

Romans 3:24–5:11

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener examines Romans 3:24–5:11, focusing on how God provides justification and righteousness as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ for both Jews and Gentiles. Keener explains that Christ's death serves as a propitiation for divine wrath, drawing on Old Testament sacrificial imagery such as the Day of Atonement and the mercy seat of the Ark. Through a detailed analysis of Abraham, he demonstrates that justification has always been by faith rather than law works or ethnic identity, preceding the sign of circumcision. Ultimately, this theological framework shifts from human sin to the assurance of God's love, confirmed by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by persevering faith through suffering.

Outline

I. Romans 3:24–31: Redemption, Propitiation, and Justifying Faith

- **A. Righteousness as a Gift of Grace (3:24)**
 1. Generosity from a divine benefactor
 2. No room for human merit or self-boasting
- **B. Redemption (3:24)**
 1. Liberation of slaves, evoking the Old Testament Exodus
 2. Ransoming price implied (Jesus' blood)
 3. Completed in the future with the redemption of the body (8:23)

- **C. Propitiation (Hilasterion) (3:25)**

1. *Hilasterion* refers to the mercy seat (cover of the Ark of the Covenant)
2. Connected to the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) sacrificial blood ritual
3. Christ is where forgiven people meet God because He provided the atonement
4. Turns away God's righteous wrath (justified anger based on justice, not temper)
5. Martyr atonement concepts available in Judaism (e.g., Maccabees)

- **D. Demonstration of God's Righteousness (3:25–26)**

1. Postponement or neglect of punishment for past sins (*paresis*)
2. Showcases both His justice and His covenant faithfulness

- **E. Exclusion of Boasting and Unity of Humanity (3:27–31)**

1. Boasting excluded through the faith approach to the law (law of faith)
2. One God for all humanity (theological implication of the Shema)
3. Justification of both Jews and Gentiles on the same terms (faith/faithfulness)
4. Faith establishes, rather than undermines, the Law

II. Romans 4:1–25: Abraham Justified by Faith

- **A. Abraham as a Model of Justification (4:1–8)**

1. Defining ancestor of Israel and model convert for Gentiles
2. Put right by trust rather than personal merit or works
3. Analysis of Genesis 15:6: credited (*logizomai*) as righteousness
4. David as a witness of forgiveness (Psalm 32: unreckoned sin)

- **B. Justification Preceding Circumcision (4:9–12)**

1. Genesis 15:6 occurs at least 13 years before Abraham was circumcised
2. Circumcision is merely an external sign/seal of prior faith
3. Abraham is the spiritual ancestor of all who believe (uncircumcised and circumcised)

- **C. The Promise Received Through Faith (4:13–25)**

1. Promise of inheriting the world (*eretz*) given centuries before the Law
2. Law's function is to reveal failures and bring wrath, not to justify
3. Abraham's faith as resurrection faith:
4. *a. Believing God who raises the dead and calls things into being*
5. *b. Trusting God despite the deadness of his own body and Sarah's womb*
6. *c. Refusing to doubt, avoiding unbelief, and glorifying God before fulfillment*
7. Application to subsequent believers:
8. *a. Trusting in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead*
9. *b. Jesus delivered for our transgressions and raised for our acquittal*

III. Romans 5:1–11: Results of Justification (Peace, Hope, and Love)

- **A. Peace and Grace as Present Realities (5:1–2)**

1. Believers have peace with God (no longer enemies, reconciled)
2. Standing securely in God's grace through faith (perfect tense indicates remaining in grace)

- **B. Boasting in Hope and Sufferings (5:2–5)**

1. Boasting in hope of sharing God's glory
2. Boasting in sufferings (affliction) because it builds endurance
3. Rousing rhetorical chain: suffering → endurance → tested character (*dokime*) → hope
4. Necessity of persevering/enduring faith for eternal life

- **C. The Assurance of God's Love (5:5–11)**

1. Love poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (echoing Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel)
2. Christ's death as the supreme demonstration of love:
3. *a. Dying for us while we were still ungodly, sinners, and enemies*
4. *b. Unprecedented sacrificial love compared to human standards*

5. *c. Saved from future wrath through Jesus' blood and reconciled by His death and life*
6. Section summary: Joyful boasting in God through Jesus Christ (*inclusio* with 5:1)