

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS - PART FOUR

The bad news - ungodliness - the disease that afflicts us all from birth;
- unrighteousness - the varied and equally serious symptoms that show in everyone;
- suppression of the truth - man's solution to the problem which solves nothing.

We have many excuses - judging others to find someone worse, the heathen have not heard the gospel, and religion which we suppose makes us acceptable to God. None of them are valid. We are without excuse.

Chapter three began with two more excuses. Then would it not be better never to have heard the gospel if so much more is expected of those who have heard? Of course not! We have had a wonderful opportunity. The problem is our unfaithfulness, not God's fairness.(3:1-4) Surely our sin which demonstrates God's goodness is doing God a favour so we should not be punished for it? If that is a serious suggestion, we deserve to go to hell!(3:5-8)

We all have the same problem,(3:9) and it takes two forms. Paul draws from a whole variety of Psalms to demonstrate the two kinds of sins that result; we fail to do right, sins of omission,(3:10-12) and we do what is wrong, sins of commission.(3:13-18) The purpose of the Law is to get this message across to us. Judged by its standard, everyone fails.(3:19,20) None of us have any excuse. We all know exactly where we stand with God.

Having faced that uncomfortable fact, the good news now comes as a great relief. There was one person who made it, who scored 100% as compared with the standard of the Law. He showed the world what the righteousness of God looked like. The Law could only agree. The Old Testament prophets said He was coming.(3:21,22) His name is Jesus Christ. By faith He becomes the answer for us as well, all of us. We all need Him, because we all fall short of God's glory, God's best.(3:23)

Three key words explain the good news. Justification means that when God looks at me He sees Jesus' life record, not mine. Propitiation means that when Jesus hung on the cross, God saw Him with my life record, not His. Redemption was the word which described buying a slave out of the slave market by paying the price for him, and then letting him go free. Jesus by dying on the cross bought the right to change places with us and so freeing us from slavery to the failure of sin, of which the Law makes us aware.(3:24-26)

Whether we are Jew or non-Jew, religious or not, there is only one response we can make, that will help us. Faith means accepting what Jesus has done by saying thank you.(3:27-30) Does that mean that the Law was a waste of time? Not at all; it shows how much of a help it was to us to know exactly what the problem was.(3:31)

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER FOUR

4:1-3 Q.1 Surely a good man like Abraham was an exception to the bad news about ungodliness?(Gen.12:1-3) How was Abraham accepted by God?(Gen.15:6)

4:4-8 Q.2 If God had given David the wages his life deserved, what would they have been?(II Sam.11) What wages would our lives deserve?

Q.3 Why in the New Testament does God not actually tell us what David's sin was? How should this affect our thinking and talking about our past sin and that of those around us?

4:9-12 Q.4 Was it not circumcision which made Abraham acceptable to God? Which came first his circumcision or his faith? Don't we have to do things like baptism to be right with God?

Q.5 What then was the point of circumcision? Or any of our rituals?

4:13,14 Q.6 How do we receive an inheritance in someone's will? How did Abraham become God's heir? Was it a reward for his actions or was it a gift? How do we become God's heirs?(Rom.8:16,17)

4:15 Q.7 The Law has the very opposite effect to making us right with God. How can this be?(3:19,20)

4:16,17 Q.8 How can Abraham be the spiritual father of both Jews and Gentiles?

4:18-22 Q.9 What was the visible result of God approving of Abraham because of his faith? What did he receive from God? To what can God's gift to Abraham be compared in our experience?

Q.10 Abraham had ups and downs in his faith just as we do.(Gen.12,16,17,18,20) Why did God only remember and record his faith?

4:23-25 Q.11 How then does Abraham and his faith become such a good example of how those three big words, propitiation, justification and redemption work to be good news for us?

