

## Romans 1-8

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an apostle** **set apart for the gospel of God** <sup>2</sup>which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, **the gospel concerning his Son**, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>3</sup>and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>4</sup>through whom we have received grace and **apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith** among all the Gentiles for the sake of his **name**, **including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ**. <sup>5</sup>To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your **faith is proclaimed throughout the world**. <sup>7</sup>For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, <sup>8</sup>asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>9</sup>For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—<sup>10</sup>or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. <sup>11</sup>I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup>I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish <sup>13</sup>—hence my eagerness to proclaim **the gospel to you also who are in Rome**. <sup>14</sup>For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**; it is **the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith** to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**Compare 1:13 with Galatians 1:11:** "For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin," **Philippians 1:12:** "I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel." **Colossians 2:1:** "For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face." When Paul uses this formulation, he wants them to know something that is deeply personal, timebound, historical or present. He wants them to know who he is, not just the gospel he proclaims. Paul's relationship with the Roman church, even though he's never been there (and he's got plenty of friends there, see Romans 16), is important, not just the message.

1:15: Therefore, who needs to hear Paul's gospel? Not just non-believers. We believers also need to hear it, to steep ourselves in it. It is, after all, the power of God for salvation.

1:16: So is the gospel the power of God, or is it faith? It seems that the gospel is only the power of God if you already have faith.

To whom are we debtors? Do we so live? How are we tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel? Its exclusivity is offensive. Yet it is the power of God to all those who believe.

Paul is in Macedonia on his way back to Jerusalem and then to Rome (under arrest). Probably written about 55AD.

What do we learn about Paul and his motives from 1:1-16?

1:1: Gospel of God: 1:3, gospel concerning his Son; 1:9, gospel of his Son; 1:14-16, 2 more uses of "gospel", which is the power for God for salvation...

1:1: Called to be an apostle, set apart, apostleship (1:5), called to belong to JC (1:6), called to be saints (1:7): This is a called life. All of us are called, not just Paul.

1:3: very theological and rooted historically intro, speaking of Jesus as David's son (according to the flesh) and God's son (according to the spirit of holiness ratified by resurrection from the dead).

1:5: "we have received grace and apostleship": we all have received grace, but only Paul has received apostleship: so why does he say "we". Unless grace is related to apostleship, not only for himself but also for us. He certainly seems to think so.

1:5: Apostleship is not the goal, it is the strategy. Obedience of faith is the objective of the strategy. Bringing about glory to the name of Jesus is the goal of the objective met by the strategy: Apostleship → Obedience of Faith → Glory to Jesus.

1:5, "obedience of faith": see 16:25-27: "Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

1:6: "called to belong to Christ Jesus", this sounds great, but what does it mean? This is a key idea in this book. We learn what this means.

1:7: "all God's beloved in Rome": a vast network of house churches. God's beloved: what does that mean? Again, this is a key theme of this book.

1:8: Paul has never been to Rome, and didn't establish the church there. This is his calling card, his theological introduction to the Roman church.

1:9: announcing the gospel of his Son: Paul's role is that of herald. His role is to proclaim the gospel—his objective is to bring about the obedience of faith.

1:10: Paul remembers to pray for them, but he also is willing to be vulnerable—he wants to be with them—it is personally important for him, a prayer concern of his, not just of theirs.

1:11-12: I love this verse: he speaks of his desire to bless them, but as he does so he thinks more deeply about it and says, "rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith". He doesn't want to condescend, or take an undue position of authority. Of course he wants to give, but he also genuinely expects to receive.

1:11: "strengthen you": see 16:25 "God who is able to strengthen you..."

1:12: Paul is not presumptuous with people who are not his spiritual children.

1:13: Paul is eager to sow among those in Rome because he is eager "to reap some harvest".

1:14: How is Paul a debtor to Greeks and barbarians? He has a life and death knowledge that everyone needs. It is not just his idea, or perspective, or opinion. 2 Kings 7:9

1:15: Why does Paul want to preach the gospel to the believers in Rome? Because people becoming a believer isn't the purpose of Paul's preaching; rather it is to bring about the obedience of faith.



1:17: "For in it": in the gospel.  
 1:17: "revealed through faith for faith": God's righteousness is revealed to those who have faith for the purpose of deepening that faith. "To those outside, everything is in parables."  
 1:17: Hab 2:4: "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith." Not the one who has faith will live righteously (apart from faith). "That would be a 'faith plus really good works' approach. No, righteousness is gotten to by faith (the obedience of faith)."  
 1:17: "righteousness of God is [being] revealed": see 3:25-26  
 1:17-18: The gospel reveals the righteousness of God (in forgiving sin as we will see later) but the creation reveals God's (righteous) wrath. SO the gospel is needed to point people to the power of salvation available in Jesus.  
 1:18: The righteous wrath of God is revealed ("from Heaven", general revelation) to everyone: the pattern of sin → punishment is clear in creation. It is only not plain to those who suppress the truth.  
 1:18-32: "those who by their wickedness suppress the truth": this is the "they" and "them" of the next 14 verses. The truth suppressers are without excuse, because they had all the evidence, all the revelation needed to know what kind of God existed and what he desired (ethically speaking), but they did not thank him as creator or honor him as the designer of human life.  
 1:20: "without excuse: 1) knowledge of truth and God was available, yet they acted contrary to that knowledge and actively suppressed the ready truth. Moral disinclination has no weight to excuse people who don't trust God.  
 1:21: "they knew God": the knowledge of God was readily available by looking around in creation. They didn't need the revelation of God that Paul speaks of relying on the law (2:17ff). Yet they pushed the thought of God out of their minds.  
 1:21: they became self-serving and self-honoring, rather than thanking God and honoring him for his powerful and creative work in giving them life.  
 1:21: ingratitude is a big part of the problem. People don't give thanks to God for all of his patience and kindness. People don't notice his mercy and grace.  
 1:22: "Claiming to be wise": Christopher Hitchens, Steven Hawking; brainy people who claim that there is no need to posit God. They become fools. Yet Paul still has an obligation to the foolish (1:15) to preach the gospel.  
 1:22: they became fools: irony, or consequence? They rejected the feeling of shame that God built into creation when we sin. In order to eliminate that feeling, they embraced a view of creation without God. When they do that, they suppress the truth, which makes them look foolish, futile in their thinking, darkened minds. God doesn't have to actually darken their minds—they do it for him.  
 1:22: immortal God → mortal human being → birds → four-footed animals → reptiles. Descent from God, to image of God, to animals, to snakes.

1:23: They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images": they come to believe that  
 • "This statue or image, this incantation or ritual, can save me"  
 • "What I make with my own hands can save me"  
 • "What I think with my own mind can save me"  
 • "What I make happen with my own will can save me"  
 1:24: "God gave them up": also 1:26, 1:28: the natural consequences of their choices. God honored their choices and allowed them to pay the due penalty. Intrinsic consequences. God removed his restraining grace and allowed them to experience the full toxicity of their heart's cravings.  
 1:24: "degrading of their bodies among themselves": they dishonored God, he gave them over to dishonorable lusts.  
 1:25: "exchanged the truth about God": Only God can give me a future. Only God can save. The problem with this truth is that this sounds humbling—it involves admitting you need to be saved.  
 Exchanges: In their foolishness, they made several bad trades, like Jack in the beanstalk (cow for beans):  
 • Glory of God → images → degrading lusts  
 • Truth of God → lie → worship creatures rather than the creator  
 • Natural [order] → unnatural → received in their bodies the due penalty for their error



<sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural<sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done.<sup>29</sup> They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips,<sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents,<sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.<sup>32</sup> They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

<sup>2:11</sup> Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.<sup>27</sup> You say, 'We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth.'<sup>31</sup> Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? 'Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?'<sup>5</sup> But by 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.<sup>6</sup> For he will repay according to each one's deeds:<sup>7</sup> to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;<sup>8</sup> while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.<sup>9</sup> There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,<sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.<sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality.

This section: "THEY": those immoral people who know but reject God's law, live and applaud those who live in rejection of it. "YOU": those hypocrites who judge others but also sin and don't live by God's law.

2:6-11: Chiasm:	2:7, 10: it is possible to seek for glory by living the way God wants you to live—more on that later—and for both Jews and Greeks this kind of life is indeed possible.
V6: God will repay each one	
V7: to those who do good, eternal life	
V8: to those who are self-seeking, wrath	
V9: anguish and distress for evil doers	
V10: glory and honor for those who do good	
V11: God shows no partiality.	⊕ by living the way he wants us to.

What are some examples of self-justifying name calling and judgmentalism in our culture today? How do we also fall prey to this? "abortionists" v "anti-choice"; "bigots" v. "perverts"; "hypocrites" v "pagans". Because we have derogatory names for the bad guys, we are the good guys.

1:26: "degrading passions": homosexual passions. Paul doesn't describe a particularly gross or exploitative homosexuality here—the sex seems consensual between adults. Paul's own opinion of it (it would at least seem) is that it is degrading (24,26), also unnatural (26), shameless, error (27), debased mind, things that should not be done (28).

Why does Paul focus on homosexuality? 1) exchanged the "other" (God, women) for the self (man+man, woman+woman). 2) It is most obviously against the order of creation. 3) As a foil for what comes ahead in chapter 2. First, he talks about God's judgment of "perverts", then in ch2, he talks about God's judgment against respectable hypocrites. Finally, after 2:17 he talks about religious Jews who are not perverts nor are they respectable hypocrites, but they do boast in their religious zeal.

1:27: "received in their own persons the due penalty for their error": Medical and physical evidence that homosexuality is not simply an equally attractive alternative lifestyle choice.

1:29-32: Remember, who are the "they" here: not people practicing homosexuality, but truth-suppressors. They do such wicked things like gossip, slander, rebel from their parents, and they are covetous. Homosexuality is not Paul's big thing here—it is just an easy target, the first of a long list of examples. No one escapes this list—everyone in this country is at least a covetous person, knowing envy full well.

1:30: in this list of things Paul includes boastful—in fact this is one of his key issues. People who should acknowledge guilt and shame instead vaunt themselves and others like them

1:32: "They know God's decree": through their own consciences, which convict them when they find these things in themselves. People always have access to this knowledge (everyone is born with a conscience) though it can be suppressed.

1:32: "applaud others who practice them": because it is difficult not to practice these things, one way to inure ourselves to the pangs of conscience is to surround ourselves with people who will applaud behavior our own consciences would condemn. Mutual admiration societies can be found in inner city gangs and in tony country clubs. When are surrounded by people who applaud our sinful choices, we are less likely to feel our need to be saved from this body of sin and death.

1:32: "applaud others who practice them": their values are completely upside down

2:1: judge others: the human tendency to think that because I know that God hates sexual sin that God will be lenient on my sexual sin, while "perverts" should be punished, etc.

2:1, 3: "whoever you are": Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian... the "You" is new.

2:4: we think knowledge of good and evil, God's desires for us, is enough to merit his favor. So we mistake God's patience for his pleasure with us.

2:4: God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance, the only thing that makes a difference to God, and evidence of faith in God (not in our own goodness).

2:1: how do the judges "do the very same things" as the homosexuals?

• Exchanged the glory of God (in recognizing his judgment) for the self-justification and judgment of others

• Refused to be thankful (1:21, 24) for God's kindness. Ungateful for creation vs. ungrateful for salvation

• Suppress the truth of God (1:18, 2:8)

• Exchanged roles with God (creature/creator, 1:24-25; judge 2:3, 6-11, 16)

2:5: "hard and impenitent heart": judgment does not come because of a single sin, but because of a long disobedience and hard heart.

Examples of the imbalance, self-justifying judicial sentiment: driving rudeness, being impolite; not listening well or cutting people off; not forgiving others; pride, greed, etc.

2:9: It is a shock to hear Paul say that the sweep of God's judgment will fall on Jews also—and it presages what is coming 2:17ff.

2:10: "for everyone who does good": no mention or implication that this must imply sinless, perfect obedience to the strict "demands of the law".



12 All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup>For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. <sup>14</sup>When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. <sup>15</sup>They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them <sup>16</sup>on the day when, according to my gospel,

God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. <sup>17</sup> But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God <sup>18</sup>and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, <sup>19</sup>and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, <sup>20</sup>a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, <sup>21</sup>you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup>You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup>You that boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup>For as it is written,

"The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." <sup>25</sup> Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup>So if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup>Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. <sup>28</sup>For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. <sup>29</sup>Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.

2:27: "Physically uncircumcised" but spiritually circumcised in contrast to "you that have the written code" [circumcision, Sabbath laws, kosher laws—the three badges] but are spiritually uncircumcised, because of your arrogant boasting. They break the law by boasting in the law!

2:29: "praise not from others": which is what boasting is all about, in order to receive praise and validation from others. 1 Samuel 2:30: "He that honors me, I will honor."

Your whole approach to the law has been one of seeking praise from people and being able to condemn and look down on people. God has very little to do with your entire approach to the law! It is this human praise seeking that is what is wrong—not their failure to live by the law perfectly.

2:29: "praise not from others but from God": as in Luke 18:14: the tax collector, humble and repentant, receives praise from Jesus but not from the Pharisee, of course...

2:12: "all who have sinned": sinned once, or remained in a state of rejection of God? The latter, see 2:4. God is patient with us to give us time to repent.

2:12: In case we think that God is being unfair by condemning sinners, he does so only on the basis of what knowledge they have. Since all are good at judging others, all will be judged.

2:13: So hearing apart from obedience has no benefit, while obedience apart from hearing does.

2:13: Who are the "doers of the law"? Those who do what the law requires.

Impossible! Doesn't seem so. Live perfectly? No, but humble seeking of God.

2:13: Doing what the law requires, like Luke 18:13-14: "But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'" <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." Repentance, quitting self-justification and hypocritical condemnation of others, and humbly seeking of God's approval by acknowledging his way of life is best: the obedience of faith.

2:15: "the law... written on their hearts": Jeremiah 31:33: But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2:17: "Jew" "I rely on the law" "I have a relationship with God" "I know his will" "I know what is best—I am instructed in the law" "I am a guide to the blind" "I am a light to those in darkness" "I am a corrector of the foolish and a teacher of children" "I have in the law all knowledge and truth": All this sarcasm heaped on the self-satisfied Jew, the Pharisee of Luke 18:9-12 who thinks so highly of himself and looks down on others.

2:17ff. now he turns to his third group, not the pagan perverts or the respectable hypocrites, but even the judgemental religious types.

2:21 "Do you steal?" "No. 'Do you commit adultery?'" "No!" Do you rob temples? "NO!" Do you boast in the law and by doing so break the law? Yes, you do. You boast in the law, nevertheless you dishonour God through your complete transgression of the law, specifically by boasting in it!

2:21-23: It would be silly for Jews to live this way—and they weren't. They wouldn't just lay their defenses down and say, "Yes, Paul, you have our number. We abhor idolatry but in fact we rob temples! You got me..." But Paul says,

they've done something just as bad: by boasting in the law they break the law!

2:24: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Ezek 36:20: "But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that it was said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.'" Also Isa 52:5 LXX

2:25-29: the notion of being circumcised in heart Deut 30:6, Jer 4:4; Jer 9:25-26. Circumcision comes to represent disobedience, because it is not done by faith...

Circumcision = sign of commitment. Like a wedding ring, it is only of value if our hearts are in the right place.

2:26: "keep the requirements of the law": actually observe the righteous intentions of the law by humble seeking and admission of sin and need for God.



3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. <sup>3</sup>What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? <sup>4</sup>By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written, "So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging." <sup>5</sup>But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) <sup>6</sup>By no means! For then how could God judge the world? <sup>7</sup>But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? <sup>8</sup>And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved! <sup>9</sup>What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all, for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, <sup>10</sup>as it is written: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup>there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup>All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one." <sup>13</sup> Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive." <sup>14</sup> The venom of vipers is under their lips. <sup>15</sup> Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. <sup>16</sup> Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>17</sup> ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear of God before their eyes." <sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

3:9: "Are we any better off?" Could be, "Do we excel?" That is, are we [Jews] better than every else because of the admitted advantage? No, all are under the power of sin, there are none righteous, not Gentiles apart from the Law, not Jews who have the Law—all are under the power of Sin.	
Rom 3:1-8: Paul answers his interlocutors: V1-2: Paul's teaching undermines Ø's covenant V3: Paul's teaching nullifies Ø's faithfulness V5-6: Paul's teaching impugns Ø's justice V7-8: Paul's teaching falsely promotes Ø's glory	1:32: All are under the law, for even Gentiles "know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them."

3:1: The Jewish objector says, "Wait, Paul, the way you are talking, none of the promises of God to the Jews are of any value? Is that what you mean?"

3:2ff: The Jews have advantages—ultimately signs that God is with them and that his faithfulness will cause them to remain faithful. But on their own, they run from God. Compare Romans 9:4-5: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>3</sup>to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

3:1ff: These questions summarize the hundreds of debates Paul has had in the synagogues of the Mediterranean world.

3:2ff: Jews have an advantage—yes! But they aren't superior (v9) Corporately, Jews have advantages. Individually, Jews must still live by the obedience of faith.

Likewise for us Christians: we have many advantages: God's word, God's Spirit—but we are not superior to those who aren't Christians. Rather, gratitude and not pride should be the result.

3:3: The faithfulness of God cannot be nullified by any human action. God will bring the Jews to belief in spite of human tendency toward faithlessness. This is a decided advantage for Jews, but doesn't mean Jews are superior.

3:3: Their → Our → Us → My: Paul is getting more personal. This is not merely theoretical for him.

3:4: Paul does have an issue to address, which he will get to in more detail in chapters 9-11: Why haven't the Jews in mass turned to Jesus? Why do they seem to be outside the family of faith? He begins by saying that God's purposes will stand and that they aren't contingent on the Jews faithful response.

3:4: Psalm 51:4: David's words after Nathan's confrontation: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment." Echoes of this story in this context: adultery (2:22), confronted with sin (2:23), God's mercy and forgiveness.

3:5: God would be unjust to inflict wrath on us because he created us under the power of sin. This he does so that his mercy (to us) may be revealed, for his glory.

3:6: Even though our unrighteousness sets forth God as righteous in keeping his word, God is still righteous in pouring out wrath on human unrighteousness.

3:7: Paul's pre-Christian vehemence against Christians redounded to God's glory, yet Paul's pre-Xn sins are still judged.

3:8: Paul, by trashing legalism, looks like an anti-nomian. People think he's promoting license. This is always the danger when people point out the problem of legalism: well, then why should/would people obey? If they aren't perfected by it?

3:10ff: Ps 14:1; Ecc 7:20; Ps 14:3; Ps 5:9; Ps 140:3; Ps 10:7; Prov 1:16; Is 59:7; Ps 36:1; Ps 62:12 LXX; Ps 143:2

3:19: The whole world is obviously condemned, if Jews who have an advantage are 3:19: "every mouth may be silenced": no boasting



22For no human being will be justified in his sight<sup>21</sup> by **deeds prescribed by works of the law**, **for through the law** comes the knowledge of sin.<sup>21</sup> But now, irrespective of **law** the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is **attested by the law and the prophets**.<sup>22</sup> **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe**. **For** there is no distinction,<sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;<sup>24</sup> **they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**<sup>25</sup> **whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith**. **He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;**<sup>26</sup> **it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.**<sup>27</sup> **Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith**<sup>28</sup> **For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works**<sup>10f</sup> **prescribed by the law.**<sup>29</sup> **Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,**<sup>30</sup> **since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.**<sup>31</sup> **Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

3:22-4: "For there is no distinction" between Jews and Gentiles. The "but now" of v21 tells us that the former advantages the Jews enjoyed because of direct access to the Law can be enjoyed by all. All are in need of being saved, since all fall short of the glory of God, and all who believe are justified by grace as a gift.

3:24-25: How can justification be both gracious and free and at the same time conditional on faith? Grace is unmerited yet not unconditional. Merit ≠ conditionality. THIS IS CRUCIAL.

3:25: With Paul's recognition that "now" things are different from before, people could ask, "Was God unrighteous before by not taking care of sin through the death and resurrection of his son previously? Was he a sloppy bookkeeper who didn't keep track of things very well and let a lot of sin just slip by?" NO! Rather, God was patient in his divine forbearance, but with Jesus' death he proves at the present time that he is righteous—he is not a sloppy bookkeeper. He justifies everyone who has faith, even those who died before Jesus came, on the same basis.

3:26: If justification came by works it would seem that  $\Theta$  was righteous by properly justifying those whose works merited salvation. But this minimizes  $\Theta$ 's glory. Yet if justification comes by faith, by grace,  $\Theta$  could seem not to be righteous, seemingly letting people off easy. So God proves, with Jesus, that the righteous demands of his wrath be met through the death of his son, and therefore that he is both merciful and just, not one or the other only. And this maximizes  $\Theta$ 's glory! Praise be to  $\Theta$ !

3:27: "Boasting": this is a key theme for Paul—the natural human arrogance made more powerful by the belief that you are justified in your actions and you are impressive to God and others. Paul certainly knew it, but it didn't take being an elite Jew to know this: 1:30-2:5 (pagans become insolent, haughty and boastful, and hypocrites do the same thing). We see boasting continue to play a role in Paul's argument, 4:2, 5:2,3,11.

3:28: What is the difference between "works of the law" and "works prescribed by the law"? Paul didn't have a word for legalism, so he invented a phrase, "works of the law". As a believer in Jesus, he now thinks very differently about the law than he did as a Pharisee (see Phil 3:1-8). Paul believes people are saved apart from any legalistic approach to the law, but rather by faith—which after all, upholds the actual intent of the Mosaic law!

3:31: "Overthrow": destroy, work against remove the drive train of an auto—make it ineffective

3:20: "deeds prescribed by the law": this is an overtranslation of "works of the law" (εργων νομου). See Gal 2:16, 3:2,5,10. For an explanation of the difference between "works of the law" and the "law and the prophets", i.e., the true law, read Romans 9:30-33. What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith;<sup>31</sup> but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law.<sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling-stone,<sup>33</sup> as it is written, 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

3:20: Paul's statement in 3:20 does not make sense if it is "through God's ordained law, no human being will be justified because through that law comes, not justification, but knowledge of sin." When the law, which includes a sacrificial system and provision for sin, was given, it was meant to detail what is, in fact, sin, but also provide a method of justification. If that law does not justify because it only offers people the first (knowledge of sin) but not the second (justification), then it is a failed and flawed system. On the other hand, if Paul means, "no one will be justified by legalistic merit" then we recognize that Paul is using "law" to mean two things in Romans (and elsewhere): 1) the Mosaic Law, God's good intention revealed for his people, and 2) legalism, a misinterpretation of the law based on thinking God's revelation was about showing us how to earn or merit blessing from God through working for him.

3:20-21: If there are two uses of the term "law" then it is easier to understand these verses in a way that gives coherence to Paul: No person will be justified by legalistic works, for through law (apart from faith) comes only the knowledge of sin, not power over it. BUT NOW, irrespective of the legalistic works that have come to define Jewish thinking, the righteous plan of God has been revealed (though in continuity with and well attested in the OT by the law and the prophets), the righteous plan of God for justification by faith in Jesus.

3:20-31: The evidence for two uses of the word "law" is clearest in v:27. Boasting is excluded, by some law. But the question is which law excludes boasting. Certainly legalism, "the law of works", doesn't exclude boasting. In fact, legalism propels boasting because it is a "badge-producing" law that almost compels the wearing proudly of the badges. Rather, the law of faith excludes boasting, because in it we realize that our justification and even our sanctification are gifts from God, not things of which we can boast.

3:20: The law brings us to a greater knowledge of sin as we become boastful, arrogant people, not merely fueled by our universal judicial sentiment, but further empowered by our conviction that we are right and others are wrong; we are good and others are bad. We can see this today in Islamic sharia cultures, which embolden their citizens to think this way. Though it is more difficult to see in ourselves, this same tendency is certainly present in ourselves.

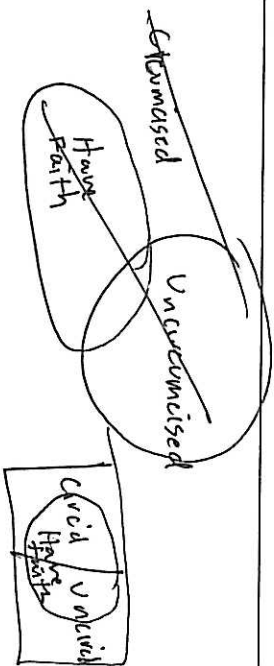
3:20: The law amplifies sin so greatly (1:32-2:5, 2:17-27) by giving sinful people that encouragement that they want to carry out a "role reversal"—they begin to boast in the very law that is meant to be beggar's bread to them. It is the Psalm 50 attitude played out, or the Pharisees prayer in Luke 18:9-14.



4:1 What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the scripture say? <sup>4</sup>'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' <sup>5</sup>Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. <sup>6</sup>But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. <sup>7</sup>So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness irrespective of works: <sup>8</sup>'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; <sup>9</sup>blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.' <sup>10</sup>Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.' <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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 ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, <sup>13</sup>and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised. <sup>14</sup>For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>15</sup>If it is the adherents of ones from the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>16</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

Abraham had righteousness, not just fictionally credited to him.

4:14-17: If it is the Jewish (by law) descendants who are heirs, then faith is null (because of excluding faithful Gentiles) and the promise to bless the world is void. For the Law brings people under wrath, but those without the law would not be violators. (So these Jews would endanger themselves and give Gentiles impunity.) For this reason it (the actual law, not legalism) depends on faith, so both Jews and faithful Gentiles may receive the promise, and also so every transgressor—one who rejects dependence on God—is punished, not for what they didn't know, but by what they knew but rejected.



4:1: "ancestor according to the flesh": compare 4:16, ancestry by faith. Jews would use this phrase to reference Abraham as the most praiseworthy human ancestor, meriting blessings not only for him for all his descendants "according to the flesh".

4:1 (also 1:3) Paul references both Abraham and David to show precedent and continuity of the gospel with the OT and the law. Typically, Jews would be proud of their descent from Abraham, who according to them won favor with God for himself and all his offspring...

4:2: again boasting, see 3:27. Abraham made faithful choices—to allow Lot the first choice of land, to intercede for Sodom, to leave his home based on a large but imprecise promise from God—based on his confidence in God's promise of blessing. So God gets the glory, not Abraham. So no boasting—for Abraham, for his descendants (by flesh or by faith). What others might see as praiseworthy ("noble") Abraham knows merely to be living by faith in God's promises. (See 2:29 for similar usage)

4:3: Genesis 15:6

4:4: "not according to grace but according to debt"

4:3-11: "reckoned": Does this "reckoned mean 1) a fictional consideration, or 2) acknowledgement of real value? Real value. "Righteousness" for human beings involves believing in God's promises, and in his righteousness. Faith is the mirror that holds up God's righteousness, so when God looks at Abraham, he "reckons" him righteous because he sees his own righteousness, appropriated by Abraham by faith.

4:5: Is God's work for Abraham just? 1) Abraham is not righteous but God doesn't care and so reckons him righteous. 2) Abraham believed God and that is in fact what it means to be righteous. Paul says, #2. So Abraham is the father of faith for ALL who believe, circumcised and uncircumcised.

4:5: "who justifies the ungodly": Abraham lied and sent his wife into harems twice—God forgave his sins. Calling Abraham an impious man would have been radical for Paul, but based on his argument in chapter 3—all have sinned—it is an implication. But see Jubilees 23:10: "Abraham was perfect in all his dealings with the LORD and gained favor by his righteousness throughout his life." Also 1 Macc 2:52: Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness?"

4:9: This sounds like a rhetorical question, with the obvious answer "both". But this answer would not have been automatic for Paul's Jewish detractors. So he uses their hero Abraham to prove his point: circumcision wasn't required for Abraham to be justified.

4:12: "Follow the example of the faith": literally, "walk in the steps of faith"

4:13: "the promise ... did not come ... through the law": i.e., through its possession or its outward symbols such as circumcision.

4:14, 16: "adherents of the law" overtranslation, literally, "the ones from/of the law"

4:16: "it depends on faith": "The actual law depends on faith, not works"



gentiles

<sup>16</sup> For this reason 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 [ones] of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup> Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' <sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. <sup>20</sup> No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God. <sup>21</sup> Being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised, <sup>22</sup> therefore his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness. <sup>23</sup> Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

When was Abraham justified by faith?

- Genesis 12:1-4: Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'
- Genesis 15:5-6: He brought him outside and said, 'Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' <sup>6</sup> And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.
- Genesis 17:1: I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. (see Romans 4:22)
- Genesis 22:16-19: 'Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.' (See James 2:21, where he quotes 15:6 again to prove that a faith completing itself in works justifies.)

4-16: "it depends on faith": "The actual law depends on faith, not works"

4-16: "all his descendants, not only to the 'ones' [descendants] via the law [the Jews], but also to the 'ones' of the faith of Abraham [Gentiles, not descended literally but in the family of faith]."

4-16: "the ones of law" also receive grace and promise and blessing. That cannot mean the works righteousness types, or that the actual law is opposite to the gospel.

4-14-17: If it is the Jewish (by law) descendants who are heirs, then faith is null (because of excluding faithful Gentiles) and the promise to bless the world is void. For the Law brings people under wrath, but those without the law would not be violators. (So these Jews would endanger themselves and give Gentiles impunity.) For this reason it (the actual law, not legalism) depends on faith, so both Jews and faithful Gentiles may receive the promise, and also so every transgressor—one who rejects dependence on God—is punished, not for what they didn't know, but by what they knew but rejected.

4-17: "calls into existence the things that do not exist": like descendants, many nations, and descendants by faith out of folks who are not descendants by flesh.

4-17: Genesis 17:5 in light of Genesis 12:2. Abraham is the father of many nations through his being the father of faith, that all who have faith in God's promises are his descendants by faith. God does great things for people who join with God in holding in high esteem the merciful and gracious things God wants to do for people (like give them children in their old age when they simply believe him and act in faith on his promises) > That is why faith is indispensable for receiving God's blessings.

4-18: "hoping against hope": the nature of faith is hoping for a reality that hasn't been accomplished and is not easily in our sights. He did not waver (but could easily have): his own aged body, and the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

4-18-22: Stresses the reasons that Abraham clearly had faith.

4-23-25: We are Abraham's descendants and we too have access to the same reckoning through the same faith, although we are on the other side of the salvation event in history, so we know more of the story than Abraham did.

4-22-25: Unlike Abraham we have Jesus' death to look back to as that which provides powerful assurance of God's willingness and desire to fulfill future promises to us, which is the basis of our faith, and makes it possible to live by this future oriented faith that we see discussed in 5:1-3, with the imperatives to 1) enjoy peace with God despite present adversities (5:1); 2) rejoice in the final display of God's glory in creation in spite of the horrible things that are happening to this present world (5:2); and 3) boast in tribulation (5:3). Faith is always future oriented—just as for Abraham, so for us.



5:1 Therefore since we are justified by faith, **we have** [let us have] **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and **we [let us] boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God**. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but **we [let us] also boast in our sufferings**, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup>For **while we were still weak** at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still **were sinners** Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>**But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

Remembering we boast in <sup>any word about his goodness</sup> <sup>man our nobility</sup> page 9

How should we boast in suffering?

- Like a merit badge, seen as a sign of noble character or of meritorious behavior. This is works of the law (WOL), what Paul is against. Extrinsic reward, a focus on status. Victim status, the right to complain or of self-pity.
- Like a great opportunity to develop our character, which is not any more noble or worthy than anyone else's, but which points us more and more to a future-oriented faith in God. We boast that God was willing to entrust us with this experience, and by it to deepen our relationship with him. We boast that, though we didn't think we could make it, on the other side of it we wouldn't trade away what we learned. A severe mercy.

So we ought to boast in our tribulations:

- 1) Because of the improved character that <sup>eventually,</sup> comes (v3-4) <sup>we don't have to wonder if it will come.</sup>
- 2) God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v5)
- 3) None of our tribulations can compare with the difficulty of God's giving up his only Son for us, his enemies at the time. God did this, so we can have confidence he will save us (see 1:16). As we rejoice in suffering rather than become bitter against God, we shall see God's salvation bring marvelous things to pass in our own lives, as he brings us to his eternal glory.

Have peace with God: don't fear or be anxious regarding our relationships with him. Rather, recognize the great work he has done on our behalf, and rest in that confidence—not in ourselves, but in him.

If it is indicative, it is almost tautological - since we are justified by faith, we are justified through our Lord Jesus Christ and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. The first is trivial but the second is a stretch, and the 3rd - we boast in our suffering - is even worse.

5:1: Why is "we have peace with God" an inadequate translation? 1) the textual evidence for the hortatory subjunctive "let us have peace" is supported by Metzger, and a host of others, with phrases like "stunningly testified to" "strong evidence" "far better textual support than the indicative", "overwhelmingly in favor of the subjunctive", etc. 2) Col 3:15 Paul commands us to let the peace of God rule in our hearts, a subjective, experiential meaning of having peace with God. So the command is not non-sensical, as some commentators believe. 3) The imperative "let us have peace" in v 1 is parallel to the let us boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (v2) or "let us boast in our sufferings" in v 3. These latter things are not automatic—hence the imperative, rather than the indicative. Which means that glorying in our suffering is an important part of being a Christian and being justified by faith. It is not the "unlucky event of a water landing" kind of thing, that a few unlucky Christians need to deal with, but something that we all experience, for God's good purposes in our own lives.

5:2-3: If life for a Christian were always easy, persevering in faith would not be difficult—all the obstacles to faith would be in the past, prior to coming to faith. The heroic journey would be one of striving to come to faith, after which time, with a hero's welcome home and ticker-tape parade, we have smooth sailing all the way home. But rather, the obstacles to faith don't end when we become believers, so rather we need to continue to "have peace" with God, "boasting in our hope" and also "boasting in our sufferings".

5:2, 3, 11: "let us boast": Paul continues to tell us about what we may in fact boast, compare 2:17, 2:23, 3:27, 4:2. Paul is not describing what we always do, such as boast in sufferings (we might tend to hide rather than boast in sufferings)—but he's arguing that we should in fact have this posture, hence "let us boast".

5:6: "ungodly", literal "impious", see 4:5. God shows the extent of his love for us through the death of his son while we were set against him, ungodly. Like Abraham, like us.

5:7: Abraham perhaps might have been that righteous guy someone might have died for. We aren't like Abraham. We are worse.

5:9: With the high mountain pass of God's sending his Son to die for his enemies behind him, how relatively easy it will be for God to save us from any small calamity that comes. So we have confidence in the future faithfulness of God based on his past display of extravagant love.

5:9: "wrath of God", see 4:16: "the law brings wrath"

5:11: "we even boast in God", compare with 2:17: "But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God". Then it was boasting of their status as Jews, here it is through Jesus Christ who makes reconciliation with God possible.

to have hope that disappoints is shameful, but we can boast in our suffering because <sup>⊕</sup> will not disappoint us.