

**THE LETTER OF PAUL  
TO THE ROMANS  
June 20, 2018**

**From Last Week**

The Greek word *to boast* is *kauchaómai*.

The same Greek word is used in Romans 4 (boast) and Romans 5 (rejoice).

In Romans 4 Paul states that Abraham had nothing to boast about before God.

Our only legitimate boasting is in Christ.

In Romans 5 believers who boast in Christ alone no longer boast about themselves.

Believers glory only in the cross (rejoice).

Believers boast (rejoice) in their sufferings because the power of God is working within them.

**Chapter 7**

Are the followers of Jesus Christ under the law?

Being under grace (and not under the law) is not a license to sin.

Paul illustrates his point using the marriage relationship –

A woman is bound to her husband for as long as he is alive.

If she has sexual relations with another man (during his lifetime) then she has broken the law.

If her husband dies she is no longer bound by the law of marriage and is free to marry again.

A metaphor for our relationship with Christ –

In Chapter 6 Paul states that it is through faith that we are one with Christ and dead to our sins.

Death breaks the bond between a husband and wife.

Our identification with the death of Christ breaks the bond that connects us to the law.

We are released from our relationship with the law and we enter into a new marriage with Christ.

Our desire to keep the rules was our attempt to gain the approval of God (to pay our dues).

Now that we experience his love we respond with thanksgiving and walk in newness of life.

We serve God in the way of the Spirit.

Our obedience to God is not like a slave fearing a master.

Our obedience (and motivation to serve) is centered on his love.

So then what is the purpose of the law?

Paul is unwilling to say the law is evil or to equate it with sin (he affirms its goodness).

Because the law was made captive to sin it can also be set free by the death of Christ.

In and of itself the law is neutral and it therefore shows both its strength and weakness.

It is weak when the law is dominated by sin. It persuades people they can save themselves.

It is strong because when the power of sin is broken the law can then serve God.

The law remains a danger because it can allow sin to tempt us away from trust in God.

Law is not sin but it exposes our sin. The law defines what God says sin is ...

Paul illustrates his point by using the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment.

It differs from the other nine in that it is an inward attitude and not an outward action.

It helps clarify Jesus' response to the rich young ruler found in Mark 10:17-27.

Outwardly the young man was very moral until God tested his heart.

The law demonstrates that there is something about us that always wants to rebel.  
We are guilty and condemned (not by the commandment but by sin).  
Sin deceives us because we are fooled into things we have everything under control.  
But the law of God is righteous and reveals our sin so we know we need his grace to change us.

Verses 14-25 describe our inner conflict (taken from *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson):  
I need something more! For if I know the law (but I still cannot keep it) (and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions) I obviously need help! I realize that I do not have what it takes on my own.

I can will it, but I cannot do it! I decide to do good, but I do not really do it. I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions (such as they are) do not result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and it gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it is predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. The good news is that only God can deliver us from our struggle with sin.

## **Chapter 8**

Paul agrees that sin deserves to be punished.  
On behalf of all humanity, Christ has taken our sins (and the consequences of sin) upon himself.  
If we believe and trust in him (if our lives are in him) we do not need to be afraid.  
For those who are in Christ there are no ultimate penalties.

Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death (from the only law that could condemn us).  
The law that says – *those who sin shall die* – no longer applies to us.  
Christ completely took care of it for us.  
We died with Christ (and it is no longer we who sin) but it is the sinful nature inside of us.  
It will die but we (who are in Christ) will live eternally.

We need to be careful because God does not want us to sin and this is not a license to sin.  
Jesus did not come to condemn sinners but he came to condemn sin (to take away its power).  
He satisfied all the requirements of the law and came to give us life through the Spirit.  
Led by the Spirit we are to think and do the things of God.  
If the Spirit is living in us (leading us and motivating us) then God will raise us up.  
For Paul the Holy Spirit plays an essential role in our salvation.

For Paul the words *flesh* and *spirit* do not designate two parts of human nature.  
These two words represent two ways of living.  
Life pursued according to the flesh is life influenced by rebellion and self-idolatry.  
We are not to live according to the flesh but to live according to the Spirit of God.  
We are called to serve God and not the self.  
We are commanded to resist sin and to put them to death.  
The more we reject sin and the more we obey God the more we are really alive.  
Our obligation to fight sin is not in order to be saved but because we are children of God.  
All creation is waiting for us because it will be freed from its bondage as well.  
The entire universe has been redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ.

We wait (with patience and eagerness) for the resurrection of our bodies.  
At the time of our resurrection our adoption will be complete.  
We live in the situation of *already* (already redeemed) *but not yet* (completely redeemed).  
We are already freed from condemnation but not yet completely freed from sin.  
We are already in the kingdom but it is not yet in its fullness.

It is the Spirit that helps us in our weakness.  
We do not know what to pray for but the Spirit intercedes for us.  
The Spirit does not remove our weakness but helps us in our weakness.  
It bridges the gap between the old and the new and does what we cannot.

God does not cause all things but he allows them and works them for his purpose.  
God called us through the gospel, justified us through his Son, and united us with him in glory.  
In this passage Paul uses two words that need further explanation: *foreknow* and *predestined*.  
They do not refer to some limitation on our freedom.  
Nor do they refer to some arbitrary decision by God to deny some from salvation.  
They point to the fact that God already has firmly set the destiny (end goal) as redemption.  
Our destiny lies in the hands of an all-powerful and loving God.

Vs 31-39: Nothing has the power to frustrate the care and love God has for us.  
Not even space and time will ever separate God from those whom he loves.  
Armed with that knowledge we can face the future with hope and confidence.

## **Chapter 9**

When Paul wrote this epistle he was in Corinth hoping to travel to Rome on his way to Spain.  
But first he planned to take a gift from the Greek churches to Jerusalem.  
In Jerusalem many Jews viewed Paul and his gospel with hostility.  
So when Paul wrote to the Romans he had one eye on the Gentiles and another on the Jews.  
He is rehearsing with the Christians in Rome what he will say in Jerusalem.

The Jewish rejection of the gospel was undermining the message of Paul.  
Had God given up on the Jewish people and turned to the Gentiles instead?  
And if so, will God later abandon the Gentiles too?  
Why were most Jews rejecting the free gift that Paul preached?  
If the gospel is promised in Scripture, why were so few Jews accepting the message?

We again see Paul (with greater emphasis) talking about the advantages of being Jewish.  
Paul had a deep concern for his people.  
He was convinced that without Christ they were headed for destruction (despite their advantages)  
To them belong their adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law.  
To them belong the temple worship and the promises.  
The Jews were so proud of these good things that they overlooked the best thing – Christ.

So if Israel has all this then what is the problem?  
They are missing out on salvation which gives the *appearance* that the promise was broken.

The Gentiles are adopted through Christ and are part of the promise of divine glory.  
The Gentiles are part of the new covenant.  
Salvation is in Christ and it is not in the law and the temple worship.  
Many Jews were not willing to admit these things were unimportant.  
They had been central elements of their culture and religion.

Paul believed that not all Jews will be inheritors of the promise.  
Some of Abraham's descendants were not counted as his children (for example – Ishmael).  
Refer back to Genesis 16, 17, 21, 25.

Within this context we need to be careful of the word *hate*.  
In Greek the word is *miséo* and it is the negative equivalent of *to will*.  
God loved Esau enough to bless him but God chose Jacob to fulfill his purpose.  
The history of Israel is not the history of a race but the history of a choice.  
God made a choice that included his intention to be gracious to all humanity through Israel.  
Being a member of the chosen people is not a matter of biology or parentage.  
It is a matter of the continuing gracious promise of God.

A new question arises: *Is there injustice with God?*  
God chooses some people and not others and that does not seem fair.  
For Paul it is a matter of mercy and not justice.  
The surprise is not that some people are left out – the miracle is that some people are chosen.  
God can bestow mercy to whomever he wants without being unfair to the others.

For Paul, God can also harden whom he chooses to harden (both are fair). God has a purpose.  
Paul proceeds to ask more questions that emphasize the gulf between God and humans.  
The surprise is not that God rejects his people it is that he is so patient with those who reject him.  
God can reject Israelites who persistently reject him.  
God has no further obligation to them.  
God can make these rejected Israelites his people again and he can do the same for anyone.  
Because God has been merciful a remnant of people are responding.  
The Word of God has not failed and a portion of the people is being saved.

The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it by faith.  
Israel pursued a law of righteousness and did not attain it.  
The Jews were trying so hard to be righteous but they failed.  
The Gentiles (who were not aware of it) were given righteousness by God through faith.  
Israel did not attain the goal because they were trying to be righteous through the law.  
It was a good goal but they pursued it the wrong way.  
The Jews focused on their advantages.  
What we need is faith in Christ.  
They stumbled over the stumbling block (against Christ).

More to come ...

June 27 (Session 3) – Romans 10-12