

HEIR MAIL: PAUL'S LETTER TO ROME

Ch. 5

This letter to Christ's followers in Rome was written by Paul a quarter century after Jesus Christ returned to heaven. For those early believers it was their Declaration of Dependence – dependent on the inexplicable sacrifice Jesus suffered in their place and ours. It's the essence of Martin Luther's Reformation theme:

**“We are saved by God's grace alone
through our faith in Jesus Christ alone.”**

Paul, God's first ambassador to the Gentiles, a temple-trained, zealous Pharisee and proud Roman citizen, bravely delivers his new gospel which he calls “my gospel,” “the secret” and “the mystery” to countries in the Empire's clutches.

Not For Sale

Paul artfully defines law and grace, contrasting credos of the Judaism and Gentile cultures, and why each of us needs to be made “right with God and stay that way, even while still battling sin (John 3:3). Paul's unique angle, unlike the message preached by Peter, James and John, is that having “right standing” with God is a gift, not a reward (Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-24).

Millions today are duped by false doctrines based on religious traditions not found in the Bible. So the Bible encourages us to study, examine and interrogate it, putting it on the witness stand to prove its infallible integrity (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16). Here's how:

“... the Jews of Berea were of more noble character and much more open-minded than those of Thessalonica. They were hungry to learn and eagerly received the word. Every day they opened the scrolls of Scripture to search and examine them, to verify that what Paul taught them was true” (Acts 17:11).

Let's read Romans 5:1-5

Our faith in Jesus transfers God's righteousness to us and He now declares us flawless in His eyes. We can now enjoy/join true/lasting/ongoing peace with God, all because of what our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, has done for us. Our faith guarantees us permanent access into this marvelous kindness/grace that has given us a perfect relationship with God. What incredible joy bursts forth within us as we

keep on celebrating our hope of experiencing God's glory! But that's not all!

Even in times of trouble we have a joyful confidence, knowing/exulting in our pressures/sufferings and rejoicing in our hardships which develop in us proven character, hope and confident assurance of eternal salvation that will develop in us patient endurance which will refine/prove our character. And proven character leads us back to hope based on God's promises. This hope is never a disappointing fantasy because we experience God's endless love cascading into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives in us!

"Our faith in Jesus transfers God's rightness to us, and He now declares us flawless in His eyes." This is one of the most potent declarations anywhere.

DISCUSS: Name others in the Bible that come to mind.

Let's read Romans 5:6-8

⁶ For when the time was right, the Anointed One came and died to demonstrate His love for sinners who were entirely helpless, weak and powerless to save themselves. ⁷ Now would anyone dare to die for the sake of a wicked person? We can all understand if someone was willing to die for a truly noble person. ⁸ But Christ proved God's passionate love for us by dying in our place while we were still lost and ungodly!

Let's read Romans 5:9-11

⁹ And there is still much more to say of His unfailing love for us! For through the blood of Jesus we have heard the powerful declaration, "You are now righteous in My sight." And because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you will never experience the wrath of God. ¹⁰ So if while we were still enemies, God fully reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son, then something greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, and because we share in His resurrection life, how much more we will be rescued from sin's dominion!

¹¹ Even more than that, we overflow with triumphant joy^l in our new relationship of living reconciled to God—all because of Jesus Christ!

Let's read Romans 5:12-19

¹² When Adam sinned, the entire world was affected. Sin entered human experience, and death was the result. And so death followed this sin, casting its shadow over all humanity because all have sinned. ¹³ Sin was in the world before Moses gave the written law, but it was not charged against them where no law existed. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned as king from Adam to Moses even though they hadn't broken a command the way Adam had. The first man, Adam, was a picture of the Messiah who was to come.

¹⁵ Now, there is no comparison between Adam's transgression and the gracious gift that we experience. For the magnitude of the gift far outweighs the crime. It's true that many died because of one man's transgression, but how much greater will God's grace and His gracious gift of acceptance overflow to many because of what one man, Jesus, the Messiah, did for us!

¹⁶ And this free-flowing gift imparts to us much more than what was given to us through the one who sinned. For because of one transgression, we are all facing a death sentence with a verdict of "Guilty!" But this gracious gift leaves us free from our many failures and brings us into the perfect righteousness of God—acquitted with the words "Not guilty!"

¹⁷ Death once held us in its grip, and by the blunder of one man, death reigned as king over humanity. But now how much more are we held in the grip of grace and continue reigning as kings in life, enjoying our regal freedom through the gift of perfect righteousness in the one and only Jesus, the Messiah!

¹⁸ As condemnation came on all through one transgression, so through one righteous act of Jesus' sacrifice, the perfect righteousness that makes us right with God and leads us to a victorious life is now available to all.

Even the most moral person is destined to spend eternity separated from God simply because he/she was infected at birth with Adam's sin and then chose to dismiss God's gift of acquittal.

You're camping by a rushing rill up in the Cascades. You scoop up a cool drink, unaware that upstream some yo-yo has polluted it. Just as you didn't choose your parents, you didn't choose to be polluted upstream by Grandpa Adam.

Adam and Christ are mankind's reps in that their actions affect all of us. Adam's sin resulted in death and a Christless eternity (Romans 3:23). From the moment Adam sinned, God announced His plan to bring all men back into harmony with Him forever. The cross cancels our death penalty for sin AND gives us life in and through Christ forever (John 1:4).

There's but one God, Paul says, and but one way to join His eternal family, i.e., by faith, not by our good conduct or religious deeds (John 1:10-12; Acts 4:10-12). The Law given to Moses for Israel proved that we're unable to meet God's standard of perfection. Like our spiritual ancestor Abraham, we all find peace with God simply by trusting Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Still childless at 75, Abe "believed" God when He promised him a son. Twenty-five years later 90-year-old Sarah birthed Isaac (Romans 4:18-25).

God the Father sent His Son from heaven to be born with animals, rejected by His own people, and die the cruelest possible death, taking OUR place (John 1:10-12).

Paul wins the gold for writing perhaps history's grandest sentence:

"Christ was without sin,
but for our sake
God made him share our sin
in order that in union with him
we might share the righteousness of God."
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Let's read Romans 5:20-21

"So then the law was introduced into God's plan to bring the reality of human sinfulness out of hiding. Yet wherever sin increased, there was more than enough of God's grace to triumph all the more! Just as sin reigned through death, so also this sin-conquering grace will reign as king through righteousness, imparting eternal life through Jesus, our Lord and Messiah!"

Heaven is real.

Hell is real.

Eternity Lasts a Long Time.

“For since death came through a man, Adam, it is fitting that the resurrection of the dead has also come through a man, Christ. Even as all who are in Adam die, so also all who are in Christ will be made alive. We’re all ‘in Adam’ or ‘in Christ.’” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

We live in a world of black & white, day & night, male & female, good & evil, life & death, and the most determinative, most final, most irreversible being:

“We’re ‘in Adam’ or ‘in Christ.’”

Are you in Adam or in Christ? This is one punt you don’t want to muff. If you lack that deep down peace of Romans 5:1, you can settle that right now. Just say something like, “Dear God. Thank You for sacrificing Your Son so that my sins can be forgiven. I happily trade them to You in return for my life here on earth and in heaven with you for eternity. Grateful for Jesus forever, amen.

His Deal
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