

**THE LETTER OF PAUL
TO THE ROMANS: Chapters 10-12
June 27, 2018**

Follow-up to June 20 handout for Paul's discussion of sin by using the 10th commandment ("You shall not covet ...") in chapter 7:

- That commandment gets to the heart of the matter of sin because it looks at our motivations: inward attitude rather than outward action.
- The rich ruler in Mark 10 outwardly was very moral until his heart was tested:
 - ¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" ²⁰ He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money^[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.
- Romans 7:15: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" = sin of commission
- Romans 7:19a: "For I do not do the good I want" = sin of omission

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Chapter 10: Salvation is for all

Paul notes the problems for Jewish acceptance of Christ (v. 1-4):

- Jews have zeal but it's not in the appropriate context of righteousness from God.
 - Paul, in his former life as Saul the Pharisee, had that zeal but it became fanaticism as he persecuted the early Christians.
- The Jews are trying to decide for themselves what equals righteousness: what people can do rather than on the relationship based on faith; they should be submitting because God demands obedience.
- They don't understand that Christ's coming and his death/resurrection supersede the Law: upends Jewish understanding of Law being the ultimate expression of how to live a faithful life.
 - Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17 reframe the law: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."
 - When Paul says "For Christ is the end of the law," he means that Christ is the goal for which the law was established = trust in God

Paul explains the Lordship of Christ (v. 5-13):

- Use of “Lord” here to refer to Christ is confusing, even shocking, for Jews because “Lord” in the Hebrew Bible refers to God.
 - Greek word is “kyrios” which corresponds to “Yahweh”
- Paul makes the distinction between legal righteousness and faith righteousness.
- Being justified and saved requires two actions: not just believing in one’s heart but also speaking that word to others. Paul returns to the requirement to speak in v. 14-21.
 - justified = being made right with God
 - saved = from sin and its consequences
- The “heaven” and “abyss” wording is the Christian adaptation of Deuteronomy 30:11-14: the Law was a gift from God and no human interaction was needed – just as no human action was required for Christ’s coming or his resurrection.
- Verse 9 is another creedal statement: Jesus is Lord and he was raised from the dead.
- Faith righteousness is simple and it is available to all because there is no distinction among peoples.

Paul stresses that the Good News must be preached (v. 14-21):

- He asks a series of questions that lead back to the initial step of people being willing to proclaim the good news of Jesus’ Lordship and His resurrection.
- Such a proclamation is what Christ commissioned the disciples to do before His ascension:

Matthew 28: 19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- Paul puts an emphasis on hearing: Jews were responsible to listen.
- Where Christ is not proclaimed, faith as a response to God’s gift in Christ cannot arise.
- What does such a proclamation mean for the Jews? The Isaiah quotation in v. 20 is not what humans would usually expect. They would be worried when reminded of God’s despair about Israel’s actions (v. 21).

Chapter 11: Both Israel and the Gentiles will be saved

Paul refers to previous “stumbling” by Israel (v. 1-10):

- Paul gives his own lineage from the tribe of Benjamin (the youngest son of Jacob’s 12 sons); it was the smallest tribe but it was the tribe of Saul, the first king of Israel.
- God never abandoned His people despite what they did or didn’t do. He always saved a remnant to carry forward His goal of redeeming humankind. This saving action is true in Paul’s time: a remnant (v. 5; “elect” in v. 7) has been chosen by God’s grace.
- Those not chosen were hardened by God just as God hardened Pharaoh’s heart before the Hebrews’ Exodus from Egypt. This action is difficult to understand but God is in control:

- it was a way of extending redemption to the Gentiles, and
- it was temporary because God would go back to those people to give them another chance to “see” and to “hear.”

Paul explains that the stumbling by those not of the elect of Israel isn't fatal but does serve God's purpose of salvation for all (vs. 11-16):

- “to make Israel jealous” is another example of how God understands us: we may not want something until we see that others have it.
- The idea of God's extension of salvation to the Gentiles must also have been a shock to the Jews. Their initial election by God was a status conveyed from one generation to the next – that status implied it wouldn't be extended beyond the Jewish community.
 - But God continues to surprise! And there are indications of God's intent for inclusion in the Old Testament: the promise to Abraham that he would be the ancestor of all who believe; the role of the Moabite woman Ruth who accepted the religion of the Israelites and became the mother of Obed (the grandfather of King David, the beginning of the Davidic line leading to Jesus)
- But Paul also speaks to the Gentiles to warn of the human reaction of thinking that they are now more important to God than the Jews; instead, God's purpose (or one of them) is to use the Gentiles as an instrument to restore salvation for the Jews.

Paul reiterates God's plan of salvation for all (v. 17-36):

- The metaphor of pruning and grafting branches illustrates both God's wrath/judgment and God's love/mercy. These actions would be familiar because cultivation of olive trees was common in Rome, dating back 7,000+ years.
- Salvation for Gentiles is the next step. That action will then lead to saving all the Jews, not just the elect: “And so all Israel will be saved.” (v. 26)
- God is faithful: the original election of the Israelites as God's people chosen for the task of redemption of humankind cannot be “undone” by action or inaction of the Israelites: “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” (v. 29)
- The doxology (a liturgical expression of praise for God) in v. 33-36 ends the theological arguments Paul has presented in chapters 9-11.

Chapter 12: Living a Christian Life

Romans 12 through 15:6 is a section addressing the ethical ideal of being a Christian rooted in human understanding of what is known of God and His purpose for humans.

The basis of Paul's ethics is spiritual worship (v. 1-2):

- He frames it in the context of sacrifice but it's very different concept of sacrifice from that familiar to the Jews:
 - a human, not animal, sacrifice
 - a living, not dead, sacrifice – which then becomes a person's whole life.

- This sacrifice (that is, this way of living) involves the mind as well as the body; we are freed from trying to be what the world wants so can work on discerning how God wants us to live.

Paul explains membership in the body of Christ (v. 3-8):

- Paul sees both the Church and each congregation as the body of Christ.
- In Colossians (1:15-18) and Ephesians (4:11-16) Christ is spoken of as the head of the body.
- Re: “measure of faith God has assigned.” Because faith comes from God, different measures of faith prevents pride/boasting. It allows us to acknowledge the gifts of others. Each individual is divinely placed as a vital/functioning part of the body.
- The importance of this body is not just that we are working together to carry out Christ’s mission for us but that we are also working together to support each other in this mission. Community is important.
- The identification of the body of Christ and slightly different lists of gifts are found in other letters (I Corinthians chapter 12. Ephesians chapter 4; Galatians chapter 5); Isaiah 11:2-3 also lists gifts of the spirit. So, the lists are not exhaustive but instead provide examples of such gifts.

Paul gives instructions for how a Christian should live in relation to others (v. 9-21):

- This section plus I Corinthians chapter 13 could be considered Paul’s counterpart to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.
- All these instructions can be summarized in the one word that begins this section: love.
 - In Galatians 5:22, “love” is the first of the fruits of the Spirit.
 - Love is the solution to the problem of pride.
 - That love is not just for fellow Christians.

July 11 (Session 5) Romans 13-14
 [Not meeting on July 4]