

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

The bad news is that as unbelievers God is missing from all of our lives,(chapter one) and it shows in what we should have done and did not, and in what we should not have done, and did. There are no excuses.(chapter two) Everyone failed totally except Jesus Christ who showed us exactly how God meant men to live.(chapter three)

The first part of the good news is that Jesus Christ died on the cross to redeem us, to buy us out of slavery to sin, by putting Himself in our place. He took the blame, propitiation, so that we might have His clean record before His Father in heaven, justification. Our responsibility is simple, faith, in which we thank Him, and receive His gift.

Chapter four illustrates what faith is all about. Surely Abraham, whom the Jews looked upon as their spiritual father and example, was an exception to the rule about everyone being ungodly?(4:1,2) According to Gen.15:6 Abraham's justification before God was based on faith. It was not due to anything he did, including circumcision, but because he looked at the stars, read the message there about creation and salvation, and thanked the Lord that He would carry out His promises to Abraham. He did not earn his standing before God but received it as a gift.(4:3-5)

David confirmed the same principle in Psalm 32 that his standing before God was based on forgiveness, not his behaviour.(4:6-8) David's adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband was sin he could never have worked off his record by any amount of good works. The only way he could be forgiven was by faith. Interestingly though, the story of David and Bathsheba is obviously what lies behind his words in Psalm 32. His sin is never mentioned in the New Testament, a lovely reminder that what God has forgiven He never even thinks of again, and therefore never talks of in the future.

The question then arises: where did Abraham's circumcision fit into his right standing before God? The answer is quite clear. Faith came in Gen.15; circumcision did not occur until Gen.17. Circumcision was an outward sign of his inward faith which already existed. So Abraham could be regarded as the spiritual father of all those who believed God and were forgiven but were not circumcised. At the same time he was an example to the Jews of faith expressed in circumcision.(4:9-12) So it was not the Law which made Abraham right with God, it was faith which accepted the grace of God, the only way anyone will ever be acceptable to God.(4:13-16)

The focus of Abraham's faith was one promise, that he and Sarah would have a son, Isaac. He believed God for 25 years, with ups and downs, until the promise was finally fulfilled. As with David, the New Testament makes no mention of the times Abraham doubted, because what God has forgiven He does not remember. In Isaac all God's other promises to him were worked out, of many descendants, of the coming of Christ, and of a land for his people. In Isaac is a picture for us of how faith is focussed on God's Son, Jesus, crucified and risen, through whom all God's promises to us will also be worked out.(4:17-25) As Paul puts it in II Cor.1:20, "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes."

Chapter five now begins to put together part two of the good news - how by faith in Jesus Christ we can live right here on earth.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER FIVE

5:1,2 Q.1 How do we feel different when we are justified before God? What do we have to look forward to once we are justified? What does 'hope in the glory of God' mean in daily life?

5:3-5 Q.2 As we face trouble in our present life, what changes is God bringing about in us? What has He given us to make these changes possible? Explain in practical circumstances how each step leads on to the next one.

5:6-8 Q.3 What was our condition when Christ died for us? Why did He bother?

5:9-11 Q.4 What was the effect of Jesus' blood being shed for us? Having dealt with the sin of the past, what did Jesus do about the problem of how we still live on earth? What does it mean to be 'saved by His life'? With whom are we reconciled?

5:12,13 Q.5 How did the problem of sin begin? What was its effect on Adam and all his descendants?(Gen.2:17) Did sin exist before the Law was given? What difference did the giving of the Law have upon man's awareness of sin?

5:14 Q.6 What was the continuing effect of sin in the period of time between Adam and Moses? How was Adam's sin different from that of the generations which followed? How could Adam be a type or an illustration of Christ?

5:15-17 Q.7 How did the coming of Jesus Christ affect the whole world? Set out step by step the consequences of Jesus' life alongside those of Adam's.

5:18-19 Q.8 What did Jesus do that was different from Adam? How has what He did affected us? How does this passage explain what unrighteousness is all about?

5:20,21 Q.9 Throughout the history of man, the problem of sin has grown steadily greater. Where has God been in all this?

5:1-21 Q.10 What has chapter five got to do with life today in the real world?