



The Story of Romans

Embracing a Righteous God

Week 8

Paul's Closing: 15:14 – 16:7

&

A Look Back at the Story of Romans

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The God of the Covenant

- ❖ The one God who created everything chose Israel and entered into a covenant with Israel who was to be the vehicle through whom God would rescue all humankind.
- ❖ God expects obedience, both from those who have the written Law and those who do not but can listen to their consciences.
 - Israel's obedience to the Law is grounded in their covenant relationship with God. The giving of the Law came *after* the Exodus, the great salvation event of the Jews.
- ❖ However, Israel has been faithless and the Gentiles have been idolatrous and immoral.
- ❖ Thus, God has planned for a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 3:6) with Israel and, therefore, with all peoples. God will do himself – for us – what we are unable to do for ourselves.

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Sin and Law

- ❖ The fundamental human problem is sin (singular). It is a kind of power that overwhelms us (see Genesis 4:1-7).
 - Humankind cannot outrun sin or outgrow it. Left to ourselves, another billion years of evolution and education couldn't fix the problem.
- ❖ Sin manifests itself in all the ways we diminish our relationships with God and with one another. We call these sins (plural).
 - Gorman uses a great phrase here: *covenantally dysfunctional*. Hence, God uses the metaphor of another covenant, marriage, to talk about Israel's covenant dysfunction.
- ❖ We need to be liberated from sin and forgiven for our sins.
 - Liberation/freedom/redemption are **not** synonyms for forgiveness.
- ❖ The Law is simply unable to liberate people from sin. Thus, the Law cannot restore people to righteousness and life.
 - The Law is good, but it cannot do the job. The power of sin is simply too great. God's teachings cannot transform – only God. The problem is not ignorance, but sin.

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The Righteousness of God Faithfulness to Israel and Mercy to the Gentiles

- ❖ Romans 3:3-4a
 - “What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means!”
- ❖ Galatians 3:29
 - “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.”

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The Righteousness of God

❖ God's Righteousness

- It is God's *saving power* (Romans 1:16-17)
- It is also God's *covenant faithfulness*, his *covenant justice*. How can God keep the covenant with Israel, despite their sins? How can he do it without being unjust (playing favorites), for Jews and Gentiles alike are in bondage to sin.

❖ For Paul, Jesus' faithfulness to the cross demonstrates God's faithfulness to the covenant. The promise made to Abraham has been kept in and through Jesus.

- Jesus is the faithful Israelite who offers faithful covenant obedience to God. Jesus is the faithful remnant of one. God's work here is not a new plan. It is the old plan focused on one faithful Jew who will represent everyone else – this is key to understanding Paul.
- The faithful death of the Messiah reveals to the world that the one true God has been good to his promises, rescuing a world gone wrong.

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The Church as alternative community

- ❖ In the NT, the Greek word for church is *ekklesia*
- ❖ This refers to a newly created community of believers gathering to worship and praise God in response to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The image of a community of believers is one of the most dominant in the NT, not only in Paul.
 - The NT world was enormously communal and this worldview permeates the New Testament.
- ❖ The church *is* and *is to be* a unified body of transformed and renewed believers living in love and harmony with one another.
 - In this, we are the holy image of our righteous, faithful God!

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