

# Romans – Fall 2023 D-Groups

*For Wednesday, September 20*  
**Romans 4:1-5:11 with a Focus on 5:1-11**



## The Big Picture - Romans 4:1-5:11

*(Throughout the Fall, we'll make our way through the entire book of Romans. Even though our primary focus in D-Groups is on a smaller text, we encourage you to read this broader section.)*

Last week's "big picture" of three chapters required a lot of summarizing; this week's is simpler. In many ways, chapter 4 continues the theme of 3:21-31 as it reinforces Paul's basic point about the Gospel: we are made right with God through faith in Christ. This chapter seems especially focused toward the Jewish believers in Rome. There were ongoing Jewish-Gentile struggles in the church. Part of Paul's presentation of the Gospel was this reminder that the only way *anyone* - Jew or Gentile - could be saved is through faith in Jesus, not the Law (see 3:20ff). That doesn't mean the Law has no value at all; it's just a reminder that it is worthless as a means to becoming right with God. Salvation is a gift of His grace that can only become ours through faith, believing in His promise.

Lest the Jewish believers think that this Gospel deviates too much from their roots, Paul provides an answer in chapter 4. His strategy here is brilliant. What *really* united Jewish people was not Moses and the Law, but Father Abraham (the one who had many sons, many sons had this Father Abraham ... not sure what that has to do with swinging your arm, but whatever; *if you know, you know*). That's why Paul points to Genesis 15. Before the Law of Moses existed and before any act like circumcision had been carried out, "Abraham believed God, and God counted Him as righteous because of His faith" (Romans 4:3, NLT - quoting Genesis 15:6). Catch Paul's point: even Father Abraham's story affirms the basic truth of the Gospel that it is faith alone that can make us right with God. To provide even further persuasion, Paul also points to David, the great Jewish king and ancestor of the promised Messiah, who celebrates God's unearned forgiveness (4:6-8, quoting Psalm 32:1-2). The Gospel is consistent with what these Jewish greats had themselves experienced and celebrated!

In the midst of this chapter, notice also how Paul is again going to try and bring about a greater sense of unity to Jews and Gentiles through the Gospel (see also 1:16 and 3:22). In the end, anyone who has this kind of faith - regardless of their ethnicity or even their adherence to the sign of the covenant, circumcision - is a true child of Abraham (see 4:11-12 and Galatians 3:26-29). It's not about ethnicity, adherence to the Law of Moses or any earthly criteria; instead, when it comes to the Gospel, what really matters most is faith in Jesus. Just like it was with Abraham, this way of grace is how God makes us right with Himself.

## The Close-Up - Romans 5:1-11

In these verses, Paul stops to rejoice in the implications of this Gospel; it's something he will do in 8:1ff as well (notice the transitional words in both texts). It's an opportunity to move from the intellectual/logical argument Paul is making - how we are made right with God by faith in Jesus - to

more of a heart-level personalization and celebration of that truth. In other words, it's not *just* a truth about the Gospel; in the end, it's the story of each of our lives in Christ. Our hearts should overflow with great confidence and assurance as we consider this Good News.

**Some notes on these verses and Paul's train of thought (there's rich stuff in these verses!):**

**5:1-2a** ... we can have confidence re: **our present status with God** - through our faith, we have peace with God and we've been brought into this place of grace, where we now STAND (that seems a key word).

**5:2b** ... we can have confidence re: **our future hope in Christ** because of His promise.

**5:3-5a** ... we can have this confidence **even in the face of hardships that come** because we know that (1) they are accomplishing something in us and (2) they cannot threaten our present standing with Christ or our future hope in Him (more on this later in chapter 8).

**5:5b** ... we can feel this sense of confidence through the presence of the Holy Spirit inside of us (again, more on this in 8:14-17).

**5:6-8** ... even more, we can know this confidence is ours through Jesus' death for us *while we were still sinners*. These are powerhouse verses that are worth meditating on as they lay out the Good News of God's unconditional love! He did what He did for us while we were still in a condition of being utterly unworthy and unable to do anything about it on our own. **This demonstration of God's love for us on the cross is why we can have confidence in Him.**

**5:9-10** ... two "how much more" statements: (1) "If He's already made us right with Himself, how much more can we be sure that He will save us?" And (2) "If He did what He did for us while we were His enemies, how much more can we count on Him to deliver on His promise now that He actually calls us His friends (we've been reconciled to Him)?"

**5:11** ... we can confidently rejoice in this relationship - not because of who we are, but because of what God has done for us through Christ. We can live assured of our status!

**Some reflections leading-up to next week's D-Group:**

- This text would remind us of the great confidence and assurance we have in Christ. ***How confident are you of your present status before God and the future hope in store?***
- Paul brings us back to the cross for the reminder of where we can find confidence (yes, there's the important Holy Spirit reminder too in 5:5b). ***How should reflecting on the death of Jesus bring us this sense of assurance? What does Paul tell us about God's love in Romans 5:6-8 (i.e. pay attention to the timing, the recipients and the reason)?***
- ***How can this reminder of what God has already done give us confidence amidst the doubts we experience, even those that arise from trials and trouble (see v. 3)?***
- In the end, we have this confidence *because it's really about God, not us*. ***How does this text invite us to rest in what He has done (as opposed to continuing to strive to earn)?***
- ***What does it mean practically to "rejoice in" what God has done for us*** (v. 11 - some translations use more of a "boasting" word ... either way, it's a word of confidence; we speak with so much assurance because of His grace, not our performance)?