

The Gospel – God’s Saving Sinners

Romans 1 - 5¹

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The Integrity of the Gospel Romans 1:1-7

The opening paragraph highlights the integrity of the gospel. While it may be misunderstood, misrepresented and even outrightly denied, the gospel is truth. The gospel has been subject, both then and now, to being altered, aborted and abandoned. This is why we must, along with Paul, articulate it and affirm it. So, authenticity of the gospel is at stake.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel flows from the Scripture

(v.1a)

The gospel focuses on Christ

(v.1b-4)

Why is the gospel about Jesus? Because He is who God promised and He has accomplished what God planned. Here is the essence of the gospel.

Jesus is deity. He is God’s Son.

Jesus is the Messiah, our Sovereign Lord.

The gospel is foundational for God’s People

(v.5-7)

The good news is the gospel

...of God,

...for the nations,

...about Christ,

...unto obedience of faith

...according to Scripture,

...for the sake of the Name.

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The Centrality of the Gospel Romans 1:8-17

Its Sacrificial Ministry (v.8-15)

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

It is Sacrificial in Its Priorities (v.8-10)

His prayer is marked by its rejoicing.

His prayer is marked by its requests.

It is Sacrificial in Its Involvement (v.11-13)

He establishes a relationship bond (v.11).

He expects a reciprocal benefit (v.12).

He expresses a resolved purpose (v.13).

It is Sacrificial in Its Motivation (v.14-15)

Paul speaks first of his duty (v.14).

Paul's duty is his delight (v.15).

Its Unquestionable Certainty (v.16-17)

Both in a negative and positive sense, Paul affirms his confidence in the gospel.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

It is Certain as the Power of God for Salvation (v.16)

It is Certain as the Revelation of God's Righteousness (v.17)

So the gospel is God's power to save us and to give us a right standing before God in our salvation and in our sanctification. This is why we must not be ashamed of the gospel and why we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day.

So the gospel is centered on God.

It is God's good news (v.1-7) about Jesus Christ to be proclaimed to all so they will believe in an obeying way.

It is God's good news for and among God's people, central to Biblical ministry, establishing its priorities, purposes and motivations (v.8-15).

It is God's good news about His saving power and revealed righteousness by faith alone to those who believe (v.16-17).

Sin's Universal Depravity Romans 1:18-32

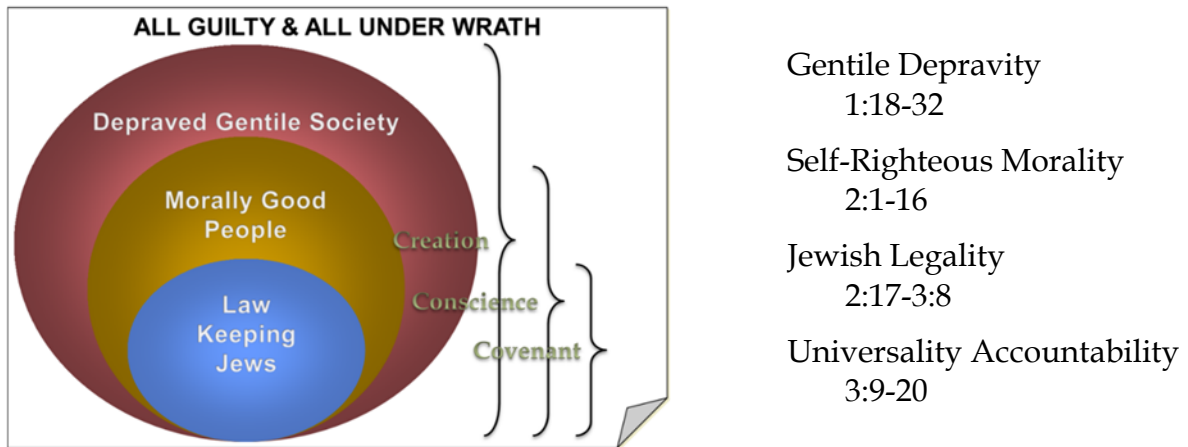


Figure 1 - The Indictment

Their Indictment (v.18-20)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse.

There is a revealed wrath (v. 18)

But there is an active resistance (v. 19)

And an ongoing suppression (v. 20)

Their Idolatry (v.21-25)

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

It is a fundamental truth.

There is a condemning exchange.

He gives an authoritative interpretation.

Their Immorality (v.26-27)

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

They were handed over enslaving passions.

They gave themselves to sinful perversions.

Their Impenitence (v.28-32)

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

God withdraws His restraining grace.

Humanity lives in the context of a clear, condemning but non-converting revelation since creation. However, man responded by suppression of that knowledge (v.18). He speculates about the means of that knowledge (v.21). He also responds by substituting for the great Object of that knowledge (v.25). They did so from hearts that believed lies (v.25) and followed lusts (v.26). Thus they exchange the glory of God (v.23-24), the truth of God (v.25) and the design of God (v.26-27). This resulted, at each step, God giving them over to impurity (v.24), degradation (v.26) and depraved minds (v.28).

So, everyone, everywhere at all times sins in the presence of light. Sinning against that light renders them without excuse. They are subject to the wrath of God, beginning with their life here and culminating in eternity.

Sin's Gentile Condemnation Romans 2:1-16

God will judge unbelievers. *They*, the depraved sinners, have no excuse (1:20). Now, *you*, the good moralists have no excuse (2:1).

Their Condemnation is Inescapable

(v.1-4)

Their condemnation is unavoidable.

¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Man has no excuse (v. 1). There is now universal accountability.

God's judgment is righteous (v. 2). God's judicial condemnation is passed against the moralist.

Two probing questions pierce the conscience (v. 3-4).

Do you think that you can get away with this?

Do you presume that because you have not been judged yet that you never will?

God's kindness is designed to bring sinners to repentance.

Their Condemnation is Inflexible

(v.5-8)

Their condemnation is unyielding.

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

God's judgment is being stored up because of the moralist's lack of repentance. (v. 5)

God's Judgment is based on Works (v. 6 -8)

Their Condemnation is Impartial

(v.9-11)

God's judgment is unbiased.

⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

The moralist stands warned that God's impartial judgment is sure.

No Jew can expect to be exempt because of their history. No Gentile can expect to be exempt because of their morality.

Their Condemnation is Inclusive

(v.12-16)

God's judgment is all-encompassing.

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Includes all knowing the Mosaic Law (v. 12-13).

It includes all having the Natural Law (v. 14-15).

It is included in the message of the Gospel (v. 16).

God's just judgment will be against moral unbelievers.

Their condemnation is unavoidable.

Their condemnation is unyielding.

God's judgment is unbiased.

God's judgment is all-encompassing.

Sin's Jewish Condemnation Romans 2:17-3:8

The powerful progression of this indictment now moves against the religionist, the Jew who relied in his good works and law keeping.

The Jews Defamed the Honor of God

(v.17-24)

Jewish pride has led to disgrace, condemnation and punishment.

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Dishonor God by their prideful boasting (v. 17-20).

They had turned their relationship with God and their responsibility to the world into a source of pride.

Dishonor God with their evident hypocrisy (v. 21-22).

The Jews were doing the very things they condemned the Gentiles for doing.

Dishonor God in their dreadful scandal (v. 23-24).

The Jews Focused on Externals

(v.25-29)

The problem with the Law is that it tended to focus on the externals.

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Circumcision's true relation to the law (v. 25-27).

Circumcision's great limitation for the Jew (v. 28).

Circumcision's new covenant fulfillment by the Holy Spirit (v. 29).

The essential unity of Jews and Gentiles is in their common sinfulness and in their common salvation.

The Jews Hid behind Objections

(3:1-8)

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

Paul then confronts the Jewish objections to his way of presenting the gospel.

Objection: It undermines God's covenant (v.1-2)

No, they had the very Word of God, which they did not believe.

Objection: It nullifies God's faithfulness (v.3-4)

No, God was faithful to His purposes and promises even if the Jews were not.

Objection: It impugns God's justice (v.5-6)

No, God's judgment of the unbelief and wickedness of both Jew and Gentile is serving the purposes of God.

Objection: It falsely promotes God's glory (v.7-8)

Stop. That objection is simply absurd.

Sin's Universal Condemnation Romans 3:8-20

Our Condemnation's Summary Charge (v.9)

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

Are the Jews a special group? Yes and no.

But they are part of the inclusive indictment.

Our Condemnation's Scriptural Proof (v.10-18)

There is conclusive proof in the Scripture...

¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."

¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Verses 10-12 describe the total inability of man, the extent and power of his depravity. Sin renders us unable to rescue or redeem ourselves. We are so infected with sin in our whole beings that we are sinners, through and through. Our thoughts and deeds reflect a "No God" way of living. Our soul and our body is infected with sin so that all our impulses even to moral good are corrupted by it.

Verses 13-17 illustrate the corruption of man, the examples and patterns of his depravity.

Verse 18 concludes with the underlying cause and effect: man does not fear God.

Our Condemnation's Concluding Purpose (v.19-20)

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

The weight of the argument is meant to silence the sinner.

We stand charged before God and silenced before His righteous wrath.

“Now a righteousness apart from the Law appears, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe.” (Romans 3:21-22, Abridged)

Righteousness apart from Law Romans 3:19-31

- 1) How can God remain just and yet pronounce sinners not guilty and righteous before Him?
- 2) How can this righteousness be applied and appropriated?

The Meaning of Justification

(v. 21-26)

God's righteousness is revealed now (v.21).

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

God's righteousness is centered on Christ (v.22-25a)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ^{25a} whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

This righteousness comes *through faith in Jesus Christ* (v.22-23).

This righteousness comes to us as a *gift by His grace* (v.24).

This righteousness is grounded *in the cross of Jesus Christ* (v.24-25a). T

This righteousness is displayed by the person of Jesus Christ. (v.25a).

God's righteousness vindicates God (v.25b-26).

^{25b} This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

So, God is righteous – He is just – He is acting in accordance with Himself when He sets forth His Son as our righteousness and waits patiently for the day of the cross in redemptive history and the application of the cross to us personally. He was just to pass over sins because He had purposed to punish them in Christ. He was patient until that day. And so, the cross vindicated God.

The Means of Justification

(v. 27-31)

Paul highlights how justification is received and appropriated by answering three important questions or objections. Why is faith the way that the right standing before God is given?

Faith is not the grounds of justification.

Faith is designed to exclude boasting (v.27-28).

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law* of works? No, but by the law* of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. [* law here is the idea “principle”]

Faith unifies Jew and Gentile in salvation (v.29-30).

²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Faith still upholds the law (v.31).

³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Righteousness apart from Works Romans 4:1-25

Do we feel our need for righteousness? Yes. Most people do. Oh, they might not say it that way. It is usually spoken of in a way that highlights our works. All religions think this way. It is the mark of all false religions. All false religions require some kind of deeds on the part of adherent to be accepted by their deity. Some of these are moral works. Some of these are sacrifices for failures. And some branches of Islam even require evil deeds to be accepted by the false god, Allah.

But what about us. You and I? Are you depending on your own version of works? Are you secretly thinking that God will accept you if you just do what He says?

This leads our author to a question. How were Old Testament saints saved? Specifically, how was Abraham justified? This is not a burning question for most of you. But understanding our own salvation, our own right standing before God is dependent on our understanding the role of faith.

In Paul’s thinking about our salvation, Abraham is the model of justification.

Abraham was not Justified by Works

(v.1-8)

¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as

David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;
⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

There is a historical reality.

There is a scriptural basis.

There is its personal application.

Abraham was not justified by works. And neither are you.

Abraham was not Justified by Circumcision (v.9-12)

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

We do not feel the impact of this paragraph directly.

There are huge implications from this simple, Scriptural fact.

Abraham was not justified by religious rite. And neither are you.

Abraham was not Justified by Law (v.13-15)

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

The promises to Abraham were not a matter of the Law, but of faith.

The law does not nullify God’s promises.

Abraham was not justified by Law. And neither are you.

Abraham was Justified by Faith (v.16-22)

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since

he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

Abraham's justification by faith upholds grace.

Abraham's justification by faith gives hope.

Abraham's justification by faith models faith.

Abraham was justified by faith. And so are you.

Abraham was Justified for our Faith

(v.23-25)

²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

It was recorded for us.

It was to ground faith in the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Abraham was not justified by works. And neither are you.

Abraham was not justified by religious rite. And neither are you.

Abraham was not justified by Law. And neither are you.

Abraham was justified by faith. And so are you.

The Blessedness of Justification Romans 5:1-21

A Glory that Rejoices

(v.1-11)

Justification brings us glorious privileges and provisions in which we rejoice.

We Rejoice in its Privileges

(v.1-5)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We have peace with God (v.1).

We have access into grace (v.2).

We can rejoice in hope (v.3-5).

We Rejoice in its Provisions

(v.6-11)

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Jesus died for us while we were helpless (v.6-7)

Jesus died for us while we were sinners (v.8-9)

Jesus died for us while we were enemies (v.10-11)

A Grace that Abounds

(v.12-21)

Grace abounds because of our ruin (v.12-14).

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Grace abounds through our redeemer (v.15-17)

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Grace abounds for our righteousness (v.18-21)

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.