

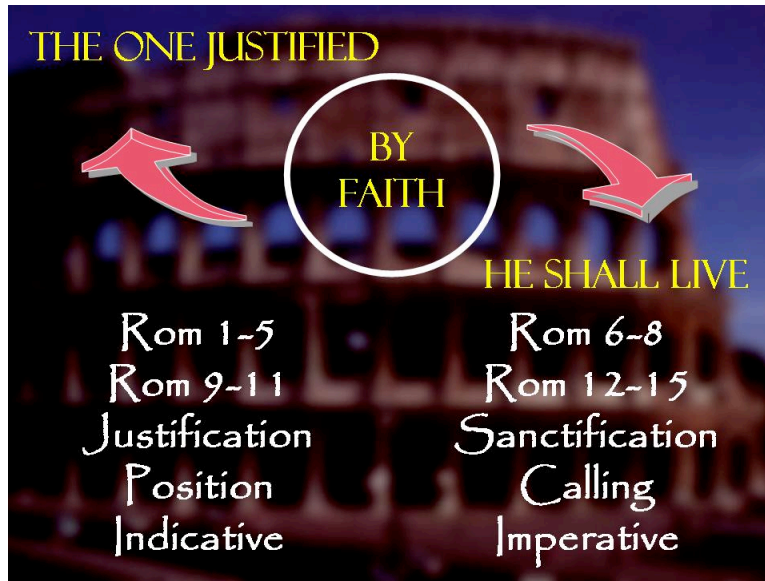
# Ways to Read Romans

## Reggie M. Kidd

### For Evangelism: “The Romans Road”

- Rom 3:10** None is righteous, no, not one.
- Rom 3:23** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Rom 5:8** But God shows his love for us in this: while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.
- Rom 6:23** For the wages of sin are death ... but the free gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Rom 10:9-10** If you confess with your lips that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

### For Systematic Theology: The Relationship between Justification & Sanctification



## As Narrative Theology: Believers Have Been Folded into God's Story Line

**Adam** — Rom 5:12-21 — as “type of one who was to come” (RSV, ESV, NAS) or “pattern” (NIV) or “foreshadowing” (NEB)

**Abraham** — Rom 4 — not as warrant for circumcision, but instead as father of all who believe

**Moses** — not as origin of “works of the law,” but instead as pointer to an obedience grounded in redemption

**David** — Rom 1:3-4; Rom 15:9 — God's royal Son came in weakness; now exalted in power, He sings the nations into submission

**Christ** — Rom 10:4 — Christ as “end” of the Law in twofold sense: an end and a beginning

## As Pastoral Theology:

### The Romans' Situation

- Beginnings at Pentecost — Acts 2:10, “... visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes”
- Claudius issued a decree ca. AD 41 limiting the right of assembly of Jews in Rome (Dio Cassius *Claudius* 60.6.6), nearly simultaneous with a letter to the Alexandrian Jews restoring full rights of assembly (but warning against future sedition). Implication for Roman Jews: discrete congregations, but no central leadership. The lack of a phrase like “the church at Rome” in the opening of Paul's letter, and the suggestion of discrete house churches and clusters of Christians around Rome in ch. 16, suggests early Christians there had to live with the same sort of organizational limitations that Jews did.
- Claudius issued another decree ca. AD 49 expelling Jews because of “disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus” (Suetonius *Claudius* 25). See, for instance, Priscilla & Aquila (Acts 18:1ff). This means that a movement started by “Jews and proselytes” lost its Jewish leadership core and founding identity — through the early 50's it was entirely Gentile.
- It's now ca. AD 57. Claudius is dead and Nero (his nephew) is the new emperor, and apparently has no grudge against the Jews. Roman Jewish

Christians are returning to a largely Gentile church — for instance, Priscilla & Aquila (Rom 16:3-5). But what are they finding?

Rom 11:18,25; Rom 14:1-15:13 — and note Paul’s repeated emphasis on there being “no difference” between Jew and Gentile

What if your church’s founders were “exiled” for several years, and returned to find their spiritual “antonyms” were in charge?

E.g., exclusive psalm-singers by “praise song” singers; evangelists by social activists; Arminians by Calvinists

- In many respects the pastoral thrust of Romans lies in chapters 9-11 (Gentiles have no bragging rights in the Kingdom of God — God isn’t finished with Israel) and in chapters 14-15 (“You all show some deference to one another). As one (less than eminent) NT scholar contextualizes:

“One sings praise songs as well as psalms. Another abstains from praise songs and sings only psalms. Let not him who sings everything despise her who abstains, and let not her who abstains judge him who sings everything; for God welcomes him. . . . He who sings everything sings in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. She who abstains, does so in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. None of us lives to ourselves, none of us dies to ourselves.”

Reggie Kidd, *With One Voice*, pp. 155-156

### **Paul’s Situation & Aims**

- Desires a Relationship with Roman Christians — thus, the unusually long list of greetings
- To Request Prayer for the Collection ... Rom 15:23-33  
1Co 16:1-4  
2Co 8:1-9:15
- ... in Anticipation of Trouble in Jerusalem Rom 15:30-31
- To Solicit Help for the Mission to Spain ... Rom 15:24
- to which end, to offer an Outline of His Gospel (Rom 1:16-17)

## My Own Personal Assumptions in Reading Romans:

1. There's always a **larger story** — the vindication of God's own character, the demonstration of his righteousness, his holiness, his faithfulness, his mercy, and his love ... God, Israel, Jesus, the Jew-Gentile Church

2. There's always **my story** — my "image-of-God-bearingness," thus my accountability, guilt, shame, aloneness, and powerlessness; thus also my redeemability, my place in his family and purposes

3. To get at both sides of the story, it's profitable always to be asking **three things**:

- What is **Faith's** read (**Normative Perspective**)? — What's this passage tell that I need to know about God? how am I being called to reimagine Him ... what truths are there? what new insights into his heart and his demands? What furthers "the obedience of faith"? What are "the commandments to keep"? (See Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 7:19)
- What is **Hope's** read (**Situational Perspective**)? — What new aspect to the story of deliverance do I see in this passage? How's he shaping the "Israel of God"? How may I take up my role in "new creation"? How am I being called to reassess my world in light of what He's up to in it? — my community, my relationships, my job ... everything. (See Rom 11:12,25-26; Gal 6:15-16; 2 Cor 5:17)
- What is **Love's** read (**Existential Perspective**)? — What's this passage tell me that I need to know about me ... what I'm being delivered from and to, in my inner being, my drives & aspirations, my affections, desires, and motivations? How may I better find in myself "faith working in love"? (See Rom 8:1-4; 13:10; Gal 5:6)

---

## Romans 1

### 1:1

*gospel of God*. OT background (esp. in Isaiah — 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1); significance of Emperor-cult (birth, coming-of-age, accession of an emperor)

### 1:2

Paul qualifies God's gospel in 3 ways:

1. this gospel is the fulfillment of God's promises ...
2. made by God's prophets ...
3. in *holy* writings (i.e., the OT) — two notes of solemnity re: Scripture: a) lack of defn. article; b) use of *hagios* (see also, *ieros* at 2Tm 3:15 — this is more honorifically Jewish, the way, say, the Rabbis or Philo would refer to SCR — elsewhere the NT is straightforward: “the writings”)

In a sense, throughout Paul's letter he is concerned about two things: a) the gospel is the continuation of the OT's story; and b) that story must be rightly interpreted — where are we in the story line?

### 1:3-4

Now Paul defines God's gospel — it's about his Son. Paul's powerful Christology comes to expression:

1. Jesus came of the royal line of David (see esp. 2Sm 7; Psalm 89; Isa 11; Jer 23, 30, 33; Ezk 34, 37)
2. Nonetheless his incarnation was characterized by weakness, poverty, and humility — that is, it was “according to flesh”
3. Raised by the Holy Spirit, he was appointed (*horizein*) Son-of-God-with-power. At his resurrection, Jesus becomes “Last Adam,” “Second Man,” “Life-giving Spirit” (1Co 15:45-47)
4. His resurrection “from the dead” makes him “firstfruit” of the general resurrection (see also 1Co 15:23). He has entered into “the age to come,” in advance of us.
5. The result is that He is Lord — the result for Jews: monotheism has to be adjusted to fit the Risen Lord in; the result for Gentiles: there are no rival lords (whether cosmic spirits or imperial rulers)

Something to think about: why does this definition of the “gospel” focus so much on the person of Jesus, rather than on what he did for us? Contrast with 1Co 15:3, “... that Christ died for our sins...”?

### 1:5

*obedience of faith*. Note the parallels between faith and obedience:

your faith is proclaimed in all the world (Rom 1:8)

For your obedience is known to all, (Rom 16:19)

For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" (Rom 10:16b)

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. (Rom 10:16a)

... if they do not continue in their unbelief, (Rom 11:23)

Just as you were at one time disobedient to God ...<sup>1</sup> so they too have now been disobedient (Rom 11:30-31)

obedience of faith (Rom 1:5; 16:26)

... what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience — by word and deed (Rom 15:18)

I (with Cranfield & Gaffin) think Paul means “an obedience that *is* faith,” or “an obedience which consists in faith” (genitive of apposition). God seeks a particular kind of obeying — i.e., faith. Secondly, Paul probably has in view a the kind of obedience God seeks has its origin in faith (genitive of source).

See Gal 5:6, “faith working in love”; 1Th 1:3, “your work of faith”; 2Th 1:11, “every ... work of faith” — that is, in Gaffin’s terms, “the new creation good works (Eph 2:10) wrought in believers as attendant expressions of their saving faith.”<sup>1</sup>

*on behalf of his name*. See Psalm 106:8; Ezk 20:9,14 ... “for the glory of his name.” To preach on behalf of God’s name suggests both the authority with which the preaching is done and the more ultimate goal: not just the benefit of the hearers/responders, but God whose name and fame are enhanced.

## 1:17

*righteousness/rightness or justification/justness of God*.<sup>2</sup> Note the differences in translation between the NIV “righteousness from God” and NAS “righteousness of God”

See the exceedingly important discussion of Paul’s “righteousness/justification” language by Stephen Westerholm.<sup>3</sup> Largely in appreciative but critical dialogue with N.T. Wright, Westerholm (rightly, I think) distinguishes between

- “ordinary righteousness” (a just judge judges justly — see, for example, LXX 1Kg 8:32),

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight* (Paternoster, 2006), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Important linguistic note: There is one Greek root (*dik-*) that underlies the separate English roots “just” and “right” — thus English translations will use two terms (“justification” and “righteousness”) for the same Greek work *dikaioisune*. So, every time you see a “just-” root you should try on a “right-” root as well, to see if it fits. Some scholars even suggest instead of “justify” we use “rightwise.”

<sup>3</sup> “Matters of Definition, 1: ‘Righteousness’ in Paul,” in his *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Eerdmans, 2004).

- “extraordinary righteousness” (amazingly, God judges guilty sinners to be not guilty), and
- “divine righteousness” (God is just when he judges guilty sinners not guilty because of what he did to his Son on the cross).

The counterpart to the phrase “the righteousness of God” is 10:3-4 (and surely an interpretive crux):

<sup>3</sup> ἀγνοοῦντες γὰρ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν [δικαιοσύνην] ζητοῦντες στήσαι, τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑπετάγησαν·

<sup>4</sup> τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι.

<sup>3</sup> For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (NAS)

<sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified. (RSV)

<sup>3</sup> For ignoring the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking instead to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law, with the result that there is righteousness for everyone who believes. (NET)

From 10:3-4, it's hard to see how you don't find yourself looking at Paul's intriguing phrase at 5:17, “the gift of righteousness.” Isn't this “gift” inherently something God gives to us? Don't we find here the answer to the need expressed in Rom 2:13's “righteous before God” (*para theou*) and Rom 3:20's “be justified/rightwised in his sight” (*enopion autou*). Php 3:6-9 is also illuminating — NTW wants to say this is something entirely different. I'm not so sure Paul's got things so nicely distinguished.<sup>4</sup>

In Paul, the righteousness of God is a dual concept — God's own righteousness as creator and covenant Lord (e.g., Rom 3:5), and a righteousness he confers on undeserving sinners (e.g., Rom 10:3; 5:17, in view of 2:13; 3:20; Php 3:9). That's why Paul calls him “just & justifier” at Rom 3:26 — he is “just” (here is vindication of God's character — again, see Rom 3:5) and he is “justifier” (here is a vindication that comes from him on the basis of the righteousness of his own Son — again, as in 5:17, “the gift of righteousness,” and converse to 10:3, “their own righteousness”). At any given point, Paul may be stressing one or both sides of his being “just & justifier” with the phrase “righteousness of God.”

Here's Westerholm's summary: “Hence, if δικαιοσύνη is not simply God's *gift* of acquittal here (Rom 1:17), we must say that it is *that salvific activity by which God's commitment to uphold the right is vindicated at the same time as sinners*

<sup>4</sup> See also Deut 9's “not because of your righteousness” theme!

(those guilty of the *undikaioisness* of 1:18) *who believe the gospel become dikaios* (in accordance with Habakkuk's dictum)." (p. 286).

*from faith to faith.*<sup>5</sup> Best choices, in my view, from the history of interpretation:

1. "from God's faithfulness to man's faith" (Ambrosiaster, Barth, Wright);
2. as indicating growth in faith (see the form of expression in the LXX of Ps 83:8, "they will go from power to power"; and at 2Co 3:18, "we are being transformed from glory to glory"; and see the idea of increasing faith in Paul at 2Co 10:15; 2Th 1:3);
3. or simply as emphatic, "by faith, and solely by faith" (Cranfield).

I incline toward #1.

*The one justified by faith will live.* Linguistic observation in support of the notion that Paul means the Habakkuk quote in the sense, "The one justified by faith (as per chs. 1-4) ... will live (as per chs. 5-8)"

- In chs. 1-4 "faith/belief" words (built on the Greek root *pist-*) occur 37 times, but only three times in chs. 5-8
- In chs. 1-4 "life" words (built on the Greek root *zo-* or *za-*) occur only 2 times, but 25 times in chs. 5-8

## **1:18-3:20**

The point of this section as a whole: there can be no other righteousness "before God" (see 2:13 & 3:20) than that which comes "from faith to faith." This section is about the gospel's (not Paul's) judgment on all people. It is only in the light of the good news that we truly see the bad news. Summary statement: 3:10, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (a notion repeated at 3:23 in the explanation of the solution).

## **The basic pattern of the gospel's critique:**

### **Idolatry (1:18-23) ...**

---

<sup>5</sup> There is one Greek root (*pist-*) that underlies the two English roots "faith" and "belief" — furthermore, Greek has no way of distinguishing between "faith" (= belief) and "faithfulness" (= trustworthiness, loyalty) For instance, there would be no distinction in Greek between, "He was a believing husband" and "He was a faithful husband." So, every time you see the word "belief" or "faith" or "faithfulness," you should "try on the others" as well.

Paul's critique is best understood against the backdrop of Genesis 1-3, where the horrible exchange was originally made.

Idolatry is a failure, first, to give God glory and thanks (Rom 1:21-23).

Glory: we were designed to have a *reflective* brightness about us.

Thanks: we were designed to be grateful for the dignity of being ourselves "the image & likeness" of God.

**leads to**

## **Degraded Passions (1:24-27; 1:29-30) ...**

Pagans' acceptance of same-sex sex is the flashing red light in the dashboard: the engine is in trouble

**lead to**

## **An Unfit Mind (1:28; 1:32)**

**Paul's premise:** It's bad enough to live by the sentiment, "If loving you is wrong I don't want to be right." It's far worse to live by the creed, "The only rule is that there are no rules."

**Paul's trap:** "Don't be so quick to judge (esp. you Jews who naturally are repulsed by the Brokeback phenomenon). Look closely enough and you'll find you're in the same stew."

---

# **Romans 2**

## **2:1-5's Portrait of God**

- He is Judge of the universe — 2:2,3, "the judgment of God"; 2:5, "the righteous/just judgment of God"

- His judgment is perfectly fair or just — it “accords with truth” (2:2) & and he does not play favorites (2:11) — “to each according to his works” (2:6)
- He is kind, patient, and forbearing (2:4)

## 2:3

For the kind of leniency in judgment (i.e., the belief that God would not judge Jews as harshly as Gentiles) that is expected by the person against whom Paul is writing, see the (intertestamental) Wisdom of Solomon:

For when they (the Israelites of Moses’s day) were tried, though they were being disciplined in mercy, they learned how the ungodly were tormented when judged in wrath. For you tested them as a parent does in warning, but you examined the ungodly as a stern king does in condemnation. (11:9-10)

So while chastening us you scourge our enemies ten thousand times more, so that, when we judge, we may meditate upon your goodness, and when we are judged, we may expect mercy. (12:22)

But you, our God, are kind (see Rom 2:4) and true (see Rom 3:4), patient (see Rom 2:4), and ruling all things in mercy (see Rom 11:30-32). For even if we sin we are yours, knowing your power; but we will not sin, because we know that you acknowledge us as yours. For to know you is complete righteousness, and to know your power is the root of immortality. (15:1-3)

## 2:5-6

Judgment day will bring to light a congruity between the inner person (the “heart”) and the outer person (“the works”) — and God’s judgment will be perfectly (and frightfully) fair. Israel’s problem was a “stubborn and unrepentant (i.e., an unbelieving) heart” that expressed itself in acts of rebellion (see Deuteronomy 9:27, in context). What Moses called for was: “Circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no more” (Deuteronomy 10:16), and his rationale was: “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe” (17).

## 2:7-11

Main point: A knowledge of God that falls short of full obedience will prove to be null and void on the day of judgment — Paul’s critique of nonchristian Jews.

Secondary point: There will be those (and for Paul, these would be believers in Christ, who face judgment “according to my gospel through Jesus Christ”) who will come out on the positive side of judgment — not because of the deeds themselves, but because of the faith and repentance that the deeds express.

## 2:12

An implication of “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”

## 2:13

To understand what Paul means by “the doers of the law will be justified/rightwised,” it’s important to notice the people he considers to have fulfilled its terms:

- 8:1-4
- 10:5-11
- 13:8-10

## 2:14-16

It’s important to notice the “for/because” at the beginning of 2:14. Paul intends to show Jews who possess but do not perform the Law in vv. 14-16 that there are those who, despite not possessing it, do actually perform it. That is to say, in 2:14-16, Paul is holding up Gentile Christians before an imagined nonchristian Jewish reader ... this is an example of how Paul expects the mission among the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (see 11:13-14).

As Cranfield & Wright maintain, the phrase “by nature” modifies “those who do not possess the law” rather than with “do the things which the law requires.” Notice how that makes the passage read ... along the lines of 8:1-4 & 13:8-10 ... an “obedience of faith.” In other words, “those who do not have the law by nature but who nonetheless wind up doing what the Law calls for” are the same people who show up in 2:27 & 29 as “those who are by nature not circumcised but keep the law ... a circumcision of the heart by the Spirit not the letter.”

Where does the language of “God’s law written on the heart” come from?

- Jeremiah 31:33 (also 32:40)
- Ezekiel 36:26-27

“... they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law” (2:14). For this sort of praise, see Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8.10, “The elegant and free person will regulate his wit, and will be as it were a law to himself.”

What about the internal wrestling? See Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:14-25

The final judgment scene would be absolutely horrific (it will, after all, be without favoritism, according to truth, in accord with deeds — and it will get to “the secrets of people’s heart”) without this proviso: “according to my gospel through Christ Jesus” (2:14)

### **2:17-24**

Despite their call to be God’s light to the nations, Jews find themselves in exile among the nations (the context for Isaiah 52:5 & Ezekiel 36:20’s “God’s name is blasphemed among the nations) because of her sinfulness. The problem: injustice (“stealing”), self-indulgence (“adultery”), and impiety (“temple robbing”) are Israel’s sickness as well as the nations’ (see Titus 1:12; 2:12, and R. Kidd’s “Titus as *Apologia*: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies.”

### **2:25-29**

When circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and uncircumcision becomes circumcision.

---

## **Romans 3**

### **3:1-8**

**Summary:** Coming out of ch. 2, we’re left with a question: if being “really Jewish” (though that’s not a term Paul actually uses) is something internal and not external — a circumcision of the heart rather than of the flesh; if God will be satisfied with a “law obedience” among those who don’t even have the Law of God —, well then, what’s been the big deal about Israel all these centuries?

In 3:1-8, Paul insists that Israel was entrusted with “the oracles of God,” that is to say, with a divine commission (going back to God’s covenant with Abraham [esp. Genesis 12 & 15]) to be the means by which God would fix the mess of Romans 1 and Genesis 3, humanity’s sin problem. And though Israel showed herself to be faithless to that mission by showing herself to be as sinful as all the rest of the nations, nonetheless her faithlessness did not keep God from being faithful to his promise to Abraham to rescue the world through Israel.

### **3:9-20**

**Summary:** Israel’s own Scriptures accuse her of being just as guilty as everybody else. Israel has to join the rest of the world standing before God’s bar of justice with no defense to offer. Israel’s Law just makes her the more culpable.

Final conclusion of the first part of the letter: No one will be found righteous before God by means of the Law.

### 3:21-26

**Summary:** However, what the Law couldn't provide it nonetheless did promise — a solution to the problem. And that solution has now (see the “now's” of 3:21 & 3:26) arrived: the redemption that God has provided in the sacrificial death of Jesus.

3:21-26 is loaded with interpretive choices and theological gems:

- Four times Paul speaks of the “righteousness of God” (3:21, 22, 25, 26). Does he mean: “God’s own righteousness” (a statement about God’s own character)? or “the righteousness that comes from God” (a provision of the righteousness we need to stand before God — see 2:13; 3:20; 10:3 and Philippians 3:6-9)?

Is it an either/or for Paul’s theology as a whole? In my opinion, No! If it’s not an either/or for Paul’s theology as a whole, is he leaning more in one direction than the other in Romans 3:21-26? Does his language of “setting forth as a demonstration of...” in 3:25-26 help? (In fact, the whole mystery of God being both just and justifier lies in the assumption that surfaces at v. 25: “... because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed”!) It’s freakin’ amazing that Paul can say that God is “just and justifier”!

- “The faith of Jesus” (3:22 & 26 — probably also implied at 3:25). Is this “faith in Jesus” (Cranfield)? or is it “Jesus’s faith(fulness)” (Wright)?

Cautiously, I accept Wright’s view (or, actually, one like it: Jesus is the one faithful Israelite whose obedient life and death (see Rom 5:12-21) prove to be the way that God has kept faith with Abraham to fix the human race’s sin problem through Abraham’s line.

A Kiddian discourse on Genesis 12 → 15 → 17 → 22

- “Redemption” (3:24) — see Genesis 15:12-16; and the whole Exodus story
- “whom God set forth as *hilasterion*” (3:25) — “propitiation” (NAS, ESV), “expiation” (RSV), “the means of expiating sin” (NEB), “a sacrifice of atonement” (NIV, NRSV), “the mercy seat” (NET — see

Leviticus 16:2,13,14,15)

- God is “just & justifier” or “right and rightwiser” (3:26)

### 3:27-31

**Summary:** In the gospel that brings Jew and Gentile together through the sacrifice of Christ, Israel’s boast is eliminated at the very same time that her deepest confession (“God is one”) is confirmed and her Law is established (her Law promotes “faith” not “works”).

---

## Romans 4

### 4:1

Grammatically, the Greek of 4:1 could either be read:

a) “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh found?” — That is, does the life-experience of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish faith, confirm or disconfirm Paul’s gospel?

or

b) “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather found according to the flesh?” — That is, what lesson did Abraham learn about “the flesh”?

or

c) “What then shall we say? That we have found Abraham to be our forefather (understood, merely) ‘according the flesh’?” — That is, is descent from Abraham really (as Jews contend) only a matter of physical lineage?

The chapter can make sense on any of the 3 readings.

a) Abraham found, as Paul has found, that life with God is by faith not by works (the point of vv. 2-8).

b) Abraham learned that the operation done in his flesh (circumcision) was not what counted before God, but rather the fact that God justifies sinners (the symbolism of circumcision being reflected on in vv. 9-12).

c) Paul's point in ch. 4: descent from Abraham is not to be considered "according to the flesh," that is, either by virtue of birth or effort (that's why Abraham is "father of all of us," v. 16).

#### **4:2-8 — What Paul thinks about the relationship between justification and works**

**4:2-3** — Jewish sources suggest that Abraham was perceived as having grounds for "boasting before God." Paul is arguing that the gospel shows that he and his kin have been radically wrong about their reading of Scripture.

- *Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life.* (Jubilees 23:10, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.)
- *We find that Abraham our father had performed the whole Law before it was given, for it is written, Because (of the fact) that Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws [Gen 26:5] (from the Mishnah, Kiddushim 4.14; a circa A.D. 200 codification of rabbinic oral teachings that go back to Paul's day and earlier).*
- *You therefore, O Lord, who are the God of the just, you have not appointed repentance to the just, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who have not sinned against you. But you have appointed repentance unto me who am a sinner.* (Prayer of Manasses, 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C. or A.D.)

And Jewish sources suggest that the "faith" of Abraham for which he was commended in Gen 15:6 was meritorious — see the litany of quotes in Cranfield (pp. 84-85).

#### **4:5**

What a strange thing: faith is counted for righteousness for the person who believes that God "rightwises" the impious, irreligious, godless (*asebes* ... remember that Abraham was a pagan when God called him ... the language looks ahead to Romans 5:6-8, where the description is amplified: "while we were impious (*asebes*) ... sinners (*hamartalos*) ... enemies (*echthros*)."

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.*

*And can it be that I should gain an interest in my Savior's blood. Died he for me who caused his pain, for me who him to death pursued?*

**4:9-12 — What Paul thinks the real significance (the “signing power”) of circumcision is: a sign for Jews of the same sort of “faith-righteousness” that they were supposed to take to the nations, and that now God has taken to the nations in Christ**

**4:13-16 — How Abraham has now become “father of us all” (not just of Jews, but of Gentile believers)**

- It was through Abraham that the original design for Adam & Eve to extend Eden-worship to the whole planet was to be fulfilled (Gen 1:26-27)
- Abraham was promised innumerable offspring (Gen 15:5; 22:17)
- Abraham was promised to be a blessing by extending his covenant blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen 18:18; 22:18)
- Abraham was promised to become father of many nations (Gen 17:4-5 — worked out in Israel’s history in a promissory fashion, Deut 2:25; Psalms 22:27; 67:2; 117:1; Isa 52:10; Amos 9:15-17) (notes from the *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*)

**4:15** Importantly, Paul reminds us of his notion that the Law only complicates things for sinful people — it makes us specifically culpable

**4:18-25 — Abraham’s faith & ours**