

Romans – Part 4

Romans 5:1-21

Old Adam and New Adam, or Adam vs. Jesus.

Faith and peace, fortitude and purity.

Love.

Hope.

Holiness.



West Valley Church
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Romans: Faith, Family, Fullness Part Four: Romans 5¹

We're on the fourth Sunday of our summer-long series in one of the most theologically comprehensive letters in the Bible – Romans – and it's a big one. We'll be taking a look at it over these summer Sundays, so buckle up, bring your journals, and take good notes. As I said, we're already four Sundays into this, so there's no turning back now!

Romans is one of the longest and most significant things ever written by the Apostle Paul. It's been called Paul's master class in theology, Paul's magnum opus, and Paul's gospel, and it's important that we understand it.

As you know, I've been out the last two weeks in Indiana and Ohio, so I want to thank Pastor Casey for doing such a great job covering some significant territory for us, taking us through chapters two, three, and four over the last two Sundays. He had to navigate some dicey – and slicey – issues, if you were here, you know what that means. I really didn't mean to leave those awkward passages for him – but it's good for him! That's just how the schedule worked out with me being gone.

But let me quickly review the last three Sundays so far:

Chapters 1-4 of Romans tell us about the Gospel – I should stop there and not assume you know what the Gospel is. The Gospel is a word that means “Good News,” and the Good News – actually the best news of all – is that God loves us so much that he came into our sin-filled world through the person of his one and only Son, Jesus the Christ, who never sinned and taught us and showed us his love. Then he was crucified on a Roman cross in our place, suffering for us and taking the consequences of our sin (when he didn't have any sin of his own), he died, was buried for three days, and rose from the dead, overcoming the power of sin and death so that we could be forgiven, free from sin, and free to live holy lives. The Good News isn't a story you read in the news or a clip you watch on Tic-Toc; the Good News describes the actions of a loving God who suffered for us and with us in order to save us.

So chapters 1-4 lay the groundwork that the Gospel reveals God's righteousness – a righteousness that shows God's standard for us; a standard that we can never live up to. We can never be good enough, and we can't save ourselves or change our sin. So our

¹ Resources:

NT Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004)

William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, 3rd ed. fully rev. & updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002)

William M. Greathouse and George Lyons, *Romans 1-8: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2008)

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Fourth American Edition. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1818)

Clarence L. Bence, *Romans: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1996)

John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016)

ability to be saved or be righteous can only come by faith – by accepting the Good News of what God has done for us in Jesus. When we accept that, it is called atonement – our sins have been atoned for. Think of it this way: atonement means we are now “at-one-ment” with God – able to be in a relationship with him. Then we are justified by God. Think of it this way: justified means God considers us just-as-if we never sinned. Now, that could never happen because of our own goodness or our own efforts or because we’ve obeyed certain laws or because we are born into a certain ethnicity. Paul pointed out that the Jews’ hero, the father of their religion, wasn’t made right with God because he was able to obey God’s righteous requirements, but because he believed God’s promises. The Jews thought they were righteous because they were born Jews and because they obeyed certain ritual rules. Let me explain what that kind of reasoning is like: if you sit in the garage and put tires on your feet, does that make you a car? If you put seasoning on yourself and sit on the grill does that make you a steak? Well, sort of, I guess. But you get the point. In the same way, you are not a Christian because you were born into a Christian family; no amount of ethnic pedigree or ethical behavior can remove the guilt of our sin; only God can do that, and only God has done that for us. We either accept the Good News in faith, or we don’t. Period. That’s the *only way* we can be in God’s family. But when you do, you are a brand new person in a brand new family with a brand new way of living. So, all of *that* sets the stage for chapter five. Man, is it good news!

Would you allow me to read chapter five to us? I want us to see it but also hear what it says, because as Paul says later, faith comes by *hearing* God’s Word. So please stand with me to honor God’s Word, but also to be in a posture of listening attention. This is God’s Word – not mine or anyone else’s. And as I read, please listen with ears of faith, okay? Now, given all that Paul said in chapters 1-4, this is what he’s leading us to:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned—To be sure, sin

was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the *(sin)* (*the translation says "trespass, but it also means "sin," which is less confusing*). For if the many died by the *(sin)* of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many *(sins)* and brought justification. For if, by the *(sin)* of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one *(sin)* resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the *(sin)* might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
(Romans 5:1-21, niv)

Thank you! You can be seated. I saw some of us, our eyes were glazing over – mine too! I think you can see why this is such a theological masterpiece, because there's so much in it that it can be easy to get sort of lost in it. So if you would, allow me to try to unpack this for us. Romans 5 is not about *how* we are put right with God. It is about what happens *when* we are put right with God; it is about the consequences of justification. When that happens in our lives, there is tangible evidence and results. Things like peace, and grace, and hope. They are described as abstract nouns that express concrete realities.

So first let's be sure to see the...

Old Adam and New Adam, or Adam vs. Jesus.

This is not some sort of cosmic clash of the titans – as if they are facing off in the octagon or something. Since the Jewish Christians in Rome want to talk about lineage (remember they were big on their ethnic lineage from Abraham), Paul takes them all the way back to our original forefather, Adam. We are *all* of his race, Abraham included, and because of that, we have all inherited Adam's sin nature and desire. That's why Paul pointed out in the previous chapters that we are not God's family because of our ethnicity or because of anything we've done, but only by faith in what God says and what God's done. When we accept the Gospel by faith, we become part of a new family – a new, multi-ethnic family that shares a profound unity and love in the way we treat each other and the world around us. We stopped being physical and spiritual descendants of Adam – which was a sinful inheritance – and we've become descendants of the *new* Adam; Jesus Christ – which

is a righteous inheritance. I'll explain what that means.

It's probably important to remind you that when Paul wrote this, there were no chapters and verses. Those were put in later by the Church. So Paul's train of thought wasn't, "There – that's the end of chapter four, now I'll start chapter five." Paul didn't change subjects between chapters. There's a spiritual and logical flow from what he was talking about to what we're looking at; there's an overlap between the stage he set in chapters one through four and where he's taking us in chapter five, and it's a point that he'll carry on through chapter eight. That's why Paul starts out this chapter saying, "since we have been made right in God's sight," or in other words, "since we have been justified by faith..." and then he explains the results.

As Pastor Casey helped us see, Paul has been making the case that we are justified by having faith in what God has done for us in Christ. That's called "justification by faith," and it creates a new humanity. We leave the humanity of Adam, a life of being slaves to sin and experiencing death. That death is everywhere; in our living that results in unhealthy and dysfunctional relationship with ourselves and others, and death that results in a place called hell – a place of eternal suffering and separation from God. But when we receive justification by faith, we leave *that* humanity of the old Adam and enter into the humanity of the *new* Adam – Jesus Christ.

Friends, if you accept Christ and what he's done for you, you literally change your inheritance, you change your ethnicity, you change your identity. You are now a child of God, part of God's united multi-ethnic family, and your identity is found in Christ alone; not in your appearance or your job or career or education or financial status or abilities or sexuality or gender; *all* that you are finds its identity and purpose in Christ, and comes under alignment with his life. That's why Jesus said to the Jewish religious leader:

"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."
(John 3:3, niv)

And that's also why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old is gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, niv)

So Paul is spelling out what it means to be made right with God, or to be justified by faith, and one of the consequences is...

Faith and peace, fortitude and purity.

In verses 3-5 Paul gives us that sequential, consequential list. Let me read it to you again from a different translation:

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment..." (Romans 5:3-5, nlt)

Our faith allows us to stay in a place of peace in our heart and soul and mind, no matter

what we are going through. The peace we have and experience is not like a human emotion. Just because we become Christians doesn't mean we are guaranteed to have some kind of inner tranquility. We may not always feel cool, calm, and collected, but the unchangeable fact is that we have peace with God. We aren't his enemies anymore. By faith we've accepted the terms of peace – terms that Jesus purchased for us, so we aren't at odds with God anymore. And when we live in that kind of peace, we have less stress – less risk of a whole host of physical ailments like heart attack, cancer, stroke, ulcers, migraines – on and on and on. I'm not saying we won't get those things; I'm saying the risk of them is greatly reduced.

The biblical idea of peace isn't the absence of conflict or difficult circumstances. The word is "shalom." It's the name "Jerusalem" comes from – where the Temple was – the place of God's presence is peace. Biblical peace is wholeness, health, and well-being brought about by the presence of God. Being *complete as a person* is at the heart of individual peace. As one scholar writes, "Debts that are paid are shalom; vows that are fulfilled are shalom. Conflicts that are resolved result in shalom."² Jewish people greet each other with "shalom" – like we would say "hello." It is to give a blessing of God's peace to the person: "may you be well." "May you have the physical and spiritual resources you need. May you enjoy the blessings of God and the age to come." How about that!? You had me at shalom! That's why when Jesus showed up, he'd say, "Peace be with you" or "go in peace, your faith has made you well." He was telling us what we could have!

Peace is not subjective feelings but objective reality that we live in. So as a result, we can face everything – *everything* – that life throws our way. When life gets difficult, we are at peace. When people get angry, we are at peace. When the world around us feels like it's literally going to hell in the fast lane, we are at peace. In fact, Paul says that living in that place of peace actually strengthens us in all those difficulties. We gain fortitude – a strength of character that we could never know without God's peace. So as a result, our character – our Christlikeness – grows even greater. These challenges serve to remove our tendency toward sin. We aren't impatient and angry. We don't lash out or blame people. We don't seek revenge or self-gratification. Instead, we learn obedience – we respond with patience and perseverance, we love people and seek the best for them even when they don't behave that way toward us. We rejoice when we face trials, as James told us. We rejoice when we are persecuted, as Jesus told us. These challenges serve as a refiner's fire that burns away all of the garbage of sin in us so that only the pure gold of Christlikeness remains. So this hope that we have never disappoints us!

Then Paul gets to the heart of it all; the reason that we can be in Christ instead of Adam, the reason we can have faith and peace and gain fortitude and purity. Let me reread verse six to you:

"And hope does not (*disappoint us or*) put us to shame, because God's **love** has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (niv)

Love

² NBBC

Other translations say, “because God has lavished his love on us...” It’s what we read again in 1 John 3:1 that says:

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1, niv)

God has lavished his love on us! God has lavished his love on you! I want to try to show you what lavished is like. I have a friend who used to do what I’m about to do to make the point.

Ask for three volunteers. Ask them to space out across the stage and put their hands out. Give the first two, three pieces. “This is what it’s like to give something that’s measured.” Dump the rest on the third. This is what it’s like to have something lavished on you (except if it were a hose of non-stop candy). You have far more than you’ll ever need. You have no reason to fear running out. This is how God lavishes his love on us. We can’t earn it, don’t deserve it. It isn’t measured in anyway. It is unending.

The word “poured out” or “lavished” literally means “emptied out,” but there’s more – because God’s love is unending, it never gets emptied out. It is forever pouring out. That is lavished. And that is how much God pours out his love in your life.

Now, if you have not been justified by faith or made right with God because you have not accepted what Jesus has done for you, then you are holding up an umbrella of sin; God’s love spills all around you but not in you. You have a cork on the bottle that is your life; God’s love can’t pour into you and out of you. By faith, you let God get the cork out; God removes the umbrella, and your life can be filled to overflowing with his unfailing never-ending abundance of love.

That’s why we have...

Hope

...that never disappoints us or put us to shame; our hope is certain! Because of God’s love, our hope is solid. It is not wishful thinking. It is a hope that is longer than your circumstances, longer than this week or this year. The real focus is on what lies ahead. Because we have been justified by faith and we’ve experienced God’s lavish love, we confidently expect a future share in the reality of God – not because of anything we’ve done or achieved. That’s why Paul reminds us that we all have sinned and continually fell short of God’s glorious ideal. Justification frees us from the chains of our sinful past and sets us on the certain course of God’s abundant life here and future eternity. It’s not just human optimism about the future; the hope we live in, because of God’s lavish love, is how we have the confidence to endure troubles. Remember, Jesus was crucified. His followers are not exempt from suffering in this world. In fact, being God’s family, God’s children, and co-heirs with Christ means that we will share in his sufferings in order that we may share in his glory (Romans 8:16, 17). We are not in heaven yet, but we already know that we are saved from God’s wrath when that time comes. Ours is not wishful thinking. It is “faith oriented to the future.” Our hope is reliable because of the one who secured it for us. We can trust God’s promises because he’s already delivered on his Old Testament promises. That’s why Paul says:

“For while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
(Romans 5: 7, 8)

So we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God – even when life here seems horrible.

Because of the certain hope we have, thanks to the lavish love of God, we can live differently than we did before; we can live differently than the world around us. We have the Holy Spirit within us, shaping and changing our status and our character and our nature, to live God empowered lives like Jesus. Paul said:

“Hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)

We can live lives of...

Holiness.

So we, the people who live knowing we are loved, saved, justified, and have the certain hope of heaven, are cleansed from sin and given the new life of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36-37). As the new-Adam-multi-ethnic-family of God, we live differently. We live lives of holy love for each other and for all the people of the world, just like God does. We love those different than us, we love those whose lifestyles and choices we don’t like, we love people who identify different than us, we love people who hate us, we love people who kill us, just like Jesus did.

That, my friends, is what God does, that’s what Jesus demonstrated for us, that’s what Jesus died to give us, that’s what the Holy Spirit does in us. That is called holiness. Holy love that loves people wholly. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community is the sure proof that we are already living in the new age, already enjoying our family relationship with God, crying out to God as our abba, our father. (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6-7)

That’s why Paul concludes this passage with verse 21:

“Just as sinned reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21)

If you are not a Christian – you have not put your faith in what Jesus has done for you – then stop blocking the lavish outpouring of God’s love in your life. Let it pour!

If you are a Christian, start living in the peace and strength of your character. Start living out the hope you have in holiness of heart and life; let the Holy Spirit shape you to live as Christ and start loving others.

Prayer

This is the theme of Romans: that we have been justified by faith in Christ, can be in the family of God, and live in the fulness of God’s glorious ideal for us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Romans 15:13 –

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.