

1 Romans: The Road Less Traveled

- Session 2: The Road from Exile

2 Table Talk

- What did you find most interesting in your reading of Romans this week, particularly Romans 1-4?
- What questions were raised for you?
- What intrigued or troubled you?

3 Romans 1-4

- 1:1-15 - Introduction, greeting, defense of Paul's travel plans
- 1:16-17 - Thesis Statement
- 1:18-3:20 - The Problem and God's Purpose
- 3:21-4:25 - The Covenant Fulfilled Through Faith for Faith

4 Introduction

- Paul's self-identification and vocation
 - "Servant of Christ Jesus" (doulos) = slave (Titus 1:1)
 - Paul claims no social standing in his letter to Rome
- Servant of Christ (Christos) - a servant of King Jesus
- Apostle (one who is sent) - apostle to the nations, called by Christ (Acts 9)
- For the "gospel of God" - promised through the prophets in the Scriptures (Old Testament)

5 The "Gospel"

- The heart of Paul's vocation
- The gospel is the proclamation about Jesus
 - Son of God (declared through the Spirit by his resurrection from the dead)
 - Son of David (according to the flesh - Messiah)
- The "gospel" is thus God's announcement, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, of the royal enthronement of Jesus the Christ as the Israel's anointed Messiah and the Lord of the world.

- For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus inaugurated the beginning of God's promised new age—the age that Jews had been expecting

6 The Nature of an Apostle

- Received "grace and apostleship" (given by God)
- Purpose: "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name."
- "Faith" as allegiance, obedience - personal upholding of the covenant - human faithfulness is response to God's faithfulness, confessing Christ as Lord, believing he was raised from the dead, and living a life of obedience and allegiance to Christ as Lord.
- "Called to be saints" (v. 7)
- Paul is laying out a map of God's purpose and says to the Romans, "You are here."

7 The Prayer of Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving for faith "proclaimed around the world"
- Remembering in prayer
- Intention to travel to Rome

8 Thesis Statement (Propositio)

- "Not ashamed" - Proclamation of Christ as Lord was sure to raise ire in a world where Caesar was lord. Paul will not shrink from the proclamation.
- Gospel is "power of God" for "everyone who believes." It is through this message that the "righteousness of God" is revealed.
- The revelation is that God has done what he promised in covenant with Israel, rescuing the world from sin and death
- The "righteousness of God" is thus God's faithfulness to the covenant and to his creation. The gospel is the proclamation that God has rendered his judgment on evil on the cross and enacted his rescue of creation in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

9 "From faith for faith"

- God's faithfulness is answered by human faith (faithfulness)

- Habakkuk 2:4 - "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by faith."
- Echoes back to the theme of exile, the disaster befalling Israel, what God was going to do about it, and what God's people should be doing in the meantime. How would God's justice come about and set things right? Habakkuk points to the future; Paul proclaims it has arrived in Jesus Christ.
- Paul appropriates this image to proclaim that in the midst of a world of idolatry and ruin (which he will talk about next), God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel, God's long-awaited answer to exile. God's people, both Jew and Gentile, are called to respond with faithfulness.

10 The Human Plight and God's Challenge

- 1:18 - "For" links to v. 16-17. Why is the gospel the power of God to everyone who has faith?
- Because God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness, and all humans are ungodly, both Jew and Gentile. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (3:23). There is no "them" (1:18-32) and "us" (2:1-11)
- The overarching cause of sin, however, is idolatry - the failure of true worship (1:25). Humans have rebelled and distorted the creator's purposes. Creation begins to run backwards. "God gave them up" = God allows humanity to reap what it has sown.
- There is no room for moralism, however, as if some were detached observers (Jews vs. Gentiles). Chapter 2 opens with a blistering reminder that all are under condemnation. God will judge "everyone who does evil" and give glory to those who are faithful.

11 The Human Plight and God's Challenge

- Israel was called to be God's representative people and the means by which God was putting the world right. But Israel failed in that vocation (2:17-20).
- The big challenge for God - how to keep his promises to a covenant that his people didn't keep?
- The response - fulfilling the covenant in a new way, creating a new family that reflects God's promises to Abraham.
- Abraham's family was marked by circumcision; this new family is marked by circumcision of the heart (3:1-4).

- God's covenant with Israel not nullified because of their sin (3:1-4). Paul is not a supercessionist, replacing Israel with the Church. He sees a covenant convergence in Christ.

12 The Human Plight and God's Challenge

- All humans stand guilty before God, with the Torah (law) witnessing against them.
- They are under "the power of sin." Sin as a malevolent force, the result of idolatry.
- Quotes from Psalm 14:1-3; 51:1-4
- The whole world is accountable to God. No human being will be "justified" by "deeds prescribed by the law" because the law can only define what sin is (3:19-20)
- So, what will God do in this situation?

13 God's Solution: The Cross (3:21-31)

- 3:21 - The righteousness of God has been revealed (call back to 1:17), attested by the law and the prophets (call back to 1:2).
- 3:22 - "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." OR "The righteousness of God revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah." The latter translation makes more sense given the context.
- As Israel's Messiah and representative, Jesus has fulfilled the faithfulness that Israel had failed. God keeps his covenant promise in Christ.
- Through the faithfulness of Christ, the benefits of his faithfulness are for all who believe (v. 22)
- There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile since all have sinned; now all are offered the gift of grace through the redemption that is in Christ (v. 23-24)

14 God's Righteousness Revealed in the Cross

- The righteousness/justice of God is revealed in the death of Christ.
- Day of Atonement - Leviticus 16:2 - blood sprinkled on the Ark (mercy seat) for the sin offering on behalf of Israel. If Israel was in trouble because of sin, the Day of Atonement put things right.
- Paul declares that God has done this once and for all in Christ. Jesus is the holy place where the holy God and sinful humanity meet. Rather than being judged, Israel receives atonement.

- Jesus as Israel's representative and "suffering servant" - Isaiah 40-55
- Jesus' faithfulness and obedience to God's saving plan is the means by which that atonement is accomplished.

15 The Faithfulness of Christ

- The righteousness of God is revealed in God's giving of Jesus as the faithful Israelite through whom God's covenant plan will be revealed and enacted.
- Jesus' faithfulness was faithfulness unto death, understood in sacrificial terms connected to the Day of Atonement and the Suffering Servant.
- Jesus self-giving faithfulness is seen as an act of God, turning away the divine wrath that hung over Israel and the world.
- The righteousness of God is thus revealed in the gospel story of Christ's death and resurrection, in which God has been true to the covenant, has dealt properly with sin, and has done so without partiality between Jew and Gentile.

16 A More Accurate Gospel

- John 3:16 - "God so loved the world that he gave..."
- Many views of substitutionary atonement - "God so hated the world that he killed his only Son..."
- Jesus' death was the result of God's own covenant faithfulness, not God "taking out his wrath" on Jesus. In Jesus, God in the flesh, God takes on the penalty for human sin, bearing God's wrath in his own person.
- This is faithfulness to the covenant God makes with Abraham in Genesis 15, walking through the bloody pieces of the sacrifice to indicate his faithfulness to the covenant for both Israel and the nations; for anyone who has faith.

17 Faith: The Sign of Membership in God's Family

- God has been faithful to the covenant made with Abraham. A single family has come into being, a forgiven family consisting of Jews and Gentiles.
- The sign of membership is not outward circumcision but "circumcision of the heart," faith in the gospel and faithful obedience that mirrors that of Christ.
- In Christ, the faithfulness of God meets the answering faithfulness of the human race.
- This is the fulfillment of the covenant and the law.

18 The Example of Abraham

- All those who believe in the gospel constitute the single family promised to Abraham.
- Abraham's own faith in the God who promised him family despite his and Sarah's old age because the paradigm for the faith by which the family is now marked. He believed God was able to do what he promised.
- Abraham's faith was not meritorious or something to boast about. It was a response to God's grace.
- Abraham's faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness" (being set right in the right). That faith preceded circumcision and the law, making him the ancestor of all who believe. Faith is the marker of Abraham's family, the Messiah's family.
- God puts his readers on the map of Abraham's family, where membership is through faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4:24; 1:1-4)

19 Some Concluding Thoughts

- The gospel is about what God has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the whole world—a world bound by idolatry and sin.
- It is God's covenant faithfulness expressed in the faithfulness of Christ, God's representative and Israel's representative, who fulfills that covenant by his atoning sacrifice on the cross.
- God's covenant was made with Abraham, with the promise that it would be for the whole world. The gospel thus creates a new family, consisting of Jews and Gentiles who are marked by faith in God and faithfulness in the way of Christ.
- "Salvation" is the all-encompassing rescue plan of God for the whole creation.

20 Assignment

- Jot down your questions and observations about the text.
- How does Paul continue the argument he has been making in chapters 1-4?
- What questions does this passage raise for you?

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- Questions?