

• LESSON 8 (June 1) •  
**Romans 4:1-25**  
**Abraham, Who is  
the Father of Us All**

**W**hat we have as the conclusion of Romans 2 in our Bibles communicates this important information:

No one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (2:28-29)

Throughout Romans 3 and beyond, Paul anticipates and answers a number of Jewish objections to what he has written.

- Then what advantage has the Jew? (3:1)
- What is the value of circumcision? (3:1)
- Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (3:5)
- Why not do evil that good may come? (3:8)

This leads us to a fifth question in Romans 4:1.

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?

Our entire fourth chapter of Romans addresses the case study of Abraham and his justification. Paul begins his answer by putting things into their overall perspective.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (4:2)

Why? In order to understand the full scope of Paul's answer, take the time now—before going any further—to read Genesis 15:1-20. If you'd like an even firmer grasp of the overall context, begin reading in Genesis 12 and read through Genesis 15.



When you think of Abraham, what comes to mind?

Why does Paul refer to Abraham as “our forefather according to the flesh” in 4:1?

Why is Paul so confidently able to proclaim that Abraham could not be justified by works before God (4:2)?

Why would Paul assert, “if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God”? He immediately takes us back to what the Scripture says:

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3)

“Now,” Paul reasons, making an appeal to our common sense.

To the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness... (Rom 4:4-5)

In fact, Abraham is not the only Old Testament figure to whom we can look for clarification of this principle.

..just as David also speaks of the blessings of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered;  
blessed is the man against whom  
the Lord will not count his sin.” (4:6-8)

It’s a citation of Psalm 32:1-2 and Paul invokes it to lead his readers—particularly his Jewish readers—face to face with a fundamental question.

Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? (4:9a)

In other words, are Jews the only ones who enjoy the blessing of justification? And think back to the two things Paul has already brought up in his letter that the Jews took such great pride in and relied upon:

- The Law of Moses (2:17-24)
- Circumcision (2:25-29)

Was Abraham justified by the Law of Moses? No! The Law wouldn’t be given for another 500+ years. Well then, was Abraham justified because of circumcision (Gen 17:1-14)?

Think for a moment about righteousness being “counted to” someone. The NASB translates it “credited.” The ASV renders it “reckoned.” The NKJV translates it “accounted.” What does this mean?

Can you illustrate in modern terms the basic principle Paul is relying upon in Romans 4:4?

What does Paul mean by referring to “the one who does not work” in Romans 4:5?

We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. (4:9b-11a)

Don't miss this critical point: if Abraham could be "counted as righteous" without circumcision then, why can't the Gentiles be "counted as righteous" before God now? Remember, Paul was boldly proclaiming throughout the Gentile world:

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:23-29)

In order to make this point clear in his letter to the Romans, Paul takes a "big picture" look at what God was doing all along.

The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. (Rom 4:11b-12)

Having addressed the issue of Abraham and circumcision, Paul turns his attention to the issue of Abraham and the law.

In your own words, what was the issue confronting the first-century church when it came to circumcision? Perhaps Acts 15:1 will be helpful in formulating your answer.

What do you think it means to "walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (4:12)?

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (4:13-25)

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** As we wade through the deep waters of Romans, don’t forget the framing bookends of the entire letter (1:5; 16:26). Whether Jew or Gentile, God is looking to shape the obedience of faith within us. Paul is not contradicting Hebrews 11:8-19 or James 2:14-24. These God-breathed letters complement each other to establish:

- No human being is justified by works of the law.
- Circumcision in and of itself does not justify.
- Works without faith will not justify.
- Faith without works will not justify.

Why would Paul write what he wrote in Romans 4:14? Can you reframe his straightforward assertion in your own words?

“For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is not transgression” (4:15). What does this mean?

Notice the connection Paul draws between life being given to “dead” Abraham (4:19) and “dead” Jesus (4:23-25). What does this powerful connection have to do with “us who believe” (4:24)?

• LESSON 9 (June 8) •

Romans 5:1-11

## Peace with God Through Jesus Christ

**W**hen we run across words like “therefore” in Scripture, we need to pause and make sure we appreciate that they are “there for” a reason. They serve to connect points previously made as foundational with important principles of application. Paul’s use of the “therefore” tool is pivotal to our grasp of Romans 5.

### FOUNDATIONAL POINTS PREVIOUSLY MADE:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. (3:21-22)

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (3:27-28)

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (4:13)

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (4:16)

That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (4:22-25)



Can you illustrate the usefulness of the “therefore” tool in your own words? Write your own foundational premise...

...and use “therefore” to connect it to a principle of application...

## IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE OF APPLICATION:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (5:1)

Paul has been building towards this pivotal, gospel-soaked point since Romans 1. Remember the universal bad news.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (1:18)

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. (2:3-5)

Gentiles deserve God’s wrath. Jews deserve God’s wrath.

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (3:23)

But just as each and every one of us are within the terrible scope of the bad news, God has ensured that each and every one of us are extended the opportunity to respond to the good news.

...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (3:24-25)

Jesus Christ is the sacrifice provided by our gracious God in order to satisfy the righteous wrath of God.

It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (3:26)

In your own words, what does it mean to “have peace with God”?

Thinking about the overall context of the letter and the makeup of the church in Rome, what impact should “peace with God” have on the relationships of Jewish and Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ, and—by extension—on our own relationships today? Notice especially Romans 14:13-19.

To rephrase Paul's climactic point in Romans 5:1, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. Whether Jew or Gentile, we can enjoy reconciliation with the Creator we have spurned and rejected because his own Son served as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. We can stand justified in his sight by faith—not in our family tree, circumcision, or the record of our own works—but by faith in Christ. It is a point that most certainly harmonizes with and compliments the bookends of the letter:

- “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (1:5).
- “...the revelation of the mystery ... has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith” (16:25-26).

Meditate with Paul on the spiritual blessings our God and Father has blessed us with in our Lord Jesus Christ. What do these statements provide that enhance our overall understanding of the gospel?

- ❖ “Through [Christ] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (5:2a)
  
- ❖ “And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5:2b)
  
- ❖ “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings” (5:3a)

Paul has repeatedly referred to Jesus as “Lord” in this letter (1:4, 7; 4:24). Why is it important that we regard Jesus not simply as a means to our justification but the rightful Lord of our new lives of reconciliation to God?

- ❖ “Knowing that”:
  - Suffering produces endurance (5:3b)
  
  - Endurance produces character (5:4a)
  
  - Character produces hope (5:4b)
  
  - Hope does not put us to shame (5:5a)
  
- ❖ “Because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (5:5b)

Which leads Paul to this powerful statement of summary:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one who will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (5:6-11)

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** Paul spent four solid chapters establishing this reality: we are weak. We are hopeless. We are ungodly. We are lost. But Romans 5 is a gospel-injection of hope. At just the right time, Christ died for us. Now, we can be saved by his life. Having firmly established the problem and introduced God’s solution, Paul will begin to show us how to live for him.

• LESSON 10 (June 15) •  
Romans 5:12-21  
The Free Gift is Not  
Like the Trespass

“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” That’s where we left off in Romans 5:11. Each one of us deserves to bear the wrath of God. Not one of us can stand justified in his sight based on our family tree, circumcision, or the record of our own works. We have all fallen short of his glory.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. (3:21-22)

Now, the choice is mine. How will I respond to the intervention of God through Jesus Christ? The terms are clear. The consequences are weighty.

Jesus said to [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Tim 2:3-6)



In your own words:

- What is Jesus declaring in John 14:6?
- What is Jesus asserting in John 15:5?
- What is Peter preaching in Acts 4:12?
- What is Paul saying in 1 Timothy 2:3-6?

Through Jesus, there is a path of reconciliation to the Father. In Jesus, there is abundant life and salvation. Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and mankind—whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, slave or free. All can stand justified in the sight of God by faith—not in our family tree, circumcision, or the record of our own works—but by faith in Christ.

Outside of Christ, we are “in” Adam. In Adam, there is condemnation and death. Notice the contrast that is being drawn by Paul.

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... (Rom 5:12)

Through Adam there is condemnation and death:

- Sin came into the world through Adam.
- Death came into the world through sin.
- Death spread to all men because all sinned.

Through Christ there is justification and life:

- Justification came into the world through Christ.
- Life came into the world through justification.
- Life is available to all men through faith in Christ.

Outside of Christ, I am “in” Adam—a universal representation of the person who stands before God on the basis of his or her own works.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen 2:15-17)

Paul has already reminded us of this basic principle: “It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom 2:13). Adam broke God’s law. In the day that he broke God’s law, he died. And one of Paul’s foundational points throughout

In what way did sin “come into the world” through Adam?

What is the “death” that spread to all men?

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Why, then, do you think God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden? What did God want from Adam?

his letter to the Romans is that we have all followed in the law-breaking footsteps of Adam! It's an epidemic that stretches much deeper into mankind's history than God's giving of the law through Moses to the descendants of Abraham at Mount Sinai.

...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. (Rom 5:13-14)

Our record under law is Adam's record. "By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight" (3:20). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23). From Adam to Moses, we broke God's laws. From Moses to Malachi the descendants of Abraham defied God's expectations. The wages of the human record under law is death (6:23a).

...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (6:23b)

To pick back up our context in Romans 5:

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 by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For 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. (5:15-17)

Adam may be an accurate representative of our record under law, but he does not represent Jesus. Jesus didn't follow in Adam's sinful footsteps. Jesus "committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth" (1 Pet 2:22), which

In what way have we all followed in the law-breaking footsteps of Adam?

It can be challenging at times to know exactly what "law" Paul has in mind—the principle of law in general or the specific Law of Moses? Which "law" is Paul referencing in 5:13?

Why is it important that Christians view their justification in Jesus as a "free gift"? In what way is it a "free gift"?

"Because of one man's trespass, death reigned." *How* did death reign? You might find Hebrews 2:14-15 helpful.

is precisely why God was able to put him “forward as a propitiation by his blood” (Rom 3:25).

Now, the choice is mine. The terms are clear. The consequences are weighty. Outside of Christ, I am “in” Adam. When it comes to justification before God:

- I cannot rely on my family tree; it’s full of sinners.
- I cannot rely on the record of my own works; I am a sinner.
- I cannot rely on mere knowledge of the law; only doers of the law will be justified (2:13).
- I cannot rely on physical circumcision; if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision (2:25).

But God has intervened. He is willing to justify me by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is “in” Christ (3:24). “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24a).

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (5:18-21)

Now, the choice is mine. For whom will I live? In whom will I boast?

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** In the next chapter of his letter, Paul will assert, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Our record under law is Adam’s record. “In” Christ, we are “under grace.” He bore our sins “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet 2:24b). Paul will show us exactly how we “died to sin” and now “live” in Romans 6.

Whereas death *formerly* reigned, notice what has changed:

- 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. (5:17)
- As sin reigned in death, grace also might **reign** through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (5:21)

What has changed? *How* has it changed? And what does it mean for men and women who are now “in” Christ?