

# Studies in Romans-04

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon explores the theme of justification by faith, highlighting Abraham's example and the blessings that come through Christ's resurrection.*

**Duration:** 32:54

**Scripture:** Romans 5:6-10, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:20-21

**Topics:** "Studies"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the unique and unparalleled act of divine love demonstrated by God. He explains that the average person would not willingly die for someone unworthy or morally upright but lacking affection. However, God's love is completely otherworldly, as He sent His beloved Son to die for us while we were still sinners. The preacher highlights the significance of Christ's death and resurrection, emphasizing that through His blood, we are justified and reconciled to God, and through His resurrection, we are delivered from wrath and preserved by His life. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection in procuring our justification.

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## Transcript

We have now come to chapter 4 verse 18 in the epistle to the Romans. In the preceding verses of this chapter the Apostle has emphasized that the promise came to Abraham by faith, not by law, that it might be by grace, and that it might be sure through all the seed. That leads quite naturally to a consideration of the patriarch's faith in the God of resurrection.

God promised Abraham posterity as numerous as the stars and the sand. Humanly speaking the chances were all but hopeless, but against human hope Abraham believed in hope that he would be the father of many nations. Just as God had said in Genesis 15 5, so shall thy seed be.

Verse 19, when the promise of a great posterity was first made to Abraham he was 75 years old. Genesis 12 verses 2 through 4. At that time he was still physically able to become a father because after that he begat Ishmael, Genesis 16 16. But in this verse Paul is speaking about the time when Abraham was about a hundred years old and the promise was renewed.

Genesis 17 15 through 17. By now the possibility of creating new life apart from the miraculous power of God had vanished. However God had promised him a son and Abraham laughed at impossibilities.

Without being weakened in faith he considered his own body and his conclusion was as good as dead. He considered Sarah's womb and his conclusion was dead also. He made a realistic appraisal of the situation and concluded that humanly speaking it was utterly hopeless.

We should pause here to mention that some versions such as the King James say he considered not his own body now dead, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb. Though the meaning here is exactly opposite it still makes good sense. Either he considered it and still believed or he considered it not, that is he didn't even take it into serious consideration.

Verse 20, the apparent impossibility of the promises ever being fulfilled didn't stagger him. God had said it, Abraham believed it, that settled it. As far as the patriarch was concerned there was only one impossibility, that was for God to lie.

He did not let a shadow of doubt cross his mind, that would have been rank unbelief. So his faith was strong and vibrant. He gave glory to God, honoring him as the one who could be depended on to fulfill his promise in defiance of all the laws of chance or probability.

Verse 21, he did not know how God would fulfill his word but that was incidental. He knew God and had every confidence that God was fully able to do what he had promised. In one way it was wonderful faith but in another it was the most reasonable thing to do because God's word is the surest thing in the universe and Abraham was not taking any chance in believing it.

Verse 22, God was pleased to find a man who took him at his word, he always is. And so he credited righteousness to Abraham's account. Where once there had been a balance of sin and guilt, now there was nothing but a righteous standing before God.

Abraham had been delivered from condemnation and justified by a holy God through faith. Verse 23, the historical narrative of his justification by faith was not written for his sake alone. There was a sense of course in which it was written for his sake, a permanent record of his acquittal and of his being granted a perfect standing before God.

But verse 24 goes on to say that it was written for our benefit too. Our faith is likewise reckoned for righteousness when we believe on God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. The only difference is this, Abraham believed that God would give life to the dead, that is to his own weak body and Sarah's barren womb.

We believe that God has given life to the dead by raising the Lord Jesus. C.H. Macintosh says, Abraham was called to believe in a promise whereas we are privileged to believe in an accomplished fact. He was called to look forward to something which was to be done.

We look back on something that is done, even an accomplished redemption, attested by the fact of a risen and glorified Savior at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Verse 25, the Lord Jesus was delivered up on account of our offenses and was raised to procure our justification. By the shedding of his precious blood he paid the penalty that our sins deserved and put them away forever.

God was so perfectly and completely satisfied with the work of the Lord that he raised him from the dead. There could have been no justification if he had not risen. In that case his death would have been no different from that of other men.

But the risen Redeemer tells us that the work is finished and that God is infinitely satisfied. Now we come to chapter 5, and here the Apostle carries his case for justification. He carries it forward another step by taking up the question, what are the practical benefits of justification in the believer's life? In other words, does it really work? His answer is a resounding yes, as he enumerates seven major blessings that every believer possesses.

These blessings flow to the believer through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the mediator between God and man, and all God's gifts are channeled through him. Verse 1, the first great benefit enjoyed by those of us who have been justified by faith is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The war is over. Hostilities have ceased. Through the work of the Lord Jesus all causes of enmity between our souls and God have been removed.

We have been changed from foes to friends by a miracle of grace. Verse 2, we also enjoy access into an indescribable position of favor with God. We are accepted in a beloved one, therefore we are as near to God and as dear to God as his own beloved son.

The Father extends the golden scepter to us and welcomes us as sons, not strangers. This grace or standing in favor embraces every aspect of our position before God, a position that is as perfect as Christ's, because we are in him. As if that were not enough, we have a third wonderful benefit.

We exult in hope of the glory of God. This means that we look forward to the time when we will not only gaze upon the splendor of God, but we will ourselves be manifested in glory. See John 17, verse 22, and Colossians chapter 3, verse 4. We cannot comprehend the full significance of that hope down here, nor will we ever get over the wonder of it throughout all eternity.

Verse 3, the fourth blessing that flows from justification is that we rejoice in our tribulations, not so much in their present discomfort as in their eventual results. See Hebrews chapter 12, verse 11. It's one of the delightful paradoxes of the Christian faith that joy can coexist with affliction.

The opposite of joy is sin, not suffering. One of the great benefits of tribulation is that it produces endurance or steadfastness. We could never develop endurance if our lives were trouble-free.

Wine that is left undisturbed develops neither taste nor aroma, but when it is emptied from vessel to vessel, it wins approval, as we see in Jeremiah chapter 48 and verse 11. Verse 4, and that is what is meant by the statement that endurance works experience, or better, approvedness. When God sees us bearing up under our trials and looking to him to work out his purposes through them, he awards us his good endurance seal of approval.

We have been tested and approved by the great underwriter himself, and this sense of his approval fills us with hope. We know he is working in our lives, developing our character. This gives us confidence that having begun a good work in us, he will see it through to completion.

Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. Verse 5. This hope of salvation doesn't make us ashamed now, and never will. We will never be disappointed or find that we rested on a false confidence. We are assured that our hope will be fulfilled, because God's love has been shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us the moment we believe.

The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the following proofs of God's eternal love to us, and by these we are assured that Christ will see us safely home to heaven. Verse 6. In verses 6 through 20, Paul argues from the lesser to the greater. His logic is that if God's love went out to us when we were his ungodly enemies, will he not much more preserve us now that we belong to him? This brings us to the fifth benefit of our justification, namely, we are eternally secure in Christ.

In developing the theme, the Apostle introduces five much mores. The much more of deliverance from wrath, verse 9. The much more of preservation by his resurrection life, verse 10. The much more of the gift of grace, verse 15.

The much more of the believer's reign in life, verse 17. The much more of abounding grace, verse 20. In verses 6, 7, and 8, Paul emphasizes what we were, that is, without strength, ungodly sinners, when Christ died for us.

In verses 9 and 10, he emphasizes what we are now, that is, justified by Christ's blood, reconciled by his death, and the resulting certainty of what the Savior will do for us, that is, deliver us from wrath, preserve us by his life. First then, we are reminded that we were weak, helpless, without strength, unable to save ourselves, when at the predetermined time, the Lord Jesus visited our planet and, as man, died for men. And not for good men, as some might suppose, he died for the ungodly.

There was no virtue, no excellence in us to commend us to God. We were utterly unworthy, but he died for us just the same. Verse 7. This act of divine love was unique and unparalleled by anything in human experience.

The average man's life is precious to him, and he does not throw it away for unworthy causes. He wouldn't die for a drunkard, for instance, or an adulterer, or a murderer. He wouldn't even die for a righteous person, that is, one who is morally upright, but coldly calculating and lacking in affection and kindness.

Some would consider dying for a good man who goes beyond the letter of the law in words and deeds of mercy, but even then only in extreme cases. Verse 8. The love of God is completely otherworldly. He demonstrated his marvelous love to us by sending his beloved son to die for us while we were sinners.

If we ask why he did it, we must look to the answer in the sovereign will of God himself. There was no good in us to call for such love. Verse 9. Now a new set of conditions exists.

We are no longer guilty sinners. At the enormous cost of the Savior's blood shed for us at Calvary, we have been counted righteous by God. Since he went to such tremendous cost to justify us when we were sinners, will he not much more save us from wrath through Christ? If he has already paid the greatest price to bring us into his favor, is it likely that he will permit us to perish at last? Or, in verse 10, think of it this way.

It was when we were enemies that we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. We were hostile toward the Lord and quite content to have it so. Left to ourselves, we felt no need of being reconciled to him.

Think of it. Enemies of God. God did not share our nonchalance in the matter.

He intervened in a display of pure grace. The substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus removed the cause of hostility toward God, namely our sin, and by faith in Christ we have been reconciled to God. If God

purchased our reconciliation so dearly, will he ever let us go? If we were reconciled through the death of his son, which is a symbol of utter weakness, shall we not be preserved to the end by the present life of Christ at the right hand of God, a life of infinite power? If his death had such power to save us, how much more will his life have power to keep us? So we can say with J. Denham Smith, and this I shall find, for such is his mind, he'll not be in glory and leave us behind.

Verse 11. And now we come to the sixth benefit of justification, namely, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We not only rejoice in his gifts, but in the giver himself.

Before we were saved, we found our joys elsewhere. Now we exult whenever we remember him and are sad only when we forget him. What has produced this marvelous change that we can now joy in God? It is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like all our other blessings, this joy comes to us through him. The seventh benefit enjoyed by the justified is found in the words, we have now received the reconciliation. Not the atonement, as in the authorized version, but the reconciliation.

Atonement itself is an Old Testament word. The New Testament equivalent, propitiation, is the work of Christ by which God can show mercy to believing sinners. Reconciliation refers to the establishment of harmony between man and God through the sacrificial work of the Savior.

God did not need to be reconciled, but man did because he was at enmity with God. Verse 12. The rest of the chapter serves as a bridge between the first part of the letter and the next three chapters.

It is linked with the first part by picking up the subjects of condemnation through Adam and justification through Christ, and by showing that the work of Christ far outweighs in blessing what the work of Adam did in misery and loss. It's linked with chapters six through eight by moving from justification to sanctification and from acts of sin to sin in the nature. Adam is portrayed in these verses as federal head or representative of all those who are in the old creation.

Christ is presented as federal head of all those who are in the new creation. The federal head acts for all those who are under him. When the president, for instance, signs a bill into law, he is acting for all the citizens of the country.

Or, to change the illustration, when a father contracts enormous debts that he cannot pay, his children are born into a state of indebtedness. They share the consequences of his irresponsibility. That's what happened in Adam's case.

As a result of his sin, death entered into the world. Death became the common lot of all Adam's descendants because they had all sinned in him. It's true that they all committed individual acts of sin as well, but that's not the thought here.

Paul's point is that Adam's sin was a representative act and all his posterity are reckoned as having sinned in him. Someone might object that it was Eve, not Adam, who committed the first sin on earth. That's true, but Adam was the first to be created and headship was given to him.

So he is seen as acting for all his descendants. When the Apostle says here in verse 12 that death passed upon all men, he's referring to physical death, even though Adam's sin brought spiritual death as well. The next two verses show that it is physical death that is in view.

When we come to this passage of Scripture, certain questions inevitably arise. Is it fair that Adam's posterity should be constituted sinners just because he sinned? Does God condemn men for being born sinners or only for those sins which they have actually committed? If men are born with a sinful nature and if therefore they sin because they're born sinners, how can God hold them responsible for what they do? Bible scholars have wrestled with these and a host of similar problems and have come up with a surprising variety of conclusions. However, there are certain facts that we can be sure of.

First, the Bible does teach that all men are sinners both by nature and by practice. Everyone born of human parents inherits Adam's sin and also sins by his own deliberate choice. Second, we know that the wages of sin is death, both physical death and eternal separation from God.

But no one has to pay the penalty of sin. That's the important point. At enormous cost, God sent his son to die as a substitute for sinners.

Salvation from sin and its wages is offered as a free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So ultimately man is not condemned because he was born a sinner or even because he sinned voluntarily, but because he rejected the provision which God made for his salvation. But someone will ask, what about those who've never heard the gospel? This question is answered in part at least in chapter 1. Beyond that we can rest in the assurance that the judge of all the earth will do what is right.

Genesis 18:25. He will never act unjustly or unfairly. All his decisions are based on equity and righteousness. Although certain situations pose problems to our dim sight, they are not problems to him.

When the last case has been heard and the doors of the courtroom swing shut, no one will have a legitimate basis for appealing the verdict. Verse 13. Paul will now demonstrate that Adam's sin affected the whole race.

He first points out that sin was in the world during the period from Adam to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, but during that time there was no clearly revealed law of God. Adam had received a clear commandment from the Lord. The law was a distinct revelation of divine law.

But in the intervening period, men did not have a legal code from God. Therefore, although there was sin during that time, there was no transgression, because transgression is the violation of a known law. And sin is not imputed as transgression when there is no law forbidding it.

Verse 14. In spite of this fact, death did not take a holiday during the age when there was no law. With the single exception of Enoch, death held sway over all mankind.

You could not say that those people died because they had transgressed a clear command of God as Adam did. Why then did they die? The answer is implied. They died because they had sinned in Adam.

If this seems unfair, let us remember that this has nothing to do with the subject of salvation. All those who put their faith in the Lord were saved eternally. But they died just the same, and the reason they died was the sin of their federal head, Adam.

In his role as federal head, Adam was a type of him who was to come, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the succeeding verses, Paul will develop the subject of these two federal heads, but more by contrast than by similarity. He will show that in Christ, the sons of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost.

Verse 15, the first contrast is between the trespass of Adam and the free gift of Christ. By the trespass of the first man, the many died. The many here refers, of course, to Adam's descendants.

Death here may include spiritual as well as physical death. The free gift abounds much more unto the many. The free gift is a marvelous manifestation of the grace of God abounding to a race of sinners.

It is also made possible by the grace of the one man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was amazing grace on his part to die for rebellious creatures. Through his sacrificial death, the gift of eternal life is offered to the many, that is, to all who become members of the new creation of which Christ is the federal head.

Verse 16, there's another important contrast between Adam's sin and Christ's gift. In Adam's case, one sin brought the sentence, condemned to die. But in Christ's case, the gift came in spite of not one but many trespasses and brought the verdict, reckoned absolutely righteous in the sight of God.

Verse 17, by the one trespass of one man, death reigned as a cruel tyrant. But by the gracious gift of righteousness, a gift of overflowing grace, all believers reign in life through the Lord Jesus. What grace is this? We are not only delivered from death reigning as a tyrant over us, we ourselves reign as kings enjoying life now and eternally.

Do we really apprehend this or appreciate it? Do we live as the royalty of heaven or do we grubble among the muckheaps of this world? Verse 18, the unrighteous act of Adam brought condemnation to all men. The righteous act of the Savior at Calvary brought justification of life to all. The expression justification of life means justification which results in life.

The two alls in this verse do not refer to the same people. The first all means all who are in Adam. The second means all who are in Christ.

This is clear from the clause in the preceding verse, quote, they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, quote, the gift must be received by faith. Only those who trust the Lord receive justification of life. Verse 19, just as by Adam's disobedience to God's command many were made sinners, so by Christ's obedience to the Father's will the many who trust him are declared righteous.

Christ's obedience led him to the cross as our sin bearer. It's futile for universalists to use these verses to prove that all men will eventually be saved. The passage deals with two federal headships and it is clear that just as Adam's sin affects those who are in him, so Christ's righteous act benefits only those who are in him.

Those words in him are the key. Verse 20, what Paul has been saying would come as a jolt to the Jewish objector who felt that everything revolved around the law. Now this objector learns that sin and salvation center not in the law, but in two federal heads.

That being the case, he was the law given. The Apostle answers, the law came in by the way so that the offense might abound. The law did not originate sin, but it reveals sin as an offense against God.

It did not save from sin, but revealed sin in all its awful character. But God's grace proves to be greater than all man's sin. Where sin abounds, God's grace at Calvary abounds more exceedingly.

Verse 21, now that the reign of sin inflicting death on all men has been ended, grace reigns in righteousness, giving eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Notice that grace reigns in righteousness.

All the demands of God's holiness have been met.

The penalty of the law has been paid. So God can now grant eternal life to all who come, pleading the merits of Christ their substitute. Perhaps we have in these verses a partial answer to the familiar question, why did God allow sin to enter? The answer is that God has received more glory and man has received more blessings through Christ's sacrifice than if sin had never entered.

We are better off in Christ than we ever could have been in an unfallen Adam. If Adam had never sinned, he was assured of continued life on earth in the Garden of Eden, but he had no prospect of becoming a child of God, an heir of God, or a joint heir with Jesus Christ. He had no promise of a home in heaven or of being with Christ and like him forever.

These blessings come only through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus.

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