousness of Christ and His obedience to the Father in dying for us that we have been justified, "made righteous," cleared of all of the charges of sin which were against us.

Paul said it this way in his second letter to the Corinthians church. I am going to re-arrange the wording of the verse a little from the way it appears in the Authorized Text to make it appear more like many commentators say that it ought to be:

For he hath made him who knew no sin,
to be sin for us,
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him
(2 Cor. 5:21).

Do you see why it is so important to know that the Lord Jesus did not have a human father, but that He was virgin-born? If Joseph had been His father, then He would have been a sinner like we are, and would have needed a Savior like we do. But Joseph was not His father. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and came into this world to provide salvation for all who would trust in Him.

Remember "righteousness" and "obedience" when you think of Christ. He was perfectly righteous being the Son of God, and He came to do what His Father sent Him to do to provide salvation for us. And it comes to us without any work on our part. We could never have paid for such a salvation; it is a free gift. We did not deserve it in any way. It is ours by faith through the grace of God and because of the love of God, and it is absolutely all that God requires for our salvation.

But there are a couple of more points that I must mentioned before I close.

One has to do with:

III. GOD'S PURPOSE IN GIVING THE LAW.

This we see in the first part of verse 20. (Read.)

Lit. the word "entered" means to come in beside. That is, as A. T. Robertson said in his Word Pictures of the Greek New Testament, Vol. IV, p. 360, "The Mosaic law came into this state of things, in between Adam and Christ." The same verb appears only elsewhere in the NT in Gal. 2:4.

It means that the Law was an addition, not to be a part of our salvation, but to show how much salvation is needed. As Paul said here, "that the offence might abound." This means that the Law was given to bring out how sinful man really is.

We need to review what we had in Rom. 3:19, 20. (Read.) The Law was given to the Jew to show the sinfulness of the whole human race.

Notice also what Paul said in his own case in Rom. 7:7.

Therefore, "sin abounded." Through the Law sin appeared at its worst. It left men defenseless. God's Law leaves us all with no excuse; it proves beyond any doubt that we are sinners and in trouble with God.

What does this statement about the Law mean?

It means that God was doing everything possible to make His people, Israel, and all people everywhere, know how terrible was their need before God. You see, the Law was a revelation from God as well as the Gospel is. The Word of God in its entirety leaves us without any way to escape the charge that we are sinners by nature and sinners by choice.

But I have one more point to make, a most wonderful point, a vital part of God's revelation.

IV. GOD'S SUPERABOUNDING GRACE.

This is what Paul was speaking about in the latter part of verse 20, and then in verse 21.

Sin was bad enough in the Garden of Eden. From Adam to Moses it got progressively worse, so bad, in fact, that in Noah's day the Lord destroyed all life on the earth except for those

who were in the ark. But when God gave His Law through Moses, sin "abounded." People saw that things were sin which they had not recognized as sin, or as transgressions, before. I know of a well-known Bible teacher who said on his death-bed, "I have never seen myself to be as great a sinner as I see that I am now." What was he saying? He was saying that in his mind and heart sin was abounding. He was reminded of his sins, and perhaps saw things to be sin which he had not considered to be sinful before. He was not doubting his salvation; he was marveling at the grace of God--which we all need to do!

Paul's words here at the end of chapter 5 mean that however great our sins may be, God's grace is greater. However great our need for forgiveness, God's grace is sufficient. In fact, if we were a million times worse than we are, the grace of God in Christ would still be sufficient for our salvation.

What does the grace of God in salvation do for us?

It dethrones sin, and enthrones grace. We are no longer under the dominion of sin, but under the sovereign rule of the grace of God "by Jesus Christ our Lord."

This statement prepares the way for what we are going to find in Romans 6, 7, and half of chapter 8. We are going to move from justification to sanctification. We have seen how we are saved; now we are going to see how we are sanctified. Or, to state it in another familiar way, we have seen how we are delivered from the penalty of our sin; we are about to see how we are also delivered here in this life, day by day, from the power of sin.

By grace we are delivered from temptations. By grace we are strengthened in our trials. It is God's grace which transforms us from what we have been into what God wants us to be. John Newton expressed the reign of grace in those words which we all know so well,

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Isn't this what Paul said in the last verse of Romans 5?
(Read.)

Concl: When you think of God sending His Son to die for you, think of grace. When you think of Christ in the flesh and on the Cross, think of grace. When you think of the Holy Spirit and all that He did to bring you to Christ, think of grace. When you think of the Word of God, think of what Paul called it when he left the Ephesian elders, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace" (Acts 20:32). When you think of your sins, remember the grace of God. When you think of the many times you have failed the Lord, think of His grace. When you think of how the Lord has helped you in your times of need, think of God's grace. When you think of the victories over sin which you have enjoyed, think of God's grace. When you think of how the Lord may have used you to bring others to Christ, think of God's grace. When you think of being in heaven some day with the Lord, think of God's grace. When you stop to realize that the God is making you like His Son, and that He will never give up or stop until the work is finished, think of God's grace.

We owe all that we are and ever hope to be, to the grace of our sovereign God. He hasn't given us what He should have given us. Instead, He has given us just the opposite--that which we never will deserve.

I love those words of Horatius Bonar which go like this:

I praise the God of grace; I trust his truth and might;
 He calls me his, I call him mine, My God, my joy, my light.
 'Tis he who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;
 I love because he loveth me, I live because he lives.

You and I who know the Lord should spend our days praising Him for His grace. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, it is grace which keeps the door of salvation open for you, regardless of how great your sin may be. If you are not saved, come to Him today. His revealed truth tells us that there is no other way to God and heaven except through faith in Christ.