

The Book of Romans, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: Peace with God; Adam and Christ

Romans 5:1-21

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Romans 5 stands at a hinge in the letter. Having established justification by grace through faith, Paul now describes its fruits (peace, access, hope, the poured-out love of God) and its foundation in the love of God displayed at the cross, then closes with the great Adam-Christ contrast that frames the whole of human history. A good deal is at stake doctrinally. The teacher should be ready to explain peace with God and reconciliation as objective realities (the actual ending of hostility, not merely a change in our feelings), the redemptive purpose God works through suffering, the love of God demonstrated in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners, and the meaning of the Adam-Christ typology.

The Adam-Christ passage (5:12-21) requires particular care, because it is one of the texts disputed in debates about original sin. The teacher should affirm clearly what the text says: through Adam, sin and death entered the world, and death has spread to all people. We are born into a world marked by sin and death, with bodies that will die and a strong pull toward sin, and this is the result of Adam's transgression. But the teacher should not import the Calvinistic idea that every person is born already guilty of Adam's sin and totally unable to respond to God. Paul says death spread to all because all sinned, and Scripture consistently holds people accountable for their own sins, not Adam's (Ezekiel 18:20). The point of the passage is not to fix blame on Adam for our personal guilt but to magnify the surpassing greatness of the grace that comes through the one man Jesus Christ. The remedy in Christ is greater than the ruin in Adam.

This chapter is also wonderfully formative. The peace, the access, the assurance of being loved at our worst, and the reframing of suffering are all meant to settle anxious hearts and produce hope and joy. The teacher should help students move from striving and fear to resting and rejoicing, and from seeing suffering as meaningless to seeing it as something God can use to form them. The disciple being formed here is a person at peace with God, secure in His love, hopeful in suffering, and amazed at the overflowing grace that has triumphed over sin.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul says, Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand (vv. 1-2). What is the peace Paul describes here, how is it different from a peaceful feeling or calm circumstances, and what does it mean that we now stand in grace?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the word therefore, which connects this chapter to everything that came before. Because we have been justified by faith (the great theme of chapters 3 and 4), we now have peace with God. The teacher should help students see that this peace is the direct fruit of justification, not a separate blessing we must earn.

Define the peace carefully. Paul does not mean a calm mood or peaceful circumstances. He means the objective end of hostility between God and the sinner. We were enemies under condemnation; now the war is over and the relationship is restored. This peace does not rise and fall with our feelings; it rests on the finished work of Christ.

Unfold the image of standing in grace. Paul says we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand. The picture is of being ushered into the presence of the King and given a secure place there. Grace is not only the door we entered through; it is the ground we now stand on. Our whole standing before God is grace from first to last.

Apply it to assurance. Many believers treat peace with God as something that fluctuates with their performance. Paul roots it instead in justification, which rests on Christ. The teacher can help students rest their confidence not on how they feel or how well they have done, but on the settled fact that, justified by faith, they stand in grace and are at peace with God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Peace with God as the objective end of hostility, not merely a calm feeling
- Peace as the direct fruit of justification by faith
- Standing in grace, grace as the ground we stand on, not only the door we entered
- Assurance grounded in Christ's work rather than our performance

Discussion Prompts

- How is peace with God different from a peaceful feeling or calm circumstances?
- What does it mean that we stand in grace?
- Why does rooting peace in justification make it more secure?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul describes believers as those who stand in grace and rejoice in hope (vv. 1–2). Do you live day to day with a settled sense of peace with God, or do you carry a quiet anxiety that He is disappointed with you? What feeds that anxiety, and how might resting in your justified standing begin to quiet it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the doctrine of peace with God and asks whether students actually live in it. The teacher should help the class be honest about the low-grade anxiety many believers carry.

Name the common condition. Many sincere Christians live with a nagging sense that God is mildly disappointed in them, scanning their performance for reasons He might be displeased. This anxiety is exhausting and it quietly contradicts the peace Paul describes.

Trace the sources. Such anxiety is often fed by a performance-based view of God, by unresolved guilt, by harsh images of God absorbed from the past, or by simply forgetting the gospel. Helping students name what feeds their anxiety begins to loosen its grip.

Apply the remedy. The cure is not to try harder to feel peaceful but to rest in the objective fact of justification. Our standing does not depend on today's spiritual performance; it depends on Christ. Invite students to identify one accusing thought they carry and to answer it with the truth that, justified by faith, they have peace with God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The anxiety of a performance-based view of God
- Peace experienced by resting in the objective fact of justification
- Answering accusing thoughts with the truth of the gospel
- Assurance as a settled standing, not a fluctuating feeling

Discussion Prompts

- Do you live with a settled peace with God, or a quiet anxiety that He is disappointed?
- What feeds that anxiety in you?
- What accusing thought could you answer this week with the truth of your justified standing?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says we rejoice in our sufferings, 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 (vv. 3–5). What does this passage teach about the purpose God can work through suffering, and why does this kind of hope not disappoint?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a startling claim: we rejoice in our sufferings (v. 3). The teacher should clarify that this is not a denial of pain or a command to enjoy hardship, but a confidence in what God can produce through it. Paul lays out a chain: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

Walk through the chain. Suffering, when met with faith, builds endurance, the capacity to remain under pressure without breaking. Endurance over time forges character, a tested, proven quality of soul. And tested character produces hope, a confident expectation that does not disappoint. God does not waste pain; in the believer's life He puts it to work.

Anchor the hope. Paul says this hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). The hope is secure because it rests on God's love, already poured out and experienced within us by the Spirit. We do not merely hope that God loves us; we have tasted that love, and so our hope has solid ground.

Apply it pastorally. The teacher should help students hold two things together: suffering is real and painful, and suffering is not meaningless. God can use the very hardship a person wants to escape to form Christ in them. This does not make the pain pleasant, but it makes it purposeful, which changes everything about how we endure it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Suffering as something God can use, producing endurance, character, and hope
- Hope that does not disappoint because it rests on God's love (5:5)
- The Holy Spirit pouring God's love into the believer's heart
- The purposefulness, not the pleasantness, of suffering in God's hands

Discussion Prompts

- What chain does Paul trace from suffering to hope?
- Why does this hope not put us to shame?
- How does it change suffering to believe God is using it rather than wasting it?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul describes a chain in which suffering, rather than destroying faith, can produce endurance, character, and hope (vv. 3–4). Think about a hardship you are facing or have faced. Have you experienced suffering mostly as something to escape, or as something God is using to form you? Where might He be building endurance and character in you right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question invites students to bring a real hardship to the passage. The teacher should create space for honesty; many in the room are carrying something heavy.

Name the two ways we tend to hold suffering. Some experience it purely as something to escape, an interruption to be ended as fast as possible, with no thought of what God might be doing. Others, by grace, learn to ask what God is forming in them through it. The difference is not in the pain but in the perspective.

Help students look for God's formative work. Without minimizing the pain, invite them to consider where endurance is being built, where character is being forged, where dependence on God is deepening. Often we can only see this in hindsight, but learning to look for it changes how we walk through present trials.

Guard against two errors. Do not let the discussion drift toward a cold stoicism that suppresses grief, nor toward a glib spin that pretends suffering is not hard. Paul holds both: real lament and real hope. Encourage students to bring their actual hardship to God honestly, trusting that He is at work in it even when they cannot yet see how.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Two postures toward suffering, escape versus formation
- Looking for God's formative work without minimizing pain
- Holding lament and hope together (avoiding both stoicism and glib spin)
- Dependence on God deepened through trials

Discussion Prompts

- Have you experienced suffering mostly as something to escape or as something God is using?
- Where might God be building endurance and character in you right now?
- How can you bring a current hardship to God honestly while still trusting He is at work?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says that while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly, and that God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (vv. 6–8). What does the timing of Christ's death, for us while we were still sinners and enemies, reveal about the nature of God's love and the basis of our salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul reaches the heart of Christian assurance: Christ died for us while we were still sinners (v. 8). The teacher should slow down on the timing, because it is everything. God did not wait until we were lovable; He acted while we were still weak, ungodly, and even enemies (vv. 6, 10).

Contrast human love with God's. Paul observes that one might possibly dare to die for a good person (v. 7). Human love responds to something attractive or deserving in its object. But God's love is different in kind: it set its affection on us when there was nothing attractive in us to draw it, when we were in active rebellion. God's love creates worth in its object rather than responding to worth already there.

Show why this is the bedrock of assurance. If God loved us at our worst, when we had nothing to offer and everything to be ashamed of, then His love does not depend on our performance and cannot be forfeited by our failures. The cross proves, once and for all, the depth and the unconditional initiative of God's love.

Apply it to the basis of salvation. The timing also tells us how we are saved: not by becoming good enough to deserve it, but by God's gracious initiative reaching us in our sin. Salvation begins with God, not with us. The teacher can help students rest the full weight of their hope on the demonstrated love of God at the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ dying for us while we were still sinners and enemies (5:6–8)
- God's love as initiating and unconditional, not responding to our worth
- The cross as the demonstration and proof of God's love
- Salvation grounded in God's gracious initiative, not our deserving

Discussion Prompts

- What does the timing of Christ's death reveal about God's love?
- How is God's love different from ordinary human love?
- Why is the cross the bedrock of Christian assurance?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul marvels that God loved us not after we improved but while we were still sinners (v. 8). Be honest about your own heart: do you tend to believe God loves you more when you are doing well spiritually and less when you are failing? How does the truth that Christ died for you at your worst free you from that performance-based view of God's love?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question exposes a subtle but widespread distortion: the belief that God loves us more when we are doing well and less when we are failing. The teacher should help students surface and confront this lie.

Name the performance-based view. Most of us carry, beneath our theology, an emotional sense that God's affection rises and falls with our spiritual performance, warmer when we have had a good week, cooler when we have stumbled. This makes our sense of being loved a function of our behavior.

Confront it with the cross. Paul says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. The high point of God's demonstrated love came when we were at our lowest. If God loved us most visibly at

our worst, then His love is not a reward for good behavior. It is grounded in His character and in Christ's finished work, not in our spiritual report card.

Apply it for freedom. A believer freed from the performance-based view can fail without despairing and succeed without pride, because neither changes God's love. This security is not a license to sin but the very thing that fuels grateful, wholehearted obedience. Invite students to name where they still believe they must earn God's love, and to answer it with the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lie that God's love rises and falls with our performance
- God's love grounded in His character and Christ's work, not our behavior
- Security in God's love as the fuel for obedience, not a license to sin
- Freedom to fail without despair and succeed without pride

Discussion Prompts

- Do you tend to feel more loved by God when you are doing well spiritually?
- How does Christ dying for you at your worst dismantle that view?
- Where do you still believe you have to earn God's love?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul reasons that since we have now been justified by Christ's blood and reconciled to God while we were enemies, we shall much more be saved by Him from the wrath of God, and we even rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 9–11). What does it mean to be reconciled to God, how does reconciliation go beyond being merely forgiven, and what confidence does it give us for the future?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul moves from justification to reconciliation, a related but distinct blessing. We have been justified by Christ's blood and reconciled to God while we were enemies (vv. 9–10). The teacher should help students see that reconciliation goes beyond a legal verdict to a restored relationship.

Distinguish forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness cancels the debt; reconciliation restores the friendship. A judge can acquit a defendant without ever becoming their friend. But God does more than acquit us; He brings us near, makes us His own, and turns enemies into beloved children. Justification is the verdict; reconciliation is the embrace.

Trace Paul's much more argument. If God did the harder thing, reconciling us while we were still enemies at the cost of His Son's blood, then He will certainly do the easier thing, saving us through Christ's life now that we are His friends (vv. 9–10). The hardest part of our salvation is

already accomplished; the rest is secure. This gives strong confidence for the future, including confidence that we will be saved from the wrath to come.

Apply it to assurance and joy. Paul says we even rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 11). Reconciliation is not only safety from wrath but the restoration of a relationship in which we can rejoice. The teacher can help students see that the goal of the gospel is not merely a clean record but renewed friendship with God Himself.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Reconciliation as restored relationship, going beyond legal acquittal
- The distinction between forgiveness (debt cancelled) and reconciliation (friendship restored)
- Paul's much more argument, the hardest part of salvation already accomplished
- Confidence of final salvation from wrath through Christ's life (5:9-10)
- Rejoicing in God Himself as the goal of the gospel

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be reconciled to God?
- How does reconciliation go beyond being merely forgiven?
- How does Paul's much more reasoning give confidence for the future?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul says we now rejoice in God Himself, no longer enemies but reconciled friends (v. 11). How would your relationship with God change if you truly saw yourself as His reconciled friend rather than a guilty defendant still hoping for acquittal? What is one way you could enjoy God this week rather than merely serving Him out of duty?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the doctrine of reconciliation and asks what difference it makes to see ourselves as God's reconciled friends. The teacher should help students feel the relational warmth Paul intends, not just the legal safety.

Contrast two self-images. Some believers, even long after conversion, still relate to God as a guilty defendant standing nervously before a judge, hoping for acquittal. Paul says that is not where the reconciled believer stands. We are not defendants awaiting a verdict; we are reconciled friends, even beloved children, welcomed into the family.

Explore how this changes the relationship. A defendant approaches the bench with fear and formality; a child approaches the Father with confidence and affection. Reconciliation invites us out of the courtroom and into the home. This does not lessen our reverence, but it transforms our nearness from dread to delight.

Make it concrete and warm. The question asks for one way to enjoy God this week rather than merely serving Him from duty. Encourage students to move toward delight: unhurried prayer, gratitude, worship that is glad rather than dutiful, simply spending time in God's presence as a friend. The aim is to help duty-bound believers begin to rejoice in God Himself.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The believer as reconciled friend and child, not anxious defendant
- Reconciliation transforming nearness from dread to delight
- Rejoicing in God as distinct from dutiful service
- Reverence and intimacy held together

Discussion Prompts

- Do you relate to God more as a guilty defendant or a reconciled friend?
- How would seeing yourself as God's friend change the way you approach Him?
- What is one way you could enjoy God this week rather than only serving Him from duty?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul draws a sweeping contrast between Adam and Christ: through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all because all sinned; but the free gift in Christ is not like the trespass, for where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that grace might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life (vv. 12–21). What does this passage teach about how Adam's sin brought sin and death into the world, in what sense death spread to all, and how is the gift of grace in Christ even greater and more powerful than all the damage Adam's sin caused?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and it must be handled with care, because the Adam-Christ passage stands at the center of debates about original sin. Paul says that through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (v. 12). Then he contrasts Adam with Christ, whose free gift far surpasses Adam's trespass (vv. 15–21).

Affirm clearly what the text teaches. Adam's sin was the doorway through which sin and death came into the human race. Because of Adam, we are born into a world dominated by sin and death; we inherit a mortal body that will die and a world bent toward evil, and we feel the strong pull of temptation. Death reigns over all, even over those who did not sin in exactly the way Adam did. This is the real and serious consequence of Adam's transgression for the whole human family.

Now guard against the Calvinistic overreach. Some teach that every person is born already guilty of Adam's sin, bearing personal condemnation for it from birth, and is therefore totally unable to respond to God (the doctrine of inherited guilt and total depravity). The teacher should gently but clearly decline to teach this. Paul says death spread to all because all sinned, that is, all have personally sinned (3:23). Scripture elsewhere is explicit that the son does not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father the guilt of the son; each one answers for his own sin (Ezekiel 18:20). We inherit the consequences of Adam's sin (a world of sin, a mortal body, the universal experience of temptation and death), but we are condemned for our own sins, not for Adam's. And throughout this letter Paul pleads with people to believe and obey, which assumes they are able to respond to the gospel.

Now lift up Paul's actual point, which is not Adam but Christ. Paul's whole purpose in this contrast is to magnify grace. He keeps saying the gift is not like the trespass; it is much more (vv. 15–17). Adam's one sin brought condemnation and death, but Christ's one act of obedience brings the free gift of righteousness and life to many. And the grace is not merely equal to the damage; it overflows it: where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (v. 20). However deep the ruin Adam introduced, the remedy in Christ goes deeper still.

Close on the reign of grace. Paul ends with a triumphant image: just as sin reigned in death, grace now reigns through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (v. 21). Two kings, two reigns, two humanities. We are all born under the reign of sin and death through Adam, but in Christ we are transferred into the reign of grace and life. The teacher should help students marvel that the gift is greater than the ruin, and that they may belong, by faith in Christ, to the new humanity over which grace reigns.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Adam as the doorway through which sin and death entered the world (5:12)
- Death spread to all because all sinned, personal accountability for personal sin (3:23; Ezekiel 18:20)
- Inheriting the consequences of Adam's sin (mortality, a world of sin) without inheriting his guilt
- Rejection of the Calvinistic doctrines of inherited guilt and total depravity
- Human ability to respond to the gospel, assumed throughout Romans
- The surpassing greatness of grace, the gift far exceeds the trespass (5:15–17)
- The reign of grace through righteousness to eternal life in Christ (5:21)

Discussion Prompts

- In what sense did sin and death spread to all people through Adam?
- Why do we say we inherit the consequences of Adam's sin but not the guilt of it?
- How is the gift of grace in Christ even greater than all the damage Adam's sin caused?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this rich chapter. Paul has shown you peace with God, the purpose hidden in suffering, the love of God poured out at the cross, reconciliation with God, and the triumph of grace over sin in Christ. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Romans 5:1-21 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question invites students to look back over the chapter and name how Jesus is forming them through it. The teacher should gather the threads, which run from peace to assurance to the triumph of grace.

Recall the journey: peace with God and standing in grace, hope forged through suffering, the love of God proven at the cross while we were still sinners, reconciliation that makes enemies into friends, and the reign of grace that overflows the ruin of sin.

Encourage a single takeaway. For one it may be finally resting in peace with God; for another, reframing a current suffering as something God is using; for another, believing they are loved at their worst; for another, marveling that grace is greater than all their sin.

Close in assurance and joy. This chapter is meant to settle and gladden the believer. The disciple being formed here is a person at peace with God, secure in His unchanging love, hopeful in hardship, and amazed that the grace which reigns in Christ has triumphed over the sin and death they inherited in Adam.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Peace, assurance, hope, and joy as the fruit of the chapter
- The triumph of grace over sin as the believer's confidence
- Suffering reframed within the security of God's love
- Spiritual formation grounded in reconciliation with God

Discussion Prompts

- Which single truth from Romans 5:1-21 most needs to shape your week?
- How has this chapter changed the way you see your standing with God?
- Where do you most need to rest in the truth that grace is greater than your sin?