

1 Romans: The Road Less Traveled

- Session 6: The Road to Life, Part 2- (Romans 8)

2 Table Talk

- What does it mean to you to be a "child of God?"
- Summarize the argument of Romans 8 so far.
- What questions or insights did you gain from last week's session?

3 Suffering and Glory

- v. 17 - And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if in fact we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.
- "Glorified" = receiving the inheritance
- What is the "inheritance?" Not heaven, but authority over creation. This is what Jesus receives as his "inheritance" because of his faithfulness in suffering, he sits at the right hand of God, co-equal, ruling as part of the Trinity.
- His faithful rule is extended through faithful, restored human beings as God intended in Genesis 1.
- Our faithfulness is demonstrated through suffering with Christ in mortification, putting the old life to death (v. 13).

4 Defining "Glory"

- For Paul, "glory" means two things:
 - God's glorious presence, dwelling with us by the Spirit
 - The wise, healing, reconciling rule of God's people over the whole creation
- Doxa (Greek) - glory - dignity, worth, status
- Kabod (Hebrew) - weight
- Irenaeus - "The glory of God is man fully alive."

5 A Counter to Roman "Glory"

- Roman world - looking for the return of the "Golden Age" - subsequent Caesars after Augustus announced it had arrived in their rule.
- Roman vision achieved through conquest

- Politicians still promise this - "Elect me and all the problems will be solved." "Make America Great Again." "We're Not Going Back." Competing visions.
- Modern vision achieved through political will
- But these visions of glory are all parodies of the truth. Creation is groaning, awaiting a real new age—not a "Golden Age," but a "New Creation."

6 A Vision from the Old Testament

- It will be achieved through the Messiah
 - Isaiah 11:1-9
 - Psalm 72
- Revealing divine "glory"
 - Isaiah 35:1-10 - The return of God's people from exile
 - Isaiah 40:1-12 - The glory of the Lord revealed as God returns
- But that vision emerges through a time of intense suffering (Isaiah 53)

7 A Vision from the Old Testament

- Psalm 8
 - Messiah - the true human being
 - Shares his royal role with his people - a vision of dominion
 - The vocation outlined in Genesis 1 and 2 is still on the agenda! The Gospel makes it possible
- Resurrection seals the promise
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
 - Philippians 3:19-21

8 The Means of Renewal

- Jesus - the true image of God, image of humanity (Colossians 1:15-20)
- Jesus - the Messiah, Israel's true representative, humanity's representative, the new Adam (Romans 5) - a rebooted humanity!
- God's intention - humanity's "destiny" - to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)

- Faith in the gospel, faith in Christ, dying and being raised with him, having the indwelling Spirit, shapes us into the renewed people God intends us to be
- We can thus share in his "glory" as part of his royal family!

9

- I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

10 A Contrast in Ages

- Paul always sees humans as living with their feet in two "ages" or realities that overlap
- The "present" age - suffering, decay, death
- The age of "glory" - revealed "to us" (no, revealed "upon us") - we are not spectators but participants
- When Jesus appears, heaven and earth become visibly one

11

- For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;

12 The Great Surprise

- Not just the coming of Christ but what he brings with him
- He is not coming to take us away ("Rapture") but to take over!
- And his coming reveals "the children of God" who are his co-regents, taking on again their vocation as stewards of Creation!
- To put it another way, Creation is longing for humans to get their act together, which is only possible because of Christ and their being "in him" through faith

13 The Vocation of God's Children

- Revelation 1:6 - "A Kingdom of Priests"
- Revelation 5:10 - A Kingdom of Priests serving our God and "they will reign on the earth"
- Revelation 20:6 - They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him
- Creation is waiting for its Creator, but also for its proper stewards in whom the Spirit of God is at work

14

- For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom and glory of the children of God.

15 Circling Back to Genesis 3

- When Adam is expelled from the Garden, the earth yields forth thorns and thistles
- Creation was the beginning, humans as stewards were to be co-creators with God (the creative impulse is built into humans made in the image of God)
- But the project was thwarted by human idolatry and sin
- "Futility" (matiotes) - frustration - without wise stewards, Creation is going nowhere and it knows it
- Creation was exploited rather than stewarded

16 The Restoration of Creation

- Creation's situation is not creation's fault
- There is no Platonist notion that the material world is corrupt and expendable (the assumption of many Christians)
- Once creation was broken, the plan was for God to come as a wise and obedient human being, and for his own Spirit to reanimate and equip humans for their role as stewards
- The freedom and "glory" that the children of God receive through being in Christ is good news for the whole creation (v. 21)

17

- We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

18 The In-Between Time

- v. 17-18 - Paul insists that we get to glory through suffering
- v. 22-23 - That suffering is experienced in this in-between period, the "groaning" of people and a creation awaiting ultimate redemption from decay and death (resurrection and renewal)

- God's Spirit comes to dwell with his people in the midst of that liminal pain, and intercedes for us (v. 26-27)
- "The Spirit inhabits that pain and calls out to the Father from its darkest depths by means of God's people being in prayer, Spirit-inspired prayer, at that place." (Wright)

19

- God himself comes into his world, into the hearts and lives of puzzled and frightened believers, who don't know what to pray for as they ought, so that precisely in their prayer of unknowing, their prayer from the within the darkness of their own lives and of the world around them, God himself will be at work, interceding from within his creation.

20 Praying with Jesus and the Spirit

- Echoing back to verse 15 and back to Gethsemane - the suffering prayer of Jesus, asking if there is another way, but "your will be done"
- Jesus, in prayer, groans for himself, his people, and the world (Luke 22:43-44)
- Jesus' prayer is about his vocation. Sharing in the pain of the world.
- Like Jesus on the cross, God's people may feel abandoned. The Spirit comes alongside, enabling us to pray, strengthening us, giving us hearts tuned to where the world is in pain, but also...
- Assuring us of the hope of glory. "We wait for it with patience" with the Spirit strengthening, guiding, and directing us.

21 Theodicy: The Problem of Evil

- Paul's answer - a three-dimensional response
 - If you start out with a picture of God as a detached, celestial CEO, or a puppet master, you are going to have a distorted view.
 - If you start with the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who grieves over the pain of the world and the failings of the humans he created...
 - If you start with the God who reveals himself in the face of the crucified Messiah...
 - If you start with the God who sends the Spirit to dwell with his people and stand with them in the heart of the world and its pain (v. 26-27)...

- Then you get a very different picture of God and the problem of evil!

22

- Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

23 The Role of Prayer

- Lament at what is happening in the present world, groaning with the Spirit
- Hope for what is to come, the redemption of creation, resurrection and renewal “on earth as it is in heaven”
- Aligning our lives with the will of God, engaging in our vocation as stewards and caretakers of God’s creation and God’s people
- “Waiting upon the Lord” with anticipation and joy in the midst of suffering
- Calling on the name of the Lord, bringing the future hope into the present

24 The Role of the Church: What is it for?

- Knowing, Living, Sharing Jesus – certainly
- But it’s also about engaging with the world in its present reality
- Not simply about proclaiming individual “salvation” as a means to exit the world and go to heaven
- But about standing in this liminal place of pain, humility, sorrow, and hope in prayer and practice
- Living the vocation of being God’s people, God’s stewards, so that when the Kingdom comes it is not such a culture shock!
- The Church is God’s means, Christ’s body, for training humanity in its true vocation under the Lordship of Christ

25

- We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

26 A Text Without a Context...

- Popular verse interpretation: Individualistic: "Everything works out for those who love God." Kind of a "don't worry, be happy" meme.
- But this verse is not a completely new thought, it comes in line with the context of what Paul has been talking about
- The subject is God, not "all things"
- Better translation: "In everything God works for good with those who love him..." (synergo - "work with")
- Those who love God are those who suffer and groan with the Spirit in prayer and live out their vocation
- Working good is not merely something God does for his people, as though they have the inside track; God works with his people to accomplish his purpose.
- God collaborates with those who love him, as Paul has been saying in this chapter about vocation!
- Verse 29 and 30 pick up this context and make it clear

27

- For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.

28 What is God's "Purpose?"

- "Foreknew" and "predestined" - not about individual salvation. Nowhere does the context suggest that.
- It's not about God picking some for salvation and some for damnation. "Predestined" means it was God's plan to redeem people and creation in this way. Call extended to all (prevenient grace).
- This is about people being called and chosen in order to advance God's purpose in the world.
- "Conformed to the image of his Son" - reproducing the life of the Messiah in us, made possible by his defeat of Sin and Death
- Jesus became like us so that we could become like him, and take on our God-given vocation ("glory")

29 The Firstborn of a Large Family

- Israel was first a family
- God now draws together Jews and Gentiles into one family in Christ

- “Christ (like Adam) is the first of a new human race, the race of the resurrected ones, who for now are being conformed internally but not yet externally to Christ’s image” (Witherington).

30

- And those whom he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31 Creating a Family

- God knew the plan of redemption (foreknew)
- He determined the destination of his creation (predestination) and those who love him.
- He justified (“set right”) those who love him, delivering them from slavery to Sin and Death in Christ
- So that they might be “glorified” - to take on the vocation they were created for from the beginning; renewed and resurrected people in the new creation.

32 Implications

- “Justification” is not simply about how and individual gets into heaven when they die. The actual Romans “road” doesn’t go there (at least not ultimately)!
- It’s about being set right, to conform to the image of Christ, in order to participate in one’s vocation as the right-putting people of God, in the model of Christ and the power of the Spirit.
- The “glory” we are seeking isn’t heaven, nor our own personal “glory”—it’s the glory of being God’s renewed people in his renewed creation. That task begins in the present with the future in mind.

33 Implications

- Creation matters - God is renewing his good creation, not abandoning it
- Human beings matter - They have a present and future vocation in the image of God, created out of love
- The body matters - God will restore our bodies from decay and death. They are and will be temples of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Salvation matters - Not just salvation from hell (which Paul doesn’t mention), but salvation for the purpose for which God made us.

- The Church matters – Together the Church is the Body of Christ with a specific vocation for this world

34

- What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for us, will he not give us everything else?

35 The Celebratory Conclusion (8:31-39)

- If God has done all this, what is there to fear?
- A word of encouragement to a Church under stress
- God did not withhold his Son, but gave him up for all of us – will he not give us everything else? (v. 32)
- God's covenant love is not wishful thinking
- The one who justifies is God (v. 33)
- Who will condemn? No one. The one who condemns is the one who died and was raised for us (v. 34)
- No present circumstance can separate us from God's love (v. 35)

36 The Celebratory Conclusion (8:31-39)

- v. 36 – Quote from Psalm 44:22 – No danger is anything new or unexpected for the people of God.
- v. 37 – Paul expects these kinds of things to happen, but he also expects that those in Christ will triumph over them because they know the plan and purpose of God and their part in it.
- v. 38 – Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love, because God is the author of creation itself! Angels (cosmic powers), rulers, authorities under whom Christians might be persecuted—none of that can separate.
- The one thing Paul does NOT mention here, notably, that cannot separate us from God's love is the believer himself. The believer has nothing to fear from the world. The only danger is internal.

37 Assignment

- How would you summarize Paul's argument?

- How does Romans 9-11 fit with what has come before?
- What questions does the text raise for you?

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- Questions?