

From the September 4, 2009 Issue

Some-All

A Trinitarian Christ-centered paraphrase of Romans 4.1 – 5.19

(4.1) Let's go back to father Abraham. What did he get, and how did he get it? (2) Did his own moral efforts create a right relationship between him and Papa? That certainly would have been impressive (to us, though not to Papa). (3) The Bible says: "By entrusting himself to Papa, Abraham entered into what he had been given – a right relationship with Papa and the world."

(4) Abraham was not earning a paycheck; he was receiving a gift. BIG difference! (5) It is not we who are working hard to earn a right relationship with Papa. It is Papa who (with his Son and their Spirit) has already worked hard to create a right relationship with people like us! Though we have earned nothing, we have been given everything! As we trust in the Giver, we begin to share in the incarnate Son's right relationship with his Papa and with all things in their Spirit.

(6) David himself celebrates those who receive this gift, as distinct from those who work to somehow earn it: (7) "How wonderful it is to be forgiven, to have my wounds cleaned and bandaged! (8) How wonderful it is to know that Papa has chosen to never use my bad decisions as a weapon against me!"

(9) But wonderful for WHOM? To whom is this gift given? Only to the circumcised, or to everyone? We say "By entrusting himself to Papa, Abraham entered into what he had been given – a right relationship with Papa and the world." (10) Did he receive this gift AFTER his circumcision? No, it was BEFORE! (11) His circumcision was a SIGN testifying to the truth of an already-accomplished fact – his right relationship with Papa, a relationship he had already received through faith when he was still uncircumcised.

The whole point was for Abraham to become the forefather of ALL who receive a right relationship with Papa through faith. When he received this gift before his surgery, he became the father of all believers who have not had the surgery. (12) He also became the father of the believers who HAVE had the surgery, but also follow the example of his faith before his surgery.

(13) Papa promised Abraham the world. How did he receive that inheritance? How do we receive it? Not through our perfect commitment to Torah, but through trust in the One who is committed to perfecting US.

(14) If obedience to Torah earns our inheritance, then faith is worthless and the promise is no promise at all. (15) Think about it: Torah decrees punishment for people like us who violate it. If Torah is what it's all about, then we're all screwed. (Come to think of it, it is in some ways beneficial to be without Torah, because you can't break rules you don't have, right?).

(16) We receive our inheritance not by keeping rules but by trusting in the One who rules and keeps US. What is promised is a gift, not an earned wage. The gift is received by all of Abraham's children – yes, the children who follow Torah, but also the children who share in his faith but DON'T follow Torah. He is the father of us all, (17) as the Bible says: "I have made you the father of MANY peoples."

We trust the One he trusted, the One in whom we live and move and have our being, the One

who makes life out of death, the One who makes all things out of nothings. (18) Abraham rested in the promise of an impossible future in which he would be “the father of many peoples,” with “descendants beyond number.” (19) Despite the obvious anatomical facts that his and Sarah’s bodies were utterly incapable of producing offspring.

(20) Over the years, not only did his trust endure, but it actually grew stronger as he thanked Papa for what had been promised, (21) being convinced of what is really the most rational of all beliefs – that Papa is able to do what he says he will do. (22) Thus, through his faith, “Abraham entered into what he had been given – a right relationship with Papa and the world.”

(23) When it says “he entered into what he had been given,” it’s talking not just about Abraham (24) but about us as well. We also will enter into that gift as we trust in him who raised Master Jesus from the dead, Jesus who took human wrongness to the grave and then rose with the gift of human rightness for all.

(5.1) Therefore, since it is through faith that we receive the gift, we are now sharing in Master Jesus’ peaceful relationship with Papa. (2) Jesus is our access into the Triune life in which we now live and move and have our being. We shout “WOOHOO!” as we share in the Great Dance and look forward to sharing in it even more in the future.

(3) We even shout “WOOHOO!” when we suffer, because even pain has been made to serve the Dance: Suffering strengthens (4) and refines the metal of our souls, producing in us hearts of steel with a chest-thumping readiness to take on the adventure of each new moment. (5) And we know adventure will come, because we know the wild heart of the One who has filled us to overflowing with Infinite Life through the Holy Spirit.

(6) When we were utterly incapable of goodness, the Master died for us, his enemies. (7) It’s rare enough that someone would be willing to die for a good person (though I’m sure it happens now and then), (8) but the Triune Love is made plain in how the Master died for us, we who were doing everything we could to destroy everything he loved.

(9) Now that’s what I call assurance! Think about it: If he has spilled his own blood to right our wrongness, how much MORE sure can we be that he will continue to heal and guide us down the paths of wisdom, so that we will require as little fatherly butt-kicking as possible! (10) With his Son’s death, Papa turned us, his enemies, into his friends. How much more surely will his Son’s LIFE turn our brokenness into healing? (11) As grateful enemies-turned-friends, we join Master Jesus in shouting “WOOHOO!” about our amazing Papa.

(12) Just one man stood in for all humanity when he chose dysfunction and death, and it affected every person everywhere; all of us became broken, decaying things. (13) This disease existed long before Torah, but without Torah, it could not have been diagnosed. (14) From Adam to Moses, death ruled unchecked over human life, even over the “good people.” Adam stood in for all humanity, and the result was catastrophic. But the good news is that a New Adam has come.

(15) And the Old Adam’s curse is no match for the New Adam’s gift. You have no difficulty believing that one man made a foolish choice and doomed all people to death. Then why is it so hard to believe that the one man Jesus could make a wise choice and doom all people to life? (16) Adam’s curse and Jesus’ gift are not even in the same league! In one action, Adam violated his relation to Papa and to the world, and the result was shame for many. But the free gift followed

many violations, resulting in a healed human relation to Papa and to the world.

(17) Death was able to overcome the world through the wrongness of one man. How much more certain can we be that, through the rightness of the one man Jesus, those who receive the gift will overcome the world with wholeness and mercy!

(18) Just as one man's dysfunctionality infected all people with his shame, so one man's act of reconciliation has now infected all people with his healed relationship with all things. (19) When one man violated the boundaries appropriate to his nature, he gave to everyone his brokenness and death. But now in an even bigger way, one man has embraced human limitation, giving to everyone his wholeness and life.

~ John Stonecypher