

## ***Sabbath School Today*** **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

### ***Redemption in Romans*** **Lesson 6: "Expounding the Faith"**

We're privileged to share with you a Bible study on Romans 5, the topic of this week's Sabbath School lesson, written by Robert J. Wieland. He titled the study: "What Jesus Christ Has *Already* Done For Us All." Until now, the study remained unpublished. We realize it's considerably longer than our regular *Sabbath School Today*, but we hope that it will give you a deeper understanding of Paul's "big idea" of what Christ accomplished on His cross.

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Paul's Romans chapter five should begin with the last verse of his chapter four: "[Christ] was given up to death for our misdeeds, and raised to life for our justification" (4:25); this leads into his chapter five. In his inspired thinking, Paul sees that the first person plural, possessive pronoun, "our," means *everybody*—the entire world, not just the church. John agrees. He says that "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son ..."

An inspired writer has told us that when we preach we should preach "big ideas." [1] In Romans 5 the apostle Paul has a *very* "big idea" that he wants to get across to us: Jesus Christ has not only died for us all; He has done more! He has judicially, legally *justified* us all "in Himself." Yes, the whole world! That means more than merely saving us to be justified; it means to be re-made in our hearts and minds spiritually into the image of Jesus. It is the most cataclysmal change that can come to any human, for it means total at-one-ment with the Son of God. Justification means the mind and the soul of the sinner changed into Christlikeness.

Paul couldn't come up with a bigger idea than this: in fact, Jesus has *saved the world* with all Paul's "much more" idea in full function. That doesn't mean that everybody is going to inherit eternal life, but it means that *they could* do so if they would cease their resistance of this much more abounding grace of Christ. And just to be saved is far less than the idea means.

The Eleven weren't thinking "big" enough to grasp Paul's idea; but the Samaritans got it. When Jesus talked with the woman at Jacob's well and she went and told her townspeople to come and meet Him, they declared, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour *of the world*" (John 4:42, KJV). Earlier, the apostle John expressed the same idea, "God so loved *the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son ..." (3:16).

If the Samaritans were right (and they were!), that means that the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of His sacrifice on His cross, has justified every man *in a judicial* sense when he

died on His cross, which means more than just saving them to live eternally; they live eternally *justified*. Let us look at Romans 5.

**Romans 5:1:** "Therefore, now that we have been justified through faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*The Revised English Version*).

The "we" is the world, in Paul's thinking. Many either don't know it or don't believe it, but nonetheless, it is true that Christ saved *the world* in a judicial sense. It means that He *gave* Himself for the world and thus He *bought* the world. This does not mean that everybody is going to be saved at last in God's eternal kingdom if they don't want to be; they *could* be if they would *receive* the gift that Christ has given them; but many will not humble their hearts to receive what Christ has *given* them.

Ellet J. Waggoner, one of the 1888 "messengers," was able to grasp this truth when most of his brethren could not. He said: "There is no exception here. As the condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death for every man. He has given himself for all. Nay, he has given himself *to* every man. The free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evidence that there is no exception. If it came upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift. It is a fact, therefore, plainly stated in the Bible, that the gift of righteousness and life in Christ has come to every man on earth. There is not the slightest reason why every man that has ever lived should not be saved unto eternal life, except that they would not have it" (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 101).

**Romans 5:2:** "[Christ] has given us access to that grace in which we now live; and we exult in the hope of the divine glory that is to be ours." Because of Christ's work of justification we are "exulting" ever since, and will exult forever. Justification is eternal joy.

Unless Jesus had made that sacrifice on His cross, there would not be one laughing, happy person on earth; there would be no smiles. Those who will be lost at last will realize that every trace of joy they ever knew was purchased for them by a corresponding, equal anguish of the Son of God in His sacrifice on His cross; they went through life never realizing that truth and thus they forfeited the eternal gift. No one could know a moment of joy unless Christ had endured an equivalent, balanced, equal moment of anguish for them.

But now we have "access" directly to the throne of God. Christ has given that "access" to every human soul, which means that the door to eternal life is standing open to all. There is a "coming," yes, that we must do—but that "coming" is the same as simply believing the gospel. But whether we come or not, Christ has done something for every one and He has given everyone the *gift* of eternal life *if they will but have what He gives*. That truth humbles every honest heart; it reconciles every believing soul that has been alienated.

**Romans 5:3:** *Blessings start pouring in immediately:* "We even exult in our present sufferings, ... and ... such hope is no fantasy; through the Holy Spirit He has given us, God's love [*agape*] has flooded our hearts (vs. 5)."

Whether we are "worthy" or not, this is what the Lord Jesus does (and of course "we" are *not* worthy!). The Holy Spirit is a Gift given free to all; the Lord gives the Gift, but everyone receives the gift who will open the heart to receive Him, "that heareth [Him], watching daily at [His] gates, waiting at the posts of [His] doors" (cf. Prov. 8:34).

**Romans 5:4:** The Lord has further given us the gift of "endurance," which is identical to His "approval." He is delighted when we *cherish* the faith and hope He has given us, like a chef is happy when we express appreciation of what he has baked for us.

We must pause a moment and look at that word *agape*. It's the Greek word for love, but it is an entirely different idea than we know naturally. The love we have by nature loves people who are nice; God's *agape* loves people who are mean and bad. Our love depends on the beauty or value of the person whom we love; God's love *creates* value or goodness in the one whom He loves. There's where our hope lies!

Our love seeks a reward; Christ in His *agape* love gave up His reward and died our *second* death—that is, no light at the end of His tunnel. That was for Him an eternal and infinite sacrifice, which is why Revelation pictures such an end as "the second death" (20:6). It was for Jesus an infinite sacrifice when he endured the horrible guilt of the whole world. Jeremiah asks the plaintive question: "Is it nothing to you, you passers-by?" (Lam. 1:12).

**Romans 5:5:** And the hope we have "is no fantasy; through the Holy Spirit He has given us, God's love [*agape*] has flooded our hearts."

The *agape* "floods" every human heart willing to receive the blessing. But often the gift may be misunderstood initially, for with the gift of the Holy Spirit always comes the gift of repentance. Repentance is often thought of as a sad experience when in fact it is joyous for it means reconciliation with the Lord. You can't imagine a greater joy!

No one can initiate repentance on his own: "God exalted [Christ] ... to *give* repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31, KJV). When the Holy Spirit gives you even the faintest touch of that precious "gift," cherish it; and let it grow in your heart-appreciation.

**Romans 5:6:** "At the appointed time, Christ died for *the wicked*." It's humiliating, but that's the word that describes those who have rejected the reconciliation that Christ has given them in Himself.

**"Christ died."** What does that mean? It was a different death than we know. The death that we know the Bible says is a "sleep." The two thieves crucified with Christ died; that means they merely went to sleep. They that "sleep in the dust of the earth will awake,"

says Daniel (12:2). Was that the “death” that Jesus died? A mere weekend of sleep? (A weekend of sleep would be wonderful after one has endured the painful horror of being crucified!) No, it was far more, for Jesus died our “second death,” the death that involved the veritable, eternal “curse” of God. It was on Jesus’ part eternal love for us.

Someone may question—didn’t He always know that He would be resurrected on the third day after His death on the cross? Yes, He walked in the light of that assurance all His sunlit life and throughout His ministry, *until that moment on the cross* when He screamed in unutterable anguish, “My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Why did He scream so? *Because the Father truly did forsake Him*: “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him,” says Isaiah 53:10 (KJV), an inexplicable statement except as we remember that the death that Jesus actually died was *our* death—the second death. It is hard to say it, but the reality is that the Father loved us more than He loved His only Son!

The fact that He was resurrected the third day does not lessen in the least the full commitment that He made on His cross; and the Father accepts the commitment for the deed.

As He died, Ellen White reminds us, “The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753). Because the father accepts the commitment for the deed, “God raised Him to the heights and bestowed on Him the name above all names” (Phil. 2:9). That total commitment on Christ’s part means that He actually died every man’s “second death.” Therefore that sacrifice of His has enabled the Father to treat “every man” as though he had never sinned! That is the *judicial* justification that Christ has achieved for every soul on earth!

All this glorious truth we are privileged to “comprehend” here and now, if we do not resist the Holy Spirit. Salvation exists in the realization of this glorious truth; if we don’t resist the Holy Spirit who gives the gift, our eternal happiness begins immediately.

If we do resist and reject the gift (it’s more than a mere offer!), then before the universe we choose to assume the name of “Esau.” We take that name because his character has now become ours; like Esau, we have resisted the Lord’s much more abounding grace. (You remember, Esau sold his precious birthright in exchange for some earthly pleasure, and cried buckets of useless tears the rest of his life; cf. Heb. 12:16, 17. May the Lord save us from doing that.)

Then, in the second resurrection, when the “books” are “opened,” those who have likewise resisted and rejected *the* “birthright” *gift* given them will realize what they have done; in unutterable horror they will abhor themselves. They will *again* cry “to the mountains and [rocks], ‘Fall on us, hide us from the One who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb’” (cf. Rev. 6:15-17). They will at last realize who Jesus is,

that He has been their infinite Saviour all their lives, and they have thrust Him from themselves.

That “wrath” is what justification by faith saves us “from.” It’s what Paul means: “Being now justified by [Christ’s] blood, we shall be saved from *wrath* through Him” (Rom. 5:9, KJV). What is that “wrath”?

Lambs do not exercise “wrath.” They are known for the opposite. The phrase “wrath of the Lamb” therefore is arresting. We always picture Jesus as sweet and gentle (He would not harm a fly, would He!); but when His “wrath” is aroused—*don’t get in His way*. The “wrath” of the Lamb of God who has been resisted and rejected—thus resulting in the loss of souls beyond our own—this arouses His intense indignation. Sweet, gentle, lowly, loving Jesus morphs into a tower of righteous divine anger—the most solemn and terrible that the universe can know.

**Romans 5:7:** “Even for a just man one of us would hardly die, though perhaps for a good man one might actually brave death ...” We think of Abraham Lincoln on the night of his assassination: if someone had known that John Wilkes booth would pull the trigger on him, someone might have intervened and taken it instead of the nation’s beloved president who was needed to bind up the wounds of the nation’s Civil War. But no, ...

**Romans 5:8:** “Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God’s proof of His love towards us.” The word “sinners” means people who are at enmity with God, and John says that such enmity is always murder: “Whosoever hateth his brother is [already] a murderer” (1 John 3:15, KJV). When we kneel before the Lord and confess our sins, that is *the* sin that has been the background of all of our sins!

No one of us can claim that if we had been there that Friday morning in Pilate’s courtyard and the mob were yelling about Jesus, “Crucify Him!” that we would have stood up in front of them and said that if you crucify Him you crucify me too! No, none of us would have made ourselves so famous; our “enmity against God” of Romans 8:7 was there in our natural sinful hearts. The murder of the Son of God is the world’s unconscious but real sin.

**Romans 5:9:** “And so, since we have now been justified by Christ’s sacrificial death, we shall all the more certainly be saved ... by His life!” (vs. 10). Again, in his thinking Paul’s pronoun “we” is the human race; his idea about Jesus is “big.”

Christ has already done something for the human race. The Father sent Him down here with a job description—save that lost world! And just before His death, the Son of God tells Him, “I have glorified You on earth by finishing the work which You gave Me to do” (John 17:4). Father, I have saved the world!

This was no idle boast; the job had been done. And Christ did not die in vain; every soul can kneel and thank Him for doing it, for in so doing He actually saved every soul.

**Romans 5:10:** "If, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more now that we have been reconciled, shall we be saved by His life!" Again, the "we" is *us*; Paul's heart is not big enough to contain the joy that he senses for us all: wicked and mean as we are by nature, we have been "reconciled" to God by Christ's blood—not a work of fear or of grasping for reward—no; but our heart-appreciation for His love! That simple, that easy. But it does bring tears to our dry eyes.

**Romans 5:11:** "But that is not all: we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus, through whom we have now been granted reconciliation." To know that there is no sin, no guilt, no dark sorry story in the closet between yourself and the Lord, is joy indescribable!

David's psalm which he wrote after his sin with Bathsheba described "exulting" thus: "Happy is he whose offence is forgiven, whose sin is blotted out! Happy is he to whom the Lord imputes no fault, in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalm 32:1, 2).

**Romans 5:12:** "What does this imply? It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as all have sinned."

That "inasmuch" is *eph ho* in the Greek—a virtually untranslatable particle of speech; the idea Paul is trying to express is that although we can blame Adam for the entrance of sin, in fact we must blame ourselves. We have all sinned like Adam sinned.

**Romans 5:13:** "Sin was already in the world before there was law [that is, Mount Sinai]; and although in the absence of law no reckoning is kept of sin, [still]. ...

**Romans 5:14:** "Death held sway from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned [exactly] as Adam did, by disobeying a direct command—and Adam foreshadows the Man who was to come [Christ]."

**Romans 5:15:** Now comes the point: "But God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing [it is much more abounding!]. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many [that is everybody], its effect is vastly exceeded by the *grace of God* and the *gift* that came to so many [that is, everybody!] by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ."

"Our beloved brother Paul" is wrestling his way through the grandest "big idea" anyone can think: the Lord Jesus Christ has done something beyond merely dying for everybody: He has *justified* everybody!

He has not simply died for a race of rebels: He has morphed a race of rebels into a redeemed race of *righteous* people whose minds and hearts have been dramatically changed forever: they are now at one with Himself.

He has actually changed a world of sinners into a world of righteous people, a people who have become transformed by the much more abounding grace of the Saviour. Paul is on to a "big idea" here that we must handle carefully.

No, in fact, the race of human rebels on earth are not now a race of actually, *personally* righteous people: but God tells everybody in His vast unfallen universe that they *are* a race of redeemed, righteous people if they don't resist or reject what He has done and *presently does* for them!

Christ has done His work correctly; He tells the Father, "I have ... finish[ed] the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). His justification of His people is real, the job is done; but man still has his freedom of will and he can nullify and defeat all that His Saviour has accomplished—so depraved and rebellious is fallen man, the man created "in the image of God" Himself.

**Romans 5:16:** "And again, the gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man's sin; for the judicial action, following on the one offence, resulted in a verdict of condemnation, but the act of grace, following on so many misdeeds, resulted in a verdict of acquittal." Paul is obsessed with this idea of "much more" grace!

**Romans 5:17:** "If, by the wrongdoing of one man, death established its reign through that one man, ... much more shall those who in far greater measure *receive* grace and the *gift* of righteousness live and reign through the one Man, Jesus Christ."

**Romans 5:18:** "It follows, then [brilliant thinking!] that as the result of one misdeed was condemnation for all people, so the result of one righteous act is acquittal and life for all."

**Romans 5:19:** "For as through the disobedience of one man, many were made [the Greek says, "constituted"] sinners, so through the obedience of one Man many will be made [constituted] righteous [even though they are not!]."

**Romans 5:20:** "... where sin was multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it,

**Romans 5:21:** "in order that as sin established its reign by way of death, so God's grace might establish its reign in righteousness, and result in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The gospel that has astonished the unfallen universe and has yet to lighten the earth with its glory (see Rev. 18:1-4), shines clear and bright in Paul's Romans five!

—Robert J. Wieland

**Endnote:**

[1] Ellen G. White, MS 7, 1894; *Evangelism*, p. 169.