

1 Romans: The Road Less Traveled

- Session 4: The Road to New Creation (Romans 7-8)

2 Table Talk

- What have been some of your biggest "aha" moments so far in this study?
- How would you summarize the message of Romans to this point?
- What questions do you have after reading chapters 7 and 8?

3 Israel and the Law

- The whole chapter is about the law, the Torah, explaining how all this fits together.
- Two key questions:
 - Is the law sin? (No)
 - Was the good law responsible for "my" death?
 - Torah promised life
 - But could only bring about death because the material Torah was working with was the "flesh" of Israel in which Sin had taken up residence

4 The Role of the Law

- Paul clarifies his understanding of the role of the law. Seems to be addressing Jewish Christians in the Roman churches.
- If you died with Christ, you are released from the law—like a married woman who is released from her legal obligations of marriage when her husband dies. (7:1-3)
- You have died to the law, so you may belong to the one who God raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God (v. 4)
- While you were living in the flesh (old humanity) the law aroused "sinful passions" bearing fruit for death.
- But we have been discharged from that law, not slaves to the law but in the new life of the Spirit (v. 6)

5 Is the Law Evil, Then? (7:7-13)

- The law itself isn't sin, but defines what sin is (v. 7)
- Sin used the law, however, to arouse a desire to sin (coveting) - v. 7-8

- “Apart from the law, sin lies dead” (v. 8) - Contrast to 5:13-14 where sin was “in the world” in the absence of the law. What does Paul mean?
 - There’s no sin if there are no rules? No harm, no foul? No.
 - Sin is sin, even when committed in ignorance
 - But accountability increases with knowledge
 - Paul is taking us back to Genesis 3 here and the sin of Adam

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- A key question for Romans 7:
- Who is the “I” to whom Paul refers?

7 The Pauline “Eye Chart”

- V. 7-13 (past tense)
 - The “I” is strictly autobiographical
 - The “I” represents Paul’s view of a typical Jewish individual
 - The “I” represents humanity as a whole
 - The “I” is a way of speaking in general without a particular group of persons in mind.

8 The Pauline “Eye Chart”

- V. 14-25 (present tense)
 - The “I” is autobiographical and refers to Paul’s present Christian experience
 - The “I” is autobiographical and refers to Paul’s pre-Christian experience
 - The “I” represents the experience of the non-Christian Jew in his own view
 - The “I” represents how Christians view Jews
 - The “I” is autobiographical and refers to Paul’s pre-Christian experience as he viewed it then

9 The Pauline “Eye Chart”

- V. 14-25 (present tense)
 - The “I” reflects the so-called “carnal” Christian

- The "I" reflects the experience of Christians in general
- The "I" reflects a person under the conviction of sin and at the point of conversion
- But do these interpretations fit the context?

10 Finding the "I" in Adam

- Who is Paul referring to here?
- Paul has been talking about the law, about Israel, about Gentiles, and about the universal problem of sin and death.
- If we take Paul's inference to Adam seriously (as we should), then it seems that the "I" to whom he refers is all of humanity, Jew and Gentile, under slavery to Sin.
- This is the condition of those who are "in Adam." Paul seems to be circling back here to 5:12-21.

11 The Adam Story in Romans 7

- v. 7 - reference to a specific commandment about coveting (the 10th commandment). Ancient Jewish commentators saw Adam as violating that commandment by first coveting the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- v. 8 - references "commandment" (singular), not the whole Law of Moses. Only Adam was ever under just one commandment and it was about coveting
- v. 9 - "I was living once without/apart from the Law" - the only person said to be living before or without any law was Adam
- v. 11 - Sin is personified as if it were like the snake in the Garden

12 A Retelling of the Adam/Israel Story (Witherington)

- The "law" in the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) included more than the law given to Moses on Sinai - it includes the first command given to Adam and Eve.
- Paul sees the coveting of fruit from the prohibited tree as a form violation of the tenth commandment
- The serpent (Sin) used the commandment to produce covetousness. Before the commandment, Adam was ignorant and had no reference point for sin (he and Eve the only persons in history who could say that). Sin was "dead."
- But sin "sprang to life" with the giving of God's commandment. The serpent, twisting the commandment, deceived Adam and he died.

13 The Law is Good. "Sin" Twisted It.

- The law of God is holy, just, and good.
- It wasn't the law that brought death. Had Adam followed it, Sin and Death would not have reigned.
- But Sin (a la the serpent) used what is good in order to "work death" in me, enslaving me.
- Once I know what sin is, I am accountable, and when I am accountable I can be condemned. And when I am condemned, I become a slave to the one who accuses me. In this case, "I" (under Adam) am a slave to Sin, and the wages of Sin is Death (Romans 6:23).
- The law was intended to give life, but because of Sin all it could give was death.
- Israel had the law, but it could not save them from slavery, only further define their chains

14 "Sinful Beyond Measure"

- A similar statement as 5:20 - "But the law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."
- God's way of dealing with Sin is not to hold it at arm's length, limiting its damage, or restricting its operation.
- The Law was not given in order that Israel would become a sin-free zone, but to gather Sin up into one place to be dealt with once and for all. The problem of the whole human race focused on one people for God's purpose.
- Sin has infected the whole human race, Israel included, and no law could fix the problem. If the commandments could have given life (7:10), God would not have needed to do anything further.
- Sin needed a more radical solution that goes to the heart of the human race.
- The Law brought Sin out of the shadows so that it could be dealt with fully and finally.

15 The Situation Under Slavery to Sin (7:13-25)

- The law is "spiritual" (comes from God); but "I" am "of the flesh" and "sold into slavery under sin"
- Both Jews and Gentiles are on the "Adam" side of the equation

- The law does not enable Israel to get out of the problem, but intensifies it.
- Those with the law and those without (Gentiles, pagans) both find themselves in the same boat—slaves to Sin
- Romans 7 is an expansion of 2:17-24 - a reminder that Jews are not better off than their Gentile counterparts just because they had the law

16 The Effects of Slavery to Sin in Adam's World

- We don't do what we want (obey the law, which is good), but do the things we hate (v. 15-16). We are "slaves" to Sin.
- The law is good (v. 16), thus I can't blame it for my evil actions
- v. 17 - not an abrogation of responsibility, but a recognition of slavery
- v. 18-20 - I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. Sin has me in its grip.
- v. 21-24 - We are at war with ourselves in this condition. We know the law of God, but our flesh wars against it. Who will deliver us? Only Christ.
- v. 25 - Slaves to the law, slaves to sin - we need liberation!

17 Some Summary Thoughts

- Humanity is enslaved to Sin and Death
- The Law defined Sin, but did not provide the means of salvation.
- As slaves to Sin, we know what it is right and good, but we struggle to do it because we have no power in ourselves to overcome Sin.
- The basic human problem: How can I be set free from slavery to Sin and Death?
- Paul brings the glorious answer in Romans 8

18 Roman 8

- Here's the situation (Romans 7:25): I serve God's law with my mind, but sin's law with my flesh. This is Israel's condition, humanity's condition
- Therefore, there is no condemnation... (Romans 8:1)
- Because here's how God has dealt with the situation (Romans 8:2-11)
 - Did what the law could not do for those "weakened by the flesh." The law could not bring "life."
 - Christ sent in the likeness of sinful flesh

- Condemned sin in the flesh (his flesh)
- Fulfilled the just requirement of the law in us. The law's intention is fulfilled through the Spirit, bringing "life"

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- Questions?