

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 4-5

The way to heaven has never changed. God set the itinerary at the onset of history, and has been consistent. That's the point Paul makes in Romans 4...

The Gospel Paul preached in 58 AD was the same Gospel that made Abraham right with God in 1800 BC.

Nothing in the 2000 years that separated Paul and Abraham changed or improves the Gospel. And there's been no alterations in the 2000 years since!

The Gospel of God is timeless. It's immutable.

Once, a little boy at Christmas time was helping his mom unpack their decorations. He carefully unwrapped the nativity set - *the wise men - shepherds - Mary and Joseph*. Finally he came to *the baby in the manger*.

That's when the boy shouted, "**Mom, here's the baby Jesus in His car seat!**" There will always be people, like this little boy, who want to modernize Christianity.

Yet the Gospel needs no modification! The means by which a person becomes right with God, and fit for heaven, is the same today as it was 4000 years ago.

We become pleasing to God not by *obeying rules* or *observing rituals* - **not by trying, but by trusting.**

Chapter 4 begins, "**What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?**

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God."

What was it about a humble Abraham that caused God to save Him? *Was it a fleshly trait - his pedigree or morality? Was it works - his diligent service? No!* If it had been either Abraham could've boasted in himself.

For the answer Paul takes us to the Bible.

Genesis 15:6... He says in verse 3, **“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** Abraham was chosen by God for one reason only - **his faith.**

Realize, Abraham was the most revered figure in all of Judaism. In fact, the rabbis exaggerated his virtue.

The Jewish Book of Jubilees claims, **"Abraham was perfect in all his deeds."** The Jews assumed God had accepted Abraham based on his good works. But Paul knew better - even Abraham needed God's grace.

Paul does a little Scriptural digging to prove his point. He goes to the beginning of the Torah, to Genesis, and flags **the moment** Abraham was declared righteous.

You might assume it was after he uprooted his family and moved at God's prompting from Ur to Canaan...

Or it was the time he stood on Mount Moriah, lifted up his knife, and was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac...

But neither case earned for him God's acceptance.

When was it then? Paul takes us to Genesis 15, *not exactly a highpoint for Abraham.* At the time he was *pouting.* He was *complaining* about his lack of an heir.

Abraham feared that without a son, he would die and be forced to leave all his wealth to his servant.

Yet at the time God spoke to Abraham of his servant, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from you own body shall be your heir. Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"

At Abraham's greatest sense of *deficiency*, God showed His *sufficiency*. God blew him away with an amazing promise. Abraham would not only have a son, he'd father a nation... According to Genesis 15:6, "He believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Faith made Abraham right with God.

This man gained God's approval, not due to *some great act on his part* - but because of *a great promise from God's heart*. The father of the Jews pleased God not because of some *feat*, but because of His *faith!*

Paul continues in verse 4, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."

Most Americans believe we should get what we earn. "A good day's work deserves a good day's pay."

This might be a good rule for the workplace, but it doesn't apply to God's kingdom. If God's favor, and thus our salvation, can be earned it makes God our debtor. He then owes us. And God is no one's debtor.

Thus, salvation can never be earned. It's not wages, it's a gift - by "grace," or love that's on the house! A person either trusts in their *own grit* or in *God's grace*.

If Abraham could've been *good enough, or pure enough, or sure enough, or endure enough* - then God would be obligated to him. But God owes no man.

God is never forced to give, He gives freely. This is why all God's blessing come by grace through faith!

Verse 5, "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness..." It's our faith in God's grace and His willingness to justify us freely, that gains a right standing with God. Thus, in heaven there are no "Hallelu-mes" only "Hallelu-jahs." God gets the glory!

Verse 6, "Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works..." Paul now moves forward 800 years in history, from 1800 to 1000 BC, from one *Hebrew hero* to another, from Abraham to David to prove that the way to heaven didn't change.

And in verses 7-8 he quotes Psalm 32:1-2...

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

Psalm 32 was written after David's downfall.

His one night stand with "*Bathsheba*" resulted in a life of pain and heartache. Adultery, deceit, murder, an ugly cover-

up - David had been *unrighteous*. He had nothing to present to God in the way of good works.

Yet God chose to forgive David's sin. He didn't "impute" - or credit sin to David's account. God hit the clear button on his calculator. Presto, the record of David's sin vanished. *God cleared it out of his memory!*

And this is what God does for everyone who trusts in the grace that's in Jesus. He does not impute sin.

Paul asks, "*Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?*"

Remember the Jews believed the act of circumcision was a requirement for God's favor. Uncircumcised Gentiles could never be accepted or blessed by God.

And yet this idea is still around - *that certain deeds or rituals are prerequisites to God's blessing*. Christians today might concede that faith alone gets you to heaven, but if you want the favor and blessing of God you need more than faith - you earn it by (*fill in blank*).

For some people it's being baptized a certain way, or speaking in tongues, or taking communion once a week, or how you dress, or the music you listen to, or reading a particular translation of the Bible, or attending a specific church - *the list is endless...*

But if you don't meet their criteria you're considered a second-class Christian. Paul contends no *rite or rule or ritual* can add anything to our standing with God. We *obtain and maintain* God's approval by faith alone!

Remember **"Faith alone"** was the battle-cry of the Protestant Reformation. Roman Catholicism had no problem with faith, or the blood of Jesus, or Christ as Mediator, or biblical authority. Their issue with Martin Luther and his allies was with the word **"alone."**

Rather than faith alone, they added good works. Rather than the blood of Christ alone, they added the Sacraments... Rather than the Priesthood of Jesus alone, they added human priests... Rather than the authority of Scripture alone, they added church tradition... But Paul in the book of Romans is crystal clear - **God's favor is gained faith and faith alone.**

Verse 9, **"For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness."** He goes back to Genesis.

How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." The Jews said you had to be circumcised to be right with God, *but when God pronounced Abraham righteous was he circumcised?*

Check the chronology. Abraham believes and is declared righteous in Genesis 15:6. Circumcision isn't instituted until Genesis 17:10 - a full 14 years later.

Circumcision had nothing to do with his righteousness. When God declared Abraham right with Him, circumcision didn't even exist. Likewise, baptism, communion, church attendance - *all the add-ons* - have nothing to do with *our* standing with God. They help us grow, but our relationship with God is based on faith.

Verse 11, “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also...”

Circumcision was a sign. Like baptism and communion, it was an outward mark of an inward faith.

A sign doesn't *confer* righteousness, it *confirms* the righteousness that came by faith... The uncircumcised Gentiles didn't have the sign, but they had the substance - **faith**. And faith made them right with God.

Abraham became the father of believing Gentiles and believing Jews. The issue that saved both was not religious practices, like circumcision, but faith. Verse 12, “And the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

Here's another argument for righteousness by grace through faith. Such righteousness preceded the Law.

Abraham was declared righteous 500 years before the Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Obviously, righteousness comes apart from the Law. God never intended the Jews to become right with Him by keeping rules and regulations. The Law exposed sin. It didn't save. Salvation has always been by faith!

Verse 14, “For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect.”

The Law and the Promise are mutually exclusive.

Something can't be *purchased* and *free* at the same time. One nullifies the other. You can't receive salvation through the work of Christ **and** your own good works.

“Because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.” As we discussed in Chapter 3, the Law's purpose wasn't to save us.

It was to **expose our sin**. Without a standard we wouldn't have known we were in violation. You don't know you're speeding, if the speed limit isn't posted.

Paul is saying the Law doesn't save... “Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace...”

It's sad the folks I talk to that lack confidence in their relationship with God? “Do you know God loves you?” “I guess so.” “Are your sins forgiven?” “I hope so.” “Are you going to heaven when you die?” “I think so.”

But with God's *grace* there should be no *guesswork*.

You find a certainty when your relationship with God depends on *God's promise* not *your own performance*.

Ever play “Chutes and Ladders” with the kids?

Climb and climb the ladder - get nearer and nearer the prize - *but you're always thinking one wrong spin and it's down the chute...* And this is how some people try to live the Christian life. They're confident as long as they're doing good and

climbing higher, but suddenly *spin into sin* and they feel as if it's down the chute.

Grace assures us that even when we spin into trouble we don't lose our place on the board. Jesus died so we could get another spin and another...

Verse 16, “So that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, “*I have made you a father of many nations*”)” Whether you're a law-abiding Jew, or a law-ignorant Gentile the blessings of God are received the same way - by the promise of grace.

Let's follow in Abraham's footsteps and have faith!

But the question arises, “**what is real faith?**” Recall James 2:19 tells us, “**even the demons believe - and tremble!**” To illustrate real faith Paul again points to Abraham. Abraham not only teaches us our need for faith, but he illustrates what real faith looks like.

In verse 17 we see the **preoccupation of his faith.**

In verses 18-21 the **application of his faith.**

And in verses 22-25 the **ramification of his faith.**

First, the **preoccupation of his faith.** Verse 17, “**In the presence of Him whom he believed - God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did...**” Abraham believed in an all-mighty God - *Who brings something out of nothing.*

Say you took an art class and you're told to sculpt a statue - but no one is issued any molding clay. You would question the teacher's sanity. "Hey, something doesn't come out of nothing" - *but it can with God!*

When God created the universe He brought *thin air* out of *thin air!* He created the world "ex nihilo" - that's the Latin word for "*out of nothing.*"

Even today, when hope is depleted... *when there's no spark left in a marriage... or a kid seems to be a lost cause... or when the business is about to go under...* our God is still able to bring something out of nothing!

And God also specializes in resurrecting the dead. Paul says of God "*who gives life to the dead...*" *dead people, but also dead dreams and dead relationships.*

Long before the resurrection of Jesus - as Abraham and Isaac started up the mountain, Abraham told his servant, "We will come back." Not just "I" but "WE."

Isaac was heir to God's promise. And I'm sure Abraham was puzzled that He wanted him to sacrifice the fulfillment of His promises. Abraham rationalized it by believing God was able to raise Isaac from death.

I heard of an old seminary professor who had a sure-fire way to predict the success of his pastors-in-training. All he had to do was listen to a single sermon.

He said, "I come to hear if they are *big-goddess or little-goddess.* Some men have a god who can't do miracles, hasn't spoken infallibly, and doesn't intervene for his people. They have a little god. I call them little-goddess. But there are other

men who have a great God. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He shows Himself strong on behalf of them who fear Him. These men are big-godders and God will bless their ministry.” The patriarch Abraham was a big-godder and his BIG GOD responded to his faith!

We all have faith... You get sick and go to a doctor who's name you can't pronounce... His diplomas you don't verify... He writes a prescription you can't read...

It's filled by a pharmacist you've never met... He measures out a chemical compound you don't understand... from a container you can't see... puts it in bottle you can't open... *and yet you take it, and expect to get well - **that's faith!*** We all have faith...

The only question is the object of our faith.

Is your faith in God or is it in you? In Mark 11:22 Jesus told His disciples, "Have faith in God."

Now look at the **application of Abraham's faith**. Verse 18, "Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, *“So shall your descendants be.”*

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the oldest woman to give birth to a baby was from Spain. It was by in vitro fertilization. The mother was 66 years old. But the Bible tells us the record actually belongs to Abraham's wife, "Sarah." Abraham impregnated Sarah at the incredibly old age of 90.

Long past menopause - her reproductive chances *hopeless* - Sarah and Abe *hoped in God!* Her friends said, "forget it."

Her doctors scoffed, “impossible.” The only urging the couple had was a word from God. God made a promise and they refused to give up on God.

Abraham and Sarah knew the facts. Faith doesn't deny the facts! It just goes beyond facts. It outreaches logic. When God promises contrary to the facts, faith stops listening to reason and listens only to God!

Perhaps there's a sin you can't shake - or a situation that seem impossible - or you're in a relationship that's on the rocks - everyone is telling you to *give up*. Stop listening to what everyone is saying and trust in God.

Hold on to God's promise. In His time He will fulfill it.

Verse 19, “**And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about 100 years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.**” Abraham kept acting on God's promise.

Even though he was 100 and Sarah 90 they kept locking the bedroom door at night. Sarah, 45 years past menopause, took her temperature every morning!

Imagine the clerk at Baby Warehouse when they picked out a crib... And what a weird baby shower Sarah must've had! Of all the ladies present only Sarah really believed she was really going to have a baby.

Understand, true faith isn't *passive*, it's *aggressive*.

Real faith is faith to the extent that I'm willing to act on what I believe. If faith prays for rain it walks out with an umbrella!... If it asks God for a job, it leaves the house in work clothes...

Genuine faith sees things - not as they are - but as God promises to make them.

That's why even if you don't feel like praying, or you're not in the mood to read your Bible, or you're too tired to act on what God is asking... do it anyway.

God can bring fruit from your barrenness. He'll resurrect the right feelings - if you trust Him. Believe God will make good on His promises - even if right now your playpen is empty. When God creates He takes nothing and makes something beautiful! "Faith is the bird that sings to greet the dawn while it is still dark."

Verse 20, "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

Between the giving and the receiving of Abraham's promise 25 years elapsed, yet he refused to waver.

Often, the longer the wait, the harder it is to remain confident. The more time that transpires, the more opportunity there is for doubts to creep in.

This is why the opposing football team tries to "ice" the kicker. Just before the field goal attempt they'll call time out. They want the kicker to have time to think about the importance of his attempt. If the slightest doubt slips in, he can slip up and miss it wide right.

Well, Abraham refused to get "iced." His faith never wavered! He was "fully convinced" that God was faithful. He

even gave “*glory to God*” in advance. He started the high-fives before he even teed up the ball.

Which brings us to the **ramifications of his faith**...

Verse 22, “*And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Here is the beauty of the Gospel. Goodness is credited to people who don’t deserve it.

As with Abraham, God gives us *the righteousness we lack*, in exchange for *the faith that we show*.

Of course, if you’ve read the OT you have a problem.

Abraham was not always a man of faith. The name “**Hagar**” isn't just a pair of slacks! There was a slave girl named “**Ha-gar,**” that Sarah sent into the tent as her proxy to have Abraham’s baby? Hagar went in a *maid* and came out a *mom!* **Don't forget that story!**

Obviously, faith doesn’t have to be perfect in order to be affective. God forgives even our lapses in faith.

Justification means God treats me *just-as-if-I'd never sinned, even when I do.* All the OT saints failed, and were flawed, but not once is an OT sin re-hashed in the NT. Evidently, **when God forgives He forgets!**

Verse 23, “*Now it was not written for (Abraham’s) sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us.*”

With Abraham and David God set a precedent. He forgives sin and imputes goodness by faith not works.

And “*It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our*”

justification.” On the cross Jesus paid for our sins and was raised to justify us by His grace.

Chapter 5, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” This is a wonderful verse. If you’re a believer in Jesus here is the status you’ve received...

You’re *“justified”* - God treats you as if you never sin even when you do. *And justification comes with perks..*

You have *“peace with God”* and *“access to God”* and *“joy in God”* and the *“hope of God.”* We’re standing in grace now, and we’ll be rejoicing in glory for all eternity.

In fact, His grace is at work in us now to perfect us in our trials... Verse 3, *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation...”*

The Greek word translated *“tribulation”* is *“thilipsis.”* It means *“to crush or squeeze under pressure.”*

At times God squeezes us. He engineers pressure-packed circumstances to break us and shape us. And this is vital - when squeezed don’t try to escape...

“knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” If you want to build into your life endurance, godly character, optimism; then don’t hop out of the pressure-cooker.

God is cooking up something good in you!

Verse 5, “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Another perk of justification is *the love of God poured into our hearts.*

God **sets out** His love in the pages of His Word, but He **pours out** His love by His Spirit. It’s the Holy Spirit that enables us to perceive and grasp God’s love.

And speaking of God’s love, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Amazing!

Once, a little boy was asked to donate blood to his sick sister. He didn't understand the procedure, but he loved his sis and would do anything for her. So, when the needle was removed from his arm the little guy said to the nurse, "Tell me, when am I going to croak?"

The little boy had agreed to the transfusion thinking it would cost him his very life!... Yet his brave and selfless act still falls short of the degree Jesus love us.

As Paul says it’s one thing to die for someone you admire, and love, and who loves you. It’s an altogether different issue to lay down your life for an enemy!

Notice the words in these verses... *when did God fall in love with you?* When you were *"without strength," "ungodly," "sinners,"* in verse 10 even *"enemies."*

Before you even gave a rip about God - God demonstrated His love for you in an extreme way.

Before you showed God the first inkling you'd ever serve Him, or follow Him, or love Him - He went out on a limb - *a limb called the cross* - to prove He loved you!

God, didn't wait until you were lovable to start loving you. Even at your ugliest and dirtiest and meanest He was willing to take you "*as is*" because of Jesus.

While we were still sinners - Jesus died in our place.

On April 6, 32 AD, God made a scene. He made a point for earth and heaven to see. He demonstrated or proved for all time just how much He loves us... God **sets out** His love in His Word. He **pours out** His love by His Spirit. And He **works out** His love on the cross.

Verse 9, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

An interesting name for God appears in Ezekiel 7:9, "**Jehovah-naka**" (nawkaw') or "**the Lord who strikes.**"

God is no pacifist. One day in His wrath God will punish this wicked world with a sharp sword! God is *the Lord-who-strikes*, but He doesn't want to strike you. He loves you, so in your place He struck His own Son.

Thirty-nine times His back was *slashed* with a whip. His brow *pricked* with prickly thorns. His hands and feet

perforated with spikes. His side *pierced* and heart *punctured* by a spear. **And I hope by now you get the point!** Jesus was struck so you wouldn't have to be.

The *God-who-strikes* became the *God-who-was-stricken*. Jesus died on a Roman cross to save you from the wrath to come and to reconcile you to God.

Tennyson once wrote of Roman religion "**The gods are hard to reconcile.**" The Roman idols were *gods with a grudge*. They had to be won over. Their anger and reluctance had to be overcome. But the cross wasn't man's effort to appease an angry God. It was God's plan to reconcile us. God took the initiative. He went out of His way to have a relationship with us.

Verse 11, "**And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**"

The lost world approaches life with their fingers crossed - they hope luck is on their side. But Christians approach life with our eyes fixed on the cross!

God demonstrated His love toward us. He made a scene on the cross. He spoke in an undeniable way. So *why do we doubt Him?* What more could God do to better say He loves us, than what He's already done!

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..." It's amazing how the actions of one man can change the destiny of millions.

On August 6, 1945 US President Harry Truman authorized the dropping of an atomic bomb on the Japanese island of Hiroshima. On that day every building within 4.7 miles of its impact was obliterated.

On Hiroshima 90,000 people died instantly from the blast - 320,000 people died from the fallout. This one event changed the world. It ushered in the nuclear era.

But in our text we're dealing with another, "*Atom bomb*" - an *A-d-a-m bomb*. For in the Garden of Eden, the first man, *Adam, bombed!* He sinned. He ate the forbidden fruit, and launched a rebellion against God.

And this Adam bomb is responsible for far more deaths than Truman's. It brought death to all humanity.

Each of the 100 billion humans who've lived since time began have been impacted by Adam's bomb!

Paul was a rabbi by training and here he employs rabbinical logic to make his point. His thinking is distinctively Jewish. For Hebrews held the concept of "*Racial Solidarity*" or "*Federal Headship*" - the idea that one person can act on behalf of a whole nation.

Recall the Philistine challenge - rather than waste the lives of thousands of soldiers why not both sides send a champion to fight on behalf of their nation. It ended up to be David versus Goliath. But it illustrates how the ancient Hebrews had a "*one for all*" mentality.

And this is Paul's rationale here. One person, a designated representative, can act by proxy for a whole race of people. Thus, when Adam sinned, as the father of the human race, he

acted on behalf of his descendants - his sin was passed down to his progeny.

Here's what's happened when Adam bombed... the entire human gene pool was contaminated. Thus, you and I are born with tainted blood. It's poisoned with sin.

You've heard the expression "One bad apple spoils the whole bunch." That's more true than you know.

Adam ate an apple, and became a bad apple. The Bible teaches that every human is born with a sin nature. It's said, "we aren't sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners." We inherit sin from Adam.

Ephesians 2:3 puts it we "we are by nature children of wrath." Mom, dad, I hate to break it to you, but that cute, precious, adorable little baby you tuck into bed at night is in reality a diabolical sinner incognito.

Ever bit into an apple and discovered a worm inside?

There's no hole in the skin, and you wonder, "how in the world did the worm get in there?" What happens is an egg is laid in the apple blossom, and when the worm hatches it finds itself on the inside of the apple.

It has to eat its way out! *And this is how sin works.*

It begins inside us - we're born with sin in our heart - and eats its way out into our attitudes and actions.

It's interesting, that an entire football team can get penalized five yards when one man jumps offside.

Well, likewise because of Adam's bomb the whole world is born into sin and subject to death. "In a sense our *death warrant* is written into our *birth certificate*."

Verse 13, (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come...) Follow Paul's logic... For 2600 years - that is from Adam to Moses - mankind sinned, but because the law had not been given, God didn't hold mankind accountable for his sin. *Yet did people still die?* Yes, a death sentence was still being applied and carried out.

All mankind was suffering for the sin that was inherited from Adam. Even though we weren't guilty of Adam's specific sin, we still received his punishment.

I know this sounds unfair to modern-day Americans, but before we accuse God of unethical treatment there're a couple of points you should consider...

First, what makes you think you could've done better than Adam? I got a \$100 bill for any honest person who can go a week without committing a sin - no lust, no pride, no selfishness - a C-note for one sinless week!

When the United States competes in an international track meet we send our fastest people. If we lose I don't grumble that I wasn't given a chance to race.

I know the runners that represented our nation were our best - *faster than me* - thus, if they lost, I lost too!

This is how we should feel about Adam. He was God's special creation. Adam was an unmarried man. He had no hurts or hang-ups. He carried no baggage. If anyone could've lived a sinless life it was Adam. He was the best humanity had to offer, yet he still bombed.

And here's the second reason we shouldn't buck Paul's logic... Verse 15, "But the free gift *is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*"

If *sin* enters the world through one man's *rebellion*, then *salvation* can enter by one man's *righteousness*.

Think of it like this, if you insist on standing on your own two feet - *you think it's unfair be to be burdened with someone else's sin* - then God will let you attempt your own sinless life! But if you fail, you're now saddled with your own sin, and it's up to you to save yourself.

But in God's wisdom, since sin was passed on by *one man*, so salvation can also be received from *one man*. Today, forgiveness is passed to us by Jesus!

Verse 16, "And the gift *is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to*

all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." Through the power of one, Adam, sin reigns in the world, but now through the power of one, Jesus, grace reigns in us.

And note the contrasts in these verses....

Adam brought condemnation, Jesus justification...

In Adam we're bound-up, in Jesus grace abounds...

In Adam we receive a sentence of sin, in Jesus we receive a sinless status...

In Adam there is death, in Christ there is life.

John Calvin once wrote "Christ is much more powerful to save, than Adam was to destroy." The *damage* done by Adam's sin is more than made up for by the *deliverance* that comes through the obedience of Jesus. Adam's bomb is not nearly as potent as the explosion of grace that comes through our Lord!

Chapter 5 ends, "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the Greek it reads, "where sin abounds, grace super-abounds."

Sin can't cause a breach, grace cannot bridge.

I love how the Phillips translation render verses 20-21, "Though sin is shown to be wide and deep, thank God His grace is wider and deeper still!"

Mel Trotter Ministries has been helping the homeless on the streets of America's cities for over a century.

In the early 1900s Mel Trotter was a hopeless alcoholic living in Chicago. When his little boy lay in his casket Trotter stole the shoes off his corpse to buy some cheap wine. Mel's drinking became so bad he grew suicidal. He was on his way to drown himself when he walked into the Pacific Gardens Rescue Mission, and heard a man testify of the saving grace of Jesus. Mel met the Lord and was never the same.

He was so thoroughly transformed that eight years later he was running a rescue missions in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over the course of his lifetime Mel Trotter started 68 rescue mission across the country.

Though sin had abounded in Mel's life, grace abounded much more. Sin can get a vice-grip in our lives, but grace is stronger! God's ability to forgive, and lift, and save is mightier, than our ability to mess up!