

JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

Lesson 8: Righteous Through Reconciliation

Key Verse: More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation~ Romans 5.11

Symptoms lead us to discovering a diagnosis. Typically used to discuss medical issues, symptoms can also help us discover a new truth. For instance, symptoms indicate a larger truth that influences how we live, how we experience life, and how we respond to our simple or complicated circumstances. Symptoms of those pursuing their own methods for entering God's Presence are seen in their self-determination, parental lineage, hard-work, intelligence, church attendance record, or self-righteousness (piety). Such symptoms indicate a diagnosis of spiritual insecurity. However, people who understand their **reconciliation** to God, or permanent, legal security before God through Christ, will display symptoms of joy even in tears, joy even in boring details, joy even in fear, and joy even in death. These symptoms indicate a diagnosis of faith. They know with absolute certainty that God is **able** to keep them rejoicing in Him no matter what they are doing, where life is leading, or the depth of their pain.

Our Father God, we come together to do as David did, "Celebrate God. Sing together – everyone! All you honest hearts – raise the roof!" (Psalm 32.11, The Message). We come together to celebrate that in You, our sin is forgiven and is covered. In You there is no "spirit of deceit" and we can trust that You do not count our sins against us. (Psalm 32.1-2, ESV) Help us understand the freedom You have secured for us to come to You all day, every day, with all things. Build our faith so that we may cling to our hope in Your Glory. Through this lesson may we become more spiritually secure. Then call us to serve You!

Romans 4.1-5.11 What then shall we say was gained by 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 counted to him as righteousness." **4** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. **5** And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, **6** just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: **7** "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; **8** blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. **10** 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. **11** He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. 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, **12** 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.

13 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. **14** For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. **15** For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. **16** 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, **17** 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.

18 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." **19** 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. **20** No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **21** fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. **22** That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

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

CH 5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been 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** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Diamonds: It has become common to first use Dr. Google to self-diagnose and find remedies for worrying symptoms. In Romans 4, Paul reveals we have been using a sort of Dr. Google for thousands of years to self-diagnose and find remedies for the worrying symptoms associated with the diagnosis of spiritual insecurity. The most indicative symptom of spiritual insecurity is “works” or what we do to convince ourselves that God will find us worthy enough to be His Presence.

Paul addresses these well-worn remedies for spiritual insecurity in Romans 4:

- 4.1-8: boasting or owning our good deeds/success;
- 4.9-12: circumcision or religious rites such as baptism, communion, public statements of belief, ordination, church attendance records;
- 4.13-17: legalism commonly found in comfortably judging the sins of others, and/or determining as damnable sins and avoiding what we determine to be sins like tattoos, piercings, clothing styles¹;
- 4.18-22: forms of intellect that force belief or saying the right things without knowing God personally (the opposite of faith).

Paul uses two key “fathers” of Jewish faith to illustrate that there is no possible human work to make us righteous enough, or righteous at all! Using both Abraham and David (4.1-8), Paul reveals that God had provided for their righteousness *before* they had done anything, or worked, to deserve His righteousness. (In fact, as we will see in this lesson, both Abraham and David didn't do anything to maintain or prove their worth in keeping God's righteousness!) Rather than having worked to earn God's righteousness through their personal successes and/or impressively moral behaviors, God chose to credit His righteousness to them (Genesis 15.6). All they had to do was believe in God; not perform for God, nor make themselves good enough for God, nor attend God's favorite school or join God's political party².

1. Describe the difference between an earned wage (4.4), and something credited, or counted (4.5), to one's bank account (who are the CPAs/bookkeepers/financiers in your group?!). How does this difference explain God's intention for His righteousness?

Paul fully understood the Jewish logic that held fast to their superiority over Gentiles. After all, not only did God say they were His chosen people, but He gave them a personalized sign of His choice: circumcision. We, too, would like to believe our participation in God-designed religious rites such as baptism and communion secure us before God. But Paul explains first where this logic fails, then the purpose of circumcision (hint: the expansion of His Kingdom).

2. Paul asks when Abraham was circumcised: before or after God credited His righteousness to Abraham. According to Romans 4.10, how did God order these two events? Which came first, and which came second?
3. According to 4.11, what was God's purpose for circumcision?
4. Finally, how does God use the order of His two events to foreshadow His purpose of His Kingdom expansion to His Glory? (4.11-12)

¹ When will ripped jeans or clothes with holes in them stop being trendy?!?!?

² God doesn't have a favorite school nor a political party!

The Mosaic Law was an additional gift God gave His chosen people. Adherence to it would intentionally set apart God's people from the pagan nations. This would be accomplished in their singular devotion to God, but also in the way their religious practices influenced their cultural, social, and agricultural practices. Thus, they would look very different if they steadfastly adhered to God's legal requirements! And as such, they would be confirmed as approved by God (4.14a). The problem with this line of thinking is that the Mosaic Law was given 500 years *after* Abraham lived!³ Thus, Abraham's righteousness could not have been accomplished by God's law (4.13). Even more, God's promise to make Abraham into a great nation came 500 years *before* His Law (Genesis 12.2). Thus, the inheritance to God's promise cannot be secured by strict obedience to the law.

5. What does Paul first establish as the hard reality of the law in Romans 4.15? Reading in the Amplified (AMP) Bible translation is very helpful.

Today we, too, attempt to impose legal requirements as evidence of our right standing before God. We usurp God's authority by comfortably judging the sins of others, and/or determining their eternal destination based on "sins" that are more commonly cultural practices we despise. Paul explains that we, just like his fellow Jewish believers, have missed God's intention with His Law.

6. Paul introduces another mind-blowing concept in Romans 4.13: "the righteousness of faith". Read Romans 4.13-16 using the translation, "The Message". It is easier to understand how God's promise, not His Law, secured Abraham as our "*faith* father" (V 16) in this translation. How does the gospel message come alive when we share God's righteousness through His promise fulfilled in Christ rather than solely condemnation through His Law or legalism?
7. Where in your life, or in your mindset, do you need the freedom found in the righteousness of faith rather than self-righteousness, legalism, and/or judgmental tendencies?

Romans 4.18-22 extols Abraham's unwavering faith and steadfast belief in God delivering on His promises to Abraham. But is this not the Abraham who joined in conspiring with his wife, Sarah, in devising a plan to accomplish God's promises (Genesis 16)? Is this not the same Abraham who lied about Sarah being his wife to save his own life (Genesis 20)? David committed adultery and murdered (2 Samuel 11) – so what qualified them for God's righteousness? Likewise, we will fail, and we will experience loss and hurt. But even when we don't understand God, His way, or His plan, we will never doubt whether we are secured in Him through Christ. This is why when we struggle with faith, when we struggle to believe His will and His way, we will always turn to Him with these hardships. This is why we are secure enough to know of His steadfast, unwavering love as He joins us in confronting hard truths and is tenderly shepherding us in the midst of hard circumstances.

8. Read David's heart cry to God in Psalm 32. How does David reconcile his sins against God's righteousness? What role (and great comfort) does being honest with God have in reinforcing our security in God's righteousness? (See David's brilliant thinking in all of Psalm 32.)

Paul's concluding thoughts in Romans 4.23-25 are like a spiritual vaccine against spiritual insecurity! This spiritual security, this faith given to Abraham (and David), were not just for them alone. Instead, they are also for us – for you – today. We are not to set them aside under the belief that there is a God of the Old Testament and a different God of the New Testament. No! Your faith in God's glory, your righteousness in Christ, is just as secure today as it was for Abraham and David!

9. Which symptom(s) of spiritual insecurity are you prone to display? Is there a pattern to your symptoms? What will

³ Keller, p. 103

you preach to yourself the next time you experience a symptom of spiritual insecurity?

Deity: Able~ (Romans 5.10) “The New Testament word “to be able” means essentially “to have power” (*dunamai* the verb form of that familiar Greek noun, *dunamis*). When we read that God is able to do something it means He has the *power* to do it. It is a concept related to His omnipotence. The Old Testament word has somewhat the same connotation. God is able! There is no deficiency in His power.”⁴

10. Despite the complicated true stories of both Abraham and David, even when at their worst, they never wondered if God was going to deliver on His promises, but rather how God was going to deliver on His promises. How does hope depend on belief in God as able (Romans 4.13-22)? How do you see both Abraham (Romans 4.18-22) and David (Psalm 32) choose hope in our able God?

“Scripture teaches that He is able: to save us completely (Hebrews 7.25), to keep us from sin (Hebrews 2.18; Jude 24), to help us (Hebrews 2.18), to keep that which we have committed to Him until that Day (2 Timothy 1.12), to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3.20), to supply our needs (2 Corinthians 9.8), to heal our diseases (Matthew 9.27-28), to keep us in perfect peace (Isaiah 26.3), to deliver us from death (Daniel 3.17), and to keep us from stumbling and present us blameless before God (Jude 24). Truly our God is able!!!”⁵

Doctrine: Reconciliation⁶~ (Romans 5.11) “Man’s sin has not only incurred guilt and aroused the wrath of God but has also affected an enmity and alienation between God and man. Such alienation is pictured throughout Scripture, most notably in the garden, where Adam and Eve’s immediate instinct after sinning is to hide from God and avoid His fellowship (Genesis 3.8), and from which fellowship they are driven out (Genesis 3.22-24).

In Israel’s history, God’s separation from sinful man is powerfully illustrated by the threefold barrier of the tabernacle and temple: the outer court, accessible only to those bringing sacrifices; the Holy Place, accessible only to the priests offering sacrifices for the people; and the Most Holy Place, accessible only to the high priest on the Day of Atonement to make propitiation for the sins of the nation. This is a far cry from speaking with God face-to-face in the cool of the day (Genesis 3.8).”

11. How do Isaiah and Paul describe this “broken relationship” in Isaiah 59.2 and Romans 5.10 with 8.7:

“For this reason, Scripture also speaks of the atonement as a work of reconciliation, whereby the ground of the enmity between God and [wo]men – namely, the guilt of sin and the punishment of God’s wrath – is removed and dealt with, thus accomplishing peace (Romans 5.10-11; 2 Corinthians 5.18-19; Ephesians 2.16; Colossians 1.20-22).”

Reconciliation has several characteristics:

- It “is a work of God, accomplished in the person of Christ through the efficacy of His blood (2 Corinthians 5.18-19). [Wo]man does not affect this reconciliation by doing something to remove God’s hostility towards his [her] sin. Rather, sinners passively receive reconciliation as a gift through the work of Christ (Romans 5.11).”
- “Scripture presents reconciliation as a finished work accomplished by Christ’s sacrifice...reconciliation occurred in the past through the once-for-all death of Christ.”
- It is applied to God’s people in God’s technical method (2 Corinthians 5.19, 21). “By imputing our sins to Christ our scapegoat, by exercising His wrath on Him as our Substitute, and by imputing His righteousness to us, God has removed the ground of His enmity against us, namely, the guilt of sin.
- “...it is objective rather than subjective; that is, it has its fundamental effect on God and not man. The alienation between God and [wo]man is double-edged. To be sure, man is hostile to God because his [her] mind and heart are depraved, but God is also hostile to [wo]man because in His holiness He hates sin.”

“Therefore, the mutual peace accomplished by the act of reconciliation is experienced as the result of reconciliation, when

⁴ Richard L. Strauss, <https://bible.org/seriespage/god-able>

⁵ Mikie Bellis

⁶ MacArthur & Mayhue, pp. 531-533

the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit overcomes man's hostility to God as the Spirit applies Christ's objective work to sinners, granting them justifying faith by which they have peace with God (Romans 5.1). Because of Christ's atonement, sinners once separated from God may be restored to loving fellowship with Him who they were created to know and worship (1 Peter 3.18)."

Jesus Christ legally secured peace with God (Romans 5.1). The symptom expressed in those who have placed their faith in Jesus is rejoicing because now:

- a. Grace secures your safety in God's Presence (5.2)
- b. God's love is poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit (5.5)
- c. Jesus' blood has legally saved you from God's wrath (5.9)
- d. Jesus' resurrection from death to life has likewise legally secured your eternal life (5.10)

12. People who understand their legal spiritual security established by Jesus rejoice! Which of the reasons listed above have you rejoicing?

13. List the three reasons you must rejoice in God from Romans 5.2, 3, and 11. How does hope drive us to rejoicing *daily* in *all* circumstances: from daily tasks to gut-punching circumstances and every moment in between? (Consider reading Romans 5 using the Amplified Bible and/or The Message translations as well.)

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Faith in Jesus Christ is profoundly transformative.

- I. Promise Through Faith (Romans 4.1-25) **T1:** Faith in Jesus Christ transforms ruined sinners to righteous saints.
 - a. How does your life testify to the transformation faith in God has worked in you?
 - b. What was once dead in your life but is now raised to new life?
 - c. What "ruin" has been profoundly changed to righteousness?
 - d. Which of God's promises to you need to appropriate by faith?
- II. Peace Through Faith (Romans 5.1-11) **T2:** Faith in Jesus Christ transforms enmity with God into peace with God.
 - a. How confident are you in your approach to God?
 - b. How freely and frequently do you draw near to Him?
 - c. What spurs you on to a vibrant relationship with the Living God? What is hindering it?

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MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017)

Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter to the Romans: The NIV Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: 2018) pp. 277-342

Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 2020) pp. 108-136