

God's Gift of Life in Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us 14*, Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015

Romans 5:6-17 (ESV adapted)

5:⁶ For while **we were still weak**, at the right time **the Messiah died for the ungodly**.

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for the good person someone would even dare to die – ⁸ but **God demonstrates his own love for us** in that while we were still sinners, **the Messiah died for us**.

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been declared right in his blood, much more shall we be **saved through him** from the wrath. ¹⁰ For if while we were **enemies** we were **reconciled to God** through the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall **we be saved in his life**. ¹¹ Not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Messiah, through whom now **we have received that reconciliation**.

¹² Therefore, just as **sin** came into the world through one human, and **death** through sin, and so **death spread to all humans 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 **prototype** of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But it's not – 'just like the trespass, so is the **gift of grace**;' for if many died through one human's trespass, much more have **the grace of God** and **the gift in grace** from **the one human Jesus Messiah** abounded for many.

¹⁶ Also **the gift** is not like the result of that one's sin. For the judgment following one trespass was for condemnation, but the **gift of grace** following many trespasses was **for a verdict of being in the right**. ¹⁷ For if, because of the trespass of one, **death reigned** through that one, much more will those who receive **the abundance of grace** and **the gift of being declared right reign in life through the one Jesus Messiah**.

Matthew 28:16-20 After his resurrection, Jesus meets with his disciples.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples **went to Galilee**, to the **mountain** to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when **they saw him** they **worshiped him**, but **some doubted**.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, ²⁰ **teaching them** to keep **all that I have instructed you**.

And behold, **I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"

I Corinthians 15:20, 25-26

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who sleep. ...²⁵ For **he must reign** until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The **last enemy** to be destroyed is **death**.

Romans 8:9-11

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if **Christ is in you**, although the body is dead because of sin, **the Spirit is life** because of righteousness. ¹¹ If **the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also **give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you**.

Out of Death – Into Life

Today is a focused concentration of all Christian faith. It marks its distinct character. All flows first from events announced as “Good News,” *Gospel* – actions of God in his world. Thus deeply miraculous! Not in the common idea of a distant god breaking into the orderly laws of nature to do something strange. But the Creator of that wonderful order, who also pervades it, working within it to show a deeper reality than we ordinarily perceive.

Jesus died. The end!? Everyone knew it. The women went to the tomb to mourn the dead prophet they had loved and followed. Not one person expected what then happened! Matthew wants us to sense the miraculous. An angel rolls back the stone to reveal a tomb already empty. Fear, joy. Jesus is there, physically alive. He commissions them. Jesus meets his “brothers” in Galilee. Some doubt. Jesus says the world has changed. The faltering disciples have a great challenge, to call all people to live in this new reality.

In Romans 5, Paul is reflecting on the astonishing new reality both in relation to the story of Israel and the situation of all humanity. God has come among us in Jesus, Israel’s Messiah. We were weak, alienated, enemies, but he took our brokenness, enslavement, even our death on himself in Jesus (5:8). Jesus is not God sending someone else to help us; Jesus is the embodiment of God’s own love, God’s own self, as one of us, making peace for us, saving us from the consequences (wrath) of our own choices, opening real hope for us.

A Solution Bigger than the Problem of Sin

Paul emphasizes that the Bible’s story is never just about Israel. The one God is creator of all. Paul reaches back to the story of Adam (Heb. *adam* = human, Gk. *anthropos*), prototype of the human situation. The deep problem is not just breaking the law of Moses, but a broken relationship of distrust, alienation from each other and God. The universal experience of suffering, pain, violence, oppression throughout history, and ultimately death is the marker of that alienation. Individuals, families, societies, governments, religions, philosophies, all share in the reign of violence, pain, suffering, and death.

If it were just a problem of us making mistakes, God might say, “That’s ok, I’ll give you another chance... and another.” But Death reigns. Just think how much human fear and treasure goes into the many ways we both impose death and try to stave off death. But we’re all involved – perpetrators of wrong and pain and victims – and we all die.

Paul sees that God certainly wanted to call us to justice and love, to better deeds and less mutual destruction, but would not stop there. The law helps us see the depth of our problem, but we still have never solved it. We go through periods of better and worse, but we never break the grip of death, of entropy. God intervenes to assert real hope.

The resurrection of Jesus asserts that God doesn’t stop with death. He gives us in Jesus the inbreaking of a new kind of life, a new level of creation, a life for us that shares his Life.

Reigning in Life

Jesus says “*All authority ... has been given to me.*” But he uses that authority not to force us but to woo us to his love. We become learners, we are plunged (baptized) into God’s own life as his children. We receive God’s Spirit to empower transformation on every level of life – in understanding, in moral life, in love, in physical life, in everything.

Paul says we receive this abundant grace, this sharing already in Jesus’ resurrection, so that we may “reign in life” in Jesus. Don’t just survive. Share in the love and life of God!