

STUDY GUIDE 6 – ‘Appreciating the privileges’

Read **Romans 5:1-11** in the dramatised script and tackle questions 1-8. Then read **5:12-21** in The Message and answer question 9.

(1) What two things do we have by <i>faith</i> ? (1-2)	
(2) What do we have <i>access</i> into? (2)	
(3) What positive aspects are there in <i>suffering</i> ? (3-4)	
(4) What does the <i>Holy Spirit</i> do for us? (5)	
(5) Find three descriptions of what <i>we were</i> when Christ died for us (6, 8, 10)	
(6) Why needn't we expect <i>God's wrath</i> any more? (9)	
(7) How has God <i>reconciled</i> us to himself? (10)	
(8) Find three things we can <i>boast</i> or <i>glory</i> in (2, 3, 11) .	
<p>(9) 5:12-21 presents Adam and Christ as (let us say) the managers of two opposing teams. At first it looks as though Adam (the Sin and Death team) is going to win hands down. But gradually we see Jesus Christ (the Grace and Life team) scoring a whole avalanche of goals and winning by a huge margin. <i>Read this in The Message (headings added).</i></p> <p>Disaster scenario. You know the story of how Adam landed us in the dilemma we're in— first sin, then death, and no one exempt from either sin or death. That sin disturbed relations with God in everything and everyone, but the extent of the disturbance was not clear until God spelled it out in detail to Moses. So death, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape from Adam to Moses. Even those who didn't sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. But Adam, who got us into this, also points ahead to the One who will get us out of it....</p> <p>Death sentence, life sentence. Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. If one man's sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God's gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do! There's no comparison between that death-dealing sin and this generous, life-giving gift. The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was this wonderful life sentence. If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?</p> <p>Wrong with God, right with God. Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.</p> <p>Sin loses, grace wins. All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call <i>grace</i>. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.</p>	
(9) Which team are we on? Why?	

(A) Read the dialogue overleaf. Does Kev appreciate the offer he is being made? And the opportunities it opens to him? Does this help us to understand what <i>grace</i> and <i>gift</i> really mean?	
(B) vv1-5 describe the new relationship with God that we can enter into thanks to what Christ has done. Which feature of this new relationship means most to you?	
(C) In the light of vv6-11, why are we (believers in Christ) permitted to <i>boast</i> that we and God are now friends and we can be sure of eternal life?	
(D) In smaller groups, look up (some of) these passages and say how they change our attitude to the love of God: <i>Ps 103:8-12; Jer 31:3; Jn 3:16; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Eph 4:32; 1 Jn 4:19.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there one point about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) that I have understood in a new or deeper way? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there one practical step I could take as a result of studying this section of Romans? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there something in this section which I could turn into praise or prayer to God? 	

'ROSES' by David Brooks (in *Rough Diamonds* by Paul Burbridge, adapted)

A man carrying two black rubbish bags rushes into a florist's just on closing time.

- KEV Oh! Thank goodness you're open. I need to buy a flower for my sweetheart.
- DELIA Well, we only have rose bushes, and they're on free offer.
- KEV I was actually looking for chrysanthemums.
- DELIA I'm sorry, we only have rose bushes.
- KEV Daffodils?
- DELIA Only rose bushes.
- KEV Do you think roses would be romantic?
- DELIA Yes, very romantic. (*She hands him a bush of red roses in a pot.*)
- KEV No, no – I just want the one rose.
- DELIA But you can have the whole bush.
- KEV A whole bush would be a bit overpowering. I was going to say to her, 'A perfect rose for my perfect rose.' 'A perfect rose-bush for my perfect rose-bush' doesn't sound quite right. And anyway, I couldn't afford a whole bush.
- DELIA But it's on free offer. And if you took the whole bush, you'd have an endless supply of perfect roses for your perfect rose.
- KEV Do you take Visa?
- DELIA Listen – it's free. F-R-E-E. FREE!
- KEV Will you take an IOU, then?
- DELIA Aarrgh! This rose bush is yours for the princely sum of nothing. In monetary terms, zero pounds, zero pence and zero per cent VAT. All you have to do is to pick it up and take it away. You owe me nothing. Do you understand?
- KEV Yes. OK, I'll take one. When's your earliest delivery date?
- DELIA Just take this one now.
- KEV Oh, I can't do that.
- DELIA Why not?
- KEV Well, I've got my hands full with these bags, you see.
- DELIA What's in your bags?
- KEV Oh, nothing much. Rubbish, mainly. Well, in fact it's all rubbish, now I think about it. Can't seem to get rid of it. No-one seems to want it.
- DELIA Just leave it here. We'll deal with it. Then take your rose bush.
- KEV Mind you, there's some good quality rubbish in here. Look at this piece of newspaper – had some good quality fish wrapped in that.
- DELIA Doesn't matter what it is – just leave your rubbish and take your rose bush.
- KEV And when do I come back for my rubbish?
- DELIA Never. I'll deal with that.
- KEV Hmm. So what you're saying is, that, if I want, I can leave all my rubbish here, and take away this rose bush – free of charge – and it's mine to keep for ever, at no extra cost?
- DELIA Precisely!
- KEV Right.
- DELIA So you'll take it?
(*Pause.*)

KEV I'll think about it. (*Places bush on counter, picks up bags and exits shop.*)

RIGHT THROUGH ROMANS

'Appreciating the privileges' (5:1-21)

6

Is *justification*, having a right relationship with God, something we can *boast* about, as if it was achieved by our own credit or goodness? No, it has been *credited* to us by God's grace and through Jesus' death on the cross, and all we have to do is to trust God's promise and accept it for ourselves. However big a blow this is to our natural human pride, we still have something to *boast* about, in a good sense, because we have rich and wonderful privileges.

5:1-5 The benefits Christ has won for us (a). **1** *We have peace with God.* Some versions have 'let us have peace', so Paul is either describing an accomplished fact, or urging us to accept that fact, or both. We are no longer God's enemies; thanks to Jesus, our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves and with all creation is one of freedom from hostility and guilt. Yes, we may still need to apologise and set things right, but the reconciling work has been done by Christ (see also vv10-11). **2** *We boast* (or *let us boast*). This Greek word (*kauchaomai*) means either boasting in a bad sense or glorying and rejoicing in a good sense. Jews weren't wrong to boast about their privileges (2:17, 23), but they were wrong to claim credit for them, particularly as they didn't live up to them. If we put our trust in Christ, we are allowed, in fact encouraged, to rejoice in the privileges he has won for us (v11). It isn't arrogance to be sure we are going to share in God's *glory*. **3** *We glory* (*kauchaomai* again) *in our sufferings*. Paul puts a positive spin on suffering; so far from being a sign of God's displeasure, it is actually God's way of toughening us up and giving us character. **5** *Hope does not put us to shame*. Even in the depth of despair, the knowledge that God loves us is like a deep well of refreshing water bubbling up in our hearts, because the Holy Spirit, given to all believers, reassures us, encourages us and tells us that God is with us.

5:6-11 Christ's amazing love in dying for us (a). **7** The idea is that normally people lay down their lives only in a good cause or for a heroic person – so it is all the more remarkable that Jesus was prepared to give up his life for an utterly worthless humanity. **8** *God demonstrates his own love*. As Paul says in 2 Cor 5:19, 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,' offering us his friendship even though we had nothing to offer him but a record of moral weakness, selfishness and hostility (**6** *powerless*, **8** *sinners*, **10** *enemies*). **10** *Saved through his life*. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we now already share his resurrection life, and one day we will experience it in all its glorious fullness. **11** *Reconciliation*. The bringing together of former enemies in friendship and forgiveness. Another translation of this is 'atonement', two people becoming 'at one'. This may recall an estranged couple agreeing to come together again; or as in South Africa the often painful process of two races learning to live together and forgive each other.

5:12-21 Christ and Adam: the triumph of grace (b). In this rather complicated passage Paul is trying to show how our situation without Christ is completely changed when Jesus enters the scene. The story of Adam's disobedience (called by theologians 'the Fall') shows how *sin* and *death* (12), *judgment* and *condemnation* (16) became the default mode of the whole human race. Once the leader falls off the cliff, he takes the rest of the team with him (as can happen in mountain accidents), as each member loses their balance one after another. By *death* Paul means, not the end of physical life, but the loss of God's eternal life. I used to wonder how Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, which, ghastly as it was, lasted a relatively short time, could have an eternal significance which would open the gate of heaven to countless billions of people. The answer is, of course, that alongside Jesus' physical death he was going through the much more serious experience of spiritual death; as he bore the responsibility for all human sin, he went through the hell of losing his relationship with his Father. Thus he achieved forgiveness for all who would accept it. Adam stands at the head of the first human race of disobedient and guilty people; Jesus is the Head of a completely new human race of forgiven and justified people. Adam pours out a single drop of poison which kills the entire planet; Jesus pours out a precious

life-giving elixir which brings the dead to life. And it's all by *grace* – undeserved and completely free!