

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Chs 4 & 5

Of the New Testament's 27 books, 13 are by Paul, a Jewish Roman citizen. His letter to Christ's folks in Rome in 57 AD is called "the fullest, plainest, grandest statement of the gospel." It answers life's #1 question: How can a person get right with God? (Job 9:2; John 3:3-4; Acts 16:30)

After Jesus' return to heaven, Saul, as he's first known, leads a *jihad* to annihilate Jesus' fans (Acts 9:1-2; 22:1-5; 26:9-11). About to take his murderous rant to Syria, he's transformed by the risen Christ into Paul, God's unlikely pick to intro this new "gospel" to Gentiles.

Three years after dictating this letter, Paul lands in Rome for the first time. Two years later he's under house arrest for preaching Jesus. Over the next two years he's released, resumes preaching and is rearrested. Circa A.D. 64-67 he's martyred by Nero.

Rewind 60 years. God's Son, Jesus, leaves behind the wonders of heaven to be born in a barn, rejected by religious leaders and hung for *our* sin (John 1:10-13). Back in heaven, He tells Paul that God makes peace with us not based on our merit, but only when we trust in Christ and what He did for us on the cross (Romans 1:16-17). **Let's flashback on Romans 3:20-28.**

Let's read Romans 4:1-25 as Paul addresses the Jewish members of Christ's hardy band in Rome.

Honest Abe from Ur **Romans 4:1-5**

About 2500 B.C. Abram, a descendant of Noah's son Shem, was a herder in Sumeria, east of Egypt. Its capital, Ur, was home to the temple of the moon god, "Sin," making its worshipers "Sin-Urs."

God tells Abram to pack his camels and light out for an undisclosed land (today's Israel). The down-line family of Abraham (his new, expanded name meaning "father of many nations") includes Isaac, Jacob, David and the Messiah (Hebrews 11:11-12).

Rabbis believed Abraham won God over by doing good deeds (Genesis 26:1-6). But from earth's Day One, living "right" doesn't get us to heaven; faith does. When God tells 75-year-old Abram and 65-year-old Sarah they'll have a son, Abe's *believing*, not *doing*, makes him right with God (Genesis 15:6)

DISCUSS: How can we know when God has something to say to us?

Israel's "Rock" Star Romans 4:6-8

After deleting Goliath, David becomes Israel's second king in 1004 B.C. Despite his love for God, plus God's pledge that his family would always occupy Israel's throne, David has a fling with Gen. Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. To cover up, he has her husband slain in combat. David's Psalm 32 expresses his grief, then relief after confessing and receiving God's pardon (2 Samuel 12:1-25).

Still, David's called "a man after God's own heart." Fortunately, God doesn't wait for us to get perfect before He accepts our faith. Nor does He hold our sins against us after He's forgiven us (Romans 8:1).

DISCUSS: Like David, Paul received God's forgiveness for the sin of murder. Even as followers of Christ, we still sin. What are the consequences, and what do we do with our guilt?

That Old Time Religion Romans 4:9-22

Religious rites and rituals don't impress God. Abraham passed God's entry requirements 430 years before the Law (Genesis 17:22-27). Since the cross, salvation is open to all by going direct to God - no broker is required (Galatians 3:23-29; 1 Timothy 2:5).

God promised Abe he'd father many nations over time, and that his Seed (the Messiah) would inherit the world over which Jesus Christ will one day reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Genesis 15:1-5; 17:1-8; 22:15-19; 1 Timothy 6:13-16; Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

The Jews assumed they had a "Get Out Of Hell Free" card. But no one can keep God's law totally; we're all guilty (Romans 3:23).

DISCUSS: Define faith's and works' roles. (Romans 4:3-5; James 2:24)

Genuine faith ignores circumstances and the odds, confident in what/whom it trusts. Due to Abraham's faith, the Jews got their own land, and a once dead womb delivered Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7).

Let's read Romans 5:1-21.

Cross-Eyed Peace ***Romans 5:1-11***

By anchoring your life in Jesus, you have peace and purpose, knowing God no longer holds your sin against you. You are “in Christ.” When God looks at you, He *sees* Christ (Colossians 3:3)!

At peace *WITH* God, not on your terms but His, you have the peace *OF* God even in suffering (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 6:3-10; 12:7-10 Philippians 4:19). That builds perseverance, lasting patience.

Patience builds character and firms up our hope that, based on Christ’s revelation to Paul, believers will not face God’s wrath nor His future judgment (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Suffering is not necessarily a sign of God’s displeasure. Explains Michelangelo, "As the chips fall, the image emerges." We focus not on chips or pain, but on the Christ-like image God is sculpting. Mature growth emerges from pain inflicted by the chisel. But if you’re ever tempted to doubt that God loves you, look at the cross.

DISCUSS: Describe one lesson you’ve learned going through a hardship.

Dying to Live ***Romans 5:12-21***

Physics’ Chaos Theory says upstream actions affect everything downstream. Adam’s and Jesus Christ’s actions affect every person who’ll ever live. God commanded Adam to avoid the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:15-17). To our chagrin, Grandpa Adam opted for independence from God. His sin resulted in introducing to all people death that ends in a Christless eternity.

But Jesus chose to obey His Father and go to the cross to secure our pardon plus life forever with God (Luke 22:42; John 1:29). God dealt justly with *all* sin at the cross, accepting His Son’s substitutionary sacrifice (Isaiah 53:11-12; Mark 10:45). Otherwise, we’ll exist forever in an unquenchable firepit the Bible calls hell (John 3:36).

Let's read Paul's words that affects everybody: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Some gag on the word “sin,” preferring “mistake,” “shortcoming,” “offense,” “human

error.”

You’ve heard “I couldn’t have made it without my faith.” Faith in what or whom? Faith is only as good as the object of that faith. If we could be saved by something we *do*, how good is “good enough?” Many sincere, religious people – ‘tho circumcised, baptized, simonized and anointed, STILL live with guilt and fear that when they die, they won’t have been good or forgiven enough. Unlike man-made religions, when Jesus saves you, “it is finished.”

DISCUSS: What’s not to like about hooking up with Jesus?

Diving In Faith First

The Law proved that we cannot clean up our act and be perfect (Galatians 3:19). Have you put your trust in Christ who came here to make it right between you and God? If not, why not say to Him

"God, I hear that You no longer hold Adam's sin or my sins against me, thanks to Jesus' dying for me on the cross. Thank You for that. So right now, by faith, I'm taking that to the bank by faith, putting my life in Your hands. Father, I'm all Yours. Amen."

His Deal

www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

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