

# CONSIDER ANEW

## *Romans 5*

Chapter 5 is another one of those chapters in Romans where Paul both gives us a key milepost, but then also goes much deeper.

Let's start with the milepost. So far in Romans Paul has gone to great lengths to establish each of these few points:

- Chapter 1: Everyone should know there is a God. All are without excuse.
- Chapter 2: Everyone falls short of being able all by themselves to "be right before God" or in other words no one is perfect. We all fall short.
- Chapter 3: When Paul says everyone, he means it, and deals with both Jews and Gentiles, and he introduces that it is faith not works that puts us right with God.
- Chapter 4: He continues to drive home the point of faith by using both Abraham and David as examples of how God has always been about faith.

Paul has accomplished each of these mileposts with very dense text, laying out point and counterpoint to demonstrate that the summary statements he is making are absolutely defensible and consistent with the Scripture.

So what is the milepost for Chapter 5? Let's look at verse 1: "we have peace with God." This is an important point to take in. I find that when I am reading something that is a legal brief of sorts, it can have a real edge to it. It is important not to confuse the genre of this letter with God. God is not angry with us, we simply need to put our faith not in ourselves, but God. In verse 8 we read

another gem, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God is the prime mover in our relationship. If we can grasp how God—who is beyond description—in the face of our constant rejection of him,\* died for us, then we will be overwhelmed by his love, and not even our own suffering will dissuade us.

That is the big picture point. And the question that flows from it is, "Are you at that level of relationship with God?" Has the depth of his love penetrated your heart so deeply that you can say, "Yes, I receive Jesus' death for me, I love God, and not even suffering will dampen my love for God?"

Does Paul take us deeper into this point? Of course he does. He does so by taking us all the way back to Adam to show God's complete faithfulness to us.

In verses 12-21 we have what may seem a rather confusing point about Adam and Christ. So let's try and make the climb up this ridge. Remember, Paul is writing this treatise in a way that no argument can undo what he is asserting. In chapter 4 he talked about Abraham and David. What if someone were to say, "What about Adam and all the people between him and Moses?" Furthermore, "all your talk about the law, what about all the people who sinned after Abraham and before the law?"

Let's re-read verses 12-14. "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--for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 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.” The point Paul is making here is that breaking the law is a big deal, but, death reigned from Adam forward because of Adam’s disobedience; the absence of the law did not lead to the absence of death. Death is the result of separation from God. In the next chapter I am going to discuss a bit more about death and just what that might mean in Paul’s day. There is a bigger point in this chapter, however, and I do not want us to miss it.

In verses 15-17 Paul makes this big point. God’s grace: His forgiveness, goodness, etc. are all greater, greater than death. These are not two equally balanced forces—God is greater! We read in verse 17 that the free gift is much more. Hold onto this point. With it said, Paul returns to Adam in verse 18 to demonstrate that God has accomplished this feat.

Another detail—and it can confuse us—is that Paul is often incorporating into his writing how the law factors into his argument. This is where it can get tough for us, but Paul is writing to both Jews and Gentiles. He specifically comments on the law in verse 13 and he does it again in verse 20. So a Jewish person might suggest that the giving of the law started a new point in time for humanity. Paul is saying both yes and no. The law merely intensified the human situation. He is dealing with how some Jews would see the law as salvation, but for Paul that would mean it would be about humans doing good works versus having faith in what God has already done.

All these details serve to drive home the depth of God’s love for us. It can be a bit intellectual, to which I will make two points. First, if you have been following the legal brief (see the first four mileposts above), then are you beginning to appreciate that God and God’s

grace in Jesus Christ is both greater than all our shortcomings and that God's plan deals with all the issues of the world. In fact it really is the best plan.

Second, you are beginning to appreciate that the goal is not to be smarter, but to be more deeply connected to God through Jesus Christ. Pause for a moment and consider anew that Christ died for you, all for love.

\*See the appendix, The Big Picture Story of the Bible.