

Romans 3:21—5:21
BUT NOW...THE PERFECT MAN, JESUS...
GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM LAW

After establishing humanity's need for the gospel through our universal guilt and the inevitability of God's righteous judgment, 1:18—3:20, Paul begins to explain Romans 1:16-17, and what is behind the phrase 'God's power for salvation'. Now we begin to understand that our inability to save ourselves has been addressed. Now we begin to understand how God has rendered all under sin so that we could discover the depth of mercy and grace. Our pleas for mercy and grace under the law's condemnation leads to Christ. Now, in this next section, 3:21—5:21, we meet Jesus, God's perfect man. In Christ, God's righteousness is manifested, apart from the Law. The same righteousness demonstrated through God's judgment upon our unrighteousness is focused upon an innocent man. Now, in the gospel, we discover that God's righteousness, having been satisfied through judgment, is demonstrated through a free gift, salvation. Through Christ's faithfulness God gifts righteousness, Christ's righteousness, to all who believe, requiring nothing but our simple faith/trust. This faith, rooted in the promises made to Abraham before the law, focuses upon God's grace through Christ, who is fully capable, of overcoming and reversing the ravages of sin and death, inherited through Adam's disobedience, 5:12-21. Through Christ's righteousness grace reigns unto eternal life, 5:21.

A. God's righteousness is manifested apart from the Law through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, 3:21-26.

The text with grammatical notations

21 But now apart from law, God's righteousness has been revealed^{pfpi} being witnessed^{ppptc} by the Law and the prophets. **22** Even God's righteousness through Christ's faithfulness¹ to all who believe^{paptc}, for there is no distinction [between Jew of Gentile] **23** for all have sinned^{aai} and are falling short^{ppi} of God's glory **24** while being justified^{ppptc} as a gift by His grace through the redemption which

¹The literal rendering "through the faith/faithfulness of Christ" has been adjusted to indicate the subjective (genitive used as a subject) use of the genitive "of Christ." Christ is the one demonstrating God's righteousness through His faithful lifestyle. Christ is the subject [i.e., the one doing the action] of the faith/faithfulness. It is Christ's faithfulness that demonstrates God's righteousness, and it is Christ's faithfulness to God that is placed on the account of those justified.

[is] in Christ Jesus, **25** Whom God set forth^{ami} as the mercy seat² through the faithfulness³ by His blood for the demonstration of His righteousness because of the passing over of the previously committed^{pfaptc} sins **26** by/in God's forbearance for the demonstration of His righteousness, in the present time, in order that⁴ He might be^{painf} just and justifying^{paptc} the one from faith about Christ.

Observations from the text

V21 BUT NOW— With the words BUT NOW Romans shifts its focus from mankind's spiritual condition under God's law to a Person. The gospel's essence and this letter's subject are revealed here. Before Christ, God's righteousness was known through man's conscience and the Mosaic Law. Now, God's righteousness is fully disclosed in and through the Person and life of Jesus Christ. Now Paul makes it a point to insist God's righteousness is manifest APART FROM THE LAW. Paul has already demonstrated that the righteousness of God must be through obedience (the essential requirement for any relationship with God) to God's law. Now we read that God's righteousness has been MANIFESTED (perf. Pass. "made known; revealed") apart from/without LAW (no definite article thus including both Gentiles and Jews). This manifestation, witnessed in the Old Testament Scriptures (e.g., Abraham and David, Romans 4), is realized in Christ.

V22 EVEN the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST -- God's righteousness that has been made known and witnessed by the OT is the righteousness manifested "through the faithfulness of Christ". The prepositional phrase translated "through faith in Christ" is an unusual construction. This grammatical structure appears several times in Paul's letters, consider, for example, Galatians 2:16, 20; 3:22; Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 3:9. Rather than using the usual Greek word "in" as depicted in the English translation, the genitive case better translated "of Christ" appears. This construction should probably be rendered indicating that Christ is the acting subject of the idea "faith" (subjective genitive), i.e., Christ's faithfulness."⁵ Thus, it is Christ's faithfulness that has satisfied the Father's righteous requirements. Jesus' life/obedience, 5:19, has revealed the righteousness of God. He lived His earthly, human life as the living Word of God. He Himself is God's righteousness embodied in human form.

²ἱλαστήριον may refer to the means of propitiation or the place of propitiation. I have taken ἱλαστήριον as the place of propitiation since this word is either functioning as substantive or adjective. Other examples of the idea of propitiation include Hebrews 2:17 and 1 John 2:2. Hebrews 2:17 is a verbal form (make propitiation) and 1 John 2:2, ἱλασμός, is rendered "the means of propitiation". Christ is both the means/sacrifice that appeases/satisfies and the place where the satisfaction occurs.

³Could refer to faith or to Christ's faithfulness... Christ's faithfulness was ultimately demonstrated by His blood (death) which demonstrated God's righteousness/justice in that our sins needed a justifying substitute.

⁴εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν this construction (eis to + infinitive) generally indicates purpose/result..."so that; in order that."

⁵For an extensive treatment of *pistis Christou* see Bird, Michael F. and Sprinkle, Preston M., ed. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Pistis Christou Debate*. Paternoster: Hendriksen Publishers, UK/ Peabody, MA, 2009.

V22 FOR ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE; FOR THERE IS NO DISTINCTION – The condition for receiving God’s righteousness (Christ’s righteousness) through Christ’s faithfulness is faith⁶. Regarding this gift of righteousness there is NO DISTINCTION, that is, between Jew and Gentile (the assumed necessary conclusion from 3:9, 19). Both Israel and the nations are transgressors of God’s law. Both Israel and the nations need the gift of righteousness. Both Israel and the Gentiles/nations can receive a righteous standing with God only based on faith in Christ. Anyone who believes receives God’s gift of righteousness without any distinction because of ethnicity.

V23 FOR— The reason/explanation given for the lack of distinction between Jew and Greek (and the condition of faith as the requirement for either people group) is the universality of sin and condemnation. This universal guilt has been previously mentioned, 3:9. As shown in chapters 1:18-3:20, ALL HAVE SINNED. The word for sin in this passage means “missing the mark”⁷. Every human being has missed the moral and spiritual mark/target for acceptance with God. The mark? The mark is God’s own glorious (righteous) character and standard, i.e., THE GLORY OF GOD⁸. Everyone has fallen short of God’s required mark.

V24 Now, apart from our ability to obey God’s law all ARE JUSTIFIED AS A GIFT. For a more complete discussion regarding justification see ‘Taking a Closer Look,’ below. For now, let’s understand justification as vindication, or, better, acquittal. Justification means that a guilty person is acquitted or declared innocent (not simply pardoned) through faith in the obedience of Christ and the grace of God promise through Christ.

V24– AS A GIFT Also translated “freely” this adverb recognizes the “gift” quality of God’s acquittal. God’s acquittal/justification of the believing sinner is BY (may also be rendering ‘in’ or ‘with’; BY, however stresses the instrument or means, ‘by means of’) God’s favor, His grace. God justifies/acquits the believing sinner by unmerited favor freely, or in the manner of a gift. Consider Ephesians 2:8-9 where the entire concept of salvation is described as a gift.⁹ Paul understood the idea of gift as wholly apart from works past, present, or future, consider also Romans 4:5.

V24 BY HIS GRACE – God’s gifted righteousness is BY GRACE (for a more complete discussion about grace see ‘Taking a closer look’ in chapter five). The word grace, apart from

⁶We will ‘take a closer look’ at “faith” in chapter four.

⁷We will take a “closer look” at sin in chapter five.

⁸A vivid presentation of God’s glory is provided in Exodus 33:18-23 w. 34:5-7 in which God descends with a glorious manifestation but declares His character of mercy, lovingkindness, and justice as this manifestation passes Moses. God’s character is His glory.

⁹Ephesians 2:8 describes salvation in its entirety, 2:4-7, with the pronoun “this” and the word “gift” being neuter. Since “faith,” “salvation,” and “grace” are all feminine words the neuter gender serves to provide a bigger picture. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 343 for a brief discussion about the neuter singular used to a collectively..

references to salvation, has meanings that include “winsomeness,” and “attractiveness,” and “favor.” These meanings communicate ideas such as having “a beneficent disposition toward someone (i.e., care/help, goodwill, benefaction, thanks, and gratitude, BDAG, 3rd edition, s.v. χάρις, ἰτος, ἡ [*charis, itos*]). Theologically, we usually assume the significance of this word as “unmerited favor.” Considering the stated conclusion of human spirituality, 1:18—3:20, justification/acquittal must be apart from any human merit/achievement.

Taking a closer look

JUSTIFICATION

It would be out of place to give justification a full treatment¹⁰. Below is a reduced explanation of this critical and history changing doctrine.

The language of justification

- Justification conveys the legal idea “to acquit,” “declare righteous,” “vindicate,” “to be free of charges,” BDAG s.v. *dikaioo*.
- Secular (non-religious) uses of this word are found in Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:29; Luke 10:29.

The ground and means of justification

The basis of our acquittal/innocence with God may be summarized below:

- Not based on personal merit, Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:3-10
- Based on the merits of Jesus Christ, Romans 3:21; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9
- Facilitated through Christ’s redemptive actions on our behalf, Romans 3:24

The act of justification

Justification is a forensic act (verdict of acquittal) imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer. The righteousness of God through Christ is imputed/reckoned to the account of the believer, Romans 1:17; 3:21-22; 1 Corinthians 1:30. As such, justification is God’s declarative act by which, on the basis of and according to Christ’s righteous character and obedience, the Father pronounces believers to have fulfilled all the requirements of divine law, and are granted the status of full acquittal. This is a once for all completed decision, Romans 3:24; 5:1.

The requirement for justification is faith, Philippians 3:8,9; Romans 3:24—4:8

The message of the gospel is that acquittal/justification/ the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is faith that what God has said about our sin and Christ’s obedience is true. Briefly...

- Faith should be understood in contrast to a human work meriting reward, Romans 4:5
- Faith is defined in this discussion as a conviction of certainty that what God has promised is true and that God is fully capable of performing His promise, consider Romans 4:21. Regarding redemption this would mean that the justified are fully convinced that what God has promised through Christ is true and that God will do what He has promised, i.e., forgive sins, declare righteous, and gift eternal life.

The results of justification

Several key results accompany the divine declaration of justification. In brief these irrevocable benefits are:

- The removal of sin and sin’s guilt from one’s account, Romans 4:6-8
- Participation in the promises of God, Romans 4:13.
- Peace with God, Romans 5:1, 11.

¹⁰For an extensive treatment see, McGrath, Alister E.. *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

- Freedom from wrath/condemnation, Romans 5:9; 8:1,33
- Eternal life, Romans 5:18-21
- Future glorification, 8:30.

The gospel is about God's gift of the righteousness required for freedom from condemnation and eternal fellowship with God. As the letter to Romans progresses Paul will build upon this theme through the perfect man, Jesus Christ.

V24 THROUGH THE REDEMPTION— God's gracious gift of acquittal is by the agency of REDEMPTION. The idea behind the word used for 'redemption' here is to deliver or make free by paying a price (see BDAG s.v. *apolutrosis*). The clause WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS identifies Christ as the agent by whom humanity might experience acquittal. Redemption emphasizes the release or freedom one experiences in being purchased from the penalty due our sin by our Lord. The perfect man obeyed perfectly so that humanity might be set free from death. Christ's obedience unto the death on the cross was the necessary price for our freedom.

V25 WHOM GOD DISPLAYED PUBLICLY – Our redemption is God's work. We could never pay for our own sin and transgressions resulting in our acquittal. God demonstrated His justice/righteousness through the blood sacrifice of His Son. Christ, in obedience to the Father's will, gave Himself for our sin, Galatians 1:4. This substitutionary death satisfied the demands of God justice/righteousness. The word PROPITIATION emphasizes appeasement. The focus in this passage is upon the "place" of divine satisfaction, probably picturing the mercy seat, rather than the sacrifice, see Hebrews 9:5 where this same word is used of the mercy seat. Christ was the 'place' where God's justice was satisfied. And why was this necessary? God gave His righteous Son to be the place where the price for Adam's sin and ensuring curse was paid in order TO DEMONSTRATE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS because He had "overlooked" sins previously committed. Our guilt required retribution. Christ's death demonstrated God's righteousness in that every sin has received a just punishment. God's salvation comes through judgment. This judgment was upon the innocent Son.

Taking a closer look

PROPITIATION

Briefly, let's take a closer look at the word propitiation.

The term propitiation is derived from the Latin, *propitiare*, "render favorable." In the pagan world this concept/word referred to someone appeasing the wrath of and winning the favor of the gods. Romans 3:21-26 presents justification from a two-fold picture, a) the image of redemption (purchase price); b) the image of sacrifice of atonement that satisfies the justifiable wrath of God. Christ's innocent death as a substitute for the guilty was the price needed to satisfy the justice/wrath/judgment of God. Jesus Christ is both the propitiatory sacrifice (*hilasmos*, 1 John 2:2; 4:10) conveying the idea of advocacy, 1 Jn 2:1, that turns aside the divine wrath through the satisfaction of divine justice, and Christ is the "place" of propitiation, i.e., mercy seat, where God's justice is satisfied, Romans 3:26. Cp. Heb 9:5 where the same word is used.

V26 FOR THE DEMONSTRATION...OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS – As mentioned above, the death of Christ demonstrates God’s righteousness/justice regarding the penalty due transgressions, see 2:8-9. Now, because justice has been served (through Christ), the death of Christ allows God to be JUST/righteous as the One Who is the JUSTIFIER (the One who declares the believer as righteous) **OF THE ONE WHO HAS FAITH IN CHRIST**. God is JUST because His righteousness and His righteous requirements have not been compromised (i.e., justice was served). Now God may justify/declare as righteous/acquit those who believe that the gift of Christ’s death on their behalf satisfies God’s righteous requirements. **THE ONE WHO HAS FAITH IN CHRIST**, lit. “the one from faith(fulness) of Christ”. While the text may refer to the acquitted having faith in /about Christ, this passage may emphasize that God justifies the one who is from Christ’s faithfulness. The genitive case “of Christ” (see 3:21) is used here.

Summary of the text

Having adequately demonstrated that every human being stands guilty before God, deserving judgment, Romans 1:18—3:20,23, Paul presents how God has appeased His justice through Christ. Christ came as the perfect man, the faithful Son. Christ was both the embodiment and the model of God’s righteousness. As such Christ presented Himself to God serving as God’s righteous payment and place for our legal debt. Christ gave His life to take away the sin of the world (consider John 1:29). This act of obedience pays for the release of the guilty (redemption) and satisfies (propitiation) the divine need for justice. This gift of acquittal is for all who believe the good news.

B. God’s righteousness imputed through faith to Jew and Gentile alike establishes the purpose of the Law 3:27-31.

The text with grammatical notations

27 Where then [is] boasting? [Boasting] has been shut out/excluded.^{api} Through what kind of law/principle? [Through a Law] of works? No! But through a law/principle of faith. **28** For we consider^{pni} a person to be justified^{ppinf} by faith apart from works of Law. **29** Is God of the Jews only? Not of the Gentiles/nations? Yes, of the Gentiles/nations. **30** Since indeed there is one God who will justify^{fai} the circumcision from faith and the uncircumcision through¹¹ faith. **31** Are we invalidating^{pai} the Law through faith? May it never be! We make the Law stand^{12pai}.

¹¹ From (ek) and through (dia) is a curious switch of prepositions. One might expect “who will justify the Jew and Gentile through faith...Perhaps Cranfield has it right when, after citing several early and recent attempts to explain the difference merely concludes that the change of prepositions is “rhetorical” (stylistic).

¹² ἱστανόμεν from ἵστημι has the idea of “making something stand; setting up; establishing.” Faith in Christ for justification was set out in the Torah/Law. By having faith in Christ for our justification we establish the principles of the Law. Chapter four illustrates this principle through the examples of Abraham and David

Observations from the text

V27 WHERE THEN IS BOASTING? – In the previous chapters Paul has depicted both the Gentile (in their self-righteous morality) and the Jew (in their Law-oriented morality) as having something about which they could boast. The boasting, of course, is unwarranted, hence, IT IS EXCLUDED. The redemption that is in Christ given freely by grace does not allow for human boasting, consider 1 Corinthians 1:30-31.

V27 BY WHAT KIND OF LAW? OF WORKS? NO, BUT BY A LAW OF FAITH— What “law/principle” excludes boasting? Certainly earning God’s salvation would include the right to boast. The LAW OF FAITH, however, does not allow for boasting. THE LAW OF FAITH refers to that principle that undergirds man’s relationship with God through the promises (Abrahamic Covenant/New Covenant), Romans 4:3, 9, 13, 19-21. While the Law of Moses had certain blessings attached to one’s covenantal obedience, the gift of righteousness through the promise operates on an entirely different system/principle. Faith, as Paul will soon insist, is apart from any meritorious works. Faith is one’s trust, the full conviction, that what God has promised is certain, 4:21. Thus, faith depends upon God according to His Word without any meritorious claim. Faith is the basis for anyone receiving Christ’s imputed righteousness (see, *Taking a Closer Look*, ‘Faith’ in chapter four).

V28 A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM WORKS OF THE LAW— Law (without the article) in this verse stresses the principle of works. Paul has already told his readers that no one is justified by works of law (3:19-20). Through law comes the knowledge of sin. To be justified by law would require our perfect obedience. Justification must be by another means. The basis for justification is the principle/law of faith. Now our new governing system is grace, 6:14. Grace is God’s operating system for spiritual life and, while it is enlivened by the Spirit, 8:2, it is appropriated/experienced by faith.

V29 GOD OF THE JEWS ONLY/ YES, OF THE GENTILES ALSO – Paul’s logic is simple. If righteousness comes by works of the Law, then God is only the God of the Jews (since they are the one’s given the law). God, however, is also the God of the Gentiles/nations. The Abrahamic Covenant promises blessing upon every nation. Thus, righteousness gifted apart from law includes the nations/Gentiles, consider Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:8. Since Pentecost, Acts 2, the great commission, Matthew 28:19-20, includes all the nations. God is regathering the nations which were always to be included in His plan for redemption, see 9:23-30.

V30 BY FAITH/THROUGH FAITH—The change in prepositions is generally taken to be a stylistic device (Augustine concluded the change was rhetorical). Many see no significant theological point being made by the variation from “by” to “through.” Upon further reflection, however, perhaps Paul is playing off the idea that the Jews, who had the Law, needed to live

by faith which would be produced “from” (by) the Torah (faith comes by hearing), whereas the Gentiles, who did not have the Law, needed to approach God through the agency of faith (apart from the written law). Just a thought.

V31 WE ESTABLISH THE LAW -- The principle of faith does not NULLIFY (i.e., invalidate/set aside/make powerless/or, abolish) THE LAW. Rather, faith is confirmed by and therefore establishes the Law. First, the Law (e.g., Genesis) taught the sole agency of faith (cp. Abraham, Gen 12—22; Rom 4) for justification. Thus, to be justified by faith establishes the message of the Law. Second, the purpose of the Law regarding the knowledge of sin and man’s inability to save himself, is established. As such, the Law, leads a person to faith, see Galatians 3:24. The work purpose of Law is accomplished. To trust Christ due to the hopelessness of keeping Law, establishes the purpose of the Law. Our guilt and inevitable judgment under law (Ch. 2) created the necessity for righteousness apart from works, 3:19-21. The Law, 1 Timothy 1:8, is for the unrighteous. Coming to God through faith in Christ establishes the ultimate purpose for the Law.

Summary of the text

As God has provided the means for righteousness apart from the law, 3:21-26, Paul now introduces another law/principle, namely faith. Faith serves as the agency through which both Jew and the Gentile, i.e., Israel and the nations would be included in the promises. Faith also establishes/upholds the teachings and purposes of the Law.

C. God’s righteousness through faith has been testified by both the Law (Abraham) and the prophets (David), 4:1-8.

Moving from the theological explanation of God’s righteousness apart from law, Paul now illustrates how the law and the prophets testify, 3:21, about this righteousness. Abraham’s example is found in the “law,” while David’s statement (Psalm 32) would have been from the prophets.¹³

The text with grammatical notations

1 What then will we say^{fai} Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found^{pfainf}? **2** For if Abraham from works was justified^{api} he has^{pai} something to boast about, but not toward God. **3** For what is the writing saying^{pai}? **Abraham believed^{aai} God and [his faith]¹⁴ was credited^{api} to him for¹⁵ righteousness.¹⁶** **4** Now to the one who is working^{pmptc} the wage is not credited^{pmi} according to grace

¹³ The NT regularly referred to the entirety of the OT as the Law and the prophets, 3:21. Luke, in Acts 2:30ff., recognized David as a prophet and the Davidic psalms as prophetic literature.

¹⁴ His faith is not in the text but has been supplied for clarity.

¹⁵ εἰς δικαιοσύνην – eis + accusative indicates direction toward/ purpose/result, hence “for/for the purpose of”

¹⁶ Genesis 15:6

but according to debt; **5** but to the one who is not working^{pmptc} but is believing^{paptc} upon the One who justifies^{paptc} the ungodly, his faith is credited^{pmi} for righteousness, **6** just as David says^{pai} about the person's happy-privilege to whom God credits^{pm/pi} righteousness apart from works, **7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven^{api} and whose sins have been covered over^{17api}, 8 blessed [is] the person regarding whom the Lord has not¹⁸ credited^{amsbj} sin.¹⁹**

Observations from the text

V1 ABRAHAM (from the Law...consider 3:21, “being witnessed by the Law...”) provides the first of two OT illustrations regarding righteousness through faith. First, it is important to note that Abraham, **FOREFATHER ACCORDING TO THE FLESH** (the grandfather of Jacob/Israel), lived more than four hundred years before the law was given, Galatians 3:17. This bolsters the idea of righteousness “apart from the law,” 3:21.

V2 Continuing his answer to the question “Where then is boasting?”, 3:27, Paul simply states **IF ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, HE HAS SOMETHING TO BOAST ABOUT**. Working our way to God satisfies the flesh. The religious man may boast, **BUT NOT BEFORE GOD**. The divine provision of acquittal/ justification apart from works of the Law takes the glory away from us and our accomplishments and places all the credit with God. If salvation required or was due to our works, we could boast in our own merit. But because we cannot gain merit with God through our own righteous activity we can and should only boast in God's goodness, consider 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

V3 FOR WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY? – Quoting Genesis 15:6, Paul, citing Torah, substantiates the claim that God's righteousness is gifted through faith. The Law testifies that righteousness is granted apart from the Law. The citation in Romans, except for two words, is from the LXX. The LXX differs from the MT in that it replaces the active with the passive **WAS CREDITED**. The passive voice indicates that Abraham was acted upon. Abraham did not reckon himself righteous. Abraham's faith was credited to him (Abraham) for righteousness. This crediting/reckoning is a work of God. On Abraham's part, He **BELIEVED GOD**. As God promised to Abraham descendants more numerable than the stars in the sky (an idiom for innumerable, see Deuteronomy 10:22), Abraham, though old and childless, believed God. It is important to understand that this was more than a belief in the existence of God (i.e., believe “in” God). Abraham believed what God said/promised. Many who claim to believe in God do not believe God (i.e., His Word).

¹⁷ The Greek word indicates a covering over something, such as when our eyelids cover our eyes.

¹⁸ The Greek text has a double negative οὐ μὴ (cp John 10:28). This construction is for emphasis “no never.”

¹⁹ Psalm 32:1-2

VV4-5 summarize Paul's point. Those who work for righteousness receive what is due. The verdict in Romans for this wage is not good, consider again chapters two and three.

V4 NOW TO THE ONE WHO WORKS, HIS WAGE IS NOT CREDITED AS A FAVOR – A gift is not earned. Paul earlier stated that we are justified “as a gift” (3:24). If works are involved, then justification is NOT a gift.

V5 BUT TO THE ONE WHO DOES NOT WORK- Paul could not be clearer. The contrast concerns those who do something for God's favor/acquittal and those who do not work (i.e., the works of the Law) BUT believe IN HIM WHO JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY. The one who comes to God by faith alone discovers the principle/law of faith, 3:27. HIS FAITH IS CREDITED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11:6. God honors the faith of the ungodly. God credits the faith “for” (see footnote 9) righteousness. While the righteousness credited is the quality of Christ's righteousness, our belief/faith is what God reckons for the purpose of our righteous standing with Him. This is the “work” God requires of us (see John 6:28-29). Faith, as understanding here, is not a work it is a response to another's word (See, Taking a Closer Look, ‘Faith’ in chapter four).

V6 JUST AS – For a second illustration of righteousness apart from works of the law, Paul cites DAVID (the witness from the prophets).²⁰ As Jesus is Abraham's promised heir, Galatians 3:16, so Jesus is also David's promised heir, Romans 1:3. This connection is important in that both men looked forward to something/Someone yet to come, namely, their descendant/God's Son, consider John 8:56; Psalm 110:1. Consider Hebrews 11:1 “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,” [LSB]. Both Abraham (Genesis 15:6) and David (Psalm 32) were men who trusted God's grace rather than their own self-worth/self-sufficiency, consider Psalm 51:16-17. Abraham could not keep the Law, it had not been given; David understood that God looked upon the heart, Psalm 51:17.

V6 SPEAKS OF THE BLESSING – David's life exemplified someone who understood the ‘fortunate, happy, privileged’ state of a person who was credited with righteousness apart from works. Justification is full acquittal of all charges, innocence. This innocence involved forgiveness and dismissal of any guilt and wrongdoing. To illustrate this Paul cites Psalm 32:1-2, 4:7-8.

V7 LAWLESS DEEDS— This phrase references the Hebrew word *pesha*, indicating rebellion. In David's case his misdeeds were rebellion against divine authority.

²⁰The phrase “law and the prophets” occurs about a dozen times in the NT to indicate the entire OT. Psalms would have been considered as a section of the prophets, see Geisler and Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, revised ed., 240-43.

V7 HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN/COVERED—Both verbs in the original text are in the past tense (aorist). This stresses historical fact. The voice is passive. Forgiveness and covering are done to the believer. The forgiveness (removal of debt) and covering (putting a shroud over) refer to the historical reality preceding justification. The one who believes in God’s promise about Christ redemptive work is declared sin-free/acquitted/righteous. The chastening for our well-being was upon Christ, Isaiah 53:4-6. He bore my offenses therefore **THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT** the sin of those justified. The Judge has acquitted those trusting Christ. There is no reference to sin on the account of those declared righteous by faith, 8:33. With no sin there is no condemnation, 8:1,34. While sin is still present in our lives, we, as we will discover later, Romans 6—8, have died to the law and where there is no law there is no transgression, 4:15. Further, Romans 8:3-4 states that God condemned “sin in the flesh,” i.e., Adam’s sin and its attending effect. There is no sin on our record. Those who work to earn God’s pleasure are never out from under sin since their righteousness depends upon obedience to the law and their obedience is imperfect. Those who believe God’s gift are free from the law’s righteous condemnation because Christ’s righteousness, His faithfulness, apart from sin and Adam’s curse, is perfect. Christ is the perfect man who took Adam’s sentence of death as His own to release all who would believe God’s promise.

Summary of the text

Both Abraham and David testify about righteousness apart from the law. This good news, introduced in 1:16-17, became the focus of Paul’s instruction from 3:21. Paul’s irrefutable argument is that God’s righteousness is a gift apart from works. The gospel is the message that announces divine justification/acquittal founded upon Christ’s righteousness results in the removal of all guilt and sin from a believers account. Our response of faith serves as that which God counts as righteousness.

D. God’s righteousness gifted through faith involves everyone as illustrated by Abraham, 4:9-12.

The text with grammatical notations

9 [Is] this blessing, then, upon the circumcision or upon the uncircumcised? For we are saying^{pai}, the faith has been credited^{api} to Abraham for righteousness. **10** How, then, has it been credited^{api}, in being^{pptc} circumcised or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. **11** And he received^{aa} a sign of circumcision [as] a seal of the righteousness of the faith of the one in the uncircumcision in order that he might be^{painf} the father of all who are believing^{paptc} through uncircumcision, in order that this²¹ righteousness might also be

²¹The definite article probably serves as an intensifying identifier “this righteousness” i.e., the righteousness given as a grace gift.

credited^{22a}inf^{to} them, **12** and a father of circumcision to those not of circumcision only but to those following^{paptc} the tracks of the faith in uncircumcision of our father Abraham.

Observations from the text

VV9-10 Paul's use of questions gets the readers' attention as the apostle provides further proof that righteousness has always been gifted apart from the Law. Paul points out that Abraham was justified before circumcision, and, as such, before the Judaic traditions and requirements surrounding circumcision as a necessity to follow the Lord, see Galatians 5:2-3,11. For Paul the chronological reality demonstrated through the life of Abraham allows for the inclusion of Gentiles, the uncircumcised, as equal benefactors of God's gift of righteousness by faith, and to be members of the household of faith.

V11 THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION – Circumcision was a “sign” (an indication, mark of acknowledgement, or authenticating claim).²³ In Abraham's day this rite signaled a faith-alliance with the Abrahamic covenant, Genesis 17. Elsewhere, certain OT passages considered circumcision to represent the spiritual change God would bring about in the hearts of believing Israelites at the nation's future restoration, consider Deuteronomy 30:6. In Romans 2:29 and Colossians 2:11 it appears that Paul understood circumcision to represent/symbolize spiritual regeneration. Those who were born again/regenerate were referred to as the ‘circumcision,’ whether Jew or Gentile, Philippians 3:3. Another rite, serving as a symbol, baptism, will be used by Paul in chapter six to signify a believer's identity and union with Christ by the Spirit, see discussion in chapter six. Finally, while neither baptism nor circumcision saves a person, these rites (OT/NT respectively) signify (serve as a sign) that the spiritual reality that they represent had already taken place. Physical circumcision served as A SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE FAITH HE HAD WHILE UNCIRCUMCISED. Circumcision served as an authenticating sign that Abraham was already declared righteous. The mention of A SEAL emphasizes ownership. In Paul's letters he used this concept of “seal” to indicate the mark of God's securing ownership of those who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, see Ephesians 1:13; 4:30. Abraham's circumcision was in the flesh. Today, under the new covenant, this rite is spiritual, a circumcision of the heart sealed by the life-giving Spirit. This sealing occurs through the indwelling and regeneration of the Holy Spirit, see Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11; Titus 3:5. It should also be understood that spiritual circumcision did not make anyone Jewish. Israel, and especially Judaism, was non-

²²εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι καὶ αὐτοῖς τὴν δικαιοσύνην, the righteousness serves as the subject of the infinitive (aor pass inf). εἰς τὸ + λογισθῆναι = purpose/result.

²³Signs authenticated the message and the messenger in God's various economies, consider Moses and God's authenticating signs, Exodus 3--12; Jesus and God's authenticating signs, Acts 2:22; the apostles and God's authenticating signs, Acts 14:3; Hebrews 2:3-4.

existent in Abraham's day. Israel was not yet born. Under the new covenant regeneration (spiritual circumcision) was required for anyone to be heirs of the promise. The Jews who were spiritually circumcised (regenerated) became truly Jewish, 2:29. Spiritually 'circumcised' (regenerated) Gentiles became fellow heirs of the covenant of promise, the Abrahamic covenant, see Ephesians 2:11ff.

V11 SO THAT – Paul discusses the timing of Abraham's physical circumcision and the implications of this timing regarding God's plan for world salvation. According to this passage, the chronological sequence of faith and circumcision in Abraham's life allowed him to be the father of both the uncircumcised believer (Gentiles) and the circumcised believer (the Jews), 4:11-12. Abraham, in Paul's argument, becomes THE FATHER OF ALL WHO BELIEVE WITHOUT BEING CIRCUMCISED. Paul understood uncircumcised Gentiles coming to Christ to be sons and heirs of the Abrahamic promises, see Galatians 3:9,29; 5:6. Jews and Gentiles are fellow citizens of the promise, Ephesians 3:6. RIGHTEOUSNESS is credited by one's faith relationship to the promises made to Abraham realized through Christ, not one's obedience to the lifestyle of the Law.

Summary of the text

Righteousness gifted by faith has nothing to do with physical circumcision, see Galatians 5:6. Whether a person is aligned with this Jewish ritual or not has nothing to do with a person's righteous relationship with the God. The only thing that matters is faith likened to Abraham's. Regeneration of the heart (the new creation) by the Spirit through faith in Christ qualifies a person as a member of God's household, consider Galatians 6:15. Abraham's own spiritual journey illustrates this conclusion.

E. God's righteousness provided through faith guarantees the opportunity to participate in God's promise that humanity would inherit the earth, 4:13-25.

The text with grammatical notes

13 For the promise [was] not through Law to Abraham and to his descendants, namely, that he is to be^{painf} heir of the world, but through a righteousness of faith. **14** For if the heirs [are] from Law, then the faith has been rendered void^{pfp} and the promise has been nullified.^{pfp} **15** For the Law brings about^{pmi} wrath; and where there is^{pai} no Law, neither [is there] transgression. **16** Because [the promise]²⁴ from faith, in order that [the promise be] according to grace, so that²⁵ the promise be^{painf}

²⁴ "The righteousness" is not in the text but has been inserted for clarity. Also "this righteousness" has been added in the next phrase.

²⁵ εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν – construction = purpose/result. The 'promise' is the subject of the infinitive.

firm²⁶ to every descendant, not only to the one from the Law but also to the one from Abraham's²⁷ faith, who is father of us all, **17** just as it stands written^{pfpi}, "**I have set^{pfai} you father of many nations²⁸**" before²⁹ whom he believed,^{aai} namely, God, who makes alive^{paptc} the dead and calls^{paptc} the things which are^{paptc} not as being^{paptc} [as though they are]. **18** Who against hope upon hope he believed^{aai} in order that he might become^{apinf} father of many nations according to that which had been spoken^{pfptc} "**so are your descendants,**³⁰" **19** and not weakened^{aaptc} in this³¹ faith he contemplated his own body having already being put to death^{pfptc}, beginning to be^{paptc} about one hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah womb; **20** and unto God's promise he did not become doubtful^{api} by unbelief³² but he became strengthened^{api} by faith, having given^{aaptc} glory to God, **21** and having been fully assured^{apptc} that what had been promised^{pfpi} He is also able to do^{aainf}. **22** Wherefore also [this faith] was credited to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written^{api} because of him only that **it was credited^{api} to him** **24** but also because of us, to those about to be^{pai} credited^{ppinf}³³, that is, to the ones who are believing^{paptc} upon the One who raised^{aaptc} Jesus our Lord from the dead, **25** who was delivered^{api} over because of our trespasses and was raised^{api} because of our justification/acquittal.

Observations from the text

V13 FOR THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM OR TO HIS DESCENDANTS – With the word FOR Paul introduces a further explanation about our relationship with the Lord through faith. Now we hear some details about the connection justification by faith in Christ has to THE PROMISE. In Paul's writings, THE PROMISE refers to the covenant God made with Abraham, Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 22; Ephesians 2:11ff.; Galatians 3:6-29. The Abrahamic Covenant (see '**Taking a closer look**' below) is the covenant/treaty/contract upon which the gospel of Christ rests. The salvation through Christ, both in our participation, i.e., through faith, and regarding the object of faith, namely, Christ, are promised by God to and through Abraham. The Abrahamic

²⁶Comment: the only way God's promise could be firm is if it was guaranteed by grace. We cannot work consistently enough to guarantee anything.

²⁷Abraham is in the genitive case. Literally "faith/faithfulness of Abraham" The genitive could be descriptive (qualitative) or possessive. Faith could also be rendered "faithfulness" but the context seems to favor the idea of "believing."

²⁸Genesis 17:5 LXX

²⁹κατέναντι--Adv. *over against, opposite*; also -έναντι LXXEx.19.2...here to be understood as "in the sight of"

³⁰Comment: Citation is from Genesis 15:5. In Paul's thinking the Gentiles (I prefer 'the nations') who believe are a part of Abraham's descendants. Israelites who do not believe are not a part of Abraham's blessing (2:17ff). Only those who believe God who raises the dead are included in the commonwealth of the promise. This is what Ephesians 2:11ff is all about. This is the mystery that the OT did not explain (Ephesians 3:1-10). This inclusion of the nations/Gentiles is the regathering through Israel of one people, God's people, Abraham's descendants.

³¹ "this" – I have rendered the definite article before faith as a reference to the particular faith being discussed, namely, that God had promised a descendant(s).

³²Both 'unbelief' and 'faith' in this verse are taken as either dative of means or instrument 'by'

³³μέλλει λογίζεσθαι- perfective use of the present passive infinitive with the present tense of the verb μέλλω "to be destined" Thus, c. pres. inf., of a probability in the past.

covenant was made to ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS. These descendants, the first born of whom is Christ, Galatians 3:16, are those who trust God's promise by identifying with Christ through faith, Galatians 3:29. While the Law was given because of transgressions so that the world would turn to Christ by faith, Galatians 3:19ff., salvation through Christ would be guaranteed through the promise. In turning to Christ by faith, the believer would become a member of Abraham's household and a fellow heir according to the promise, Galatians 3:7,29.

V13 HEIR OF THE WORLD – The promise made to Abraham included the guarantee that the believer would be HEIR OF THE WORLD. This guarantee encompasses many far-reaching implications within the Abrahamic covenant. The heir promised to Abraham is Christ. And it is Christ who has secured the realization of these promises. Thus we must also understand that the gospel of Christ is embodied in the promise, Galatians 3:6-8. Further, Abraham was promised that he would be the father of many nations. As such, his descendants (spiritual descendants, Galatians 3:29) would live across the entire planet. More to the point, however, is how one qualifies for this inheritance. God's plan limited the heirs who qualify THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH. The promises for God's eternal inheritance are not by a righteousness from works of the law. God's eternal earthly dwelling place, whether Jew or Gentile, is ours through righteousness gifted/imputed through faith.³⁴

Taking a closer look

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The idea of Covenant: The word “covenant,” *berit* in Hebrew and *diatheke* in Greek, refers to a variety of formal or legal agreements. These agreements, (in the Ancient Near East [ANE], these could be individual wills, business contracts, territorial deeds, and national constitutions) define relationships between people. Divine covenants define relationships between God and human beings. Covenants may be conditional or unconditional, that is, bilateral or unilateral.

The Abrahamic Covenant: Many believe that the Abrahamic Covenant is a unilateral grant covenant, that is, the primary nature of the Abrahamic Covenant stresses the unconditional nature to the promises made by God to and through Abraham, Genesis 15. Further discussion at this point is necessary.

Key Passages: Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-19; 22:15-18; 26:1-6; 35:11-12.

Unconditional Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant: The Abrahamic Covenant is an example of a unilateral, grant covenant. Thus, at its very inception, is unconditional. Genesis 15:1-21 depicts the formal institution of the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis 15 depicts only one party formalizing the covenant. Only the glory of God's presence passed between the divided animals. Culturally all agreeing parties would have passed between the sacrifices. Hebrews 6:13-18 reiterates the unique nature of the promises made by God. God swore by Himself.

³⁴While “of faith” may be understood as “faithfulness”, several factors favor the rendering the Greek word in this instance as “faith.” First, while both the ideas of faithfulness, 3:21-22 and faith 3:27—4:8 have been introduced in our context, the idea of “faith” (not faithful works) is more immediate, 4:1-8. Second, the focus of and argument for justification is our response in FAITH not our life of faithfulness. It is our faith in Christ's faithfulness, 3:22, that qualifies us to be heirs of the world promised to Abraham and his descendants. Finally, as Paul continues his discussion, we continue to see the stress of “faith”/ believe (contra ‘faithfulness’), 4:18-21; 5:1 (note the uses of the aorist tense).

The unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant serves as a guarantee that God will fulfill the promises made.

Conditional Aspects to the Abrahamic Covenant: Unilateral grant covenants were not without certain stipulations for participation. The unconditional nature simply insured that the one making covenant would grant his promises. Those who would benefit from these promises had to meet certain criteria. Genesis indicates several points of testing for Abraham. Abraham was required to leave his home and sojourn in Canaan. Abraham needed to trust (believe) God for the provision of an heir. Abraham was called upon to require circumcision for every male member of his household. Finally, Abraham was called upon to sacrifice his heir, Isaac, upon an altar. The conditions (tests) of obedience required of Abraham qualified Abraham (vindicated/ justified not for righteousness) to participate in the blessings that were guaranteed through the covenant (consider James 2:20-24; Hebrews 11:8-19, 39—12:2).

Promises included in the Abrahamic Covenant: Genesis 12:1-3 represents the key passage for understanding the Abrahamic Covenant. There are three primary promissory categories.

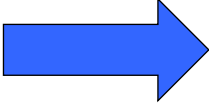
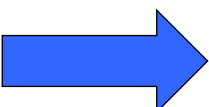
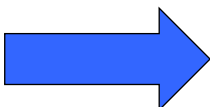
- **A great nation:** a multitude of descendants, 15:5; a large parcel of land, 15:18-20
- **A great name:** father of many nations, 17:5; father of kings, 17:6 (cp. 1 Chronicles 17:8, here we learn that the Davidic Covenant embellishes the concept of great name); prosperity, 12:2.
- **A great blessing:** Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 use the phrase “and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Paul, in Galatians 3:8, quotes this phrase as a reference to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Involved in this promise of world-wide blessing through Abraham is: 1) the Redeemer [the promised seed], Jesus, Galatians 3:16; 2) the message of justification through faith, Galatians 3:8; 3) and, the presence of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 3:14. The New Covenant embellishes the salvific aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Significance of the Abrahamic Covenant:

- The Abrahamic Covenant promises a future for the people of Israel that includes land, a king, great blessings, peace, protection, and salvation.
- The Abrahamic Covenant promises a specific descendant who would be heir to all the promises and who would bring about the fulfillment of this covenant, Genesis 22:17c-18; Galatians 3:16-29.
- The Abrahamic Covenant promises the Gospel of justification based on faith, Galatians 3:8.
- The Abrahamic Covenant promises all the blessings for spiritual life germane to the Gospel.
- The Abrahamic Covenant promises the future hope and blessing of all who are in Jesus Christ, Hebrew 6:13-19.

The chart below helps visualize what we have been discussing.

Abrahamic Covenant	Davidic Covenant	New Covenant	Jesus Christ
A Great Nation Gen. 12:1-3 Descendants: Gen. 15:5; 22:17-18 Land: Gen. 15:18			Jesus, Abraham's promised Son, Gen. 22:18; Matt 1:1, Gal. 3:16 is the Heir through whom God will gather Abraham's descendants, Gal. 3:29, and through whom they will inherit the earth upon His return, Rom.4:13.

A Great Name: Gen. 12:1-3 King(s) Gen. 17:6 	The Davidic Covenant, 2 Sam. 7:8-16 and 1 Chr. 17:7-14, guarantees David the dynasty that will rule over God's kingdom. David will have a Son who will always be king. This promise informs, Gen.17:6.		Jesus is identified as the Davidic Son who will rule on David's throne, Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3. Jesus has obeyed the Covenant and will one day establish and rule God's kingdom upon the earth, Heb. 9:28; 10:12-13.
A Great Blessing(s) Gen. 12:1-3 God's blessing to all the nations, Gen. 22:17-18		A New Covenant, Isa. 54—55; Ezek. 36—37; Jer. 31:31-34. God guarantees the worldwide blessing promised to Abraham, namely, that a new covenant would be made that would remove sin and death while granting life, resurrection, and His Spirit.	Jesus now functions as the High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant, Heb. 9:15; Acts 2:33, promised by God as the fulfillment of God's promise for worldwide blessing (salvation) to the nations through Abraham, Gal. 3:8.

V14 FOR IF THOSE WHO ARE OF THE LAW ARE HEIRS FAITH IS MADE VOID AND THE PROMISE IS NULLIFIED – Any system that requires our works renders the principle of faith useless, 3:27. By rendering faith inconsequential, the promises, unilaterally given and participated in by faith, Genesis 15:6, become void. If works of the law were essential the promises would require works for their authentication. Abraham, who did not have the law, would not be able to enjoy what God had promised. Further, if works of the law was a contingency for God keeping the promises, God would be dependent upon our faithfulness to grant the gift of righteousness and eternal life.³⁵

V15 FOR THE LAW BRINGS ABOUT WRATH – Rather than the idea that works of the law qualifies a person for the promises, Romans informs us that the law renders everyone guilty before God, 3:19-20. This guilt requires judgment. This judgment is God's wrath which is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, 1:18. Attempting to keep the law for righteousness ends in judgment and wrath. The promise, on the other hand, centers around

³⁵It is understood that there are many whose theological system requires that the "good works" /faithfulness required by God originate with God and are not dependent upon man. Ephesians 2:10 is often cited as proof of this position though it is due to an unfortunate rendering of the epi with the dative in Ephesians 2:10.

someone who has subjected Himself to God's wrath so that others may partake in the promise, 3:25.

V15 BUT indicates a contrast. In contrast to wrath under the Law, the removal of law removes the possibility of sin. Paul writes, WHERE THERE IS NO LAW, THERE IS ALSO NO VIOLATION. If there are no rules to violate there can be NOT VIOLATION. If there is no violation, there is no punishment. Paul repeats this idea again in 5:13 applying the precept to the imputation of Adam's sin upon the human race. Further, in chapters six and seven Paul describes how Christ's death and resurrection deliver the believer from the Law. For now, we might say that the work of Christ at the cross serves as the redemptive price, 3:24, for all under the condemnation of law. Christ died under the law to release those cursed by the law, Galatians 3:10-13. No longer under the law, 6:14, the believer is no longer be rendered guilty of transgressing the law. The reason for righteousness imputed through faith speaks to the completeness of the gospel. The promise and the Promised One, Christ, fully dealt with law. When there is no law there is no transgression. The promise is guaranteed through Christ and because of our freedom from law through Christ, Paul later writes, "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 8:1.

V16 FOR THIS REASON *IT IS* BY FAITH – The ESV, NET, NAS provide an ellipsis "it". Does "it" refer to the promise or to righteousness? Either choice makes sense. Either the promise depends on faith in order that the promise may rest upon grace, 3:16, or righteousness depends on faith in order that the believer may inherit the promise that rests upon grace.... The promise serves as the object of faith in God, i.e., Abraham believed God (about the promise). Christ is the fulfillment of the promise. Christ's faith/faithfulness is what God credits as righteousness. This righteousness stands as the requirement to participate in the promise. Thus, both the promise and the righteousness required are granted through faith by grace. The requirement of faith credited as righteousness guarantees the salvation inherent in the promise and this guarantee is apart from our works. Furthermore, the gift of righteousness leading to the promise through faith is IN ORDER THAT God's salvation *MAY BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GRACE*. Those who believe are guaranteed the promise because the promise does not depend upon works of law. The promise is granted by grace through faith. Additionally, the recipients include both those of the Jewish nation WHO ARE OF THE LAW and ALSO TO THOSE WHO ARE THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, namely, the Gentile nations. Through the promise all the nations of the earth will be blessed (salvation), Genesis 12:3, qualifying Abraham as THE FATHER OF US ALL.

Taking a closer look

GRACE

While the following is a brief overview of some of the meanings and themes embedded in the terms and concepts attached to grace, any treatment of grace seems academic and sterile in that grace is in and through

a Person, Christ, and serves as the spiritual “operating system” for life under the new covenant. The idea(s) encompassed by the word grace requires its own book(s). That said, let’s look at some of the terms and contexts for this all important theme.

Old Testament words conveying grace

- **chen: favor:** *Chen* denotes favor. This favor can be shown in a relationship with man or God, Genesis 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 39:4; Exodus 33:12³⁶; favor shown by God through His personal presence with His people, Exodus 33:16; by the forgiveness of sins and the adoption of His people as His heirs, Exodus 34:9; in allowing for land to be the inheritance of His people, Numbers 32:5; to the House of David, 1 Samuel 16:22; 2 Samuel 15:25; in resulting in the restoration of Israel, Jeremiah 31:2; and favor resulting in the final deliverance of Israel, Zechariah 12:10.
- **chesed: loyal love³⁷:** *Chesed*, a very important OT word and concept, contains the idea of kindness shown between men, 2 Samuel 9:1; Psalm 109:16; Micah 6:8; the character of God, Exodus 34:6,7; God’s dealing with earth and man, Psalm 33:5; 89:14; Jonah 4:2; the cornerstone quality of loyal love (kindness) to the covenant relationships which God has with His people, Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10; Psalm 106:45; Psalm 136; Psalm 89:28; Micah 7:8; Jeremiah 32:18; Psalm 86:5; 103:4,8.; the character quality basis of the Davidic covenant, Psalm 18:50; Isaiah 55:3; the basis of blessing (to the obedient), Psalm 62:12; 25:10; 32:10; and the basis of the restoration of Israel, Ezra 9:9; Jeremiah 31:3; 33:11.

New Testament words conveying grace

- **Charis³⁸ (and its derivatives):** The root meaning of the word *charis* is favor (charming words, Luke 4:22; thanksgiving, 1 Corinthians 15:57; giving, 2 Corinthians 8:7; a gift, 2 Corinthians 8:19; deliver, Romans 8:32; favor (human or divine), Luke 2:52; benefits, reward, credit, Luke 6:33,34; divine unmerited favor; Romans 11:6; the unmerited favor by which God provides, enacts, and enables salvation, Galatians 1:6; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:7; 1 Corinthians 15:10). Regarding our salvation grace denotes
 - favor apart from any merit, Romans 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9
 - favor found only in and through our Lord, Jesus Christ, John 1:17
 - The entire character of the Gospel, Galatians 1:6
 - Divine favor that provides God’s salvation, Titus 2:11
 - Divine favor that was the basis for the work of Christ, Hebrew 2:9
 - Divine favor that provides personal deliverance from sin and its consequences, Romans 5:15-16; Titus 3:7
 - Divine favor that applies salvation to individuals, Ephesians 1:3-14 (especially vv. 6-8); Galatians 1:15-16
 - Divine favor that enables man to respond to God, Acts 18:27; 1 Timothy 1:13-15
 - Divine favor that enables God’s people to serve the Lord, Acts 4:33; Ephesians 3:7; 1 Corinthians 3:10; 15:10; 2 Timothy 2:1; Hebrews 13:9; Galatians 5:4; John 1:16
 - The divine favor that leads to the eternal inheritance of glory as the culmination of salvation for the righteous, 1 Peter 5:10; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:17; 1 Peter 1:10,13.

³⁶Of the 130 + uses *chen* denotes ‘favor’ throughout. to stoop, to bend; condescending favor, Judges 21:22; Jeremiah 31:2; undeserved favor, 2 Chronicles 30:9. The consequences of this favor provide insights into OT salvation.

³⁷Expresses relationship; conveys the guaranteed lovingkindness (favor) between related parties, Psalm 6:4 (deliverance); Psalm 85:6-9 (enablement); Psalm 143:8 (guidance); Psalm 33:18 (preservation); Numbers 14:19 (forgiveness).

³⁸Some of the meanings afforded to *charis*: charming words, Luke 4:22; thanksgiving, 1 Corinthians 15:57; giving, 2 Corinthians 8:7; a gift, 2 Corinthians 8:19; deliver, Romans 8:32; favor (human or divine), Luke 2:52; benefits, reward, credit, Luke 6:33,34; divine unmerited favor; Romans 11:6; the unmerited favor by which God provides, enacts, and enables salvation, Galatians 1:6; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:7; 1 Corinthians 15:10.

The application of the concept 'Grace'

Grace results in the sustenance of life: 'common' grace: Common grace refers to God's unmerited favor toward all humanity. This grace displays itself in general works of care and kindness, Psalm 145:8,9. Common grace also applies morally in that the Holy Spirit exercises moral influence and restraint upon humanity, and providentially as God provides sunshine, rain, food, and safety.

Grace resulting in righteousness: Through this providential grace God effectively draws a person unto faith resulting in righteousness, John 6:37-40,44; Galatians 1:15,16; Acts 18:27; 1 Timothy 1:14,15; 2 Timothy 1:9,10. The order of events in salvation may be listed as: 1) illumination/conviction; 2) call; 3) faith; 3) justification; 4) regeneration.

Grace resulting in a believers' inheritance, God's grace has been provided for the Christian, Romans 12:3; 1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:7. God's grace is available to live the Christian life, 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; John 1:16. God's grace may be spurned, Galatians 5:4; 2 Corinthians 6:1. God's grace must be pursued and received, 2 Timothy 2:1; Hebrews 13:9; 10:29. Finally, God's grace effectually mobilizes and enables the Christian to accomplish and become all that God's plan has ordained, 1 Corinthians 15:10. Finally, the Christian's response to God's plan is by God's grace enlivening the believer, Romans 12:3-6; 1 Peter 4:10.

Conclusion: Grace denotes favor. Regarding salvation this favor originates with God and is characterized as being wholly without any human merit. God's grace is personified and available through the Lord Jesus Christ, John 1:14,16-17. This divine favor, through Christ, provides and applies salvation to humanity. God, by grace, chooses, quickens, justifies, enables, transforms, and provides the means for an eternal inheritance. Thus, grace is the unmerited divine enablement that provides and applies salvation leading to the glorification of the redeemed humanity and creation resulting in the glory of God, consider Ephesians 2:4-10. As the law is energized by the flesh and subject to sin's governance, the Christian is now "under grace," 6:14. The Christian is enlivened by the Holy Spirit who administers the grace of the life of Christ. Grace, one might say, is God's spiritual operating system. No longer dependent upon our ability to keep God's laws we live through the life of Christ in us. He is the perfect man who has perfectly fulfilled God's will.

V16 TO ALL THE DESCENDANTS – See Galatians 3:29. Faith, and not law, opens the way for both Jew and Gentile to be heirs of the promise. Abraham believed before the law was given. Now, through faith, Abraham's offspring includes everyone who believes the promise. The promise (see the chart above and Galatians 3:10-29) focuses upon Christ. To be Abraham's offspring qualifies one to be heir of the promise. While the believing Israelite is the Israel of God, Galatians 6:16, anyone who believes in Christ, a new creation, is the true circumcision, Philippians 3:3, and a part of the Body of Christ. As Abraham preceded Israel, Abraham was not an Israelite. Abraham, just stated, is the father of all who believe.

V17 See Genesis 17:5. The Abrahamic covenant included all the nations of the earth, Genesis 12:3; 22:18. Every believer in God's promise for righteousness through Christ, Jew or Gentile, can consider themselves to be Abraham's descendant and an heir according to the promise. In Genesis 17:5 God changes Abram's name (lit. exalted father) to Abraham (lit. father of a multitude) to reflect the scope of the promise/covenant. Further, as Paul begins to transition his readers toward Christ and the resurrection, we are reminded that God is the One WHO GIVES LIFE TO THE DEAD. Abraham's faith in God's promise connects objectively with the gospel. Not only did Abraham model faith, Abraham modeled faith in the new creation and life from the dead, both ideas are embedded in the gospel message. In

Abraham's spiritual journey, God delayed the promise of a child until both Abraham and Sarah were unable to reproduce. Regarding the ability to bear a child, their bodies were as good as dead, 4:19. To believe God's promise regarding a child would now require belief that God would do the impossible, namely, give life to the dead and to bring into existence something from nothing. See also Hebrews 11:19. Abraham believes that God CALLS INTO BEING THAT WHICH DOES NOT EXIST. The promise embraces the idea of creation. Abraham believed God could bring into existence something that DOES NOT EXIST. This is quite different than someone creating something from raw materials. Abraham's faith went beyond the realm of human possibility and experience. So too, Christ's resurrection represents an event that transcends the realm of human possibility and experience.

V18 Abraham's circumstances transcended human possibility. His hope had to transcend the ability of man to hope. The phrase IN HOPE AGAINST HOPE sheds light on the simple sentence HE BELIEVED...ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH HAD BEEN SPOKEN. The preposition AGAINST can have a range of meanings (*spatial*: by, alongside of, near, on; *Comparison*: compared to, more than; *Opposition*: against, contrary to). The idea here is probably "against hope." Looking at his circumstances Abraham had no hope. Trusting in God, Abraham had hope. Abraham had divine hope over and against the circumstances crushing any human hope. Because God promised, Abraham believed.

V19 WITHOUT BECOMING WEAK IN FAITH HE CONTEMPLATED HIS OWN BODY, NOW AS GOOD AS DEAD— Abraham understood his circumstances and he understood God's promise. In the face of his circumstances Abraham remained resolute. His trust was God's promise. The miracle for which Abraham trusted God was the "resurrection" of his and his wife's body.

V20 – Abraham was seventy-five years old when God first promised descendants, Genesis 12:4. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, Genesis 21:5. For twenty-five years Abraham had to reflect upon God's promises without seeing any progress or possibility. In fact, the possibilities disappeared with Abraham's own loss of reproductive abilities. Despite these years, however, Abraham GREW STRONG IN FAITH. God uses time to transform us into the people He has planned us to be. All these years were opportunities to give GLORY TO GOD, that is, allow his life to put God on display.

V21 BEING FULLY ASSURED— Now we see the character of faith. Verse twenty-one provides the inside look into Abraham's disposition. His faith was a full assurance of conviction, cp. Hebrews 11:1. Abraham was fully assured that WHAT GOD HAD PROMISED HE WAS ALSO ABLE TO PERFORM. In this short epitaph we are given one of the clearest definitions of faith. To believe God is to be fully convinced that what He has said is true and certain. Regarding the gospel relating to our spiritual life, faith responds in the same manner as Abraham. God

has raised Christ from the dead; God has made us alive together with Christ, Ephesians 2:4; Romans 6:5, and Christ, by the Spirit now lives in us, through us, by faith, Galatians 2:20; Colossian 2:6.

Taking a Closer Look

FAITH

Perhaps our closer look at faith is one of the more important digressions we might make. What is faith? What must I really do to be acquitted?

The lexical meaning of “believe,” “faith”

Old Testament. 1) *ʾmn* – Of the various words in the group indicating “believe, belief, trust;” *aman* communicates the idea of a ‘firm trust,’ Genesis 15:6 “to be steady, firm, trust in”. Abraham responded with confidence in the God who made His promise. Thus, faith understood here depicts a response of trust. 2) *bth* depicts a confidence of mind such as “to feel secure;” to have a “secure frame of mind.” Consider Hezekiah’s “trust/hope” in YHWH found in 2 Kings 18—19; Isaiah 36—37; 2 Chronicles 32. Combining these two word groups we discover that the primary Hebrew concept regarding “faith” involves believing and trusting.³⁹

New Testament. The verb “believe” (trust as true; to be certain of) and the noun “faith” are of the same root. Lexical studies of the Hebrew *ʾamen* and the Greek word *pisteuo* indicate that the words simply refer to “trust,” “have confidence in,” “believe to be true.” Contextual studies indicate that the words have no additional conditions added to them such as continued works or continued “trust,” (e.g., Number 20:12 in which the aorist indicative of *pisteuo* (LXX) is used of both Moses and Aaron). Faith/believe should be understood as simple concepts, consider John 20:24-29.

The contextual uses of “believe” “faith,” Romans 4:21; Hebrews 11:1⁴⁰

- Romans 4:21—Abraham had a firm confidence in the promises and the abilities of God.
- Hebrews 11:1—Faith is assurance and conviction of that which has been proposed but which is not yet seen.

Conclusion: Believing and trusting are responses every human experiences every day. Faith is the “normal human response” to that which we deem true. Humanly speaking, the reliability of one’s faith/confidence/trust depends on our assessment about the **fact(s) of testimony, the source of testimony, and the content (object) of the testimony**. While the Bible assumes all these factors involved with the act of believing, the emphasis in the Bible concerns the object of one’s faith, not faith in faith (consider Luke 17:5-10). Faith involves assurance (i.e. substantial nature, cp. Hebrews 1:3) of that which is hoped for, and the confident trust that something is true. Faith involves inner conviction about those things that are not seen. Faith is not a decision (what we do about what we believe may be described as a decision); rather, faith is a response of trusting conviction to that which one considers true.⁴¹

³⁹George J. Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace: Exegetical Considerations of Key Anthropological, Hamartiological and Soteriological Terms and Motifs* (Little Rock AR: 2002), 172-77.

⁴⁰Fred Chay and John P. Correia, *The Faith that Saves: The Nature of Faith in the New Testament* (USA: Schoettle Publishing Company, 2008), 22-53.

⁴¹Jerry Vines, “Sermon on John 3:16,” in, *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 25. “A sovereign God has given every person the faculty of faith and a will to exercise it (see Rom 12:3). This does not rob God of His sovereignty. Humans exercise the faculty of faith every day. They trust that their spouse is not poisoning them, so they eat their breakfast. They trust the banker to keep their money safe so they make their deposit...As Norman Geisler

The idea of responding to the gospel with “saving” faith is more about the source (God), and the object (Christ’s Person and work), resulting in trust. Thus, “saving” faith includes knowledge (the object of faith), conviction (the assurance that the knowledge is true), and trust (the commitment to the conviction). Faith includes both repentance (change of mind) and belief (trust in the content). Saving faith believes that Jesus Christ died both for sin and for personal sins, rose from the dead, and offers eternal life to anyone who will believe God about Christ, according to the promises God made. The unfortunate experience of some who seem to fall short of a spiritual transformation may simply reflect a misplaced trust (e.g., and religious tradition or action; and experience; or a confidence in something other than God’s word about Christ).

Elements leading to faith.

Every human being lives by faith. We all put our trust in someone, something. For a rational human being to make a faith conclusion certain factors come into play.

Faith Needs proposition in which to believe

- Faith isn’t merely faith in faith. To have faith we must have faith in something. That something generates and comes to from someone. Whether we like it or not faith requires a testimony, consider that the Bible agrees with this assessment, John 5:31-47; 10:38; 20:24-29; 20:31. Testimony (as used here) represents a declaration. To have saving/ justifying faith in God we consider the validity of God’s testimony/declaration about His Son. Four testify about the Son: John the Baptist, John 5:31-35; Jesus’ works, 5:36; also Jn 10:38; the Father’s voice/presence, 5:37-38; Scripture, 5:39; consider also, Romans 10:17.
- Saving faith believes the propositions about our sin, God’s Son, and the validity of Christ’s redemptive work and God’s promises.

From a trustworthy source

Faith considers the source of a given proposition. If our experiences discount the credibility of a statement oftentimes the source of what we are asked to believe comes into play. Regarding our faith in spiritual matters this same factor impacts our trust.

- Initially our faith in Christ finds its source in the content of Scripture, Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.
- Ultimately our faith in the Scriptures rest with our confidence about the existence and nature of God, consider Hebrews 11:6.

To respond with a confident conviction

Content of testimony must correspond to what is already assumed as plausible or factual. Today I hear of many ‘conspiracies.’ My response to any of these rumors is based upon the reality-grids in my mind. These reality-grids serves as the filter (right or wrong) through which I evaluate new information and respond with hesitation or confidence. When there are many barriers that must be overcome any ‘conviction’ lacks confidence. Consider 1 Samuel 20:1-34. As a secular (non-theological) example of belief and trust, Jonathan had to overcome his belief about the character and intentions of his father concerning David. The same is true about the Gospel. There are many objections to the simple message about Christ. Sometimes these need to be overcome by reason and/or evidence. Regardless of the immediate means necessary for a person to believe, God is the One who, through providential (overcoming) grace draws a person to a saving conviction and trust. Through God’s grace our faith ultimately is a response in confidence that the proposition God has made about salvation through Christ is trustworthy and considered to be true.

Obstacles to faith/trust in God

The natural human condition

Because of sin in the flesh, the mind set on the flesh does not consider the voice of God through the Spirit, see Romans 8:5-8. Elsewhere in Scripture this idea is re-enforced and expanded, consider:

says about humans’ capacity to choose—it has been ‘effaced, not erased; limited, not lost; damaged, not destroyed.’ God commands us to believe.” Ibid.

- John 3:19 our moral preference is darkness.
- John 5:40 our “unwillingness.” Because of our moral preferences we resist.
- John 5:44 our “wrong focus.” We have placed our confidence/trust/fait in other things.
- John 6:1-12, 16-21, 60-69 our “unpreparedness.” We are not ready for God’s truth.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14, our natural “inability” to understand. See also Romans 1:21, 24, 26, 28; Eph 4:17-19.
- 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 the influence of false and other ideas embedded in our culture “by evil-supernaturalism.”

The Christian’s condition

When we trust Christ as Savior we bring to our faith-response many of our embedded flesh-patterns/beliefs. For example:

- Roman 7:14-24 – we are still trusting self to accomplish good, see also 2 Cor 3:4.
- Hebrews 3:12-13 – we are still affected by sin.
- 2 Timothy 2:14-18 – We are still infected by false doctrine/ideas.
- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 – we may still be influenced by evil-supernaturalism.

The Christian, though in essence a new creation, can, through the presence of sin, the world system, and evil supernaturalism, fail to believe God’s testimony about His Son and our life in the Son at almost every level. Due to our pre-disposition, believing/trusting God’s testimony (for the non-Christian and Christian) can have great obstacles resulting in that we do not embrace certain spiritual propositions as true, the source of the proposition as reliable, and, thus, we are not able/willing to respond with confidence. Through embedded misunderstanding and misguided ‘false’ teaching, we can lose our way as well as our confidence. God, however, remains faithful, consider 2 Timothy 2:13.

The necessity to believe/trust God’s testimony, Hebrews 11:6

Our responsibility/response toward God is trust

Certain key passages underscore the responsibility to believe God’s testimony about the death and resurrection of Jesus, John 3:16; John 6:47; Acts 16:31; Romans 3:26-28; 4:3-5; 5:1-2; 10:6-13, 14-17; 1 Cor 15:11; Galatians 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 5:9-13.

The content and character of our trust includes

- The conviction that Jesus is the Guarantor of eternal life, John 6:47. The gospel requires a person to believe that God, through Jesus Christ, can and will forgive sins, give eternal life, and guarantee us an eternal relationship with God. Biblical faith insists that all this is true because Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead and God the Father grants these benefits. Believing this report to be true is God’s required “work” for eternal life, John 6:28-29.
- Personal faith includes two main components. The first component of faith is repentance (literally, “change of mind”). Repent/repentance is often used interchangeably with faith when stressing the response necessary regarding the content of one’s beliefs. Repent and believe represent the complete idea behind faith. Accepting something as true demands that we simultaneously “change our minds” about that which is contrary (repent) and accept as true (believe) a different proposition, consider Mark 1:15. Repent emphasizes leaving our old focus, while believe emphasizes the new focus of what we consider true. Faith (changing one’s mind/ accepting as true) is not a work, but a response to God Word about His gracious work. This response results from the illuminating impact of God’s self-revelation, 10:17 (cp. John 16:8-15), and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, which is only possible through God’s providential grace.

Summary

Believing (responding as true to) God’s testimony about His Son (the finished work of the cross and the resurrection from the dead) results in God regenerating the human spirit and gifting everlasting life in Christ. All that God has said is true, and we are granted God’s gift of life when we trust that what God has said about the Son is true. Trust is the response/obedience which God’s desires, Romans 1:5; 16:26 and will lead to further relational acts of faithfulness.

Believing/trusting God's testimony about the *life* of His Son

Believing God for 'salvation' is just the beginning. Certain key passages that indicate "faith" is the correct and continual response/responsibility for the Christian in living the Christian life. The Bible says:

- "The Righteous shall live by faith," Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38
- "for we walk by faith not by sight," 2 Corinthians 5:7
- "But that [life] which I am now living in flesh [as a human with its inherent weaknesses], in/by faith I am living in/by/with the Son of God," Gal 2:20b

Closing Comment

Today there is ongoing discussion about the nature of faith, i.e., faith that works; faith alone/never alone. James 2:14-26⁴² is often cited as proof that saving faith produces "works," i.e., produces visible, sustained works. Further, it is argued that any other view lessening this works-quality of faith cheapens salvation by reducing faith to mere cognitive assent, which is deficient for salvation. This cheapened view is often called 'easy believism.'

The evidence is Scripture, however, seems to support faith as simply (not merely) a response of confidence/trust to a proposition/circumstance (based upon cognitive grace assisted assessment). While trusting a proposition/circumstance may be simple, but it is not easy. Regarding the nature of "works" as proof of faith, it may be best to locate the discussion about works under "proof of life." Regenerative life, 'the Spirit of Life in Christ,' Romans 8:2, should be the primary focus of such discussions, not the nature of faith.

V22 THEREFORE—Paul uses THEREFORE to show that Abraham's faith is what God credits as righteousness. Confident trust in God is the work/response God desires, John 6:29.

V23 NOW NOT FOR HIS SAKE ONLY WAS IT WRITTEN— Faith in God's Word for our right standing with God has always been God's model for justification. To reenforce this thought Paul connects the Abrahamic example to the present day. This account about Abraham was not simply for and about Abraham. This account was recorded FOR OUR SAKE ALSO, 4:24.

V24 IT WILL BE CREDITED—God's gift of righteousness will be reckoned/imputed to those WHO BELIEVE God's message about Christ. Just as Abraham believed God's promise about life from the dead and re-creation, those who believe IN HIM WHO RAISED JESUS OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD are declared righteous. The Christian faith is not merely another religious tradition, e.g., services, sermons, doctrinal statements, and social practices. The Christian faith is the full assurance of conviction that God raised Jesus from the dead for our justification. The gospel is a message based upon historical reality and backed by the reality of the promise of God.

V25 DELIVERED OVER BECAUSE OF OUR TRANSGRESSIONS— Succinctly stated, Jesus was delivered up by God, Acts 2:23, BECAUSE OF OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, the just for the unjust, 1 Peter 3:18. His death took away the sins of the world, John 1:29. Yet as important as Christ's death is, even more importantly, Jesus, who died, was raised from the dead and this

⁴²Without digressing from Romans, the context of James 2:14-26 is best understood to be a judgment of the believers works not the validity of one's saving faith leading to salvation. The text is sandwiched between statements of a believer's judgment, 2:12-13; 3:1. Both Abraham and Rahab were believers when their tests of faith qualified them for the reward of blessing. Their "works" justified the reward. Salvation (eternal life) is not a part of James' context, 2:1—3:1.

resurrection becomes the basis for our acquittal. Christ was RAISED BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION. Christ's resurrection authenticates God's work at the cross, 1 Corinthians 15:17; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21. To that fact, we, like Abraham, are invited to respond to God with the full assurance that what God promised He has done. He gives life to the dead and calls into existence that which does not exist.

Summary of the Text

God made a covenant of promise to Abraham which is guaranteed by grace apart from works of the law. Additionally, Abraham's faith in God's promise serves as the biblical paradigm for anyone who will be a benefactor of the promise. Abraham believed God could raise the dead and create from nothing. Ultimately, Christ's death and resurrection are the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. Today we believe God's promise to Abraham with our immediate focus being the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus has been raised from the dead and His glorified, new creation has come into existence from that which did not exist.

F. Demonstrating God's love, Christ's righteous obedience establishes peace with God, making possible the hope of sharing in God's promised glory, 5:1-11.

Chapter five begins to detail the impact of Christ's substitutionary work on the cross (this discussion continues through 8:39). Here we discover that through Christ the believer now has peace with God (reconciliation) and, being delivered from wrath, experiences the triumph of Christ's righteousness which secures eternal life through the reign of grace to the hope of God's glory. Christ's obedience to the Father reverses the curse of death incurred through one man's disobedience. Rather than God's enmity and wrath, those in Christ have friendship (family) and peace.

The text with grammatical notes

1 Therefore having been justified^{apptc} from faith we have^{pai} peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ **2** through whom also we have^{pfai} the access by faith into this grace in which we stand^{pfai} and we are boasting^{pmi} in the hope of God's glory. **3** But not only [that], but we boast^{pmi} in the distresses, knowing^{pfaptc43} that the distress brings about perseverance **4** and the perseverance approved character, and the approved character hope. **5** Now the hope does not shame^{pai} because God's love has been poured out^{pfpi} in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given^{api} to us.

6 For yet Christ, while we were helpless,⁴⁴ yet at the proper time on behalf of the ungodly, He died. **7** For rarely on behalf of the righteous will someone die^{fai}; for on behalf of a good person perhaps someone dares^{pai} to die^{painf}; **8** But God demonstrates^{pai} His own love for us⁴⁵ because while

⁴³ I take the perfect ptc to be stating a reason "because knowing"

⁴⁴ ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν genitive absolute indicating a temporal quality "while we were helpless."

⁴⁵ The original word order emphasizes the love toward us. Literally rendered this sentence would read, "now demonstrates His own love toward us God"

we are being^{paptc} yet sinners⁴⁶ Christ died^{aai} on our behalf. **9** Therefore much more having now been justified^{paptc} in⁴⁷ His blood we will be saved^{fpi} from the wrath, **10** For if while being^{paptc} enemies we have been reconciled^{api} to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled^{apptc} we will be saved^{fpi} in His life; **11** but not only [this], but boasting^{pmptc} in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received^{aai} the reconciliation.

Observations from the text

V1 THEREFORE— With THEREFORE (‘on account of this’) Paul begins to bring the entire discussion from chapters three and four to its conclusion. Because of faith in Christ’s death and resurrection Paul now tells us “we have peace,” that is, we, the ones who have believed God about Christ, do not have to fear God’s wrath, 5:9.

V1 HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH— The participle HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED plays an important supporting role in a believer’s relationship with God. The idea of acquittal modifies our understanding of the main verb, WE HAVE PEACE. Because of the tense (past tense), the reader is assured that the divine gift of acquittal, Christ’s imputed righteousness, is already a reality. This gift of righteous standing with God is a fact for all who believe that God has raised Christ from the dead on their behalf. The passive voice tells us that this justification isn’t anything we did, rather our justification came from outside of ourselves. It is because we are acquitted (justification), that WE HAVE PEACE. The divine Judge no longer has an issue. Peace (reconciliation) has been made.⁴⁸ Rather than a reference to inner tranquility, this peace refers to the cessation of relational hostility. This peace is WITH GOD. Finally, our relational peace with God is THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is the death of Christ that satisfies God’s righteous demands bringing an end to His enmity with mankind, consider 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

V2 INTO THIS GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND— Justification and the peace (reconciliation) believers have with God is the GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND. There is nothing meritorious about anyone that would require God to acquit the sinner. Throughout Paul’s letter to the Romans the idea of grace singularly focuses upon everything God has accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ as well as the spiritual operating system for spiritual transformation and service, 6:14. Chapters three, four, and five, ending with 6:14 continually refer to redemption, 3:24, the promises, 4:16, the triumphal reign, 5:20-21, and the position of the believer, 6:14, as being all of God’s grace. And it is because our salvation is all of grace

⁴⁶ὅτι ἔτι ἀμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν -- genitive absolute indicating contemporaneous temporal value to the time of the main verb.

⁴⁷Certainly “in” *en*+dative could be rendered instrumental “by” (both here and in the very next prepositional phrase “in His life”).

⁴⁸Aware of the manuscript discrepancies regarding “we have peace” (indicative) and “let us have peace” (hortatory subjunctive), I maintain the preferred reading “we have peace.”

that WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD. It is through God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, not our own worthiness, achievements, or faithfulness, that secures our glorious future. For this gift of hope WE REJOICE. When associated with God's provisions through Christ the idea of HOPE always involves a certainty that has not yet been realized, cp. 8:25. The hope believers have regarding THE GLORY OF GOD includes our final transformation, Philippians 3:21, our share in Christ's kingdom, Colossians 1:12-14, the restoration of creation, 8:21-23, and the glorious praise our redemption brings to God Ephesians 1:12 ; 2:7.

Taking a closer look

FUTURE GLORY (in Romans, esp. Romans 8:17-25,30)

We have discussed "salvation," at length, see chapter one. Glorification is an aspect of salvation; therefore, we will make this brief.

Glorification refers to the final state of the justified. This final state is more than personal transformation (i.e., the resurrected body. 8:21). In Romans the final glorification of the just involves the participation in a future judgment that will, for some, issue forth rewards involving honor and glory (eternal life), 2:5-7. Abraham, by faith, received righteous standing that made possible that he and his offspring could inherit the world (4:13). In Paul's writings, Abraham's offspring is specifically a reference to Jesus Christ and those who follow Christ by faith (Galatians 3:16,29). For the followers of Christ to be a fellow-heir with Jesus, Paul places conditions of faithfulness, 8:17.

Thus, future glory involves the glorified state of the resurrected (to all the just), the freedom of all creation from the bondage to sin and death, and the participation in the rewards of Christ's inheritance (for the just who demonstrated faithfulness), 8:17-23.

V3 NOT ONLY THIS—There is more to rejoice about than the future. The Christian's joy (WE ALSO EXULT) also includes the troubles of this life (remember Abraham's troubles). While this seems contrary to reason, we learn through Paul's letters that God has left us here in this fallen environment so that we might participate with the fullness of Christ, consider 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Our suffering is likened to Christ's with the result our suffering is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit transforms the Christian. Through our fellowship in Christ's suffering God's love impacts our hearts, consider Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Philippians 3:10, as it did Christ's, Hebrews 5:8-9. Our joy in tribulation is through KNOWING THAT TRIBULATION BRINGS ABOUT PERSEVERANCE (As a believer we join our Savior in suffering. Our suffering produces an enduring/persevering disposition) AND PERSEVERANCE, PROVEN CHARACTER. The endurance developed within us by the Holy Spirit through suffering transforms our character. This character can be understood as PROVEN, that is, having stood the test (as with metals which have been refined) cp. 1 Peter 1:6-9. This tested character produces HOPE. The changes, challenges, and troubles of life produce the perseverance of faith through life and the tested character that is grounded in God's hope about life that corresponds with Abraham's hope against hope (4:18). As Abraham endured in hope twenty-five years before realizing the promised son, so we endure and grow in character that hopes (has confidence in God's promise). While we often fall

victim to ideas that include God's abandonment or the futility of faithfulness, troubles are God's way of purging the worship of self and focusing our allegiance upon Jesus.

V5 Furthermore, we learn that HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT. God's hope (guaranteed by promise upon grace through Christ) will not lead to shame (disappointment due to failure and the shame/ embarrassment of experiencing this failure). Consider the similar context and language in Psalm 22:5, a psalm born from David's afflictions and is forward looking to the sufferings of Christ. The result of faithful perseverance is the discovery that God is faithful and the promises are real.

V5 BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT WITHIN OUR HEARTS— The reason hope does not disappoint is because God's love (demonstrated through the cross, 5:8) HAS BEEN POURED OUT WITHIN OUR HEARTS. Our trials bring out the best in God. Our trials reenforce the conviction that God has loved us. Through Christ God's love has already been poured out in our hearts (the core of our beings). This redemptive love is given as the reason as to why hope will not disappoint. It is God's love already given that guarantees the final realization of the hope God has promised to Abraham and into which promise we stand, 8:39. It is because of God's love that this hope (a glorious future), the hope of God's righteousness, is secure. Our full acquittal (justification) given as a gift is because of God's love demonstrated in Christ toward us and received by us, like Abraham, from faith apart from works, guarantees the hope of glory yet to come, consider 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17. And our present experience of this future hope is not self-induced. We experience the reality of God's love THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit is the agent through Whom we experience God's love (the reality of the redemption which is ours through Christ) and the transformation of our character from self to Christ.⁴⁹

V6 FOR WHILE WE WERE STILL HELPLESS— The idea that God helps those who help themselves does not come from God's plan for salvation. God's deliverance for us was not due to our ability. Quite the opposite. Because WE WERE...HELPLESS (a better rendering of the original intent) God sent His Son. The lessons we should have received from attempting to keep the law, 3:19-20, is that salvation is impossible through self-effort. God saves a helpless/weak race. Christ's strength is perfected in weakness, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

VV6-7 CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY – Christ did not die for those who were showing promise. Christ died for those who were ungodly, that is, according to the immediate context, Christ died for those who were helpless, without moral scruples or values, sinners, 5:8, and enemies of God through our continual self-authentication, 5:10.

⁴⁹Romans 7:4—8:27 will focus upon the indispensable role which the Holy Spirit has in our transformation

V8 GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US – The verb is present tense. God’s demonstration of love is in the present because the death of Christ is always real, Christ’s death is a historic fact. CHRIST DIED (aorist/past tense). God’s love cannot be disputed or proven false. Christ’s death for the human race is a fact (historically true). Further, God’s love demonstrated through Christ’s death was not after we demonstrated worthiness, rather, Christ died for us WHILE WE WERE YET (still) SINNERS.

V9 Since we, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD (BY HIS BLOOD serves as direct reference to the nature of Christ’s death and the shedding of blood necessary, under the Law, for the remission of sins, Hebrews 9:12,22) MUCH MORE, that is, even greater, shall we be SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD THROUGH HIM. God’s love perpetually demonstrated through the singular death of His Son rescues the believer from God’s wrath (remember 1:18; 2:5,8). We are saved from God’s wrath by Christ’s sacrificial blood and resurrected life.

V10 FOR IF WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES – Paul’s reasoning, FOR, is simple yet profound. To underscore the idea of God’s love Paul reminds us Christ died WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES. Each of us were more than merely sinners, we were enemies. Humanity is hostile toward the God of the Bible, remember 3:10-18. The flesh is hostile toward God, 8:7. To think otherwise is to be gravely mistaken. People may be religious (consider 1:23), but when the Bible (God’s Word) is part of the discussion religion and its traditions take exception to God’s grace. The Christian faith is not another religion. The Christian faith is a living relationship with God by grace through Christ by the Spirit. We are accepted based on and because of *unmerited* favor. Further, WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON not our merit. God was in Christ Jesus reconciling (see Taking a Closer Look, Reconciliation, below) the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19. From God’s standpoint, the enmity between God and man could only be resolved through divine intervention. Now because of Christ there is the possibility of a personal relationship. The reconciliation was one sided and it occurred while we were still God’s enemies.

V10 MUCH MORE...WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE – There is even greater news. If Christ’s death removed the enmity between God and man wasn’t great enough, Paul now tells us that there is MUCH MORE, that is, in a greater way, Christ’s life, namely, the ongoing ministry of our resurrected, interceding High Priest, who sits at the right hand of the Father, saves/delivers us from the coming wrath.

V11 AND NOT ONLY THIS— But wait, there’s more. Having given us two reasons for rejoicing, 5:2-5, Paul now adds a third. WE ALSO EXULT IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The reason for this joy and rejoicing? WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE RECONCILIATION. We have peace with God. More importantly, God is at peace with us and we have received His peace. Though we will later discover that our relationship with God by the Spirit is that of

Father/child, 8:15-16, for now we learn that our new relationship with God does not await a further work of redemption. The verb tense (aorist/past) stresses the historical fact/ reality. We have NOW RECEIVED THE RECONCILIATION. The reason for our exultation/rejoicing will be further explained in 5:12-21. As this chapter concludes Paul explains how the obedience of one man, Christ, removed the curse of sin and death. By God's grace the justified are now freed from Adam's curse and experience Christ's righteousness unto eternal life, 5:21.

Taking a closer look

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation refers to the change in relationship between God and humanity because of the death of Christ. Apart from Christ's death God's necessary relationship with mankind was that of judge and executioner. Now, because Christ's death has satisfied God's justice, 3:25-26, God's relationship with the world is characterized by peace.

- The verb translated "to reconcile" *katallasso*, means "to change thoroughly." The Greek world used this word to picture the restoration of original understanding between people after hostility or displeasure. Hence, the relationship has been thoroughly changed.

Key passages depicting reconciliation.

- Romans 5:10 clearly pictures reconciliation.
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 depicts God initiating and accomplishing the reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 2:12-16 demonstrates that reconciliation is at the heart of the new humanity. Not only have the redeemed been reconciled to God but we have been reconciled from the divisions that stood between us as nations. Consider also Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20.
- Believers now may carry on the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:19, through which others may come to terms with what God has accomplished through Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Concluding thoughts

Reconciliation results from both the removal of sin ("not counting their trespasses against them," 2 Corinthians 5:19) and the gift of righteousness, 5:1. The death of Christ paid the debt. The resurrection guaranteed justification. God has made His peace with us through the propitiatory ministry of His Son, 3:25-26. We are to encourage others to make their peace with God, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Summary of the text

Because of the gift of righteousness by grace through faith the believer has multiple reasons for rejoicing. First, we are assured of a hope for a glorious future. Second we now know that this hope for a glorious future is strengthened because of the trials/troubles we experience while waiting for our completed salvation. Our present suffering results in an enduring transformation as we experience the redemptive love of God through the Holy Spirit. Thus, we not only rejoice in hope, we rejoice in our sufferings because of what these trials produce, glorious reward in the coming messianic kingdom. Finally, while the death of Christ, which demonstrates God's love for the world, serves as the vehicle by which God reconciles the world to Himself (cp. 2 Cor 5:19). Now the life of Christ serves as the vehicle by which God more than guarantees the believer's deliverance from God's wrath reigning by grace unto eternal life.

G. Our eternal life is assured through the reign of God's grace because of the righteous obedience of Jesus Christ, 5:12-21

Christ's life saves us from God's wrath, 5:10. Paul now explains how this salvation takes place. By contrasting Christ's obedient life and its consequences with Adam's disobedience and its consequences, the Apostle shows how the perfect man, Jesus, satisfies all God's requirements for our salvation, 5:12-21.

The text with grammatical notations

12 Because of this, just as through one man, the sin⁵⁰ entered^{aai} into the world and through this⁵¹ sin death [entered], and so to every human this⁵² death spread^{aai}, because of whom/which⁵³ all sinned^{aai}; **13** because until Law sin was^{impfai} in the world, but sin is not being charged to one's account^{ppi} while there is^{paptc} no Law **14** but death reigned^{aai} from Adam until Moses even upon those who have not sinned^{aaptc} in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is^{pai} an example of the one coming^{paptc}. **15** But not as the transgression, even so [is] the gift; for if⁵⁴ by the one trespass⁵⁵ the many died^{aai}, [then] much more God's grace, [that is] even the gift in grace by the one man Jesus Christ for the many abounded^{aai}.⁵⁶ **16** And not as through one having sinned^{aaptc} [is] the gift, for, on one hand, the judgment from one results in⁵⁷ condemnation, but, on the other hand, the grace-gift

⁵⁰While it would not be unusual for the subject to have the definite article, I believe that Paul's use of the definite article regarding the original/ first "sin" and its consequences. This article may well be a referral to the specific sin that changed the fabric of the universe. Paul repeats the article in this verse, "through *the* sin". Another example might also be Ephesians 2:2 where he refers to humanity as the "sons of *the* disobedience."

⁵¹The definite article has been translated "this" to denote the specific Adamic sin mentioned earlier, thus, the article of previous reference. See previous footnote.

⁵²The definite article refers to the specific consequence referenced in this verse. The death incurred through Adam's sin is the same death that spread to everyone.

⁵³ The phrase ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον may be render in a variety of ways. C.E.B. Cranfield provides six possibilities. 1) to take ᾧ as masculine with ὁ θάνατος as it's antecedent. 2) to take ᾧ as masculine with ἐνός ἀνθρώπου as its antecedent, and ἐπί as equivalent to ἐν. 3) as (2) but taking ἐπί in the sense "because of." 4) to take ἐφ' ᾧ as a conjunction meaning "because of" understanding ἥμαρτον to refer to not to men's sinning in their own persons but to their participation in Adam's transgression (thus combining the essential theological idea of (2) with the grammatical explanation of ἐφ' ᾧ as a conjunction. 5) as (4), but understanding ἥμαρτον to refer to men's sinning in their own persons quite independently of Adam, though after his example. 6) as in (4), but understanding ἥμαρτον to refer to men's sinning in their own persons but as a result of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam. Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. one, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1975), 274-75.

⁵⁴First class condition. The "If...then" states an actual existing reality.

⁵⁵Dative of means/instrument.

⁵⁶Both "grace" and "gift" are in the nominative case (they are the subjects of the verb). Yet the verb ἐπερίσσευσεν is aorist active 3rd person **singular**. Paul is either grouping grace and gift as a singular subject with the verse reading "grace and the gift... abounded," (The NET, NAS95 both use the singular verb "abound" with the double subject), or, as I prefer, we should render the word "and" as "even." As such, the passage would read, "[then] much more God's grace [abounded], [that is], even the gift in grace...abounded." Thus, grace [part one] refers to the gift. And the idea of gift is in apposition to grace. Paul's understanding of grace is actually referring to the gift.

⁵⁷ Simply the preposition *eis* + accusative. However the function is that of result/purpose.

from many trespasses results in⁵⁸ justification. **17** For if⁵⁹ by the one trespass death reigns through the one, much more the ones receiving^{paptc} the abundance of the grace and the gift of righteousness will reign^{fai} in life through the one, Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ **18** Consequently, therefore as through one trespass unto all humanity results in judgment, so also through one righteous deed unto all humanity results in⁶¹ justification of life; **19** For just as through the disobedience of the one man many sinners were rendered^{api} as such, so also through the one the many will be rendered^{fpi} righteous. **20** Now the Law entered in^{aai} in order that the trespass might increase^{aasubj}, but where sin increased^{aai} grace super abounded^{aai} **21** in order that as sin reigned^{aai} in death, so also the grace might⁶² reign^{aasubj} through the⁶³ righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Observations from the text

V12 THEREFORE – Paul begins his summary statement (section 3:21—5:21) with a phrase connecting what has just been said. Now we will discover how Christ’s faith/faithfulness fits into the human mess/tragedy of sin and death. The event triggering the perfect mess, 1:18—3:20, and the need for God’s gracious provision of the ‘perfect man’, 3:21—5:21, are now placed side-by-side. The power of God unto salvation, 1:16 is Christ, whose obedience unto death is God’s judgment of Adam’s sin, 8:3, and whose resurrection serves as the full reversal of the consequences of Adam’s disobedience, the disobedience by which we were all rendered sinners.

V12 JUST AS – With a comparative particle JUST AS, Paul begins the comparison between Adam’s one act of rebellion resulting in the sin and death to all and Christ’s one act of righteousness resulting in the reign of grace unto eternal life.

V12 THROUGH ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD—Without question Paul understands the Genesis narrative (Genesis 3) to be a real event. Adam’s willful disobedience (remember Eve was deceived, 1 Timothy 2:14) brought sin into the world

⁵⁸ Simple preposition *eis* + accusative. The function, parallel to the first occurrence is that of purpose or result.

⁵⁹ First class condition.

⁶⁰ The word order emphasizes the grace and the gift of righteousness. The articular present active *ptc* is divided with *την περισσεϊαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης* between the article and the *ptc*. Thus, Paul literally says (for emphasis) “the ones the abundance of the grace and the gift of the righteousness receiving.”

⁶¹ In verse 18 the unto/unto and the results in/results in are the same preposition *eis* + accusative.

⁶² Verse 21 begins with *ἵνα* which requires the subjunctive mood. The first clause, however, has the aorist active indicative. The subjunctive describes the reign of grace. Thus, Paul is actually ending this conclusion with a very simple statement, *ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις, ἵνα...ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν*. God planned for sin to increase (the Law was part of that increase) so that grace might super abound and reign through the righteousness (of Christ) resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ. God wanted to demonstrate the depth of His love through Christ.

⁶³ I translated the definite article because the context (chapters 3—5) is stressing the specific righteous act of one Person, namely Messiah Jesus.

(*kosmos*). To further reinforce this view Paul compares one man, Adam, with the one man, Christ, 5:13ff... Regarding the phrase THROUGH ONE MAN we can immediately conclude that Adam was the entire human race at the time of his transgression. There is no evidence in the biblical narrative of Adam being one of many. Further, the Bible never hints of there being “others” at the time of Adam’s transgression, rather, Scripture states quite the opposite. Earlier in Genesis God comments that it was not good for the man to be alone. This assumes Adam, before Eve, to be alone as the only human being.

V12 AND DEATH THROUGH SIN-- The result of Adam’s disobedience was death. While it is tempting to immediately refer to physical death, it might be best to consider this death to be spiritual death, which is best defined alienation from God. The Genesis account states, regarding the ‘forbidden fruit,’ that “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” [NAS]. Genesis does not depict Adam physically dying the day he ate the fruit. He was, however, immediately estranged from God. This ‘death’ (i.e., spiritual death) was immediate and negatively transformative. Not only did spiritual death take place, but as an object lesson for this invisible reality, physical death, and all of its corruption, was introduced into the entire creation, consider Romans 8:20. As Genesis 3 recounts, God placed a curse upon the earth, Genesis 3:17, and then pronounced the inevitability of physical death upon humanity, Genesis 3:19.

V12 AND SO DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN – Here Paul furthers the comparison he is about to make with Christ. One man’s transgression led to the spiritual//physical death of all human beings. The reason given is simple, BECAUSE ALL SINNED. The literal phrase most likely reads either “because of which” or “because of whom.” I prefer ‘because of which’ in that it locates the reason for “all sinning” with the “death” that spread to all. One act of sin brought (spiritual) death/alienation from God. In Adam the entire human race was alienated from life with God. Further, because of which alienation (death) all sinned. Everyone born of Adam was/is born estranged from God. Sin is now embedded in Adam’s flesh and this condition was passed on to all Adam’s offspring. In Adam all die, 1 Corinthians 15:22. “This death” is also referred to in Romans 7:24; 8:2-3.

Taking a closer look

The Imputation of Adam’s Sin

The tough question raised by Romans 5:12 and not seemingly answered anywhere in Scripture is simply, ‘How did we all become sinful because of one person’s sin?’ Over the centuries several proposals have been offered.

The transmission of sin to every human being and the effect upon the will

1. Pelagianism: Pelagianism, a view concerning human sinfulness named after Pelagius a British monk of the 4th and 5th centuries, insists that Adam’s sin had no direct effect upon mankind. Pelagius strongly emphasized the idea of free will. Adam’s sin had no direct effect upon any human being. According to Pelagius, God’s grace is always something present everywhere and man can apprehend God through reason and free-will. Thus,

humans, by their own efforts, perfectly fulfill God's commands without sinning. Each human being sins on their own accord, not because of a pre-disposition toward evil.

2. Arminianism: Arminianism holds that every human being experiences alienation from God inherited through Adam. That said, Christ's death extends prevenient grace nullifying the effects of the Fall upon the will. Mankind, born a sinner with a sin nature experiences the effects of Adam's sin upon the will, yet through Christ this bondage is removed by God's prevenient grace. This removal is extended to everyone, thus neutralizing the overriding influences of sin's corruption inherited from Adam. Accordingly, every human has the renewed ability to choose or reject Christ.

3. Federal headship: Federal headship states that Adam, the formal head of humanity, fell as the representative head of all humanity. When Adam fell into sin the entire race fell into sin incurring corruption and guilt. When Romans 5:12 states, "all have sinned," this view holds that 'all' refers to Adam, and that, consequently, all who followed are rendered guilty because they were represented by Adam. Adam, their representative, sinned (on their behalf).

4. Augustinianism: The Augustinian view states that all mankind was in Adam (e.g., Levi was in Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek, Hebrews 7:4-10). Thus, when Romans 5:12 states, "for all have sinned," the Augustinian view maintains that all did sin, in Adam.

5. Procreationism: Sin, while not essential for the makeup of a human being, Genesis 1:27-31, became a part of the disposition and makeup of Adam (the corruption and alienation Adam suffered because of his transgression). As he begat children, they were fashioned after his (Adam's) image (as such, Adam's representatives), Genesis 5:3. This Adamic image did not replace humanity's role as God's representatives (i.e., the image of God), rather this Adamic influence became, because of sins overbearing activity coupled with the weakness of flesh (Romans 5:6; 8:2-4), the controlling disposition of mankind.

Summary

None of the accepted solutions definitively answer the question, "How did we become sinful?" Perhaps there are aspects in solutions 2 through 5 that serve as part of the final answer. What we must realize is that Romans is stressing the universality of sin and death because of one person and the overwhelming triumph of God's grace because of one Person, namely, through Christ. For my understanding, the interpretation which best suits the analogy with Christ and still justifiably answers the cause for the universality of sin is procreationism...as natural birth renders all associated with Adam dead in trespasses, our new-birth connection with Christ renders us alive through righteousness (i.e., Christ's).

V13 FOR UNTIL THE LAW SIN WAS IN THE WORLD—Paul begins a digression to alleviate any misunderstanding about what he has just said. Since it would be anticipated that Paul's readers would be thinking about sin, judgment, and the Law, Paul makes it clear that before the Law came (c. 1445//1300 BC) sin was in the *kosmos*. The law, it will be said later, came to increase the transgressions (to better display the depth of grace), 5:20.

V13 BUT SIN IS NOT IMPUTED—As stated in 4:15 sin is not counted (4:15 "where there is no law there is no transgression" ESV) **WHEN THERE IS NO LAW**. The law exposes sin and expedites judgment. As this passage (and others in Paul's letters, e.g., Galatians 3:19) stresses, the law was added into the chaos of human transgression to demonstrate that

humanity was guilty of sin and THAT THE TRESPASS, along with its ensuing guilt, WOULD INCREASE, 5:20.

Taking a closer look

SIN

While we have been assuming what is meant by sin, it is appropriate to take a closer look at what the Bible says about sin. Because this subject is so pervasive throughout the Bible, our ‘closer look’ will be a long look.

The terminology used to ‘identify’ sin

Certain words (which identify sin) emphasize *causes* for sin.

Ignorance – “not knowing.” Ignorance can be related to the effects of sin and can also be the cause of further sin, Ephesians 4:18. Consider also Hebrews 9:7, “fault of ignorance.”

Omission – Failure to do what is right is and can be a cause for further sin, James 4:17.

Unbelief – The failure to believe God is considered disobedience (sin) which leads to further sin, consider Numbers 20:11-12; Hebrews 4:1-2,6; also, Romans 11:12 “transgression”, 11:15 “rejection;” 11:20, 23 “unbelief;” Romans 14:23.

Error— “going astray,” [*shagah; shagag*], consider 1 Samuel 26:21; “wander about,” [*ta’ah*], Isaiah 29:24. “Going astray,” [*planomai*], Mark 13:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 John 1:8.

Inattention – “to hear incorrectly [disobedience],” Hebrews 2:2-3; Matthew 18:17; Mark 5:36

Certain words (which identify sin) emphasize the character of sin

Missing the mark – the primary concept used to describe sin. OT *chata* and the NT *hamartano* (and all its forms) depict “sin” with the general characteristic of missing a target. Judges 20:16 provides a literal example of *chata*. Both OT and NT words indicate that missing is because one aims at the wrong target.

Ungodliness – “impiety,” “irreligious” [*asebeo; asebeia, asebes*]. Consider Romans 1:18; Jude 15, 18.

Unrighteousness – “wrong,” “injustice,” “unrighteous,” [*adikia* and words in this group]. Consider Romans 1:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Colossians 3:25.

Transgression – In the OT “to cross over,” “to pass by,” “violate,” [*abar*], Deut 26:13; Jer 34:18; Dan 9:11; in the NT [*parabaino; parabasis*], Rom 2:23, 25, 27; 4:15; 5:14; Gal 3:19.

Iniquity – “deviation from the correct course,” [*awa*], Leviticus 19:15.

Rebellion – “transgress,” “rebel,” [*pasha*], Isaiah 1:2; “to rebel” [*marah* “to rebel denoting a resistance to authority”].

Lawlessness—1 John 3:4

Certain words (which identify sin) emphasize the results of sin.

Wickedness – “agitation,” “restlessness,” “ill regulated,” “disorder” [*resha*], consider Isaiah 57:20-21.

Evil – “bad,” [*ra*] Deuteronomy 30:15; Jeremiah 42:6. This concept includes anything that is harmful.

Trouble – “trouble” (almost always in a moral sense), consider Psalm 5:5; 6:8; Proverbs 22:8.

Certain Bible passages (which identify sin) help to point out sin.

Romans 14:23 – “for whatever is not from faith is sin.” Sin is that which is contrary to or does not proceed from our faith in God.

James 4:17 – failure to do the right thing when one knows to do it helps us understand that sin involves the lack of positive righteousness.

Proverbs 24:9 – The planning to sin is sin, cp. Acts 8:22.

Concepts used to understand sin.

There are several words and phrases which are often used to help us understand the root of sin. **Selfishness**, consider Philippians 2:3, **self-sufficiency** (pride), consider 1 Peter 5:5, **self-dependence** (the displacement of God), Romans 1:23, and **independence** from God (and others), Ephesians 2:12 are a few examples of these concepts.

A definition of sin

Reviewing the above data, several definitions of sin might be offered. First, we might say that sin is the in-born disposition of every human being (since Adam and except for Christ) to exist independently from God and to live according to this independence.

Secondly, we might add, that sin is also the result of our in-born attitude/disposition, namely, the motive/ thought/ action originating from the disposition of self-sufficiency or self-reliance (rather than a dependency or trust in God according to God's revealed will), consider Genesis 3.

Finally, we might say that sin represents the failure by man to conform to God's standards and character in either the very disposition/nature of man himself or by the very acts of omission or commission that are derived from man's independent disposition/nature.

The Location of Sin

When we refer to the "location" of sin we are simply asking, 'Where does sin reside?'

1. Original sin, 1 John 1:8

- Every human being from Adam possesses the corruption of sin that affects every aspect of his humanity...i.e., Adam begat offspring after his own image, Genesis 5:3. Every human being has the presence and corruption of sin from conception, Psalm 51:5
- Within every human (the flesh) there resides the active presence of sin, Romans 7:17.
- This corruption affects every aspect of our humanity and human experience, e.g., the heart (our core), Jeremiah 17:9; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19.

2. Personal sin(s) James 1:14-15; 1 John 1:10

- Every human being practices sin because the corrupting power of original sin affecting every aspect of our being.

3. Corporate/societal (the world system) and sin, 1 John 2:15-17

Two primary concepts are used in the New Testament to communicate the "world system".

Aion— refers to "age," or segment of time, Galatians 1:4. The Greek word used here may refer to something that is "morally or socially worthless, wicked, evil, bad, base, vicious, or degenerate." [BDAG]. Second, this age is said to have its own god, namely, the Satan and his angels, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Thus, this age is vitally connected to evil supernaturalism. It may be said that the character of this age simulates the character of its immediate supervisor. Third, and not surprisingly, this age is said to possess its own wisdom and authority. Paul tells the Corinthians that the wisdom he has imparted to them is from the Spirit of God. This contrasts with the wisdom of this age, 1 Corinthians 2:6. Finally, Paul tells the Corinthians that both the wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age are doomed, and they will pass away. Jesus, likewise, informs us that this period in which we now live will not last. This age is temporary, Matthew 13:39.

Kosmos—As the term 'age' emphasizes "time," the word *kosmos* emphasizes "order." "*Kosmos*" refers to the collective system or order of things. BDAG states that *kosmos* refers to "the sum total of everything here and now, the world, the (orderly) universe" as well as "the system of human existence in its many aspects." As such the New Testament has many things to say about the *kosmos*.

First, the world system is hostile toward God, James 4:4. Second, as one might suspect, the world system is defined with the characteristics of sin (the desires of the flesh; the desires of the eyes; and the arrogance of life's achievements), 1 John 2:16-17. Third, the world system is vitally connected to evil supernaturalism, 1 John 5:19.⁶⁴ Fourth, the world system, like this present age, and its outward expressions

⁶⁴*keimai*, at its face value, means to recline upon, or to "be in a recumbent position." Metaphorically, this verb is used here to indicate that the World "finds itself to be [reclined] in the evil one."

are temporary and passing away, 1 Corinthians 7:31. Finally, but most importantly, Jesus testifies that the inhabitants of this system are the objects of God's love, John 3:16.

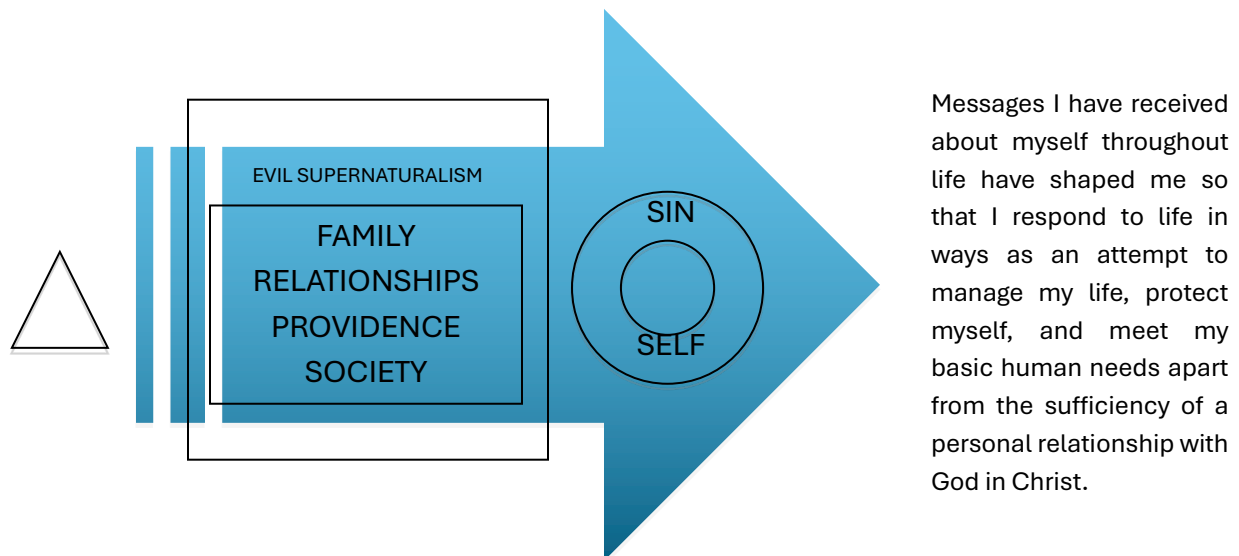
This "evil age," and this "world system," expresses itself as human **culture—society**. Every culture embraces certain spiritual and philosophical worldviews. In addition, Scripture speaks of various religions (demonic false gods) embraced by other cultures, Deuteronomy 29:16-17; 32:17; 1 Corinthians 10:20. Every culture embraces certain falsehoods perpetrated by evil supernaturalism (consider Ephesians 2:2 and 1 John 5:19). These falsehoods, referred to as the "weak and worthless elementary principles of the world" (Galatians 4:9; Colossians 2:20), are systems of thought and practice that shape culture.

Every culture values certain pursuits and achievements.

Consequently, cultural worldviews/human values are an intrinsic part of the fabric of human endeavor and spirituality. By "value" we mean an idea or ideal representing great worth or importance that represents a culture's principle or standard. A value is something of such importance we pursue or perform according to the ideal. These values may not even be cognitively understood but serve as forces that shape human spirituality.

Every culture accepts and reinforces certain behavioral patterns and character traits

As cultural ideals are pursued and achieved the intrinsic impact of these values are reinforced by the culture. Psalm 135:15-18 informs us of the consequences of following falsehood, "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them." Thus, our cultural values shape us into who we are and how we will live.



The Results of Sin

The curse upon creation, Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20-21. When Adam transgressed God's singular command (God's law) God placed a curse upon creation, Genesis 3:17. Decay and death became the norm. In addition to death and decay, violence and destruction continually characterize our universe at every level.

Death upon humanity, Genesis 3:19. When Adam transgressed there was an immediate change to human disposition. The first human beings moved from innocence to a conscience characterized by guilt and shame, 2:25; 3:7-10. Humanity also began to experience decay and death. There was violence and destruction, the loss of human dignity, as well as alienation and eternal separation from God. Through one man, Adam, Romans 5:12, every human being born from Adam now possesses the corruption of sin...i.e., Adam begat offspring after

his own image, Genesis 5:3. The result is, all are sinners, Romans 5:12b. Every human being is sinful at conception, Psalm 51:5. Also consider John 8:44 which implies that natural born human has the devil as his spiritual father and is like the Satan in character. Now, every intent and thought is about self and, subsequently, is evil, consider Genesis 6:5. Every human being fails to meet God's standards; cannot comprehend spiritual reality; does not want a relationship with the true God; and, cannot commend himself to God, Romans 3:10-20, 23. Furthermore, every human being is spiritually inept, 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural (soulish) man (man without the Spirit) thinks Spiritual things are "moronic/foolish." The natural human being is not able to know or receive Spiritual truth (perceive spiritual reality apart from the revelatory work of the Spirit). This ineptitude is because the god of this age, through sin, has rendered every human blind, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and every person is deceived at the core of his functional personality, consider Jeremiah 17:9 – the entire inner man (the heart-man's central functioning personality).

Consider this brief list describing the impact sin has had upon every human being.

- Sin directs our inner appetites away from the spiritual and toward the physical/earthy, Romans 3:11; Philippians 3:19.
- Sin directs our intellect away from a trust in God's testimony (Scripture) and toward reliance upon our own reasoning and ingenuity, Romans 1:21; 8:6-7.
- Sin redirects our will (choice mechanism) toward self-centeredness and self-reliance independent from God, John 3:19; Romans 3:11b-12a.
- Sin impacts our emotions, appetites, mind-set, and daily choice orientations, John 3:20.
- Sin's impact over the faculties of each human directs their moral compasses so that we live a life that is self-sufficient rather than God-dependent, Romans 1:26, 28; 7:14, 23.
- Sin's impact over our faculties estranges us from both ourselves, others, and God, Ephesians 2:1, 12.
- Sin remains a pervasive force within every human being (our weak human "flesh") overwhelming our own abilities to do what is right, Romans 7:14-23.
- Sin, through our own unique make-up and over the course of our lives, develops dispositional, perceptual, and behavioral patterns that become a part of our unique personalities. These flesh patterns become our characteristic response to life's circumstances.

The final, and most devastating result of sin is that every human being is born separated from the God's Life, Ephesians 2:1-3. In this sense every human being is spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins. Thus, according to this short passage, humanity lives according to the course of his surrounding culture and according to the standards of Satan's supervising philosophies. Throughout the biblical record, the spiritually "dead" can and do respond to God, though in a self-centered and sinful manner.

This separation from God, left unaided by God's grace, not only reflects spiritual death leading to physical death, but ultimately and finally results in what the Bible calls second death. Second death refers to the finality of the life of the human being who experiences God's judgment (remember Romans 2:5-16), Revelation 20:11-15. Those who have refused God's gift of life through Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire and will be eternally separated from the presence of God.

V14 DEATH REIGNED FROM ADAM UNTIL MOSES – Despite the fact that there was no law, sin existed, and death reigned over humanity. Since sin is not imputed where there is no law (see above), we must assume human beings died because they were, by natural birth, sinners and under God's curse.

V14 EVEN OVER THOSE WHO HAD NOT SINNED – Death reigned over those who were sinning even though their sin was not IN THE LIKENESS OF THE OFFENSE OF ADAM, namely

they did not eat of the fruit in the garden. As mentioned in 1:18—2:16, every human being was given over to their own godless desires and were judged apart from the law, having God's law written on their hearts, 2:14-15. It is here that Paul begins to develop the comparison between Adam and Christ. Adam IS A TYPE OF HIM WHO WAS TO COME. That is, Adam was a type of Christ. The idea behind "type" [from Greek *tupos*] is simply 'that which serves as a model, a figure, or a pattern' [BDAG]. Adam, and his impact upon humanity, serves as a pattern of Christ and His impact upon humanity.

V15 Now we begin to discover that the pattern between Adam and Christ, was similarly dissimilar. That is, both Adam and Christ impact the many, but their acts were categorically and qualitatively different resulting in an opposite effect. Thus, Paul tells us that THE FREE GIFT IS NOT LIKE TRANSGRESSION. As Paul explains, FOR...BY THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE ONE MANY DIED. Adam's act of disobedience to God resulted in death. However, by contrast God's grace in Christ provided life. The extent of the dissimilarity is expanded with the words MUCH MORE. Christ's obedience was much more impactful. While Adam's transgression made everyone a sinner bringing death to everyone, Christ's obedience was greater than all our sin. Christ's obedience brought life from the dead. The perfect man did what Adam could not. While sin brought death, Christ, who is Himself the resurrection and the life, brought life. Christ's life is the MUCH MORE. Paul explains, MUCH MORE DID THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE GIFT BY THE GRACE OF THE ONE-MAN JESUS CHRIST ABOUNDED TO THE MANY. God's grace and the gift, namely righteousness leading to eternal life, are now being compared to Adam's transgression. One transgression impacted all. One man's righteousness impacts all to a greater degree. The gift by the grace OF THE ONE MAN becomes Paul's point of comparison. What Christ has done, by God's grace, has impacted the entire human race. Since Adam's transgression brought death to all, Christ's righteous act on our behalf has presently spared humanity God's wrath. Considering Romans 2:4; 3:25; 11:32; and Hebrews 9:26, we are reminded that either by delay or, as in the case of the believer, permanently, this delay of the fullness of wrath will not be forever. Those who reject THE FREE GIFT will answer to God, 2:2-16. The gift to those who believe is eternal life, 5:21.

V16 THE GIFT IS NOT LIKE THAT WHICH CAME THROUGH THE ONE WHO SINNED—Thus, because of the far-reaching impact of Christ's righteous act, Paul tells us that the gift is NOT LIKE the consequences of Adam's sin. FOR ON THE ONE HAND THE JUDGMENT AROSE FROM ONE TRANSGRESSION RESULTING IN CONDEMNATION, that is, the trespass brought death. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FREE GIFT AROSE FROM MANY TRANSGRESSIONS RESULTING IN JUSTIFICATION reversing the impact of sin for as many as would receive the gift. And while the trespass of one man, and the ensuing sinfulness of humanity, deserves judgment and wrath, 3:1-10, the gift represented something entirely, NOT LIKE Adam's sin,

the free gift was undeserved. Christ's obedience has spread to all, not through natural generation, but by God's grace and spiritual regeneration.

V17 FOR IF—Paul now describes how the gift differs from the transgression. Death reigned (as king) because of one transgression. Now something entirely undeserved occurs. Again Paul adds, MUCH MORE. The difference between Adam's transgression and Christ grace gift has to do with the extent of their impact. Now those WHO RECEIVE THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND THE FREE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS REIGN IN LIFE THROUGH THE ONE, JESUS CHRIST. From deserving death to reigning (as royal heirs) in life, God's free gift doesn't merely give undeserved pardon. God's gift through Christ fully restores humanity to a place of honor beyond what Adam would have experienced had he not sinned. Paul uses the word REIGN. The subject of the verb REIGN refers to those WHO RECEIVE the ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND THE FREE GIFT. While every human naturally receives the result of Adam's sin, to experience the complete reversal of the curse, a person needs to receive the abundance of God's redemptive/ restorative grace.

V18 SO THEN— Having finished his necessary digression begun in verse thirteen, Paul returns to verse twelve and draws his conclusion. The Greek construction, (three words in succession "consequently, therefore, as") used here introduces a formal comparison, all of which have been alluded to in the earlier verses.

V18 AS THROUGH ONE TRANSGRESSION —Paul now summarizes his larger objective which was introduced back in 1:18. The first part of the argument has to do with the impact of sin, namely, because of ONE TRESPASS all humans sin which has RESULTED CONDEMNATION TO ALL MEN. This universal sin ultimately leads to the revelation of God's wrath, 1:18, which warrants, in God's love for His creation, the perfect message, 1:16-17. The perfect mess resulting from Adam's transgression leading to wrath is countered by ONE ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The gospel, 1:16-17, and the primary focus of Paul's letter has to do with the Person and work of Christ. The idea of one act of righteousness (Christ's faithfulness, 3:21-22) perhaps refers to the entirety of Christ's incarnation, life, and obedience unto death while we were yet sinners (5:8). Christ, the innocent one, has come, lived, and died on behalf of those deserving wrath. This death was an act of righteousness (obedience to the Father's will, Philippians 2:6-8). This righteous lifestyle and obedience unto death represent God's righteousness manifested, under, but apart from the law, 3:21-22. And it is Christ righteous/faithful life that RESULTED JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE TO ALL MEN. While all may not receive the gift of life through Christ, the scope of Christ's death extends to everyone. The potential exacted by God for justification and eternal life is FOR ALL MEN. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared for all mankind, Titus 2:11. God's imputed righteousness and life is available for all mankind. This availability, while rescuing those who believe, also

serves as the basis for a justified final judgment, consider Romans 2:16 (judged according to the gospel). Paul alludes to this concept again in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. Man's condemnation now results from rejecting the free gift, consider John 3:18-19.

V19 FOR AS – This phrase in the original language introduces the explanation for verse eighteen. As such, verse nineteen provides the clear summary statement which ties together the meaning and depth of the gospel introduced in 1:16-17. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. By making the comparison of ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE (to God's revealed will) and THE OBEDIENCE OF THE ONE (to God's revealed will) we gaze at God's righteousness and the remedy for our sin. Through disobedience MANY WERE MADE (aorist passive) SINNERS. Through Christ's obedience many WILL BE MADE (future passive) RIGHTEOUS. This has been Paul's objective, namely, to compare the unrighteousness of man (1:18—3:20) under the law, over and against the righteousness of God apart from the law, namely, God's righteousness through the faithfulness of Christ Jesus our Lord, 3:21ff...

V20 THE LAW CAME IN SO THAT THE TRANSGRESSION WOULD INCREASE– Why the Law? Paul answers this question with an overarching assessment. To make the depths and riches of God's grace even more obvious, God instituted THE LAW. Paul reintroduces the law here to emphasize the extent of sin. While all sinned apart from the law, 5:12-14, the law was given (among other reasons) to INCREASE THE TRESPASS (Paul details this idea in 7:7-25). Not to leave his readers in doubt, however, Paul adds a caveat, BUT WHERE SIN INCREASED GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE. The increase of the trespass, indicting humanity with obvious and undeniable guilt, led to the more glorious realization, the depths of our sin exalted the extent of God's love. We would not know grace and mercy apart from sin. We would not know the extent of grace and mercy in love apart from the exceeding sinfulness of humanity as amplified through God's law.

V21 SO THAT – Here we are introduced to the resultant objective regarding God's super plan.

V21 AS SIN REIGNED IN DEATH—Just as sin has been allowed to reign by means of death (and this was God's plan) so GRACE MIGHT REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS (and this was God's endgame), namely, through the righteousness that is Christ, the perfect man. His life is the manifestation of God's righteousness apart from the law. His life is the righteousness revealed through the gospel, 1:17. His life is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. The life of Christ, the Son of God, the son of Abraham, the son of David, and the son of man, is God gift to a fallen and dead humanity. And the grace of God in Christ will reign TO ETERNAL LIFE. The word translated TO is a preposition indicating direction toward or purpose, "to," "unto," "for." The purpose of the righteous obedience of our Lord is that God's grace might reign to/unto/for the purpose of eternal life THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

OUR LORD. God has sent His Son. His Son, the Christ, has secured our salvation. All this to the glory of God through the lives of those redeemed by His grace. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians “so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus,” 2:7. In Christ “we overwhelmingly conquer,” 8:37.

Taking a closer look

THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER AND ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Hearing that God’s grace reigns unto eternal life raises two questions in the minds of Christ’s followers. The first question, dealing with security of the believer, may be stated, ‘Can the promise of life, God’s grace unto salvation, be forfeit?’ The second question, dealing with assurance, might read, “How can I be sure/assured that my faith is enough to have secured the promise of eternal life?” Before we continue to study Romans, it would be appropriate to address what is often called eternal security and assurance of salvation.

I. Eternal Security

Defining Eternal Security: Generally, eternal security can be stated that once a person is ‘saved’ that person can never be ‘unsaved.’ Thus, the true believer (those whose faith-object is in the promise of God through Christ) is eternally secure, John 10:28 “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever...” [LSB].

Defending Eternal Security

Theological themes require eternal security. The Bible tells us that salvation, the rescue of a human being from the penalty of sin (God’s wrath) and granting the eternal life, is entirely God’s work. Without extending this discussion for pages, eternal security rests upon the works of God according to the plan of God, Ephesians 1:11, accomplished by God in love by grace. These works include the finished work of the cross, Mark 10:45, the ongoing work of Christ as our High Priest, Romans 8:34, and the sealing work of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. Additionally, all these initiatives are augmented by divine election/choice, Ephesians 1:3-4, redemption, Ephesians 1:7, forgiveness, Hebrews 9:26, justification, Romans 3:24, reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:19, adoption, Galatians 4:1-7; indwelling, Romans 8:9, regeneration, Ephesians 2:2-6, sanctification, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and glorification, Romans 8:30. Without question these gracious realities and provisions are solely God’s gracious work, Ephesians 2:10. When a person trusts God’s promises about Christ that person becomes the beneficiary of this grace.

Certain passages require eternal security. In addition to these theological realities there are certain passages in the Bible that require a security that transcends time. **John 6:38-40** assures us that Jesus came to do the Father’s will. The Father’s will, according to Jesus, is that everyone whom the Father “has given” to Christ should never be lost but should be raised up on the last day. The security of a believer is ultimately Jesus’ responsibility.

A second passage, **John 10:28**, tells us that those who belong to Christ receive eternal life as a gift from Christ and they shall never perish. In this passage the Greek construction is a double negative which emphasizes the impossibility of losing the gift of eternal life. Further, Jesus tells us that no one can snatch those with eternal life from His hand.

While there are other passages we could reference, a final passage emphasizing eternal security of the believer is **Romans 8:31-39**. Here we discover that God the Father is on our side, Jesus Christ is on our side and that nothing can separate us from their love.

Arguments against eternal security

There are, however, objections regarding eternal security.

1. Certain passages seem to add conditions requiring our faithfulness, namely, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 2:1-4; Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 5:11—6:12; Hebrews 10:19-39; Hebrews 12:15-29

Attempts to understand these passages include:

Irresolvable tension: there is a tension between the assurance of security passages and the warning passages that must be maintained. We must admit that we cannot explain how the tensions between God's promises and His threats are worked out. To solve the ambiguity one either compromises assurance or omit details apparent in the warnings

Hypothetical: believers who fail to persevere will not be saved yet it is impossible for believers to fall away (lose salvation) therefore these passages simply present a hypothetical situation that will never become a reality in any Christian's life.

Loss of salvation: believers can apostatize by choosing to abandon salvation. All those texts appearing to offer assurance have been misunderstood.

A means of salvation: those who are elected, called, and justified will be glorified; however, the warning passages truly threaten eternal destruction for apostasy, which, in turn, prompt the truly saved to remain steadfast and, as a result, obtain salvation.

Test of genuineness: while all God's chosen will be saved, perseverance in faith and good works are necessary proofs for salvation, thus, heeding the warnings prove the reality of one's faith.

Loss of rewards (inheritance): no regenerate person will fail to have eternal life. The warning passages, while depicting real loss, do not speak of the loss of the gift of salvation, rather, these passages speak of the loss quality of spiritual life and/or of the loss of ones' inheritance/reward in the coming Kingdom.

2. Certain theological systems and the security of the believer⁶⁵

- Roman Catholicism: Saving grace is forfeited by mortal sin.
- Many Arminians: Saving grace is lost by walking after the flesh/ denying the faith.
- Many Lutherans: Elect believers persevere; non-elect believers fall away.
- Reformed: God preserves the elect as His grace enables works authenticating saving faith to the end while others who fail to persevere demonstrate that they were never partakers of saving grace.

Conclusion

As salvation rests entirely in God's hands, the finality of God's plan is secure, consider Romans 11:29. The completion of God's plan, Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:3—3:10, as it relates to the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit on behalf of the human race and those who believe God's message about Christ, secures God's objectives regarding salvation. Undoing what God has determined is never understood as a viable option for interpreting Scripture, Isaiah 46:8-11; Psalm 33:11; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28. Those whom God has chosen and given to the Son will not be lost, John 6:38-40. Our security rests in the hands of God. Those who believe are and will always be securely saved.

II. Assurance

When we talk about assurance of salvation, we must approach the subject from two sides. First, there is the assurance that is provided by God's Word regarding His promises and the provisions made by God on our behalf. Second there is the attitude of confidence we have regarding God's Word and our life-response to God's testimony.

⁶⁵ Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* in *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 432-44. The four headings used in my outline were from the outline by Bruce Demarest, pp. 432-44.

Assurance and the character of faith, Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 5:10-13; Romans 4:21: Faith is the assurance and conviction about what God has said, Hebrews 11:1. Some could rightfully argue that assurance of salvation is built into faith. To believe is to be assured, see, Calvin. *Institutes*, 3.2.15-16.

Assurance and the character of faithfulness, 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 3:18-24: While faith and assurance are bound together, Hebrews 11:1, the Bible talks about the impact of faithfulness. Several passages suggest that our lifestyle affects our confidence. Failure to believe the Scripture or believe wrongly about what Scripture teaches or, failure to live up to one's spiritual expectations can have a devastating impact upon our personal assurance. For example, circumstances can shake the confidence a person might have in God's promises. Discovering that we have been trusting wrongly about God also affects our assurance, consider Romans 10:2-3. Other issues that impact our assurance about salvation include the following:

- **Sin.** First John 2:3-6 connects our confidence toward God and our lifestyle. Willful and persistent sin erodes assurance.
- **Failure to grow,** Hebrews 5:12—6:4; 2 Peter 1:9. Closely related to willful and persistent sin is the failure of the Christian to progress in Christian maturity. The Hebrew Christians were told that they had not progressed in their faith. This may lead a person to seek to be born again a second time, which, of course, is impossible, Hebrews 6:4-6. Peter also informs us about the impact failing to mature in the faith can have on our assurance/confidence with God, 1:9.
- **Failure to fellowship,** 1 John 2:4. Taking the position of “fellowship” as the theme for First John would also indicate that failure to “walk with Christ” leads to an erosion of confidence about our relationship with God. Any relationship which has been neglected calls into question the strength of that relationship.

Conclusion: Assurance of salvation begins with the promises of God. God's Word to us about Christ is sure, 2 Corinthians 1:20. Assurance, however, resides in the confidence we have about those promises. As faith is the assurance and confidence in God's Word, Hebrews 11:1, those of us who struggle with assurance should begin to review and prayerfully embrace God's Word. Faith comes by hearing the words about Christ, Romans 10:17. Second, we should follow the Lord in those areas of life about which the Spirit reminds and leads us. Third, we should seek the presence of the Lord. All this will lead to spiritual maturity (growth) and will result in assurance of salvation within.

Summary of the text

This final portion of chapter five, 5:12-21, ties together Paul's entire letter to this point. Here we discover how the gospel demonstrated God's power for salvation/deliverance, 1:16, from the reign of sin and death. Here we discover how it is that God's righteousness has been revealed in the gospel, 1:17; how is it that “all have sinned, 1:18-3:20, 23; and, how God's righteousness been manifested apart from the law, 3:21. By comparing the transgression of one man, Adam, with the righteousness of one man, Christ, we see that God had established a pattern/type with Adam in that one man's transgression was sufficient to render all sinners. Similarly, but to a greater degree, one man's righteousness has the potential to render, by God's grace, all righteous. Dissimilarly, as the one transgression led to death, the one act of righteousness results in the reign of God's grace unto eternal life.

The Perfect Man, Romans 3:21—5:21

Having introduced the perfect message, 1:16-17, and expounded upon the perfect

mess, 1:18—3:20, Paul now details God's solution to the "mess" of sin and death, the perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this section we discover Jesus, the embodiment and revelation of God's righteousness apart from the Law. Christ's faith/faithfulness, 3:21, provided the righteousness that Adam did not. The chaos of man's sin introduced into the world through one man's disobedience has been answered through one man's obedience.

Furthermore, this righteousness is gifted to mankind by God when anyone expresses faith/trust in Christ. God freely justifies/acquits the believing sinner. Christ's obedience to God's will through death has appeased God's need for judgment. Having demonstrated His wrath against sin through Christ's death, God's justice has been satisfied. Through His own love for creation, God is reconciled to humanity. The perfect man, in obedience the Father's will, has made peace with God for all humanity.

Modeled through Abraham and David, Jesus has become the faith standard. Christ's faith/faithfulness now serves as the object of our faith by which God offers acquittal, reconciliation, and eternal life. The perfect man has, through obedience to the Father, reversed the curse of death upon creation, and has begun the recreation of God's universe. He is the last Adam, the obedient Son, and the Head of a redeemed humanity, the perfect man.