



BUT GOD
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ROMANS 5:8

WHAT WE NEED

THE STORY
OF CHANGE

DATE

November 21 & 22

WEEK

3 of 4

OVERVIEW

Romans 5

KEY VERSE

Romans 5:8

TEACHERS: It is important to read all four lessons to understand the flow of content.

SETTING THE STAGE

Paul is never afraid to dig deep into the lives of those who are Christ-followers, including his own. Because of Paul's background as a leader in the Pharisees, he knows the details of the Old Testament intimately. He knew what the Laws of Moses meant and why they existed. Paul upheld those laws and more during his years of being a Pharisee.

As he writes the book of Romans, Paul connects the stories of the Old Testament with his new life based on faith in Jesus Christ. He does not want anyone to miss out on the Story of Change. This chapter today paints a clear picture of our need for a Savior. Paul shows that the need for help began as far back as Adam, which is the beginning of humanity. If you read this chapter in its entirety, you will notice that he builds a case of comparisons and contrasts with Adam and Jesus. There is no gray area; the lines are clear. The good news is God knows that we are people in need. God knows that we are people with a problem.

Apart from Christ, we are sinful people whom Paul refers to as "enemies of God" in our sinful state. (Romans 5:10) This chapter establishes that even though we begin as "enemies," we can be restored and reconciled to a relationship of friendship with God. The Story of Change is a story of grace, peace, hope, and forgiveness, as we will see in Romans 5.

LESSON OUTLINE

We Need to:

1. Be Restored
2. Admit Our Sin
3. Receive His Grace

THINGS TO KNOW

- Paul compares Adam in the Fall, with Christ on the cross, explaining the consequences of their actions for humanity.¹
- The failure of human beings to be the image-bearing creatures God intended, results in corruption and death.²

WHAT WE NEED

Introduction

“My name is Bob, and I am an alcoholic...” Most of us are familiar with this phrase, associating it with the organization Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). As of 2016, an estimated 2 million people worldwide were members of AA.³ AA has succeeded in helping millions of alcoholics achieve sobriety because of their simple, organizational focus and their intentional group meetings. The method that AA follows is called “The Twelve Steps,” containing twelve principles that can lead willing participants toward sobriety. The famous statement at the beginning of this paragraph sums up the message of the first of the twelve steps. Step 1 says, “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.”⁴

The first step is for the alcoholic to admit that there is a problem with alcohol that he or she cannot manage on their own. Taking the first step requires the acknowledgment that the alcoholic has an urgent need that he cannot meet for himself, and he requires help. This principle is true for many more behavioral, spiritual, and emotional issues that cause pain and destruction in people’s lives. Consider gambling, sex addiction, anger management, self-harm, eating disorder, chronic laziness, to name a few. To fix the issue, first, there has to be an acknowledgment that the problems and needs cannot be resolved on our own.

We are currently studying the Story of Change, and have established the human problem of sin, as described in Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* And, we have established the Holy nature of God and preeminence of Christ (Colossians 1:15). Now we are going to explore what God has done to alleviate the problem of sin and death. Today, we are going to dive into the fundamental need that all humans have: the need for a restored relationship with the God who made us.

1. WE NEED TO: BE RESTORED

We begin in Romans 5:1-2 to see our need to be restored in our relationship with God to have peace with God.

ROMANS 5:1-2 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (NIV)*

¹ www.soniclight.com/romans

² N.T. Wright; *Paul*; Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN; 2005, p. 35.

³ “ESTIMATES OF A.A. GROUPS AND MEMBERS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2016”. Alcoholics Anonymous (PDF) (4th ed.). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. p. xxiii.

⁴ Bill W. “Chapter 5: How It Works”. Alcoholics Anonymous (4th ed.). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. ISBN 1-893007-16-2. OCLC 32014950.



It seems impossible to have peace with God when we admittedly have a sin problem. It even seems more unlikely to be able to boast in the hope of the glory of God when we admittedly have a sin problem. And left to our own devices of what we have to offer by ourselves, it would be absolutely impossible. We need to be restored in our relationship with God because it has been broken by sin.

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Genesis 3 tells the story of how the rebellion of humans made in His image broke God's created order. Eve listened to the half-truths of the serpent and believed that she could become like God by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eve saw that the fruit was good for food (the lust of the flesh), that it was a delight to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and that it was good to make her wise (the pride of life), and she decided to eat it. Because they decided that the fruit would be pleasurable, that it appealed to their vanity, and that it could let them usurp God's position, the man and woman rebelled against God; thus sin entered the world.

God then tells them about a series of curses that would result from their rebellion (Genesis 3:14-19). The woman would have pain in childbirth, and the relationship between man and woman would forever become strained. The man would have to toil in work, and life would be difficult until the day that he dies and returns to dust. The result of sin and rebellion against God is pain and tragedy in life, leading up to eventual death.

We cannot restore this relationship on our own though we often try.

A. We Cannot Restore Ourselves

We try to get clean or do good things in order to have peace with God. There may even be moments or even hours where you have not told a lie, gossiped, lost your temper, or even cursed out loud, but then the alarm goes off, and it is time to wake up, get out of bed and face the day. It becomes a different story when the kids are dragging, the toast is burned, the coffee is spilled, you cannot find your car keys, and you have cat hair on your slacks, all before you walk out the door.

Life is messy, and we are messy people. There is no way for us to get clean enough, be nice enough, or do enough good deeds to have peace with God. It did not work for Adam and Eve, nor will it work for us. It would seem we are doomed. It would seem we are helpless and hopeless people. The truth is we are simply people in need of help and hope.

Not unlike those who are part of AA, we are on a daily journey, and each day if we are honest with ourselves we should openly say, "My name is Adam, I have a problem." The reality is that we cannot eliminate areas of sin in our lives by our own willpower. We are all in the same situation. Paul expounds on this truth in Romans 7:24-25: *"²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (NIV)

The good news of the Bible is that God knew we needed help, and He provided help for all of us. Adam and Eve were hiding from God, having covered themselves with fig leaves because of their shame of sin. God provided a covering for them with the skin of an animal, which was the first sacrifice in Scripture (Genesis 3:21). In their sin and messiness of life, God showed them the picture of grace, giving them something they did not deserve but needed.

We need the same thing today in our messy, sinful, broken lives. God provided a covering for the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.

B. While We Were Still Sinners, Christ Died For Us

Notice how Paul describes this good news in Romans 5:6-11:

ROMANS 5:6-11 *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

In the midst of being helpless, God provided help. Christ died for you and me. There is not a single person alive for whom Christ did not die. Paul tells us that God has taken it upon Himself to restore the relationship with His broken people, while we were still broken and messy, while we were still sinners. Jesus cast aside the majesty of His place with the Father, humbly came to us as a baby, and gave up His life in a painful and humiliating fashion, dying on the cross—all so we could be made right with God again. That which was broken was mended because of the cross.

We experienced reconciliation through His death, and now we can experience the fruit of salvation and victory through His life.

In verse 10, Paul points out that even though we were enemies of God, Jesus' death allowed us to be reconciled to God. But that is not the end of the story, because Jesus not only died, but He was raised to life again on the third day, and He still lives. We experienced reconciliation through His death, and now we can experience the fruit of salvation and victory through His life. Jesus is alive, and He is reigning in the presence of the Father. For us, this means that gaining peace with God is not a one-time experience. Jesus' resurrection and ascension give us confidence that we can experience the life of Christ every day.

As believers, we still struggle with sin and its consequences, but because we have been made right with God through Jesus, we can experience freedom—not only from sin in general, but from the specific sins that cause pain and destruction in our lives. You can learn to control your biting and sharp tongue, you can gain control over your anger, you can eliminate gossip and slander from your life, and you can find freedom from the sexual sins that have bound you. These things can happen because Jesus died to reconcile you to the Father and because He is alive today and reigning. His death on the cross did not wait to happen until you or anyone else was good enough; Jesus died while we were yet sinners. Paul digs a little deeper into this reality of sin.

2. WE NEED TO: ADMIT OUR SIN

ROMANS 5:12;18-19 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

The fundamental issue that all humans face is the problem of sin.

The fundamental issue that all humans face is the problem of sin. Paul is stating two undeniable, indisputable facts: the universality of sin and the universality of death. Everywhere we look, there is evidence upon evidence that what he says is true, that

we are victims of the twin evils of sin and death.⁵ When Paul says that sin and death entered the world through one man, he is referencing the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Sin is not a new problem, nor is our need to deal with sin a new challenge. We are all people who can say, “My name is Adam, and I have a problem.” The next sentence should always be, “I need help.”

Why is sin such a big deal? Why did Adam and Eve’s choice to eat the fruit of a forbidden tree lead to the consequence of all the pain, suffering, division, and death that we see in the world today, thousands of years later? The answer is found in the nature of what it means to be human. Genesis 1:26-28 tells us that humans were made in God’s image. Our purpose in life is to know God and reflect His image to the world. God’s nature is light, life, holiness, power, glory, and a million other descriptions beyond our comprehension. Life can only be found in God Himself because He is the source of life.

Sin does not mean breaking a list of arbitrary rules given by a judgmental God. Sin is the fundamental rejection of God’s nature, and a rejection of the life that comes from knowing Him. Our sin is not an issue because “it needs to be punished,” sin is an issue because it is a punishment in and of itself. Sin necessarily brings about death, because it is a perversion of the good nature that God has given us. Sin is our rejection to live out God’s image, and it leads us to death. No one is exempt from this pattern.

Sin is the fundamental rejection of God’s nature, and a rejection of the life that comes from knowing Him.

All of us live in the same rebellion against God as Adam and Eve. Paul realized this truth as he wrote to the Romans. Paul builds a case for what happened at the beginning when sin entered the world. He shows that based on one man, Adam, we all are sinners. But He also explains that because of one man, Jesus, there is an opportunity to have a changed heart and life.

Like Adam, we reject God’s life and His purposes in favor of our own pleasure, vanity, and pride. The story of Genesis 3 has incredible explanatory power to illuminate the experience of being a human living in bondage to our own sin. In essence, it says, “My name is Adam, and I have a problem.”

Notice the first part of Romans 5:18 and 19 with the words *transgression* and *disobedience*. Both words are a bit gentler than the word “sin.” Yet, we do not want to fall into the trap of soft stepping around the impact of transgression and disobedience. Because we need to have our sin dealt with, we also need to acknowledge that unresolved areas of sin in our lives harm both the people we love and us.

When pressed, all of us will likely admit that our anger, our willingness to gossip, our envy, our greed, and our sexual sins are wrong, but we often live our lives under the unspoken assumption that it is “no big deal.” Our internal justification may sound something like this: “Who cares if my friend and I talk about our Boss behind his back? It is just the two of us, and no one is going to know.” Or “No one is going to know what I am watching on my phone. Sure, I am ashamed of it, but it is hidden, and it is not hurting anyone.” Or perhaps, “I may occasionally fly off the handle and say mean things to my wife and kids, but they know it only happens when I am stressed.” We can rationalize almost any words or actions, justifying what we have done.

If you are a believer, your sins are forgiven, but they are still devastatingly destructive to you and your loved ones.

If you are a believer, your sins are forgiven, but they are still devastatingly destructive to you and your loved ones. You need to take your unresolved sin seriously, precisely because it is hurting you and others. There is no such thing as private sin, and everything that is hidden will eventually be brought to light. Your sin is a malignant

⁵ www.raystedman.org/romans5

disease that needs to be killed, not a pet, to be indulged and fed. Your proclivity toward certain sins is not God's design for your life, but it comes from our desire for pleasure, our vanity, and our pride. We can trace it back to Adam and Eve, yet that is not an excuse to ignore the ramifications.

Jesus came to liberate us from the punishment of sin, and He also came to free us from the bondage and grip of the individual sins that pull us away from God's purposes. We need to ask ourselves, what is the area of sin in my life right now that I am indulging, and what needs to happen to eliminate it immediately? Sin is a harsh reality that we must admit. But remember, God provided grace while we were yet sinners.

3. WE NEED TO: RECEIVE HIS GRACE

The story of Scripture is ultimately the story of God's redemption of His creation. The world is broken because of sin, and all of us are individually broken because of sin. If you find yourself bound by addiction, broken relationships, and a lack of purpose, then you can be certain that you are experiencing the results of sin.

Jesus gave His own life to deal with the sin of the world once and for all. And those who believe in Him will be made right with God again, or in other words, justified and reconciled.

Freedom from the bondage of sin can only come through a restored relationship with the God who made you, and God has made a way for that to happen. Jesus gave His own life to deal with the sin of the world once and for all. And those who believe in Him will be made right with God again, or in other words, justified and reconciled. If you have never made the conscious decision to give your life to Christ, then this is the right time for you to make that decision. Once you admit you have a problem, you can ask Christ to be the Lord and Savior of your life, receive His grace, and be freed from the brokenness of sin and death. It can only happen through Christ. Look at how this truth reads in Romans 5:16, 20-21:

ROMANS 5:16 *And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins. (NLT)*

ROMANS 5:20-21 *God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (NLT)*

Next week, we will examine the provision of His grace in more detail.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Sometimes the hardest part of change is that first step. It is not easy to admit you have a problem. But the reality is we all have a problem, the same problem, the sin problem. We do not have to face it alone. In fact, we cannot overcome the sin problem alone. We all have the same problem, and we all have access to the same solution, Jesus. God has a plan and purpose for each of us.

How does His plan shape our purpose? What does all of this mean, practically? It means that if you want to purge specific sins from your life, it must start with living out a relationship with Christ. Becoming a Christian does not exempt us from temptation, or from the earthly consequences of our sin.

We must daily decide to live out the new life. We must make time to read and know His Word, to talk to Him and listen to His voice in prayer, and to worship Him corporately with other believers. Victory from sin and the satisfaction of the life of Christ is available to us, but we have to be willing to walk with Him to experience it daily. God's plan will continue to shape our purpose daily as we walk with the Lord, believe His truth, and receive His grace.