

## HEIR MAIL: PAUL'S LETTER TO ROME

### Ch. 4

**A**rmed with breaking news received direct from God's Son who called him up to heaven, Paul includes this updated gospel in his letter to Jesus' friends in Rome. High on his bucket list is *spending* time there, not *doing* time and being *beheaded* there.

God's toehold in this pagan, idol-worshipping world capital is a band of Christ-followers, mostly Gentiles. Paul writes to review and preserve how we can be made right with God. Having it in writing, this Christendom's Statement of Faith, it could now be passed around without relying on memory and word-of-mouth.

Romans is the Bible's most detailed Christian theology **whose core is "Salvation by Grace Alone through FAITH alone."** Simply put, we owe a debt for our sins that we could never pay, and God's Son paid-in-full for sins He did not commit.

**Let's read Romans 4:1-3.**

*So what can we say about Abraham, the father of our people? What did he learn about faith? If Abraham was made right by things he did, he had a reason to boast about himself. But God knew different. That's why the Scriptures say, "Abraham believed God, and because of this he was accepted as one who is right with God."*

Abraham believed God and was justified. (Nothing in that statement about works!) How is a person saved today? Same as Abe (Ephesians 2:8-9). People have always been saved in just one way -- **"BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH."** But *what* they believed changed as God added new revelation.

**DISCUSS:** What did Abraham believe in order to be saved (Genesis 12:1-3)?

This is the great secret of life. What a change this makes in your motivation if you know that **you do not have to earn God's love, favor or forgiveness. It's already yours!** Nothing will liberate you more than that. **You already have the only standing that matters, i.e., your standing before God.** So, relax and love people without strings (or chains!). That's what life with Christ is all about.

**Let's read Romans 4:4-5.**

*When people work, their pay is not given to them as a gift. They earn the pay they get. But people cannot do any work that will make them right with God. So they must trust in Him. Then He accepts their faith, and that makes them right with Him. He is the one who makes even evil people right.*

**DISCUSS:** Why would God make evil people right with Himself?

**Let's Read Romans 4:6-8.**

*Even King David himself speaks to us regarding the complete wholeness that comes inside a person when God's powerful declaration of righteousness is heard over our life. Apart from our works, God's work is enough. Here's what David says: "What happy fulfillment is ahead for those whose rebellion has been forgiven and whose sins are covered by blood. What happy progress comes to them when they hear the Lord speak over them, "I will never hold your sins against you!"*

Religious people can be described by the word "DO." They're trying to earn God's acceptance. **BUT** Biblical Christianity is summed up by the word "DONE!" Are you busy **DOING** or are you **RESTING** on the finished work of Jesus Christ?

**DISCUSS:** If you've moved from DO to DONE, how did that happen? If you're stuck on DO (of if you're happy there), what about being DONE doesn't appeal to you?

**Let's read Romans 4:9-12.**

*Now, think about it. Does this happiness come only to the Jews, or is it available to all who believe? Our answer is this: faith was credited to Abraham as God's righteousness! How did he receive this gift of righteousness? Was he circumcised at the time God accepted him, or was he still uncircumcised? Clearly, he was an uncircumcised Gentile when God said this of him! It was later that he received the external sign of circumcision as a seal to confirm that God had already transferred His righteousness to him by faith, while he was still uncircumcised. So now this qualifies him to become the father of all who believe among the non-Jewish people. And like their "father of faith," Abraham, God also transfers His righteousness to them by faith. Yes, Abraham is obviously the true father of faith for the Jewish people who are not only circumcised but who walk in the way of faith that our father Abraham displayed before his circumcision.*

**DISCUSS:**

**Let's read Romans 4:13-16.**

*Abraham and his descendants received the promise that they would get the whole world. But Abraham did not receive that promise because he followed the law. He received that promise because he was right with God through his faith. If people could get God's promise by following the law, then faith is worthless. And God's promise to Abraham is worthless because the law can only bring God's anger on those who disobey it. But if there is no law, then there is nothing to disobey.*

*So people get what God promised by having faith. This happens so that the promise can be a free gift. And if the promise is a free gift, then all of Abraham's people will get that promise. The promise is not just for those who live under the Law of Moses. It is for all who live with faith as Abraham did. He is the father of us all.*

Faith operates like this: God gives, and I receive. I'm not worthy of any of it but God gives me what I do not deserve. That's grace!

**DISCUSS:** Which side of this list best describes your location?

law/grace

works/faith

your best efforts/Christ's finished work

under God's wrath/saved under God's wing

**Let's read Romans 4:17-22**

*As the Scriptures say, "I have made you a father of many nations." This is true before God, the one Abraham believed—the God who gives life to the dead and speaks of things that don't yet exist as if they are real.*

*There was no hope that Abraham would have children, but Abraham believed God and continued to hope. And that is why he became the father of many nations. As God told him, "You will have many descendants." Abraham was almost a hundred years old, so he was past the age for having children. Also, Sarah could not have children. Abraham was well aware of this, but his faith in God never became weak. He never doubted that God would do what he promised. He never stopped believing. In fact, he grew stronger in his faith and just praised God. Abraham felt sure that God was able to do what he promised. So that's why "he was accepted as one who is right with God."*

**DISCUSS:** When you believe God has told you something that to your rational mind makes no sense, what do you do?

**Let's read Romans 4:23-25**

*And this declaration was not just spoken over Abraham but also over us. For when we believe and embrace the One who brought our Lord Jesus back to life, perfect righteousness will be credited to our account as well. Jesus was handed over to be crucified for the forgiveness of our sins and was raised back to life to prove that He had made us right with God.*

Musing about this explosive, liberating truth he had received from Jesus in person, Paul tells new believers in Corinth about his updated gospel which he calls "the mystery," "the secret" and "my gospel." Now that they are "in Christ," it's a new ballgame, and here's how to play your position:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to Himself in*

*Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)*

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## **"4 STRAPS"**

The following is based on Bill Johnson's message delivered on May 7, 2021.  
(<https://sermons-online.org/bill-johnson/values-create-atmosphere>)

At key intervals drivers of logging trucks know that their load has shifted during the trip and needs to be cinched up again. This creates balance, stability, safety and restores confidence. Let's cinch up these four straps today.

### **1. God is good.**

If He's as good as He says He is, as good as the Bible says He is, then I owe Him BIG DREAMS. Dreams in line with the heart of God, not to build my own castles.

Behavior illustrates our beliefs. If our behavior doesn't measurably change, it's not a belief; it's a philosophy.

Because we value human life, each person is significant.

Jesus came to reveal the Father, to be His hands and feet in the marketplace. He is looking for partners and has put Himself at risk since He'll be providing whatever you need to shape the future of your dreams.

We are born to dream. Ask whatever you want, not for your own advancement but to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, and it will be given to you.

Because of God's goodness (which draws men to repentance) we have available to us God's vast resources so that we may help others succeed. We can transfer this to other nations.

God dares us to live beyond our present reality (John 14-15-16). Then who we really are is on display to the world by how we honor Him in all we do. (Psalm 67:7)

### **2. Nothing is impossible for God.** Therefore, I need to take big risks for Him. Look for broken people and trust God for the impossible.

**WITH GOD nothing is impossible.** Replacing "for God" with "with God" takes your possibilities to a new, higher level by including you.

*Faith explores what God reveals. God is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”*  
(Ephesians 3:20)

3. **Everything was settled at the cross.** Because Jesus went to Calvary for you, God has already deposited in your account everything you’ll ever need for all of eternity (“in the ages to come” Ephesians 2:4). Therefore, it’s reasonable for you to trust God for everything. Keep saying, “God, I trust You.” “Father, I trust You!” “Jesus, I trust You.” “Holy Spirit, I trust You.” And say it out loud!
4. **True significance is revealed in true servanthood.** Everything belongs to God. What was Jesus thinking the night before He carried your cross and mine? The Father had given Him all power and authority. He knew He had laid it aside when He became a man. He knew He had come from God and would soon return to God. So with these light-year-size thoughts and His supernatural, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present nature, what did He do next, mere hours before He would be nailed to the cross? He washed the feet of those who were about to deny and desert Him! As we focus on Jesus, we become like Him, learning from the Master.

If God didn’t love you so much, or if there were any other possible way, He would not have made His Son endure something so brutal. Once you know how significant you are to God, you’ll want to do whatever He says to you.

So be encouraged. Life is not plummeting into a horrible climax. It’s setting the stage for a spectacular invasion!

Since God is good, nothing for Him is impossible, everything was settled at the cross and true significance is revealed in true servanthood, we can say with no reservations .....

**“I TRUST YOU, LORD!”**

*“I speak to you an eternal truth: if you embrace My message and believe in the One who sent Me, you will never face condemnation, for in Me, you have already passed from the realm of death into the realm of eternal life.”* (John 5:24)

**DISCUSS:** What has God been saying to you in recent days that bubbled up into your mind again today?

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His Deal

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