

**THE LETTER OF PAUL
TO THE ROMANS
June 13, 2018**

Chapter 3

If Jews and Gentiles will be judged equally then why be a Jew?

Paul is clear that being a member of the chosen people was in fact advantageous.

The greatest advantage was that they were the ones with whom God communicated.

Therefore they were the ones who knew the identity and nature of God.

And they were the ones to whom God gave the promise of the covenant.

But the faithlessness of Israel did not nullify the faithfulness of God to all people.

It turned out that the Jews (in history) were a source of blasphemy rather than a blessing.

If God now abandoned his promise (as Israel abandoned God) then all of humanity was affected.

It was through the blessing to the descendants of Abraham that God opened the door to all.

However faithless humanity may prove to be, God will remain faithful to his promises.

God is faithful to his promises and that makes God righteous all the time.

To be *righteous by faith* means that we trust that despite our sin God continues to be faithful.

We trust that through Jesus Christ the covenant has been opened to all people.

God may change our evil intent to his good purposes but we are not absolved of responsibility.

We are responsible for what we do.

Human evil will face divine judgment.

Evil is to be condemned.

Paul now returns to his belief that the Jews will be seen (and judged) alongside the Gentiles.

We are all accountable to God.

We are all under the power of sin.

We are all under the law which silences us.

It is through the law that we come to have knowledge of sin.

Apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed.

It was attested to by the law and prophets.

It is confirmed through faith in Jesus Christ → for all who believe

We are justified by his grace (as a gift).

God made Jesus a sacrifice of atonement (Leviticus 16:15-22).

Boasting is excluded by the law of faith (it is not about us).

This theme is further explored in Chapter 4.

Paul emphasizes once more that to claim that one's possession of Torah is sufficient will not do.

The Torah will simply remind the Jews that they are sinners just like the Gentiles.

The long-awaited faithfulness of God has been newly disclosed in the events of Jesus Christ.

God is both just and the justifier.

Paul centers everything on the free grace of God.

Chapter 4

As sinful people we can only be saved through Christ by the grace of God and accepted by faith.
We have nothing to brag about with respect to our salvation.
We have been saved in spite of ourselves and not because of anything we have done.

God is the God of all people (not just those who have the law).
Salvation is offered through faith so that all people may respond.
Now for the first time Paul outlines the relationship between the law and faith.

Abraham was known as a person of faith.
God regarded Abraham as righteous before he was tested or circumcised.
So Abraham had nothing to boast about before God.
The righteousness of Abraham was based on faith rather than on works of obedience.
Abraham was righteous in the eyes of God before the law came into being.
So the law is preceded by faith and rests on faith.
One becomes a descendant of Abraham by sharing in his trust and not his genes.

Within the framework of faith the law is a gift that gives order to our lives (a gift of grace).
Sin uses the law to make us think that we do not need to rely on the mercy of God.
Sin urges us to believe we can do it all by ourselves.

We learn that Abraham is our father in the faith.
The promise of Abraham came as a word of grace and not as a demand of law.
We have in Abraham an example of how trust in the faithfulness of God is to be exercised.
We are never to waiver in the conviction that what God has promised he will accomplish.
We are to trust in his purpose even when our news screams that sin rules the world.
It means we are to give God room to do his work and to fulfill his promises.

Between the call of Abraham and the coming of Jesus Christ God introduced the law.
The problem we face is not with the law itself.
The problem is its inability to protect humans from falling into the power of sin.
Until Christ breaks us free we are uncontrollably dominated by the results of original sin.

Paul outlines his new argument in 4:23-25 and then explains it in 5:1-11



Chapter 5

First theme: Righteousness (4:23-24)

Development in 5:1-5

The righteousness we have in Christ provides hope.

Hope is based on the love that comes through the Holy Spirit.

Second theme: Death of Christ for our sins (4:25a)

Development in 5:6-8

Christ died for sinners and is therefore the source of that love.

Third theme: Resurrection of Christ for our righteousness (4:25b)

Development in 5:9-11

Salvation is certain by the resurrection of our Lord (he died for sinners).

He is therefore the source of the Spirit.

Paul has given us a detailed literary examination and not some random ideas on Christian virtues. He has carefully organized his thoughts to show us the significance of human sin and grace.

We have been set right with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We can be at peace with God through that same Jesus Christ.

In addition to peace, we have confidence in our hope for the future.

Our present status with God assures us that we can have confidence in the face of adversity.

The grace of God is so powerful that even things that work against us can strengthen us.

Adversity can bring out patience that reinforces our hope.

Hope is grounded in the love of God which has filled our lives.

It is a love that comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

We have nothing more to fear from future judgment.

In Chapter 3 the righteousness of God was linked to his faithfulness to his promises.

In this chapter the righteousness of God is related to reconciliation.

God has the power to turn enemies into friends.

We have a choice to belong to the humanity whose destination is determined by Adam ... or we can belong to the humanity whose destination is determined by Christ.

Christ gets us out of the mess that Adam got us into (what Adam did, Christ undid).

Even when sin cannot be recognized or counted as a sin it is nevertheless there.

The reign of death proves that fact.

The sin of Adam is destined to be repeated even by those who lived before there was law.

It is the universal consequence of his disobedience that anticipates the obedience of Christ.

Christ has set us off in a new direction that will become evident in the new age.

The final victory over death occurs in the future.

The resurrection of Jesus is the announcement of the new age.

Its promise is not yet fulfilled.

An act which brings life is greater than an act which brings death.

Until that time we cannot see the difference between those who belong to the humanity of Adam and those who belong to the humanity of Christ (the wheat and the tares). It remains a matter of trust in God that the new goal in Christ is sure and true. Until that time we walk by faith.

Chapter 6

We do not do evil so that more grace can be poured out upon us.

We cannot ignore the terrible effects of sin nor should we presume the goodness of God.

People who are dead to sin will keep on sinning.

And to justify his logic, Paul returns to the discussion on Adam and Christ and then to baptism.

From Chapter 5: The obedience of Christ (to undo the disobedience of Adam) involved his death.

So any serious discussion of human sin and how God reacts must include the death of Christ.

For Paul, death pays the price of sin.

The one who has died no longer has to answer for that sin.

The penalty has been paid.

The dead are no longer in any position to rebel against God.

But how can that help the living?

If one has to die to be free of the power of sin then that does not help us in the present.

The answer is baptism ... those who have been baptized share in the death of Christ.

As far as sin is concerned the one who is baptized is dead to its power.

Sin no longer has absolute rule over us.

Here is the other half of the story ...

By dying Christ conquered sin and by rising he conquered death.

Our participation in the death of Christ is described in the past tense.

Our participation in the resurrection of Christ is described in the future tense.

Paul is clear we do not yet share in the resurrection of Christ the way we share in his death.

To share in his death is enough for now.

It has broken the enslaving power of sin over us.

For the first time we have a real choice. We can choose not to sin.

Free from the enslaving power of sin we can now serve another master.

We are members of a new race whose goal can be something other than rebellion.

The freedom baptism brings will not become fully apparent until that future time.

The new age is beginning but its fullness is obscured and difficult to identify.

Until that time, only the eyes of faith can see the full meaning of those realities.

The devil made me do it will no longer work as an excuse.

Our new state of freedom is not absolute. It is possible to slide back into our old ways.

Also Christians may so romanticize the old situation that they think back on it with longing.

The problem does not lie in willing the good. The problem lies in doing it.

This is what slavery to sin prevents.

What is new is that now the good that one wills can in fact be accomplished.

June 20 (Session 2) – Romans 7-9