



The *ENJOY THE BIBLE*

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Questions and Answers

Our annual issue devoted to Questions and Answers. The following selections have been edited to either conserve space, ensure clarity, and/or remove any personal information.

Matthew 7:6

⁶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. (Matthew 7:6)

What does this prohibition mean and what is its application? And why did the Lord need to impose it?

As the Lord begins to conclude the fundamental doctrines contained in His ‘sermon on the mount’ for the remnant of Israel’s edification, He does so by first instructing them in verse 6 about the issue of not dealing with two certain groups of people. Even though the climactic stage in God’s program with Israel was underway, (with the kingdom of heaven being preached as “at hand” and the remnant being educated in that which is ‘holy’ and that which is ‘precious’), they needed to understand that it was not yet time for them to deal with anyone but “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” They, therefore, at this time were not to take what they were learning and go give it to either the “dogs” or the “swine”; with the “dogs” being a reference to the Gentiles and the “swine” being a reference to the Samaritans.

Now as the climactic stage in Israel’s program moved on, the time would eventually come when both the Samaritans and the Gentiles would be dealt with; when they both would hear “the gospel of the kingdom,” along with that which is ‘holy’ and ‘precious,’ from the mouths of the remnant. However that proper time was not in existence when the climactic stage in the program was just underway. Hence the Lord prohibited the remnant from dealing with them as yet by what He says in verse 6; which He enforced again when He first commissioned His apostles later on in Matthew 10:5–7.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

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⁷ And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 10:5-7)

Now as the Lord also points out in Matthew 7:6, the reason for not yet dealing with either the Gentiles or the Samaritans is because neither of them was ready at this time for being able to receive either what was ‘holy’ or ‘precious.’ Their response at this time would be negative, both to what the remnant had to say and to the remnant itself. This is because there was some preparatory work, so to speak, that needed to be done during the climactic stage in the program before the remnant could effectually deal with either the Samaritans or the Gentiles. And this preparatory work would not be occurring until the program had proceeded on and certain things within it had taken place. Once those things had taken place, then it would be the appropriate time to deal with both the Samaritans and the Gentiles. Then both groups would be in the position to be effectually dealt with and ready to receive what the remnant has to say to them.

The basic issues that pertain to this ‘preparatory work,’ (along with the reality of there being an appropriate time during the climactic stage in Israel’s program for dealing with the Samaritans and Gentiles), are set forth back in the prophets. Hence, for example, the nations are spoken about as having the “time of their visitation” in the final aspect of the program. This “time of their visitation,” though, was not in existence when the Lord was speaking to His remnant in Matthew 7:6. Hence the prohibition.

[Note: The following question and answer provides some further information regarding the issue of how Gentiles are dealt with in God’s program with Israel.]



Matthew 15:21–28

I understand from Matthew 7:6 and 10:5–7 why the Lord did not immediately respond to this Canaanite woman's initial appeal. But He did eventually respond to her as verses 25–28 describe. So in view of this I would like to know two things: (1) what is the basis upon which a Gentile could be dealt with in God's program with Israel; and (2) exactly what was it that made the Lord eventually respond to the Canaanite woman? Was it something she did? Or was it His compassion? Or what?

First off we need to have a basic understanding and appreciation for the most fundamental and primary means by which God designed for Israel to make a positive impact upon the nations of the earth. Then we also need to take note of the fact that there are some other things that God did and put into place in the course of Israel's history, (especially leading up to the time when the climactic stage in their program would occur), which also figure into the issue of them making a positive impact upon the Gentiles; including even allowing the Gentiles to be benefited in certain ways. And though there is certainly more that could be looked at, the gist of these two matters will at least provide us with a basic understanding of the general issue of how the Gentiles were dealt with in the "time past" portion of God's program with Israel, and also for the particular issue of the Canaanite woman and her situation in Matthew 15.

Briefly put, the primary means by which God designed for Israel to make a positive impact upon the nations is set forth in Deuteronomy chapter 4. As Israel prepared to enter their promised land and to establish themselves in it as God's nation, Moses declared to them,...

⁵ Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. (Deuteronomy 4:5–6)

Now without going into any real detail, this is the basic issue of Israel's designed positive impact upon the nations once they got established in their land. By it God established Israel as 'the light of the world' and as 'the salt of the earth.' Simply stated, by functioning as such Israel was designed first of all to appeal to those within the nations who were individually responding positively to the fundamental light of God-consciousness; i.e. recognizing the truth of who the living and true God really is, in contrast to the "lie" and idolatry of their own nation. Then Israel also was designed to be able to provide for a further witness for God, by which positive responding Gentiles could be further impacted with more of the truth, and even benefited.

So then once Israel was established and functioning in their land this was the primary means by which she positively impacted the nations. Hence it was the most fundamental basis upon which any positively responding Gentile would approach Israel.

However as the books of Judges and following relate, Israel failed to consistently function as she should, and as such her designed impact upon the Gentiles was seriously compromised. But even though she failed to faithfully fulfill this function, (and even produced a negative impact upon the nations that actually grew worse and worse as time went on), God Himself did certain things from time to time that provided for this basic positive impact upon the nations to occur in spite of Israel's rebelliousness and contrariness. In fact at the time when Israel's rebelliousness caused God to send the people out of their land and

into the Assyrian/Babylonian captivity, God set in motion a series of things that not only supplied for a continuing positive impact upon the nations at that time and beyond, but He also did some special things that would even prime and/or prepare the nations as a whole for the specific time when He would directly deal with them as prophesied about in the final part of the climactic stage in His program with Israel.

Therefore with God having designed for Israel to be 'the light of the world' and 'the salt of the earth' once they took possession of their land, this basic function, (whether it was properly produced by Israel, or whether it was supplied for by God by other things in spite of their rebelliousness), was the fundamental thing to which positively responding Gentiles would respond and would then come to Israel.

Now regarding the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, it was not that she 'did anything for or to Israel' that prompted the Lord to eventually deal with her. Nor was it sheer compassion on the Lord's part. Rather it was the issue of her positive response both to the things that God had set in motion previously, and also to the things that were particularly in motion when Christ was here, that prompted the Lord to eventually deal with her as He did. In fact by what she says to the Lord from the time that she first approaches Him, and then by what she does and says in response to everything she experiences in her encounter with Him, she sets before the Lord a full and proper response to those aforementioned things that God had set in place and in motion. So once again it is because she possessed a full and proper response to these things that the Lord eventually responded to her and so honored her with the healing of her daughter.

This is why when the Lord does eventually deal with her, He prefaces what He says to her by saying, "O woman, great is thy faith." Therefore

what the Lord responded to, and honored, was not some work that she had done in the past, or some work that she then did. Nor was it simply her pitiful appeal. But instead He responded to, and honored, what she believed. And what she believed was not just one thing. Rather she understood and believed a number of things that not only pertained to her as the Gentile that she was, but that also pertained to her particular situation in view of what was going on at this particular time in God's program with Israel, and also in view of how Israel was responding to it.

Briefly and simply put, by what this woman of Canaan says when she first approaches the Lord she gives evidence that in her past she had not only already responded positively to the truth of Israel's God being the living and true God, but she had also responded positively to much more than that. She had evidently already benefited from both Israel's "light" and "salt" function. For she clearly knows about, and has understood and believed, the Davidic Covenant. For this reason when she appeals to Jesus for her daughter's sake she addresses Him as "O Lord, *thou* son of David."

²¹ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

²² And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. (Matthew 15:21–22)

However the Lord did not respond to her even though she appealed to Him as such.

²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

²⁴ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 15:23–24)

The Lord "answered her not a word," as it says, and neither would the disciples deal with her when she subsequently made her appeal to them. So even though she was a positively responding Gentile, she did not merit being dealt with at this time on that simple basis. For just as the Lord said, and just as He had previously taught His disciples, the time had not yet come in the climactic stage of Israel's program for the Gentiles to be dealt with as prophesied. Hence, as the Lord says, He Himself was not sent unto them, and neither had He instructed His disciples to go unto them, or even to think about going unto them, as of yet.

However even though this was the general situation in which the Canaanite woman stood, she understood some other things about her Gentile status; especially some things about provisions that God had made for Gentiles who were being affected by things that were going on in Israel's program. And in view of this she returned to the Lord and set before Him her understanding of these other matters. Wherefore, as verse 25 states,...

²⁵ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. (Matthew 15:25)

Now in doing so she appealed to the Lord on the basis of her dismal and grim Gentile status and state. Moreover she made this appeal in accordance with a provision that God had made in connection with the Gentiles' plight. And to this particular appeal the Lord does respond by actually speaking to her for the very first time. For now her appeal was legitimate. Then by what He says to her in verse 26 the Lord probes the nature of her appeal, and by what He says He makes it so that she can manifest to Him whether her appeal is worthy of being honored at this particular time in Israel's program.

²⁶ But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

²⁷ And she said, Truth, Lord:

yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. (Matthew 15:26–27)

When, therefore, she responds to the reality of what the Lord says by saying, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," she testifies to the fact that her appeal is definitely worthy of being honored. For her appeal is intelligently and faithfully based upon a particular provision and precedent that God had made and set in Israel's program regarding impacting the Gentiles.

So then when she said to the Lord, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," she did not come up with some sort of witty or snappy response. Neither did she deliver a 'come back' by which she brought to the Lord's attention something that He had overlooked, which when He gave thought to it made Him see the fairness of what she pointed out, and this then made Him change His mind towards her. No, she did nothing of the kind. Instead she stated her clear understanding of a particular provision and precedent that God had established in Israel, which made it so that the "dogs" were allowed to partake of some of the benefits that Israel received, particularly when those benefits either by design 'spilled over' unto them, so to speak, or when they befell to them as the result of carelessness or neglect on Israel's part. And this she correctly recognized was what was going on in Israel at this time.

Wherefore when this Canaanite woman expressed her understanding and appreciation for this issue, (and by so doing made it evident to the Lord that she was basing her appeal solely upon this), the Lord then says to her,...

^{28b} ... O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matthew 15:28b)

Once again the Lord responds to her because her "faith" is "great." She

truly did understand, appreciate, and believe much. And she believed it wholeheartedly, being fully persuaded both of its truthfulness in connection with her as the “dog” Gentile that she knew she was, and of its legitimate and appropriate application to her at that time in the beginning portion of the climactic stage in Israel’s program.

John 17

²⁵ O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

²⁶ And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:25–26)

Why did Jesus in the latter part of John 17 pray that He would be “in” His disciples? Is this something different from having the Holy Spirit indwell them?

Previous to His prayer in John 17 the Lord had prepared His apostles for His impending departure back to the Father by not only informing them about it, but by especially informing them about the provisions that they would soon receive in order to be able to successfully function in His absence during the final stage in God’s program with Israel. And in connection with doing so, the Lord had particularly said to them,...

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

¹⁷ *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

¹⁹ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

²⁰ At that day ye shall know

that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14:16–20)

So then when the Lord prays to the Father in John 17, He specifically fulfills this promise that He had made to “pray the Father” for them.

Now as the Lord had said to them in John 14, one of the particular issues about which He would “pray the Father” was the issue of them not being left “comfortless” in His absence. Rather, as He said, “I will come to you.” And as He explains throughout John 14–16, this would be accomplished by the ministry of “the Holy Ghost” being sent to them. In accordance not only with the unique capac-

...it is by the person and ministry of the Holy Ghost that the Lord lives in us in accordance with God’s program with us.

ity of the Holy Ghost, but also in accordance with what the Lord says to His apostles about His special ministry to them, the Holy Ghost Himself would be the mechanical means by which the Lord would both “come” to them and be “in” them. Hence the Lord said to them that when they were given the Holy Ghost, “At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

Therefore it is by the person and ministry of the Holy Ghost that both the Lord and the Father would be “in” the apostles, as per the Lord’s doctrine to them in John 14–16 and in accordance with the Lord’s prayer for them in John 17.

Likewise with us in this present dispensation of God’s grace it is by the person and ministry of the Holy Ghost that the Lord lives in us in accordance with God’s program with us. Hence,

for example, the apostle Paul calls the Holy Ghost “the Spirit of Christ.”

Numbers 23:7

⁷ And he (Balaam) took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, *saying*, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. (Numbers 23:7)

Why does this verse speak of “Aram” being in the east, when my Bible atlas shows “Aram” to be north of Israel and Moab?

It is obvious from what Balaam says in Numbers 23:7 that the “Aram” he is talking about is “in the east.” And not just east of Jerusalem, but east of Moab as well. For that is where he is when he makes the statement. In view of this “Aram” must be a designation for more than one place. And indeed it is. In fact “Aram” is a common name used in connection with many geographic places in that general area. Unfortunately most modern Bible maps and atlases only make reference to the major designations, like Aram (Syria) to the north of Israel and the individual towns and villages within it named Aram-‘this’ or Aram-‘that.’ So when people see this they tend to think that this is the only Aram there is. But, again, this is not the case.

Actually the fact that “Aram” is the name for Syria tells us that the name does not originate there, but that it comes from the area east of there. For the name Syria does not originate there either, but is from Assyria, making it so that the name originates in the east, in the Assyrian area. It is therefore an eastern name, originally used in connection with the area of Assyria and Mesopotamia.

Later on in Deuteronomy 23:4 Balaam is spoken of as “the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia.” “Mesopotamia,” as you undoubtedly know, means ‘between the rivers/the two rivers’; i.e. the Tigris and the

Euphrates. However the area is also known as Aram-Mesopotamia, especially when it is being described nationally. That is, when it is being described in connection with the time of Assyrian rule, and as the southern area of Assyrian domain.

So then Aram-Mesopotamia is the “Aram” that Balaam is talking about in Numbers 23:7. This is the “Aram” he came from; which in order to identify it more precisely in view of the wide use of the name, he further defined it as being “of the mountains of the east.” This is the “Aram” that is east of Moab, and also of Jerusalem.

Romans 5:11–21

I have never found Romans 5:11–21 very easy to understand, but I am especially perplexed by the statement, “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift” in verse 15; and by the similar one in verse 16 that says, “And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift.” What is Paul saying, or teaching, when he makes these statements? And then what is the significance about ‘the law entering’ in verses 20–21? I don’t get it.

First off we need to understand that God has designed the overall doctrine of Romans 5:3–21 to effectually produce within us the understanding that we are eternally secure in our justification unto eternal life and its accompanying salvation, having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient Savior. This overall doctrine gives us the “much assurance” that God wants us to have regarding our justification and salvation in His sight, which when we learn it, and it effectually works within us, it does not allow for even a shadow of a doubt to take hold in our minds.

Now there are three separate matters set forth in this overall doctrine that provide for producing the doubtless “much assurance” that God wants us to have, with the final one in verses 11–21 being the capstone doctrine, so to speak. It is the doctrine about the

permanently fixed and absolutely unalterable status of “at-one-ment” with God that we now possess through Christ, being ones who are justified through faith in Him. And it begins as follows:

¹¹ And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned

...we are in the exact same permanently fixed “at-one” position and relationship with God that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is in.

from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Romans 5:11–14)

Now very simply put, after setting forth the issue of the ‘at-odds’ and enemy status with God that we formerly had ‘in Adam,’ what Paul teaches us is that in doing the work of providing for our “at-one-ment” with God, the Lord Jesus Christ did not simply reverse what Adam did. In other words He did not simply provide for us to possess the same status with God that Adam originally possessed before he sinned. Our reconciliation with God, therefore, is not simply a restoration to Adam’s original status with God. If all the Lord did was to provide for reversing what Adam did, then all we possess having believed in Him as our Savior is the

same kind of probationary relationship with God that Adam had before he sinned. And if this is the case, then just as it was with Adam, so it would be with us. That is, as soon as we would sin as a Christian we would lose our relationship with God, and we would once again become an enemy of God.

But, once again, the issue is that the Lord Jesus Christ did not simply provide for reversing what Adam did. Hence having trusted Christ as our Savior and being beneficiaries of what Christ did, we are not simply back in Adam’s original probationary status and relationship with God. Rather we are in the exact same permanently fixed “at-one” position and relationship with God that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is in. And it is by what Paul declares in verses 15–17 that he particularly begins to teach this to us.

¹⁵ But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which* is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

¹⁶ And not as *it was* by one that sinned, so *is* the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

¹⁷ For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (Romans 5:15–17)

Notice that if verse 15 began by saying, ‘And just as the offence, so also is the free gift,’ then it would be declaring that all Christ did was to reverse what Adam did, and all we possess through and in Christ by “the free gift” is the exact same as Adam’s original probationary relationship with God. However it does not say this. Instead it says, “But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift.” And those first three words “But not as...” declare that

the reconciling work that Christ accomplished, and “the free gift” we received through it, does not simply reverse the effect of the offence. In other words it does not simply put things back to the way they were.

Likewise if verse 16 began by saying, ‘And just as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift,’ then it too would be declaring another equality that exists between the result of what Adam did and that of “the gift.” And this would further confirm that all Christ did was to reverse what Adam did, making it so that all we possess by “the gift” is Adam’s original insecure relationship with God. However, once again, verse 16 does not say this. It too begins by saying, “And not as *it was...*”

Now it is by these two highly significant inequalities that Paul sets forth and teaches us the reality of the fact that being justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient Savior we possess the exact same permanently fixed “at-one” position and relationship with God that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself possesses. For His own “at-one” position is the very thing that the Lord Jesus Christ is legally able to give to us, in view of Him being “him that was to come” and Adam being “the figure” of Him, just as the end of verse 14 declared.

Very simply stated, the first significant inequality in verse 15 sets forth the aforementioned fact that “the free gift” that we received in view of Christ’s work is abundantly more than what Adam originally possessed. And indeed it is. The “gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ” is the gift of the very righteousness and life that Jesus Christ Himself possesses. And this is much more than the conditional righteousness, so to speak, and the probationary life that Adam originally possessed. Therefore, it is obvious that the work Christ did in providing for “at-one-ment” did not simply reverse what Adam did, and therefore we do not simply have the repossession of

Adam’s original conditional righteousness and probationary life. Once again if this is all we do have through Christ, then there can be absolutely no eternal security for us. In fact there can be no kind of security at all. But since restoration to Adam’s original status is clearly not what we possess through Christ, then there is bonafide and absolute eternal security for us “in Christ.”

Moreover the second inequality in verse 16 sets forth the fact that the act of judgment of God’s Justice in giving us “the free gift” unto justification is actually of a greater enforcing nature and power than the judgment of His Justice that established our former condemnation in Adam. This is because the former act of judgment to condemnation was in response to just one sin. But in contrast to this, as Paul says, “the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.” That is, the act of judgment of God’s Justice in justifying us is in response to many offences, not just one. Hence the act of judgment of God’s Justice unto our justification is that many times more powerful, sure, and emphatic in its results than even was true for our former judgment unto condemnation. And as Paul drives the judicial significance of this home to us in verse 17, in essence he says, ‘If the results of God’s judgment in response to Adam’s one sin was the issue of death reigning by one, (i.e. if such certainty of reigning could be produced by God’s Justice responding to just one sin); then much more we which receive “abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ,” in view of the fact that the reigning of grace unto eternal life has been established by an enactment of God’s Justice that has responded to many offences.’

So then our “at-one-ment” with God is not only eternally secure because it is “in Christ” and not simply back to what Adam originally possessed, but it is also eternally secure because it has been established by an act of God’s Justice that is even greater

in power and enforcement than that which established our former condemnation.

This, therefore, is the gist of what is set forth by these two highly significant inequalities in verses 15–17.

Then in verses 18–21 Paul sets forth the conclusion to this marvelous doctrine regarding our permanent “at-one-ment” with God through Christ. And this conclusion is composed of two powerful components. Moreover in connection with their power, their effectual working is specifically designed by God to drive the truth of the reality of our “at-one-ment” deep into our thinking and to firmly lodge it in our minds. In fact the forcefulness with which this is done actually embeds in our minds the truth of our “at-one-ment” with God. Indeed it becomes embedded in our minds to such a degree, (and also indelibly recorded there), that it functions in our minds to the production of the exact same degree of absolute certainty and surety concerning our permanent “at-one-ment” with God as exists in God’s own mind regarding us. And this is because God’s own understanding of the eternal security of our justification and its accompanying salvation is the direct result of Him thinking the very same things that He teaches us to think in these verses.

Now Paul provides for the embedding of the truth of our “at-one-ment” by first off declaring in verse 18 the powerfully logical conclusion that we are to understand from what he has just taught in verses 12–17, and then in verse 19 underscoring what it means.

¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:18–19)

In gist form this powerfully logical conclusion and what it means is as follows: That just as the Justice of God only responded to the one man Adam's offence when it came to the issue of the condemnation of all men, so also does the Justice of God only respond to the one man Jesus Christ's righteousness when it comes the issue of justification unto life. Hence this means that just as it was only by the one man Adam's disobedience that others besides himself were judicially constituted and established to be sinners in the eyes of God's Justice, so also is it only by the one man Jesus Christ's obedience that others besides Himself shall be judicially constituted and established righteous in God's sight.

Consequently, just as our former condemnation and enemy status before God did not depend for its existence upon anything we ourselves did, but solely upon what Adam did, (and our works could do nothing to get us out of that former status); so now also our "at-one-ment" with God through faith in Jesus Christ does not depend for its existence upon anything we ourselves do, or might do. Instead its existence depends solely upon the Justice of God's judicial response to what Jesus Christ did for us, (and this likewise means that our works can do nothing to get us out of our present "at-one-ment"). So then with this being the case, we definitely are permanently "at-one" with God. We cannot affect our justification and reconciliation to God in any way whatsoever by anything we might, or might not, do. We therefore truly have "at-one-ment" with God *forever*.

But Paul is not done yet. As was pointed out earlier, there are *two* powerful components to the conclusion. Hence God has Paul go on in verses 20–21 where by beginning with the word "moreover" He has him teach us about something special that He did in preparation for the time when He would put His "Jehovah-ness" and grace into effect for us through Christ. And what God did was specifically designed by Him to manifest the supreme and invincible power of His grace; and thereby to provide us with even all that much more convincement regarding the permanence of our justification unto eternal life and our "at-one-ment" with God through Christ. Hence as Paul says,...

²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20–21)

In these verses God teaches us about a special intent and purpose that He had with the law, which when it fulfilled its purpose, it provided Him with the ability to show

something about the invincible power of His justifying grace. As Paul says, this particular intent and purpose with the law was for it to make "the offence" to "abound." And it historically did this very thing. The law entered and during its run, so to speak, it made sin abound. In doing so it showed sin to possess a very particular power; i.e. the power for judicially reigning unto death, of which there was no manifest equal or none stronger. However, God had this issue about sin's power shown for one particular reason. So that He could show that when His grace entered to deal with sin, His grace would be seen to have both more judicial power and more reigning power than sin possessed. And so it does, just as Paul teaches us to understand and appreciate.

The power of God's grace was more than equal to sin's power. It is not only stronger, but it remains stronger. Hence Paul says, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:." And in connection with grace 'much more abounding,' the result for us now is "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Therefore the issue is that sin, which formerly reigned over us unto death, has now been overcome and divested of its power, and it has been replaced with the power of God's grace reigning over us through the imputed righteousness of our justification. And because of its superior power and might, grace now reigns invincibly over us unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

All the more, therefore, are we permanently "at-one" with God. All the more, therefore, should we "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Again, what verses 20–21 teaches us is that the power and strength of God's justifying grace is indomitable and invincible. It reigns supreme, being unmatched in power and being unable to be deposed. Nothing is more powerful. Nothing, therefore, can overcome it; not even sin. Hence, all the more are we to understand and appreciate that we are permanently "at-one" with God. Or to put it another way, we are 'stuck being justified unto eternal life.'

The doctrine of our "at-one-ment" with God through Christ in Romans 5:11–21 is indeed the capstone doctrine for producing the unquestionable and indubitable "much assurance" that God wants us to possess along with Himself regarding the absolute eternal security of our justification unto eternal life. — K. R. Blades


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