

Transformed by the Gift of Grace

Spring Sermon Series on Romans

Romans 5:1-21

Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

March 13, 2016

TEXT: Romans 5:1-21

We continue this morning in our spring series on Paul's letter to the Romans. We are reading this letter with an eye to see how we are to be transformed by the gospel. Romans is a letter

ROMANS

**"...PRESENT YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP. DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF YOUR MIND, THAT BY TESTING YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD, WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT."
ROMANS 12:1-2 SERMON SERIES FEB 7 - MAY 29, 2016**

written to draw us in at the end to join God's mission in the world, and we will not join that mission in the world unless we understand the power of the gospel to utterly transform our lives. We are listening at Kenwood this spring to seek such a transformation, and this morning we look at Romans 5 and consider how you and I are transformed by the gift of God's grace. In Romans 1, Paul grounds his eagerness to share the gospel in

seeing a world around us in need of transformation. In Romans 2, he addresses us personally in the second person singular, that you and I need transformation too. In Romans 3, he announces how this transformation happens. It happens at the cross where Christ takes our sin upon His shoulders. Once the gospel is announced in Romans 3, that's when we need to fasten our theological safety belt, because that is when the transformation starts to unroll and unfold before us. In Romans 4 last Sunday, Pastor Scott showed us how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms us to give us a new family. We are descendants of Abraham, heirs of the promise, co-heirs of the new heavens and new earth. We discover that we have the beginnings of a new identity in and through Jesus Christ.

This morning, Paul will take us all the way back to the very beginning of humanity and set before us the towering and life-changing truth that God is re-creating humanity in Jesus Christ. This has massive implications for us. As we look at Romans 5, we want to first begin by noting that teachers matter. I remember my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Hunt, and a vivid memory of Mrs. Hunt's calling us together after lunch, after we had played kickball. We were sweaty, lacked focus, and were coming into the afternoon time. Mrs. Hunt gathered us around, and she played the piano and taught us to sing. It was the first time that I had ever experienced that, and I remember thinking to myself: "This is so amazing!" I discovered there in the back rows of my fourth grade class that I love music and singing, and I'm so glad that she imparted that to us. When you think of the teachers that you've had all through your life, they shade your understanding of the world. They give you information; they give you ways of thinking about the world as well. This is true for all of our teachers, and it is especially true for those who teach

us the Word of God. Sunday School teachers really matter. If you want to make a difference in the world, get engaged with teaching, not only Sunday School teachers for children, but teachers for adults. Preachers shape our attitude towards the Scriptures; seminary professors guide us into how we approach God's Word and think about it forward. Before we get into Romans 5, I want us to join in a lesson that Paul received from one of his teachers. Acts tells us that Paul's teacher was Gamaliel. That's how he learned as a young man to read the Scripture, to reason from Scripture. Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus. He was the leading teacher of the day, and Hillel published a set of hermeneutical rules for thinking from Scripture and with Scripture. The first of these rules has the catchy Hebrew title: *Qal va-Homer*. In Hebrew, this means: *the light and the heavy*. The light and the heavy is a way of thinking and reasoning from Scripture. It is thinking by analogy, that if something is true in this case then it is true in this other case. The *Qal va-Homer* assumes a consistency in the character of God and in His working with the world. Here is a *Qal va-Homer* observed from Genesis by Rabbi Ishmael, another first century teacher:

“If He, for whom there is no weariness, allowed it to be written that He created His world in six days and rested on the seventh, how much more should man, of whom it is written: ‘But man is born unto trouble,’ rest on the seventh day?”

The light and the heavy does not mean that the first part is insignificant—here we are making an observation about the character of God—but it is reasoning by analogy. If God, who creates the world, rests on the seventh day, then how much more should you and I—created in His image—rest on the seventh day? The *Qal va-Homer* assumes this consistency of God. It is a reasoning by analogy and not a contrasting logic. That is very important to notice. The *Qal va-Homer* works by saying: “If this is sure, then this also is true.” It is not a relationship of contrast, one or another. Have you ever met a parent who seems to have a difficult time loving both of their children? This is sad and devastating, and yet it often occurs. Sometimes parents feel this sense that: “If I were to love you, then I have to put this other one down in order to gather my resources to love you.” The *Qal va-Homer* does not think that way at all. It is: “If I love you, then how much more is love overflowing that I can love this other one. If a father can care for the children of his neighborhood and watch out for their safety as they cross the street, how much more should he love and care and protect his own.

Let me give you the apologetic use of the *Qal va-Homer*. A certain Caesar, we are not told which Caesar, came to Rabbi Joshua, a contemporary of Paul, came to certain Rabbi, and he said: “I want to see your God,” and Rabbi Joshua said: “You can't see Him.” Caesar, placing his hand upon the hilt of his sword, said: “Well, nevertheless, I want to see Him.” Remember, when Pompeii came into the Jerusalem Temple, he saw no image and wondered who was worshiped in Jerusalem. So Rabbi Joshua took Caesar out into the field and positioned him to stand facing the sun during the summer solstice, and Rabbi Joshua said to him: “Look directly at the sun.” Caesar replied: “I cannot,” and Rabbi Joshua said: “If you say of the sun, which is only one of the servants of the Holy One, ‘Blessed be he, I cannot look directly at it,’ then how much more the Divine Presence.” That is reasoning from *Qal va-Homer*, and it has very technical terminology. Whenever you see the language in Scripture *how much more* or *much more*, you are face-to-face with a *Qal va-Homer*.

Our Lord Jesus taught in a similar way. In Matthew 6:30, Jesus says:

“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

It is not relationship of contrast. It is not as though Jesus is saying that in order to care for you God has to destroy the earth. No, because God cares for the earth, and arrays the earth with splendor, then *how much more* will He care for you! The *Qal va-Homer*, the *light and the heavy*, is a way that Paul was taught. It is Hillel’s first rule of reading and reasoning from Scripture. He was taught this way as a young man; he retained this as a primary way of reading Scripture. So, when we come to Romans 5, as we walk through this breathtaking passage, it is important for us to recognize there are four *Qal va-Homers* in here, four times where Paul reasons by analogy to set before us the grandeur and greatness of what God has done in Christ. When we see what God has done in Christ, it is the same God that we have known through the pages of the Old Testament Scripture who has now acted in Jesus Christ.

Now, let's turn to Romans 5:1 equipped with a very vital lesson on the *Qal va-Homer*. As Romans 5:1 begins, Paul says:

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

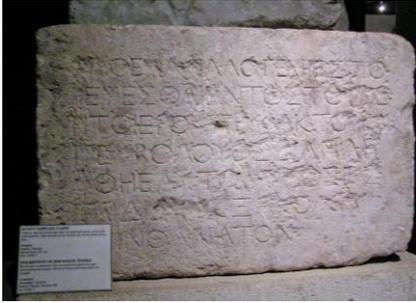
He immediately starts to describe the benefits, the effects of justification, and that is why we see the logic of Romans flowing out from chapter 3, that because we been justified at the cross, we have a new family, and in Romans 5, the outcome of justification begins to change us. The first announcement of this radical change, Paul says, is that we have peace with God. When we hear the word *peace*, we tend to think that the war is over. That is true and good, and yet peace with God through Christ has a different association for Paul as a devout Israelite. The peace that comes from God is a known thing. It is the covenant presence of God; it is the blessing of His presence that was pronounced daily from the sanctuary in Numbers 6:24-26:

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Paul is saying that this peace now is upon us in and through Jesus Christ, because it is through Jesus Christ that we have access to God and we stand in this position, this place of grace, and we rejoice in hope of God's glory. When Paul says that we have access to God, he has a very concrete picture in view again: the imagery of the sanctuary. The Jerusalem Temple was the place of God's presence, and this sanctuary had a partition around it. There was a high wall around the sanctuary, and there was a low wall just outside. You can see in this image the sanctuary in the center, and there are surrounding walls. As you move out from the sanctuary, there are low walls.



The very low parapet is 4½ feet high, and the very little wall marks the dividing line as to how far the nations of the world could come. The low wall was marked with stones at regular intervals that said no foreigners can come past this low wall lest they be destroyed. Several of these stones have been found. This is the best preserved one in the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul announcing that no foreigner can come past this place. Yet, Paul is affirming that in Jesus Christ we have access. The nations of the world are brought **in** to the place of God's presence. The peace of God's



presence is around us, and we rejoice in hope of God's glory. Our situation has radically changed because of the death of Jesus Christ. Your situation and mine is totally different because of the cross of Christ: peace with God; access to our heavenly Father; and hope of the glory. What would you think to say next? "Jesus dies for me. We have peace with God. We have hope of glory." What's next? Paul tells us what's next in Romans 5:3a. Not only do we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but:

"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings . . ."

We rejoice in the difficulties of this life. That is why we need to stay close to the reading of Scripture, because you and I would never think to put this as the next thing that we are rejoicing in. Christ dies for me to have peace with God. Hallelujah! Christ dies for me and my sins are forgiven. I have access to God. Hallelujah! I would never think to say this: Christ died for me, so I rejoice when I'm slaughtered. That is what Paul says. Paul says we rejoice not only in that, but we will rejoice in our sufferings, our afflictions, because we know that God is for us and not against us. We know that whatever happens in this earthly life is interpreted in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We read in Romans 5:3b-5 that Paul knows from experience:

". . . knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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."

Hope does not put us to shame. It is not a letdown. This is very real biblical hope driven by the reality of God's love poured out into your heart and mind through the Holy Spirit. The reality of God's love is known and established at the cross. Paul says in Romans 5:6:

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

Christ died for ungodly people like you, like me, like Paul. Paul goes on to say in Romans 5:7:

"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—"

God has established, fixed, set before our view, His own love for us. He has established it, made it known, revealed it, demonstrated it. Romans 5:8:

"But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This love is sure. It cannot be doubted. It is established with absolute certainty at the cross. This truth, this reality, gives Paul the freedom to reason forward into the future, and this is where we need the *Qal va-Homer*. This is where we need *the light and the heavy*. I know some of us

here, even right now, strain to believe that Jesus Christ died for me while I was His enemy. Some of us haven't caught up with this yet. Some of us still think: "He loved me because I am lovable, and that is such a shaky foundation for redemption, because deep down we know we have sinned against Him. The great truth of the Scripture is: "Yes, I was His total enemy, and He loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Paul then raises the first Qal va-Homer of this passage in Romans 5:9:

"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God."

If it is true that we have been justified by His blood, then there it is, how much more will we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. Paul says we been declared right with God in the present moment by His blood, and so we can look forward into the future, knowing that we will be rescued, we will be standing when God's wrath is poured out at the end. Notice that salvation is both a present possession and a future hope. The reasoning of *the light and the heavy* is from this truth, then how much more for this one. If God has made me right with Him by the blood of His Son shed on the cross, how much more can I look forward to the future without fear, because we will be saved from God's wrath in Christ!

Paul goes immediately in Romans 5:10 to the second Qal va-Homer, the second *light and the heavy*:

"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."

If Christ's death brings us in unity with God, reconciliation, then how much more is it the case that we will be saved by His life, His resurrection. We stand in a new place by the death and resurrection of Christ, and Paul reaches initial climax in this passage rejoicing in surpassing joy of Christ. He says in Romans 5:11:

"More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

If this is true that you are right with God through the death of Christ, how much more then can you know that He is for you in the present, and you can face the future without fear. This assaults the fortress of doubt and fear that afflicts so many of us. This is large weaponry against that fortress that John Bunyan called "Doubting Castle." If God has established His love, then we can reason forward.

Paul looks back now to the very beginning. He moves further back in time from Abraham to the very beginning, and he enters in Romans 5:12-21 to an extended comparison between Christ and Adam: Adam, our ancestor, our forefather according to our flesh, with whom we share a common humanity. All the shared DNA can be documented, established. We have common ancestry. We look different, as we have made certain adaptations to our environment, and yet we share a common descent. Paul reasons from this shared humanity in Adam to a shared new humanity in Jesus Christ. Pastor Scott shared last week that Peter said that there are certain things in Paul's letters that are hard to understand. That is because some of them are so

brehtaking. Romans 5 is so lofty. What is said here is so lofty, so breathtaking. And notice it's an extended comparison between Adam and Christ. Paul says in Romans 5:12:

“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. . .”

Paul reasons that we share in Adam the reality of a sinful nature, and we all die. Death is a reality in this world. He says that death reigns from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sin was not exactly like the transgression of Adam. Yet, we all sin because we are Adam's descendants. We do not come into this world neutral. We come into this world with a proclivity to sin and reject God's Word. No child needs instruction on how to disobey their parents. No elementary school runs a seminar on rejecting the advice and counsel of your teacher. No one sponsors a parenting class on how to cultivate independence in your children. It is in them from Adam. Paul says that the result of it is death, and we all share it.

In Romans 5:15 comes the third *Qal va-Homer* of the passage. Paul reasons:

“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.”

The comparison is that Adam's action spreads and affects all of humanity, and Paul reasons that Christ's death, His action on our behalf, spreads and abounds to many. Paul is comparing both the pluripotency of Adam's trespass with the pluripotency of the grace of God. If death spreads, how much more is it the case that the gift of grace and life will spread. It can't be contained.

He moves in Romans 5:17 to the fourth and final *Qal va-Homer* of our text. Paul reasons:

“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.”

We all experienced this. Death reigns in this world. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says death is the final enemy. But death reigns. You don't have to choose it. It is a reality, and he says that death reigns through the one man. If that is true, then how much more is it the case that for all who receive the grace and gift of righteousness will reign in life through Jesus Christ. Paul is reasoning from Scripture that Jesus Christ is the new Adam, and that all who believe in His death and His resurrection share in a new nature, a new beginning. The gospel transforms you and me, not only into a new family of faith, but into an absolutely new ancestry, a new origin, and he will reason from this forward as we get into Romans 6, 7 and 8, that you are no longer obligated to the life and pattern and thoughts you have inherited from Adam. We should be glad and grateful because now we have the possibility of a new life. We don't have to think that way anymore. We don't have to act that way anymore. Paul will say in Philipians: “I want you to think and live out of Christ. You don't have to think in terms of selfish ambition and exploit others around you for gain. You have the great freedom of thinking like Christ who emptied Himself and became obedient and humble unto death on a cross.” He let God do the exalting. That is freedom. That is new life.

The passage ends with triumph in Romans 5:19:

“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.”

One led to condemnation, so one righteous act leads to life for all. The consistent element in this comparison is the *all*. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience the many are made righteous; as sin reigned in death, grace reigns through righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are changed. We are changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me apply this to us this morning in three ways.

Number one: **Teachers matter.** We wouldn't have Romans 5 without Paul's being taught by someone to reason and think this way. Teachers matter. Teachers come in all shapes and sizes. Teachers matter in school; teachers matter in Sunday School classes; teachers matter in University, in seminary life; teachers matter in the home, as parents and grandparents, as uncles and aunts. So, the call from Romans 5 in part is to model teaching the Word of God to the people around us. Model to people around you an approach and attitude towards the Scripture that allows the possibility of looking to the Scripture for life and reasoning forward for new life and application. Teach your children, those in your sphere of influence, that you go to this Book to find out who you are. You go this Book to find out how to live.

Number two: It is beautiful in Romans 5 for us to observe that **Jesus Christ does not destroy our personalities but rather redeems them and restores them.** Paul doesn't really stop being a rabbinic sage in Romans 5. It is just that his rabbinic sage education is restored, refined, and transformed with the additional information of the gospel. At some point it will hit you that the God of Scripture does not destroy your personhood. He redeems it, and you end up as more of you than you were without Christ. He will take your gifts, your intellect, or service, your capacities, and redeem and transformed them. So the call is to use who you are for Jesus Christ. If He has given you a great gift in business and finance, then use it for Jesus Christ. I listened to an interview this week from a business leader who is now the president of the Museum of the Bible that is getting ready to open in November in Washington, DC. It was a great story. He had a call from Bill Bright the week that Bill Bright was dying. This guy was retired from leading Bass Pro shops and other businesses very successfully, and Bill Bright said to him: “Look, brother, you have great gifts in business, so go and use your gifts in business for Jesus Christ.” Bill went on to say: “I'm dying, I'm leaving, so this is my last chance to tell you use who you are for Christ.” He did, and he is doing it.

Number three: **Reason forward from the cross without fear.** The *Qal va-Homer*, *the light and the heavy*, invites us this morning that new life has begun at the cross of Christ, that Adam's helpless race in Romans 1-2 has been found in Romans 3. New beginnings break forth. You are part of a new family of faith in Romans 4. You have a new past, a secure future. God is on your side. Romans 5 told you that you have access to God's presence. You hope of God's glory. You have God's ultimate commitment to you in the present. His love cannot be doubted because it is firmly established at the cross.

Charles Wesley's great hymn, *And Can it Be?* has a stanza that tells us:

“Christ left His Father's throne above
so free so infinite His grace.
Emptied Himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free
for oh, my God, it found out me.”

This is big—grace, all the way back to a new Adam, a new beginning. So we follow in the footsteps of people like Jonathan Edwards in his famous resolutions. Resolution Number 25 said: “Resolved to examine carefully and constantly what is the one thing in me which causes me in the least to doubt the love of God and direct all my forces against it.” Whatever is in me that causes me to doubt the love of God, let me direct all my energy against it, because the love of God is established, and if that is true, then you have the freedom to reason forward into a new beginning of new life without fear, and you are no longer bound, as we will discover in Romans 6,7, and 8, to think and act as you always have. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, You are great. Your coming to save is immense and free, and your transformation that is offered to us in the gospel reaches to the very depths of who we are. There is nothing that is antecedent to You, nothing that will follow the achievement of the cross. Lord, help us this morning. I pray specifically for those who are still doubting the love of God for them. Would You set us free. Call us into the broad place of life in Jesus Christ. Transform us by the gift of grace, we pray.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.