

1 Romans: The Road Less Traveled

- Session 5: The Road to Life - (Romans 8)

2 Table Talk

- What insights have you gleaned thus far from our study?
- Summarize Paul's argument to this point.
- How did the description of the human condition in Romans 7 speak to your experience?

3 The Road So Far...

- Romans 1-4: The Faithfulness of God
 - God's Gospel and God's Righteousness (Theme) - 1:1-17
 - The Problem: Idolatry and Wickedness in All of Humanity (Jew and Gentile) - 1:18-3:20
 - God's Faithfulness to the Covenant (3:21-4:35)
- Romans 5-6
 - From Faith to Hope (5:1-11)
 - From Adam to the Messiah (5:12-21)
 - Launching the New Humanity (6:1-23)

4 The Road So Far...

- Romans 7
 - The Story of Israel in Relation to the Law
 - The Life the Law Could Not Give

5 Romans 8

- Expressing the heart of what the Bible and Christianity is all about
- Drawing together major biblical and theological themes (God the Father, the Spirit, Jesus' Messiahship, cross, resurrection, and ascension; salvation, redemption, and adoption; suffering, glory, prayer, and love.
- A climactic argument for assurance.

- The destination of Romans and the gospel itself: A renewed humanity, resurrected and dwelling with God in a renewed creation, where humans will have a truly human role to play. That renewal has begun in Christ.

6 Romans 8:1-2

- Because of the wonderful things God's done!
- "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1)
- Condemnation = Death (enslaving power)
- "Because (gar) the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of Sin and Death (v. 2)."
- The law of the Spirit brought in by Christ's faithful life, death, and resurrection releases those in Christ from the law of Sin and Death
- Paul is referring back to chapter 6 and 7:1-6. We belong to One who has already been raised from the dead, and are thus dead to the law of Sin and Death.

7

- For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin he condemned sin in the flesh...

8 The Incarnation

- "Likeness" - not an illusion or reflection, but fully identifying with humanity, yet without sin
- "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Jesus is fully human as well as fully divine. Israel represents humanity. Jesus represents Israel as Messiah. Therefore, Jesus represents all of humanity and all of God.
- Jesus, fully human, does what Israel could not do and offers perfect obedience

9 The Incarnation

- Remember that God had gathered all of humanity's sin into one place by giving Israel the law. As Israel's representative, Jesus takes that sin on himself and gathers it all up on the cross.
- "The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)

- The curse of the law falls on the Messiah Jesus and, on the cross, he draws Israel's (and humanity's) slavery to Sin and Death on himself, dying the death of a slave.
- In doing so he "condemned Sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3)

10 Atonement

- Popular atonement theories: God wanted to kill us because of sin, but took it out on his own Son instead (Penal Substitutionary Atonement).
- But this view separates what Jesus does from the story of Israel
- Jesus is not dropped out of the sky to die condemned by the wrath of God
- Note that Paul says it is SIN that is condemned! It is condemned in the voluntary death of Jesus "according to the Scriptures"
- God's covenant faithfulness and righteousness is revealed
- Genesis 15 - God is walking the bloody road of keeping the covenant while fleshly humanity, represented by Israel, could not.

11 The Law Fulfilled In Us

- "...so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."
- The Torah itself could not provide life, given Israel's (humanity's) slavery to Sin and Death
- The "life" that the Torah promised is provided by the Messiah and the Spirit because Jesus has dealt with Sin and Death in his flesh and set those "in him" free
- When Sin and Death are eliminated, God can dwell in his people through the Spirit (Temple image again - purifying and dedicating the holy place)
- And when God dwells with his people in the Spirit, they will be animated to live according to the Spirit, according to the vocation God gave them from the beginning. This fulfills the purpose of the law! This is "life!"

12

- For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

13 Defining Terms

- Flesh (sarx) - In Paul's usage, does not refer primarily to materiality (though he does use it that way on occasion)
- "Flesh" refers to the corruptible, decaying human life within the corruptible, decaying world.
- To be "in the flesh" is to be "in Adam"
- All humans are still "in the flesh" in one sense - Galatians 2:20
- But Paul insists that the "flesh" is not the source and guiding power of his life.
- We may be headed for decay and death, but we are not living according to that current state

14 Defining Terms

- Body (soma) - As Paul understands it, the "body" is our whole public personal reality, our "personhood"
- The "soma" can still give into sin (v. 13 - putting to death the "deeds of the body")
- But it is also given as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2) and in service to God and neighbor
- The "body" and not "the flesh" is what will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)

15 Defining Terms

- Spirit (pneuma) - dynamic power
- The Holy Spirit
- The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ
- The question for Paul is what "animates" us as human beings - will it be our corruptible "fleshly" nature, or the Spirit of God?
- Contrast between animation by "flesh" or "Spirit" - Galatians 5:16-26

16 Defining Terms

- Mind set (phroneo) - focus of the mind, habitual patterns
- What your life and actions are determined by - what you think about, what you habituate, governs your behavior
- It takes discipline and effort to turn the mind away from the flesh to the Spirit, a mental effort to focus on God's way of being human

- Romans 12:1-2 - being transformed by "the renewing of your mind"
- Choosing between the mindset of the flesh or the Spirit is a constant choice, which requires constant choosing until that choice becomes second nature (sanctification)
- Choosing between "death" and "life and peace"

17

- For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

18 The law still has a role...

- Torah (law) was to bring life; that is still its intention.
- With Sin and Death defeated and the Spirit indwelling, the law is not abolished or superseded but fulfilled
- Ethical living is not optional for those "in Christ,"
- The Spirit enables us to live already in the present as renewed human beings
- Moral choices are part of the resurrection way of life
- "Salvation" does not equal "I don't have to obey the law." What brought death now brings life because of the indwelling Spirit made possible by Christ.

19

- But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

20 The "Body" as "Temple"

- Temples in the ancient world - the place where heaven and earth meet
- The Temple in Judaism - holy place, God's dwelling place
- Jesus - embodiment of the Israel's God coming to dwell with (in) his people

- I Corinthians 6:19-20 - our bodies are human "temples" intended to be a sign pointing forward to heaven and earth coming together
- If the Spirit dwells in you, there will be evidence - life, energy, conviction, love, fruit of the Spirit, wisdom, illumination
- If the Spirit does not dwell in you, on the other hand, you do not belong to Christ

21 The Present State: Life Before Death

- The present "body" is headed for death, but the "Spirit" is life "because of righteousness (note present tense).
- The "righteousness" here is God's covenant faithfulness revealed in Christ's saving death and resurrection
- Even though we die, the Spirit gives life in the present and after death
- The Spirit, dwelling in the Christian, is the life-giving power
- We live "life" to the full in Christ, with freedom from the guilt and power of sin, and we do not fear death because...

22 The Future State: Life After Life After Death

- "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you."
- What's the end state of the Christian life? Not heaven. Only mentioned twice in Romans and neither reference is about eternal destiny (1:18; 10:6)
- In between - our "spirit" is commended to God, caught up in the "Spirit of God"
- But the ultimate state is resurrection of the body - the renewal and restoration of the whole person
- What is true of the resurrected Jesus will be true of us (1 Corinthians 15:20-24)

23 Why Resurrection?

- It is essential to understanding the whole Bible
- God does not create the earth as the vehicle for his dwelling presence, only to later drive it off an eschatological cliff.
- God's creation is "good" - Humans were created to rule in that creation as God's representatives and stewards, coworkers with God for creation's sustainable goodness.

- Sin distorted that project by derailing humanity and its vocation, but God is faithful and deals with human sin by coming as a human being in Christ, by “condemning sin in his flesh” and enabling his Spirit to dwell with his people

24 Why Resurrection?

- Jesus, is bodily raised from the dead (not simply raised in “spirit”) as the “first fruits” or prototype of God’s renewal project, confirming the defeat of sin and death, the goodness of creation, and the restoration of human beings.
- The vision of the future is God’s renewed, resurrected people, animated by God’s Spirit, ruling and reigning with God in a renewed creation. The Bible ends as it begins with heaven and earth coming together, God dwelling with his people (Revelation 21-22).
- This has massive implications for how we live now, how we care for creation, how we treat other human beings, how we live as people indwelt by the Spirit.
- This is a vital framework for understanding the rest of Romans 8
- “Heaven is important, but it’s not the end of the world.” - N.T. Wright

25

- So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

26 Romans 8:12-15

- Verse 12 - We are debtors, but not to the flesh...BECAUSE
- Verse 13 - The flesh leads to death, but the Spirit to life...BECAUSE
- Verse 14 - The Spirit-led people are God’s children...BECAUSE
- Verse 15 - You didn’t receive a spirit of slavery but of adoption.
- If we are children, we are heirs; debtors who owe God, not a grudging obedience, but the discovery of our vocation as God’s agents and stewards of creation.
- Heirs pick up the family business!

27 The Inheritance - God’s Empire

- Jesus is the true Son of God

- Jesus' people share that sonship
- Jesus' people are God's adopted royal family
- Jesus' people thus carry out the Father's project
- They rule wisely over God's empire, the inheritance promised to Abraham (4:13)

28

- If because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

29 A Counter-Imperial Claim

- Rome's glory - empire extended through conquest
- Heirs of emperors become rulers
- Authority exercised through violence
- God's empire - a different sort of empire with a different sort of glory
- It is not one person who rules the world, but all of humanity who are to be set in authority. This is what it means to be "glorified" according to Paul.
- Drawing on Exodus theme - former slaves become royalty

30 The Exodus Theme in Romans (Wright)

- Romans 6 - Slaves come through water to freedom (Baptism)
- Romans 7:1-25-8:9-11— Israel arrives at Sinai and receives the law, recapitulates Adam's sin, God provides rescue, work of the Spirit, tabernacle dwelling
- Romans 8:12-13 - Ready to cross into the Promised Land, but must choose who they will serve: life or death (Deuteronomy 28)
- Paul's point - imagine getting to the edge of the Promised Land and deciding to quit and go back to slavery!
- The Promised Land - not heaven, but new creation! Psalm 2 - the whole earth is God's Promised Land

31 The Road to Life

- The road to life is "mortification"
- Putting the old life to death

- Galatians 5:24 - "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."
- Colossians 3:5 - "Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly."
- 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 - "I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified."

32 Preparing for the Promised Land

- Christian ethics are about bringing the renewed heart, the life of heaven, to birth in a new earthly lifestyle led by the Spirit.
- Holiness means drawing down from God's promised future the life we are to live in the present.
- We work for what we pray for - "on earth as it is in heaven."

33 The Spirit of Sonship

- Two options for reading:
 - "We have received the spirit of sonship in whom we cry 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit bears witness with our spirit..."
 - "We have received the spirit of sonship. When we call 'Abba, Father,' the Spirit is bearing witness with our spirit..."
- "Our spirit" - not "soul," but our deepest interiority
- "Abba" - Aramaic - God is not an impersonal force, distant bureaucrat, or malevolent personality but deeply loving, personal, paternal
- "Abba" also calls to mind suffering - same as Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

34 The Witness of the Spirit

- How can we know that we are children of God?
- Like a child knows the love of a parent, directly and intimately, beyond words
- Like a law court - evidence supporting the claim, living holy lives.
- "Love rejoices to obey; to do in every point whatever is acceptable to the beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do his will on earth as it is in heaven."
- Thomas Oden - Rebirth precedes the witness of the Spirit; the joyful fruits of the Spirit accompany the witness; and the life of obedience follows the Spirit's witness.

35 Next Up

- Discovering how God's restoration project with humanity affects the whole creation
- Suffering and glory
- The assurance of the unwavering love of God

36 Assignment

- Do a deep reading of Romans 8 - what words or concepts jump out at you?
- How does Romans 8 challenge or confirm your previous understanding of the gospel?
- What will you do as a result of what you have read?

37

- Questions?