



Welcome to Faith

**The Letter of Paul
to the Romans**

Romans 4 & 5

Summary

Romans 1:18-3:20 - Paul tells the story of a world lost and enslaved to the powers of sin and death.

In 3:21-31, we learn the story of God's dramatic rescue of the world using the metaphors of justification, redemption, and atoning sacrifice for sin.

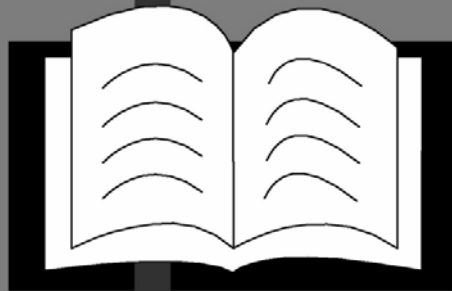
How Do We Read Romans?

1. God is the author, Paul merely the instrument. In a quality English translation (King James), we have the actual words of God. The Word of God.
2. God is the author, but we lost the original. Errors (spelling, punctuation, etc.) are due to errors in transmittal, translation, etc. The Word of God (almost 100%).

How Do We Read Romans? (cont'd)

3. Paul is the author, and he was inspired by God to write. Therefore, the words, sentence structure, ideas, etc., all belong to Paul. Because Paul is human, we are reading God's inspiration through a first century man who was a product of his culture. With the Holy Spirit, this is God's unique and authoritative word on all matters of faith.
4. Paul was a gifted man, but nonetheless a man. Therefore, we must take Paul's views the way we might take the views of any gifted teacher.

Introduction to Romans Chapters 4 & 5



3 Things About Forgiveness

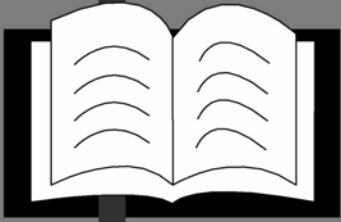
1. If justification means forgiveness, why didn't Paul use the word "**forgiveness**" in the first place? For Jews, the word forgiveness implies repentance (story of Jonah—the people repented and because of their repentance they were forgiven).
2. Justification **precedes, comes before**, our repentance ... the story of the **Prodigal Son** is important because the Father forgives (receives the son home) even before the son makes his confession—forgiveness comes before receiving.

3 Things About Forgiveness (con't)

3. Grace comes before faith—for Presbyterians this is the basis of **predestination**—we are justified by God **before** we accept it!

Example: Abraham was justified. Was he justified by faith? No—he lived 1800 years before Christ. Rather, his justification was "given to him" by God. Romans 4:3 "it was reckoned to him as righteous"—reckoned means credited, counted, regarded as, ascribed, imputed. **Predestination means that salvation precedes works** (hence we cannot even boast of our faith, for faith is a gift). Also, this event with Abraham happened 14 years prior to the **covenant of circumcision, so the law cannot be a basis for righteousness.**

Romans, Chapter 4



I do not demand a reason from Christ. If I am convinced by reason, I deny faith. Abraham believed God. Let us also believe so that we who are the heirs of his race may likewise be heirs of his faith."

Ambrose, on the death of his brother

The Story of Abraham - Romans 4:1-8

¹ What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was **reckoned to him as righteousness.**" ⁴ Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. ⁶ So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin."

1. Was Abraham justified by his faith?

No (verse 3) - " ... and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ..." Reckoned = credited, counted, regarded, ascribed, imputed.

Abraham's faith was a gift, not through merit (works).

2. Jews saw faith as one's action in accord with God's will. Paul sees faith as a response to God's action.

3. David (v. 6-8)—the other national hero—received divine, unmerited pardon for his sin. David received grace, he did not earn God's forgiveness.

Circumcision and Baptism

⁹ Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.

¹⁰ How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

Some (Roman Catholics and Lutherans) see baptism as "initiating" the covenant. Like Paul, Reformed tradition understands that one can be justified apart from circumcision and apart from baptism—that circumcision and baptism celebrate/mark what God has done.

It is a response.

Father Abraham

- The story of Abraham is the story of "the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1) in miniature.
- God's faithfulness brings forth human faithfulness (1:17).

Abraham is the common ancestor to three major faith traditions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) who put their trust in God's covenant promises.

Abraham's name is the content of the promise that came true. Abram's name is changed to Ab/raham "the father of many" (Genesis 17:5), and this is the promise that is now the inheritance of Paul's rapidly growing Gentile churches.

Paul and the Land

Romans 4:13

¹³ The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

The original promise to Abraham and to his seed involved inheritance of the **land**. Paul restates the promise "that he (the seed) would inherit the **world**" but his interpretive shift had already been made in Jewish tradition before Paul (cf. Sir 44:19-21).

The True Descendants of Abraham

Romans 4:16-25

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants—not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all.

The remainder of Chapter 4 tells the story of Abraham and Sarah and the gift of their child.

The Gift - Isaac

Abraham and Sarah believed ...
hoping against hope, they trusted
God.

No way! No way Sarah could have
a child—what was promised was
absolutely humanly impossible.

Jim Wallis of **Sojourners** defines hope as
**"trusting God in spite of all the
evidence, then watching the evidence
change."**

Soren Kierkegaard spoke of believing
because **"it is absurd"** –that is, because it
makes no sense to trust God.

- › Faith is to trust God—even when you
don't feel it possible.
- › Faithfulness is to be obedient to God in
spite of the cost.

Romans 4:23-25

²³ But the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. **It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**

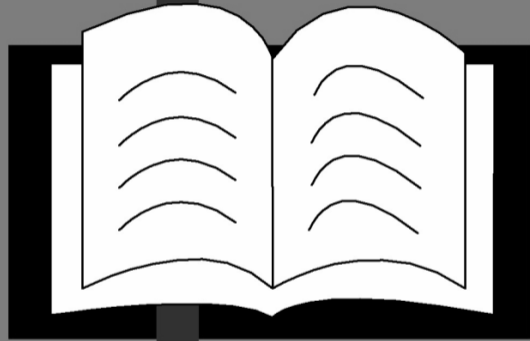
Chapter 4 Summary

1. God had always intended to include the Gentiles in His covenant promise to Israel.
2. Righteousness will be reckoned to us as we learn to trust God the way Abraham and Sarah did, the way Jesus Christ did.

We can trust God because God is powerful enough to create something out of nothing (Isaac) and bring forth life out of death (Jesus).

Chapter 5 now begins by encouraging us to trust in God's love for us, even in suffering, because the sign of God's grace, the Holy Spirit, has been poured into our hearts.

Romans, Chapter 5



Romans 5:1-5

¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Paul first summarizes the first 4 chapters in one brief statement:

5.1a - "Therefore, since we are justified by faith ..."

Now, having dealt with what **has happened** because of Christ (new relationship with God—reconciliation/justification), we can look to the future with hope.

Therefore, because of what happened in Christ, we can even boast in our afflictions (v. 3) because we know history's goal—God redeems creation. So we "rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **and hope does not disappoint us.**

Part II: Transition/Link to Chapters 5–8

⁶ While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. ⁸ But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

¹¹ Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

What Time Is It?

Age of the Cross

Justification

New age begins with Jesus

Middle Age

The "now" in which we live

Future Age

Age of glory - salvation

Adam and Christ

Adam and Eve as

- 1. Historical truth.** Paul probably understood Adam and Eve as a historical truth (first century Jews accepted Genesis 1–3 as historical fact).
- 2. Myth**
- 3. Saga** - It tells a true story in a poetic or mythical way. True, but not necessarily historically true. Jonah is a saga—tells the story of what happens to a man who holds on to prejudices and attempts to run away from God.

Adam

Paul collapses Adam and Eve into Adam—when he speaks of Adam, he means mankind.

Adam means "ground" or "dust" and so also "the human creature made of dust."

- › **Adam does not trust God—this** is the pattern of **disobedience**.
- › **Abraham trusts God—this** is **faith**.

- Regardless of how we understand it, death was not part of original plan—death comes from free will, from rebellion/separation (Sin).
- Adam's sin is eating forbidden fruit. His penalty is death; death is God's mercy, rather than living forever without God.

**Nothing is so easy to denounce;
Nothing is so difficult to understand.**

Augustine on "the ancient sin"

Romans 5:12-17

¹² **Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned** – ¹³ 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 sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have



the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷ **If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned** through that one man, much more will **those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.**

Adam and Christ are different (v. 12-17)

- Adam brought condemnation;
Jesus brought justification
- Adam asserted himself;
Jesus sacrificed himself.

¹² Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned

Augustine sees verse 12 as a key verse in the entire letter—through Adam, sin invades humanity and brings death—death to the body and death to the soul.

Hope

5:2 speaks of the "hope of sharing the glory of God."

This hope of glory was forfeited by Adam and Eve and would have been lost to humanity forever except for God's gracious restoration of the image of God in Jesus Christ.

Sin and Sinners

5:19 - For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Question: A child is born and immediately lapses into a coma. Four years later (or 20 years later) the child awakens. Is the child a sinner? For Paul the answer is YES because Sin is not a moral or ethical description of the child but a relational description. The child would, in Paul's thought, NOT be a transgressor—but would be a SINNER (one who is separated from God ... but in Christ this child is reconciled!)

Universalism (all damned, all saved)

¹⁸ Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.

What does Paul mean, " ... acquittal for all men"?

Does he mean ALL, or only those who believe?

But if faith is a gift, then the only way Christ did not die for ALL is if some are double-predestined (Calvin's solution—some are destined for reconciliation and some are not).

C. B. Caird argues that **Paul holds 3 ideas simultaneously:**

1. God predestines people to salvation;
2. People are responsible for what they freely decide;
3. All will be saved.

In recent years there has been a weaker movement toward universalism by interpreting the Bible as teaching that those not saved will be annihilated rather than condemned to eternal torment.

Four Views of Eternal Salvation and Punishment

Universal Salvation	Reverent Agnosticism	Annihilation of Unrepentant	Eternal Punishment of Unrepentant
Origen	Clement of Alexandria	Arnobius	Augustine
J. W. Colenso	Maximus the Confessor	John Stott	Martin Luther
F. D. Schleiermacher	Karl Barth		John Calvin
J.A.T. Robinson	Hans Urs von Balthasar Richard John Neuhaus		

Final Thoughts on Sin

Karl Barth understands Sin as the human desire to be independent in relationship to God.

Sin is the **power** that dominates the world,
Death is the **law** that dominates the world.

Romans spends more time on death than any other book in the Bible.

Do we read Romans as a letter describing God dealing with humanity in a corporate, collective sense,

OR

Is Romans a description of how individuals come to faith?

Karl Barth's answer is a resounding "yes"!

Summary

"...Genesis shows that God called Abraham to address Adam's disobedience. God called a people to be in covenant with God and to be a light to the world in order to deal with the effects of Sin and Death brought on by Adam's disobedience. But, as we saw in Romans 1–3, Israel was too compromised by its own disobedience to be a light to anyone, even to itself. So God had to do on Israel's behalf what Israel could not do for itself or for the world. God accomplished this work by putting forward Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice (3:25) to deal with Sin and to redeem the lost world from slavery to Sin and Death. Now, in Romans 5–8, Paul wants to speak of the life of those who have been redeemed."

A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans* (2006), p. 64