

Men's Class on Romans Chapters 1-8

Prepared by Matt Dabbs

The major commentaries consulted include:

- Ben Witherington, Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary
- N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: Romans (Part 1)
- Cranfield, Romans: A Shorter Commentary

I have tried to cite where appropriate.

Introduction

What we intend to accomplish:

- Receiving – Processing - Applying
 - What does it say
 - What does it mean
 - Now what?
- Understand how we read the Bible
- Understand the context:
 - Of the world of Paul/Romans
 - Of individual verses, chapters, and the book as a whole.
- Draw you in to the world of the Bible in order to experience the text in all its dynamics and twists = make you hungry for it.
- To take what we find and let it challenge our thinking, our theology, and the way we understand God, self, and others.

How we will accomplish our goals:

- Receiving – need an open heart
- Processing – study, class discussion
- Applying – introspection and discussion

Things we want to avoid:

- Proof texting – we have to understand verses in context. Romans is HUGE on pulling out verses (especially 3:23) and leaving them to sit on their own. That has to be done at times out of convenience and brevity but that will not do in our discussion.
- Viewing the book as a general letter outlining Paul's theology (beliefs about God) with no other real purpose in sending this to the Roman Christians.

We have to look at the whole book

- Past problems in reading Romans did not take into account context and historical background that shed light on what is being talked about.

Genre - Reading the Bible flat vs. catching the contours:

Reading something how it was meant to be read:

- Gospels – History/Story/narrative written to help us believe
- Acts – History written for Theophilus – story of church and sequel to Luke

- Epistles - We are listening in on their conversation.
 - Letter – certain things expected
 - Wedding - “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today...”
 - Letter - “Dear John, How are things with you? Hope you are doing well...”
 - Scientific paper, stock report, etc – the all read different and should be read different
- You don’t do a wedding like you read a letter and you don’t read every letter you get like you are listening to a wedding. Genre makes all the difference.

How does this apply to the Bible?

- This makes how we read the Bible more informed and helps us dig deeper.
- Romans as a letter/Epistle:
 - Author and recipients – why is it important to know who is who?
 - Who said something can have a dramatic impact on what it means.
 - Letters in ancient world – see handout #21 – contains “Greetings” and continual prayers
 - Form (Fee, 44):
 - Name of writer – Paul
 - Name of recipient – Church in Rome
 - Greeting – grace and peace...
 - Prayer or wish of thanksgiving
 - Body
 - Final greeting/farewell
 - Charein – Greetings
 - Charis – grace
 - Occasional – Letters are written for a reason. Romans is no different. Thought was that all other Paul’s letters written for specific problems but not Romans.
 - When you write a letter there is always a purpose – for Paul he was usually addressing specific issues in various churches in order to help them understand their calling and their identity in Christ more fully.
 - Problem – we only have one side of the discussion – we hear the answers but don’t often know the questions/problems. We can figure it out based on the answers.
 - Unity, unity – must be divisions problems.

Context

Side note - Witherington thinks Paul wrote this after his winter visit to Corinth but before the Jerusalem collection (Rom 15).

What was Paul’s relationship with the church at Rome?

- Paul’s presence in Rome and his execution (See Acts – appeal to Caesar)
- Paul writes this in advance of his time in Rome to people he generally has never met (exception – Rom 16).
 - Why would Paul take the time to list all these people? He doesn’t have a similar list in many of his other letters...he does this because he doesn’t really know them

personally and is establishing credibility with them. Witherington says these are even moreso his co-workers than his converts (BWIII, 2, 5)

Who is the church in Rome composed of?

- Mostly Gentile Christians (1:13, 15:15ff, 11:13, 9:3, 10:1-2, 11:23-31
 - BWIII believes that in 3:1 and 7:1 Paul is debating an imaginary Jew
 - Jewish Christians there as well – 15:7ff, Rom 16
- Witherington believes there is an honor/shame component of Rom 16 – that he names mostly Jewish people to help build up their honor before the more established Gentile Christians in leadership at Rome.

The Back Story

We read the gospels and then Acts and get the history of the church. Then we hit the letters. Arranged in order from longest to shortest for Paul.

- Acts we see churches established – Romans we see Paul dealing with some specific issues in a specific church – one that he has never actually been to personally (actually probably a conglomeration of house churches).
- In Letters – we see many of those churches and church leaders have specific issues and problems that need to be addressed.
- Edict of Claudius (See **Acts 18:2** and also Suetonius?) in 49 AD
 - Roman emperor Claudius ruled Rome from 41 to 54 AD. During his reign he issued a number of edicts including a prescription of “Yew juice” for snake bite ([Suetonius #16](#)) but also, and most importantly, an edict in 49 that Suetonius records as follows, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [probably a misunderstanding of Christ], he expelled them from Rome.” ([Suetonius 25.4](#)). Acts [18:1-2](#) also makes mention of this edict as to why Priscilla and Aquilla left Rome. To make a long story short, when Claudius died the edict was void and the Jews were able to return to Rome.
- Paul’s aim – to help consolidate/unify the church in Rome after all the division they have undergone.

Big picture – little picture.

- The little picture forms the big picture and the big picture informs the little picture.
- Where is the author taking us? = Structure

As we study then we will do several things:

- Interpretation:
 - Context – keeping things in focus – being informed by what surrounding text.
 - Structure – big picture little picture
 - Genre – how does the fact that this is a letter change the way we read it and what we hear is going on?
 - Author, audience, etc
- Application – let it stretch us and open our hearts and minds for hearing it again for the first time.

Romans 1

Romans in broader NT context:

- Romans Date – 57 AD in perspective
- Romans 15:25-27:
 - Macedonia (Acts 20)
 - Achaia (Acts 19:21)
 - Jerusalem (Acts 21)
- Paul is writing his letter to the Roman Christians while on his way to Jerusalem after having been in Macedonia and Achaia. He has the collection for Jewish Christians there who are struggling financially (Acts 21 he arrives there). When he gets there he will be arrested

Structure of a Greek letter:

- **1:1-6 – Introduction of the author**
- **1:7 – Addressee – to the all in Rome who are loved by God...**
- **1:7 – Greeting – “Grace and peace to you...”**
- **1:8 – Thanksgiving/prayer section**
- **1:10ff – Body**

Paul’s introduction of himself (1:1-6):

- Church of maybe a couple hundred in a few homes in the city of Rome (Ch 16 shows he knows roughly 30 of them)
 - This impacts how we read the opening verses...
 - Lengthy intro – probably because Paul didn’t know that many of them.
 - Authority issues – see below
- Authority issues – In order to listen they must understand the person who is righting and his position – surprising what we find:
 - Slave or servant of Christ Jesus
 - 19th century American view of slavery helps us miss what is being said - We see slaves as powerless – to be a slave of the king was to have authority as they carried out the king’s official business. Thus, to be a slave to God/Christ was to share in his power and authority.
 - He is not on his own but is under the authority of another...Jesus Christ.
 - Christ Jesus – when you hear that in Paul – want you to hear that as “God’s anointed one – Jesus” rather than as a proper name.
 - Many of God’s foremost people in OT were called slaves of God (see Cranfield, 2) – Moses, Joshua, David, prophets, etc and was considered there a title of honor – totally belonging to God (basically Cranfield’s words)
 - *Does the servant/slave metaphor still apply today? How?*
 - Apostle – “one who is sent” – implied...with the authority of the sender to give their message or accomplish their purpose.
 - *Are there still apostles today?*
 - Not in an official way – but certainly by the meaning – those who are sent.
 - Appeal to the authority of the Gospel (1:2):
 - God + scripture as to where his authority comes from “the gospel promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”
 - *Why is it important that we look to God and scripture for our authority?*

- This is not of ourselves or by our might – this is dependent on God and what God wants to happen.
 - *What other places have people looked to base their authority?*
 - Self, others, etc.
- Paul is pointing away from himself – toward where his authority comes from.
 - Scripture
 - God
 - Christ
 - Gospel
 - Spirit of holiness
- Paul is putting Nero in his place and putting God/Christ in theirs.
 - “God’s Son” – 1:2 – title given to Caesar who was believed to be divine.
 - Gospel = good news. A term used for when the emperor was born or accomplished a great feat (See BWIII & NT Wright).
 - Line of David – the rights to the throne based on a lineage older than Rome itself.
 - Lord?
 - What is Paul saying here? Christ is the real king with the real kingdom
 - Remember back to his trial – “king of the Jews” and Jesus’ response – “My kingdom is not of this world.”
 - This is significant given the fact that Paul is writing to Christian in the city of Rome – where Caesar lived.
- *How does the Gospel fly in the face of the powers of this world?*
- *Do we ever get ourselves so enmeshed in this world that we might start thinking these kingdoms are the real deal rather than God’s kingdoms?*
 - For instance – are you as worried about your walk & relationship with God as you are your 401k/IRA?

Paul is talking about a string of events that have changed the world forever (N.T. Wright) that basically demand a response. N.T. Wright writes,

“[The Gospel] is more like a command from an authority we would be foolish to resist. Caesar’s messengers didn’t go round the world saying, ‘Caesar is lord, so if you feel you need to have a roman-empire kind of experience, you might want to submit to him.’”

- Because what Paul says is true we can never be the same.

The audacity of the claims:

- Paul is writing to maybe a couple hundred Christians meeting in a couple of homes in a city of a half million to a million about their identity as citizens of the real and true world superpower, the kingdom of God.
- In less than 400 years the city of Rome itself would declare its empire a Christian one, if even in a somewhat loose fashion.
- *If Jesus lordship brought us this same kind of hope...what would change?*
- *How would it challenge us to dream bigger and see bigger possibilities?*
 - Think about this:
 - Rome in their day – 1,000,000 people
 - Christians in Rome – 100-500?
 - People in Pinellas county – 1,000,000

- Members at Northwest – 400-500.
- How many years would it take to turn this county upside down? Don't say it is impossible. If the most pagan city in the world could be impacted that greatly by it, what could happen here?
- Is this more or less likely to happen if we are “ashamed of the Gospel” and keep it a secret to those around us?

How can this be? – Listen to what Paul wrote – God has been making promises. He made good on them through his Son who was raised from the dead. Because of that resurrection we now receive grace and are called to faith and obedience. We now belong to him because God is the one who justified us.

Paul's plans to visit Rome (1:8-17)

- Thanksgiving and prayer section
 - *What can we learn about the prayers of an apostle even for people he had never met?*
 - *How often do we pray without ceasing for someone?*
- Move from some complex ideas to some plans
- Paul's sense of mission:
 - He has been in prayer for them
 - He has been making plans to come and teach them the Gospel to build their faith
 - He wants to impart to them some spiritual gifts.
 - He wants to be mutually encouraged by their faith
- Greeks and non-Greeks (literally barbarians). Funny background here:
 - Greek word – Barbarois – almost like saying the civilized people and then the Blah-blah people – as that is how their language sounded to the Greeks (thanks to Cranfield for the onomatopoeic aspects of this word).
- Salvation to everyone who believes – BIG words. Gospel according to traditional Jewish teaching was exclusive to Jews. Not so in OT
- 1:17 – “For in the Gospel a righteousness of God is revealed (apocalupto – apocalyptic literature – revealing hidden things)-a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...”
 - *How is God's righteousness revealed in the “good news”?*
 - Righteousness – just, right, pure...has to do with justice.
 - God's justice is revealed in the good news because we see that Jesus took the penalty for our sins and now we are justified/made righteous by his blood.
 - How are we then to live? By faith.
- Key verse – “the righteous will live by faith” (Hab 2:4)
 - *How is faith important today?/What parts of life today need to reflect faith in Christ?*

We are about to launch out into humbling territory where we have to take an honest look at our lives and see how well we live up to the idea of “the righteous living by faith.”

Romans 1:18-32

Bridging from the last section – 1:16-17:

- The Gospel – reveals a righteousness from God and yet by faith
- The righteous will live by faith – Hab 2:4
- Paul points out that the world needs to be saved and it is the gospel that makes that possible. Mankind

Think of the Jews and Gentiles hearing these words for the first time – The Jews might be thinking the Gentiles are getting hammered by Paul and in some ways they are – until 2:9

What is being revealed and who is doing the revealing (1:18-32)

- 1:17 – Righteousness being **revealed** through the Gospel that requires faith
- 1:18 – Wrath of God **revealed**...why? Because of vs. 20 – since the creation of the world God has made himself clear to mankind.
- 1:19 – “**plain to them** because God has made it plain to them – lit “manifested”(light is root - φανερον).
- As opposed to 1:21 – their hearts were **darkened** (as opposed to what God was manifesting/shining the light on).

The order of things (1:17-21)

- First – God’s righteousness is **revealed** in creation (1:20)
 - God expected mankind to respond with belief/faith
 - Man responded with all this wickedness/**darkness** rather than faith and belief – instead of righteousness they responded with unrighteousness
- Second – God’s wrath is revealed – due to the wickedness of mankind (1:18)
 - Righteousness was expected but the opposite happened:
 - Godlessness & wickedness (1:18)
- Third – God’s righteousness is **revealed** (1:17) – The Gospel
 - God has made himself **clear** again through his son
 - Just like with creation he expects this revealing of himself to mankind to result in belief/faith and righteousness rather than wickedness.
- Paul’s point is mankind was supposed to respond God with belief/faith but instead they rejected Him and rebelled. No excuse because God made this very clear.
 - Clear in the beginning – creation
 - Clear in the Gospel – Jesus’ D,B,R
 - So we are without excuse because we have knowledge of the Gospel and that should lead us to believing in him.
 - Yet many Christians behave like pagans even though they know better. *Why is that and what does God think about it?*

They changed things – made things not as they were supposed to be (1:21-25):

- The light was supposed to change them (back into the image of God?) but instead they changed God to fit their image.
- 1:23 – “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into a likeness of a corruptible image of a man...”
- 1:25 – “Who changed the truth of God into a lie”
- Idolatry - Worshipped and served the creature (literally the “created one”) **rather than** the one who created (same root word as “created one”)
 - How foolish it looks to bow to a piece of stone.
 - How foolish it looks to bow to the idol of power, arrogance and pride.

- The Gospel should reveal our lives for what they are and change us rather than the other way around.
- Idolatry – an image (NIV) – where else do we hear about “Image” in the Bible?
- Mankind – made in God’s image.
- ***To worship an idol is to degrade the image of God within you. Wright believes that to worship God makes the image of God within us shine more brightly (23).***
- Homosexuality – why this example?
 - N.T. Wright lays this out well in Romans for Everyone, 21-23
 - “His point is, ‘this is not what males and females were made for’...His point is not ‘there are some exceptionally wicked people out there who do these revolting things’ but ‘the fact that such clear distortions of the creator’s male-plus-female intention occur in the world indicates that the human race as a whole is guilty of a character-twisting idolatry’. He sees the practice of same-sex relations as a sign that the human world in general is out of joint.” (N.T.W., 22-23)

Result of corrupting of self and of God’s intention – “God gave them over...”

What does it mean that God gave them over?

- God let their desires/lusts (Wright) run their course.
- God didn’t force them into something they didn’t chose (Pharaoh in Exodus hardened his heart 3 times before God ever did). God doesn’t force people to do things outside their character.
- The natural result of engaging in sin is for life to deteriorate and get further and further from the original intention – relationship with God in righteousness and through faith.

Is there such a thing as a small sin?

Is there such a thing as a “gateway sin” similar to a “gateway drug”?

- Seems that all sins are big but some sins lead to more serious ones if not kept in check – or at least serious consequences within our hearts.

The ugliness of sin:

- In a post-modern world it is easy to hear the message that sin is okay – the old “if it feels good, do it” mantra
- *How does the world try to make sin look okay?*
- *Why is it even worse to sin when you had knowledge of God that should have led you away from sin?*

1:29-31 – Wright calls this “what human life looks like when God says, ‘All right, do it your own way.’...Evil is what you get when the mind is twisted out of shape and the body goes along for the ride.” (Wright, 25)

Their day sounds a lot like our own!

- How have the people – Jew and Gentile alike in the Roman church responded?
 - Disunity with each other.
- How have we responded?
 - Answer found in this question – do we find ourselves acting and believing like the godless, faithless ones or like righteous ones?

1:32 – “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Goes along with 1:22 – “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”

- There is a way that seems right in the world that leads to death (Prov 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”)
- Can you imagine knowingly doing something you know deserves death?
 - What in our society have we determined as a nation deserves death?
 - Murder, etc
 - Crazy thing is, when we sin we do the same thing – Rom 6:23

Remember – Paul is not so much pointing at the world but also has three fingers and a thumb pointing back at the church who is disjointed and in a state of disunity. These words are for us. The bigger picture is not so we can step back and say, “Look how evil the world is getting these days” but for us to say “Whose image am I displaying in my own life?” “How have I exchanged God’s intention for my life for my own creaturely desires?”

Romans 2 – No Claim to Moral Superiority¹

Reading a Letter - Listening in on one side of the conversation

- A condemnation = response to a corresponding problem or sin.
- A compliment – praising something good
- Make some assumptions based on the one side of the conversation we do have.
- “Well, its about 65 degrees outside and sunny.” you would assume the person on the other end just asked “How’s the weather?”

Ch.1 – Already listened in on is that the pagans have done lots of bad things.

Remember background – Jews, Gentiles, Edict, Rome...So Paul starts in on the Gentiles in the crowd in chapter 1 and into chapter 2

Let’s listen in...

“You, **therefore**, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” (2:1)

What would you infer was the occasion for Paul writing this?

- Problem – passing judgment
- By whom – Gentiles. Why? “Therefore” points to chapter 1
- Against whom – anyone (Jew or Gentile) but most importantly other Christians.
-

Infer occasion – there were Gentile’s in the Roman church who were passing judgment on others but were just as guilty of doing those same things themselves.

A Call to Self-Examination in 2:1-16

Imagine Hitler serving as judge over crimes of genocide. Messed up right? How can you pass judgment and condemnation when Joe sins but you do things even worse than he does?

¹ A term Ben Witherington III uses in his Romans commentary, 76-77

What Paul is about to say in 2:1-16 are pointed primarily at Gentile Christians and serve as a warning against moral superiority.

What does Paul say is the problem with being judgmental with the faults of others in 2:1?

- The one who judges is just as guilty.
- When we pass judgment on the lives and sins of others we often overlook the fact that we are just as guilty.

How does reminding ourselves of our own sinfulness help us deal with others humbly?

- We have to deal with sin with an attitude and heart of humility. We don't joke for spiritual position over others...not even over non-Christians.
- These verses are not just about how we deal with other Christians. It is also about how we deal with the world.

Hypocrites or Humble?

See Story Below

Difficult balance - dealing with sin without being arrogant or holier than thou.

- When we start treating the world like we are better than they are we run into the problem of not recognizing that our own righteousness does not come from ourselves but from God (1:17).
- We deal with sin...but we are also honest about our own shortcomings and failures.
- Notice the difference in dealing with a friend who is struggling:
 - Option 1 (hypocrite) – I can't believe you mess up that badly. What you did is horrible and without excuse. I sure hope God can forgive you!
 - Option 2 (humility) – I sure know how it feels to mess things up. I have done the same thing myself and it sure stinks. I know God can forgive you because he has forgiven me of a lot worse things than that.
 - Difference in attitude – one is jockeying for spiritual authority and position. The other is a humble recognition that none of us are righteous on our own.
- *How do people respond to hypocrisy?*
 - They don't listen and shut down – *Why?* – Even though the truth may be spoken by a hypocrite it just sounds so silly that the message is lost.
 - So you can run around and say Jesus is Lord all day but if your neighbor knows you are more like the Devil than you are like the Lord the message loses its power.

Transparency and authenticity are key to reaching the lost.

The world thinks Christians are hypocrites because they don't hear much of option 2 from many of us.

How do we make ourselves transparent and authentic to reach others?

- Paul is wanting these Christians to allow an honest self-examination to lead them to deal more fairly with others.
- **Application** – we recognize the sin in our lives and allow it to humble us enough to deal with the sin in the lives of others in a humble and loving way.
- **Warning** – Instead of saying “Wow those Romans were stubborn and unrepentant” (1:5) it behooves us to ask ourselves the question, “When have I been just like that?”

2:4 – Repentance:

- Greek conception of repentance – a change of mind with the resulting change of attitudes and behaviors.

- Hebrew/Jewish conception (from Shuv) “to turn”
- *How does changing our mind/thinking result in changing the way we live?*
 - Andy Stanley in Breakaway – **Beliefs** influence **Decisions** with influence **Outcomes**. So if you can get someone to change their thinking you can ultimately get them to change their life.

God is just (2:6-11)

- Start with the last verse – “God does not show favoritism.” (2:11)
 - That flies in the face of the traditional Jewish understanding of their place with God.
 - **Addressing potential arrogance of abusing God’s grace** - Don’t think so much of yourself that you think God won’t punish you. He will.
- We get into the problem of mishandling the grace of God and sinning, knowing that we will be forgiven so we do it anyway. That is called **nominal Christianity** – Christianity is this get out of jail free card that we live however we want for 75 years and then at the pearly gates we go “gotcha...I was baptized when I was 16!” Doesn’t work that way – God knows our hearts and our actions and he will judge accordingly.
- Paul writes that God will repay and God will give righteous judgment.

It really does matter how we live, the choices we make, etc. (2:6-9)

- *Why is it easy in our world to wonder if our actions even matter anymore?*
 - There are few outlets of morality any more. Most voices we compete with are about doing what you want and how RIGHT that is.
- God is watching and judging and righteous.
- God is also graceful.

“Having the Law is no guarantee of doing the Law, and merely having it is no protection against God’s judgment on disobedience, for all human behavior will be judged by God.” – BWIII, 85
The law? (2:12-16)

- There is a standard for everyone. God will judge accordingly.
- Having the Law does not mean one will always keep it and Not having the law does not mean that one will never keep it. Jews sometimes fail to keep it and Gentiles often keep it even though they don’t know what it is.
- We are all alike in the need to have a Renovated Heart (a phrase used by Dallas Willard).

Paul turns attention to the Jewish Christians (2:17-29)

- Jewish hypocrisy.
- The law can become a crutch to lean on that leads one to live however they want.
- This is the checkbox mentality of the law – we have the law = we are fine with God, therefore let’s live however we want.
- This is also to the in-crows – those who have been God’s people for a long time.
- Deals with hypocrisy
- “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” – Ever seen the bumper sticker – “Jesus, save me from your people”? Same concept. Some say the single greatest cause of atheism in the world are quote “Christians” – nominal Christians who hold themselves superior over others.
- 2:25 - Why circumcision? Because that was their checkbox. **Gen 17:9-14** – sign of the covenant.

- So what can happen - the man who is circumcised begins to see himself as “In” and others as “out” because of what is done externally to his body.
- He loses the regard for what happens to his heart and he turns to ungodly things
- Then you have this Gentile, while he has never been circumcised, has a heart for God and follows God anyway even though his body has never externally received the sign of the covenant, his heart shows it.
- True circumcision is a circumcision of the heart.

Nominal Christianity:

- Is it possible to be a Christian in name only?
- Nominal Christianity means you claim to be a Christian but you could really care less if you lived more like Jesus, came to church, etc. Someone asks you your religion and you say “Christian” or “Church of Christ”...when was the last time you were there? Oh, I haven’t been since I was a kid!
- But it can be more subtle than that
- Just like they could be circumcised outwardly and yet have rotten hearts we too can claim our membership with this church or that or that we were baptized by this preacher or that but if we are far from God, we are far from God.
- We can start moving in a nominal direction when we find ourselves:
 - Coming to church to make sure we get the Lord’s supper and then leave because we have little regard for the fellowship, message, or the fact that Christ is being worshipped.
 - We have more Bibles on the shelf than days we have been at church in the last three months.
 - Get caught up in a bunch of fine tuned doctrine but could care less about the sin in our lives
 - Are more about going to the right church than about God actually transforming our lives.

An illustrative story from Steve Furtick’s blog - <http://www.stevenfurtick.com/uncategorized/a-tale-of-two-ministers/>

Funny that I ran into this randomly when preparing this lesson.

This is a true story. I’ve altered a few details to avoid maligning anyone.

Recently a man I greatly respect was telling me how much he didn’t like a certain local pastor. We’ll call the local pastor Pastor Dale. He felt that Pastor Dale was super-arrogant. Conceited and haughty.

“You can just tell he’s hiding something. I don’t trust him. There’s something fishy going on there. He’s sleeping with someone, stealing money...wait and see.”

I happen to know Pastor Dale pretty well. I respect him a lot, and have never seen him demonstrate anything but the utmost integrity. Granted, he is very bold and audacious, and I see how people could construe that as pride. I see it as faith and passion.

I tried to defend Pastor Dale, but it was no use. The man had made up his mind.

Pastor Dale was up to no good, headed for a moral failure-and that was that.

Next, he began to compare Pastor Dale to another local minister in the same town. This other guy (we'll call him Dr. Ross) was a veritable Bible scholar. He had memorized massive portions of the New Testament...in **Greek**.

This man marveled at Dr. Ross' knowledge and trusted His Scriptural insights immensely.

"The main thing that I like about Ross is, he's a humble guy. Has real integrity. Loves his wife. Humble, humble, man. A good man. Not like Pastor Dale..."

A few months later, Dr. Ross left his wife. He took half their money and left the country to be with his mistress. He had been sleeping with someone else secretly for a long, long time. The last I heard, the situation wasn't resolved, and the family was torn to shreds.

Meanwhile, Pastor Dale is still preaching God's Word, still married, and hasn't-to my knowledge-stolen from or wronged anyone.

We make a big mistake when we judge people by outward appearances. The guy who seems humble and trustworthy might be a time bomb masked by meekness.

The guy who seems like he's strutting may be just that secure in his identity in Christ because He spends hours on his knees each week.

You never know.

It's best to keep your mouth shut.

Let God be the judge.

Romans 3 – Background

Jews, Gentiles and the Law:

Traditional view of the covenant and the law:

- Sinai – law given - - - - - > Jesus Christ (Cross) brought end to the law and a in with a new covenant. So the old covenant was a thing of the past.
 - Early church started with Jews who believed in Jesus Christ.
 - Later the church spread to the Gentiles.
 - Early Christian Jews did not check their Judaism or the law at the door.

In Romans 2 & 3, we have some interesting verses that should make us raise our eyebrows:

- 2:17 - "If you call yourself a Jew" – yes, they even Christian Jews were still Jews
- 2:25 – "Circumcision has value if you **observe the law**, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised." He is talking to Christian Jews here...circumcision still has value.
- 3:1 – "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!"
- 3:20 – "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin."

Problem – Our logic says, "If no one will be declared righteous by observing the law then there was/is no place left for the law." That is, if you only view the law as something important to salvation.

Old view – the law was about works righteousness. You had to do everything exactly right or else God wouldn't save you. Thought you have heard - no grace when there was law. So God gave the law until Jesus came, Jesus died and nailed the law to the cross and now everyone is just a Christian with no thought of the law whatsoever.

Problems

- Grace is all over the place in the OT. They understood their need for God's grace just as much as we do.
- Jesus' own words – Mtt 5:17 – He did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. Jesus actually reinterpreted the law with a stricter standard than ever before.
- Look at Jews after Jesus D,B,R and see how they were behaving:
 - Acts 21:17-16
 - Jews who believed and were “zealous of the law”
 - 21:20 ff - But those Jewish Christians were concerned that Paul had turned against the Torah in teaching fellow Jews not to circumcise their children, turn away from Moses (another way of saying the Law of Moses), etc
 - 21:23ff – Paul pays the purification expenses for some men who had made a vow, why? To show he was still in keeping of the law (21:24). He did. He even purified himself along with them.
 - Acts 21:27-29 – More thought that Paul was an apostate from the law. Paul arrested and gives a speech of his conversion.
 - Acts 25:8 – Paul defends himself against accusations that he was apostate from the law – “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

Refining our view of the law in the early church.

Book of Acts:

- Accusations against Paul – that he is not keeping the Law of Moses = apostasy. Paul responds by taking a Nazirite vow (Acts 21:15-26).
- Notice Peter and his vision and Peter's adherence to the law
- First Christians did not have the view that Jesus died and so every aspect of the law was thrown away from then on.
- They still kept large portions of the law! Listen to how Paul speaks of the law 20 years after Christ has risen from the dead in Romans:
 - 2:25 – “Circumcision has value if you observe the law”
 - 3:1-2 – Entrusted with the very words of God
 - 3:19 – The law has something to say to those under the law
 - However – no one will be declared righteous by observing the law (3:20)
 - So we assume that they didn't keep the law because they couldn't be declared righteous by keeping it. Not so.
 - Peter was keeping the law (Acts 9). Paul was keeping the law (Acts 21)
- Problem – we think that once something no longer has power to save that it would be kept. But it was...this was part of their identity with God.
- Some things God said would last forever:
 - Circumcision – lasting sign of the covenant (Gen 17?)
 - Sabbath – lasting sign of the covenant (Exo 20? & Lev?)
- Some things God brought to an end:

- Dietary laws (Acts 9-10)
- Purity laws

Acts 10 – Gentile acceptance into the church based on God’s initiative:

- Turning point in the church
- Before – Gentiles could be considered a “god-fearer” but were not usually readily accepted into synagogue or definitely into temple worship. There was an outer court where they could worship.
- Blessings and curses:
 - To be blessed in OT was to be in right relationship with God, to experience God’s promises, and to observe the distinctive marks of Judaism (Circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc). We often think law works righteousness and that Jesus and NT was all about grace. Not so. Even under the law there was a HUGE grace component.
 - Covenantal nomism -

Circumcision:

- Acts 15:1,5 16:3

R. Simlai wrote “Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses. David came and reduced them to eleven [principles]. Isaiah came and reduced them to six. Micah came and reduced them to three. Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two. Amos came and reduced them to one, as it is said, “For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, seek ye Me and live (Amos 5:4)...It is Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said, “But the righteous shall live by faith.” (Hab 2:4).

Romans 3

[see appendix A for background on Romans 3]

Give them a copy of what I put on the blog about misperceptions about the law to clear up some things we talked about last week.

Paul is funneling his way down to show that his Jewish and Gentile audience are more alike than they think – they all have sinned and they all must rely on God. They also cannot rely on human reason or wisdom to manipulate God to allow them to sin.

We cannot rationalize sin to be okay...EVER

3:1-2 – It’s not all bad news. The Jews have much going for them.

- *What did God expect the Jews to do with the words he entrusted to them?*
 - He expected them to be a light to the Gentiles but they were faithless with that responsibility.
 - But that doesn’t make God any less faithful to his promises.

3:3-6 – God is righteous even if we aren’t. God’s judgment is righteous even if ours is messed up

3:7-8 – Rationalization

What does it mean to rationalize?

Why would someone want to rationalize sin?

- Because it makes it seem okay!

Paul gives two examples of people who rationalized a way to sin and feel good about it:

1. If I lie – it helps people see that God is way more truthful than I am. Then God would get more glory as people realize just how honest he is compared to the rest of us!
2. Let us do evil so that good might result!

Paul says this type of thinking deserves to be condemned.

Sin

What is it?

- *What would you say sin is?*
- Some would say “to miss the mark” but that doesn’t quite get the picture.
- Sin is rebellion – God tells us what he wants and when we do what we want anyway, it is called sin.
- Adam, Eve, Serpent – Sin is saying we know better than God what is best for our lives.
- Sin distorts our humanity and skews the image of God that is within each one of us.

Consequences of Sin

- “Or you will surely die” (Gen 2:17).
- “wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)

Who has done it?

- Everyone – Rom 3:23

Pathways:

- Rationalize it – See Rom 3
 - Even if I do this – I am still nicer than most people
 - I do more good than I do evil
 - No one will ever know.
 - I can just ask for forgiveness later
- *Why is rationalizing so dangerous?*
- Justify it – redemptive violence as an example.
- *How might someone justify sin in their mind?*
 - They did me wrong so they deserve this
- Total rebellion – who cares what God thinks about it.
 - *What would be a good example of someone justifying sin?*

Paul is talking about the fate of God’s people and their failure to live up to their obligation – he will get to more of that in Chapter 9.

Romans 3:9-20

Paul is about to do to the Jews what he did to the Gentiles in the first 2 chapters.

3:1 – Jews have advantage

3:9 – But that doesn’t make them better than anyone else

How do these two fit together?

- It is like saying the Jews got a head start in the race but that doesn't mean they are any better athletes than the rest of the field.

Most shocking for them to hear – “We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin.”

Paul backs this up by quoting a dozen OT passages.

Romans 3:21-26

3:21-22 – Righteousness apart from the law – the law doesn't make one righteous. Following all the rules does not make one righteous. Only God can make someone righteous – 3:22

Righteousness comes from faith in Jesus Christ...to all who believe? (3:22)

- 3:22 – Could well read “faithfulness of Jesus Christ” – in other words, because Jesus was faithful to God's plan salvation is made available.
- James 2:19 – Even the demons believe and shudder.
- The point is not that if anyone, anywhere, at any time has ever believed Jesus was the Son of God that they have an irrevocable place in heaven.
- He is saying that those who believe in him and have faith (what is faith?) will be saved.
 - Faith in NT – Faith comes from belief and results in faithfulness (that is the qualities of someone who has faith in something).
 - The idea is that something is believed in so strongly that faithfulness results. Think about it this way, if a wife was told her husband would be at the airport returning from Iraq at noon tomorrow, guess where she would be at noon tomorrow? At the airport. *Why?*
 - Because she believes what she was told so strongly that it moved her to faithful action.
- If you believe Jesus is the Son of God and put faith in Him, you will try to live a faithful life. That is what makes James 2:19 true – if everyone who believed was instantly saved, the demons and the devil would be saved because they certainly believe in who Jesus is. Difference – they have not lived faithfully in hope of Him as their savior.

3:23 – all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

- That is a verse we hear ALL the time.
- Never, ever read that verse without 3:24 – “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.”
- *What does it mean to redeem something?*
 - You pay the debt for something or put down something for something of value.
 - Redeem something at a pawn shop or redeem a ticket for something of value.
 - Also used of slaves – manumission – slaves could be redeemed or redeem themselves to freedom from their masters. Christ has freed us from sin by paying the price himself.

So what did God do? Israel was disobedient – God sent his own Son to fulfill his promises to his people and bring reconciliation to the world.

3:24 - “Justified freely by his grace...”

- No more beautiful statement in all of scripture than that.

- No matter how hard we try or how much good we do we will never outweigh our sin. But God can and did through Jesus Christ.

3:25 – left sins committed beforehand unpunished?

3:25-26 – could spend a whole class here.

- Sacrifice of atonement – literally read a sacrifice on the mercy seat? Referring to the tabernacle and ark of the covenant. This was the place God bestowed mercy to his people.
- N.T. Wright points out that Christ Jesus is now the place of forgiveness rather than the temple or the sacrificial system.
- Forgiveness comes through the blood of Jesus
 - Passover – the blood brought pardon.
 - Sacrifice – the blood brings

Romans 3:27-31

All of this is so humbling and even humiliating – those entrusted to share the good news with the world failed but God didn't fail! Instead he redeemed and restored and saved! So where is the boasting? Anyone who can stand up and say "I don't need the blood of Christ...I am righteous on my own!" Nope.

3:28 - "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." *What does that mean for the Gentiles?*

- It means they are on even footing with the Jews.

"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." – The law upholds the fact that it was always about faith from the very beginning. So yes this is something new – that God set things right through Jesus Christ but it is also something very old – God had been planning this a long time and this was the intention of and fulfillment of the law.

Romans 4 – It All Comes Back to Faith

Romans 4:1-8

Too narrow a view of God's family:

Paul is making the point here that the Jews made God's family too narrow – the direct descendents of Abraham & are circumcised.

In fact, God's family is much bigger – those who, like Abraham, put their faith in God.

Bookended by faith

4:1 – "What, therefore, shall we say to have found, that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?"

Romans 1:17 – "The righteous will live by faith"

Romans 1-3 Paul pointed out that both groups had fallen short and now he comes back around to faith.

Two approaches to being justified by God – Who is indebted to whom?

- Works righteousness – I will work and God will owe me something. This attempts to place God as debtor to us. I worked so give me my wages.
- Grace righteousness – I will believe God and realize that I am indebted to God and not the other way around. This acknowledges that we are indebted to God.

Difference between “getting in” and “staying in”

- Getting in relationship with God does not require that we earn it. There is not any good deed that is required of us to enter God’s kingdom by way of earning our salvation.
- Staying in – once we are in relationship with God, we are expected to be obedient to God. We are expected to be holy as God is holy. We are expected to abstain from sin. We are expected to do good works – not because they merit the continued relationship with God but because that is the natural outcome of who we are – righteous people forgiven by a merciful God.

1:4 – When a man works he earns his wages

1:5 – When someone trusts in God and **does not work** his faith is credited (determined by mathematical process – BDAG = count something for or against someone) as righteousness.

Faith is counted for him as righteousness.

What does it mean that he does not work?

- Paul is saying that those who trust in God do not work for God as if their works earned them anything.
- Instead, they trust in God and put their faith in him and know it is God who has to decide for himself to count them righteous apart from their works.

What this does and does not mean:

This does not mean that God wants us to sit on the couch all day and relieves us of all obligation. It does – change the focus of and reason for why we work – not to earn anything but in recognition that God has counted us as his righteous ones through faith.

Looking back to Abraham (4:9-12)

1:9 – New question, same subject.

- Subject – where does righteousness come from.
- New question – what happened with father Abraham? He is the ultimate example to a Jew as he was the first one God called to be Father of many nations.
- Gospels – “children of Abraham”
 - John 8:33 – we are Abraham’s descendents
 - John 8:39

Children of Abraham:

- Gen 17:1-8 – the covenant
- “father of many nations”
- 17:4 reads – Behold, [this is] my covenant with you and you will be לֹאֲבָרָה (father of) הַרְבֵּי (a multitude of = **hamon**) nations
- 17:5 – No longer will your name be called Abram but your name will be Abraham (אַבְרָהָם)
- Abram (Av = father, Ram = is exalted)
- Abraham = (Av = father, **raham** = multitude)

- The Jews understood that their heritage as a people went back to God’s covenant with Abraham to:
 - Be father of many (17:4-5)
 - Possess the land (17:8)
- The sign of the covenant was circumcision (Gen 17:9-14)
 - But God counted Abraham righteous before he was circumcised:
 - Abraham declared righteous by God (Gen 15:6)
 - Abraham circumcised (Gen 17:23-24)
- Abraham was righteous in God’s sight while he still had a foreskin.
 - The Jews in Paul’s day were saying that God’s people had to be circumcised in order to be declared righteous.
 - Paul points to the pioneer of their heritage and their HERO – Abraham and says even he was righteous while he still had a foreskin.
 - Abraham himself was an idol worshipping pagan before being in covenant with God.

The righteousness is not found in the circumcision. The righteousness is found in those who walk in a trusting and believing way toward God as Abraham did. That is called **faith**. Because the righteous will live by faith (1:17).

“one cannot possibly suggest that circumcision was a necessary part of belonging to Abraham’s family. Had that been so, Abraham himself would not have qualified in those early days” – Wright, 70. Early days meaning the time between Genesis 15 and 17.

Romans 4:13-15 – The law?

Bigger picture – how did Abraham get into God’s family? Not by the law. There was no law at the time. Take home point – it is the same today. People can get in God’s family apart from the law.

What about the law? Abraham didn’t have the law but was declared righteous. There is a righteousness that comes apart from the law for those who believe – Abraham was the first. We follow in his steps.

- The Jews would be quick to say they have always followed in Abraham’s steps – they were his children.
- But this sheds new light on everything.

Romans 4:16-17 – Father of us all

This would be a shocking statement to the Jews – Abraham was the father of the Gentiles as well. God said Abraham would be the Father of many nations. The Jews took that to mean many people (countless generations of Jews). Paul took God to mean what he said – the father of many nations.

- Gentiles are often referred to in scripture as “the nations” = ethnos (where we get ethnic from)
- Rom 1:5 – NIV translates ethnos as “Gentiles”)
- They are synonymous.

- OT – nations meant the Gentiles (Deut 1:28 – “The ethnos (LXX) are stronger and taller than we are...”)
- Thanks to Wright for sharing these ideas:
 - Life to the dead = Jews (See Rom 11:15)
 - Nothing – Something = Gentiles (See Eph 2:12)

Romans 4:18-25 - God of the Possible Impossible

This section ties in with 4:17 – “who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they are.” – points to Abraham who had kids at 99, as good as dead.

Abraham should have had no hope to raise up a great nation of descendents – but he hoped any way. *Why?*

- Because he had a promise from God.
- Abraham was persuaded that God could do what he promised (4:21)

Paul brings his audience into the picture alongside Abraham –

The implication in this section is that God is able to accomplish what is impossible with us and we need to accept that. We accept it in Abraham’s story and we need to accept it in the story we are in – that God indeed did make the Gentiles righteous by faith apart from circumcision. That was seemingly impossible in the eyes of the Jews but Paul brings them back to another impossible story – how they even began as a people through a man who had faith in the God of the impossible. They need to realize that the Gentiles are made righteous just as they are – no matter how impossible that seems.

Wright also points this out (78):

Mankind	Abraham/those who have faith
Ignored God (1:20,25)	Believed in God (4:17)
Knew God’s power but failed to worship (1:20)	Recognized God’s power and trusted (4:21)
Failed to glorify God (1:21)	Gave glory to God (4:20)
Dishonored their bodies (1:24)	Regained his body even though old through God’s power.

Which way do we follow? Do we trust God or not?

Wright points out that this concludes the first major section by pointing out that things have come to completion that were started at the beginning – the intention given through Abraham has been made complete here and now through Christ and our faith.

Romans 5:1-21 – Boasting In Christ

Context:

- Chapter 4 – Abraham believed (before he was circumcised) and God credited to him righteousness = justified by faith and proving that through Abraham that both Jews and Gentiles have a share in the family of God.

- 4:23-25 – “The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”
- We are pulled into the same story that Abraham and Moses were in – the story of how God is redeeming and reconciling the world to Himself.

Chapter 5:1-5

- The fact that God has made us righteous gives us peace.

After all is said and done – what is the result of our righteous reconciliation?

- Peace and hope
- Peace – on the grounds of what? – We have access into God’s presence and he doesn’t kill us when we do.
 - 5:2 – “Through him we have been allowed to approach, by faith, into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate (or boast) the hope of the glory of God.
 - Think about God being so glorious that when you stand in his presence you feel a profound sense of peace.
 - *How does that give us peace?*
 - Many people are haunted by their past sins and have no sense of peace because they doubt their forgiveness. Paul writes that we have reason to celebrate the grace of God and that peace that should result.
 - Peace = more than absence of war = whole inner state of being...wellness and health.
 - Think about a world outside of Christ who have no faith – have no peace.
- Temple – a place where people approached God – but only certain people really had access to God’s presence. Jesus changed everything (4:24-25)
- Think about having peace with God:
 - To be at peace – how? Because of reconciliation. The books have been balanced and things have been set right.
 - We don’t worry about the debt collector once the debt has been erased. That is what God has done but not because we deserved it – because he is gracious.
- “When we stand there in God’s own presence, not trembling but deeply grateful, and begin to inhale his goodness, his wisdom, his power and his joy, we sense that we are being invited to go all the way, to become the true reflections-of-God, the true image-bearers, that we were made to be.” (Wright, 83)
- *How does it make you feel to think that God is welcoming you into his presence and glory?*

Have you found peace in and through your relationship with God?

What have you tended to put your hope in?

Boasting in Romans 1-5

- 5:2 – “Boast” = kauchomai (cacophony)
 - Could mean to celebrate (Wright, 80)
 - Other occurrences:
 - “Brag” – 2:17, 2:23
 - “Boast” – 1:30, 3:27, 4:2

- 1:30 – calls the pagans those who are loud tongued boasters – those loud in the mouth.
- 2:17 – Don't shout about of your superior status as a Jew
- 2:23 – Don't shout aloud of how great it is you have the Law.
- In 3:27 – he says we cannot boast in ourselves because we are sinful.
- In 5:2 & 11 – He says we can indeed boast in the Lord. This is a loud celebration of thanksgiving in response to what God has done. It is not boasting in self.

In Romans 5 we finally have something to talk loudly about – what God has done for us and the resulting peace we have.

5:3 – Glory in our sufferings – this is a perspective issue

- This question focuses us – “Where does suffering lead us?”
- Paul's answer = closer to God
- Therefore suffering has a place in our lives because it reminds us that we have something to hope for.
- No suffering = nothing to hope for.
- Because we suffer, we hope.

5:5 – Hope is being played out even right now = Holy Spirit inside of us. Deposit.

- *How does having the Holy Spirit here and now give us hope for what God has promised will eventually happen?*

Chapter 5:6-11

AHA!

- Gentiles are sinner
- Jews are sinners
- All are unrighteous
- God has made a way – AHA!
 - The only way to “get it” is to give up on figuring out how you DID it.
 - As long as you are focused on how you got to the top of the mountain, the climb, which trail you took, etc – you will never enjoy the view at the top. Open your eyes to the beauty that can only be seen from the top of the mountain.
- Boils down to love – the cross is the emblem of the love God has for us.
- “While we were still sinners” - Undeserved = God's gracious acts on our behalf.
- If Christ died for us while we were SO BAD...how much more is he pulling for us when we are trying to get our lives wrapped around him...even if we aren't doing it perfectly.
- *How much hope does it give you toward a future with God if he was willing to go to those kind of lengths when we were in total rebellion?*

We have reason to boast – to be loud – to celebrate. The world might call it arrogant, bigotry, and narrow minded but we know it is truth and so we shout out in celebration of the one who has reconciled us and given us hope and peace.

5:12-21 Adam vs. Christ (Death vs. Life)

Two models:

- Adam – sin/death
 - Brought death to mankind
 - Rom 6:23 – wages of sin = death.
 - *How does sin bring death?*

- Those owned by sin are no longer living for God but living for Satan. Result = death.
- Those who live under the rule of sin are likely to do deeds that result in death of self and others.
- Christ – righteousness/life
 - Brought life to mankind
 - *How does Christ bring life?*
 - His people are fully alive.
 - We are who we were made to be.
 - God made mankind to fully experience the life He designed for them to have – life in relationship with their creator.

Christ came and undid the mistakes of Adam and the mistakes of all the rest of us. He came to bring a GIFT – life.

Gifts in this chapter:

- Gift of grace – 5:15
- Gift = Jesus Christ in 5:16

5:17 – reigning in life through Jesus Christ – these are kingdom terms and language.

- We are part of a different kingdom than the world.
- Obedience of Christ results in our justification (5:19) *Why?*
 - If he had been disobedient we would have remained under the same problems that Adam faced.

5:20 – The law illuminated sin – it made it stand out more clearly. Cruel of God if he just left it like that.

5:20b – instead God poured out even more grace.

Gift:

How do you see your relationship with God as a gift?

Bigger picture of what Jesus came to do:

- Death reigned in Adam and in every last one of us. How? Because we rejected God. But I am a good person – but we all have sinned and picked our way over God's.
- Jesus came to rescue us from ourselves and to bring life where there was death through grace. Why grace? Because if it had to be earned we were all doomed.

Looking Ahead - Chapter 6:

- Going to see how this all takes place in the life of the believer:
 - How does one live in relationship with God?
 - How does one enter into the life God has in store for his people?
 - How does grace work in the life of the believer? Wages vs. free gift...

Romans 6 – This is Life or Death

What is Romans 6:1-6 about? – Baptism

It is more than a prooftext. It continues Paul's line of thinking about how we deal with sin and what God is doing behind the scenes.

Letter – cannot be there to have conversation.

Tool of Paul – ask a question he knows will result from what he just wrote.

6:1 – “What shall we say then?” – In regard to what? To what he said in Chapter 5:12-21

- Adam brought sin (5:12).
- Christ brought righteousness and did away with sin which brought eternal life (5:21).
- God showed just how abundant his grace was because he was able to forgive so many sins (5:17)

Paul's anticipated question – well, should we sin more? I mean, if you take away the law and you put in grace by faith. **What is the motivation not to sin?**

Picture – Scale with sin on one side – Righteousness on the other

- Wouldn't adding more sin mean God would have to add more righteousness?
- Paul says that is not how it works and here is why.

You died to sin. So why talk about doing it/living in it? You can't. Here's why.

Understand the reality that happened to you when you were baptized (6:1-6):

- Burial picture – going into the ground/water to die.
- Resurrection – raised to walk in new life.
- You left the sin back there...you killed that part of yourself that was unrighteous.
- A righteous person doesn't ask – “does this mean we can sin more now, please?”
 - When you say that it shows something didn't die that should have.
 - Paul calls this our “sinful nature” or “flesh”

6:7 – when a slave dies he is no longer a slave.

- When we die to sin, it cannot master us anymore.

6:8-11 – The reality is, just like Christ died so death has no mastery over him

- 6:11 - We died to sin – it no longer masters us
- Not just dead – but alive – to God.

No Platonic dualism (6:12-14):

- Dualism says – whatever you do in your body doesn't really have an effect on your soul. Physical and spiritual are separate.
- Not so – What we do in the body matters.
 - Instruments of wickedness (6:13)
 - Instruments of righteousness (6:14)
- *How can we be used as instruments of righteousness?*
- *How is it possible to be a Christian and yet still be used for wickedness?*

Newly expected question – “Can we sin more because God has so much grace?” (6:15-23):

- Paul spends the rest of the chapter answering this question.

Slavery analogy continued:

- Slave to sin = death

- Slave to righteousness = life
- They changed from sin/death to righteousness/life
- Imagery:
 - Imagine Jesus raises someone from the dead. They walk around a bit and say “I sure do miss it back there dead in the grave!” Dumb.
 - Imagine someone forgiven and made righteous wanting to go back to sin and death again? Equally dumb.
 - Imagine a slave released who comes back to serve his wicked, abusive master. Dumb.
 - We have been **saved**. *Ever wonder what that means?* God rescued us from death through Christ. We are slaves who have been set free.

6:19-23 – We are all slaves of something.

- Decision to be made – we can make a concrete decision to give ourselves to God. The devil doesn’t have mastery over us unless we allow him to.
- *How do we allow the devil to gain control of our lives as our master?*
- *In what areas do we often struggle with giving control to God?*
- *Why is being a slave to God better than being a slave to the devil?*

6:21 – What benefits come from sin? *Can you name any?* – NONE

Why would we want to be a slave to God? – 6:22 – it leads to eternal life.

6:23 – more than a prooftext – it sums all this up very well.

- Sin = Death
- Righteousness = Life

Romans 7

What did you realize last week needed to be put to death?

Romans 5 – Life comes through Jesus Christ

Romans 6 – We have to die before we can live.

- **Example 1** - of a slave – free from his master when he dies. Once we die to sin it can no longer master us. We die to sin through baptism.
- We raise united with Christ to share in his resurrection and eternal life.

Romans 7 –

- **Example 2** – Marriage. When someone dies the spouse is free to marry whom they please.
- She cannot marry a second man while her husband still lives.
- Death **releases** a spouse from the **lawful obligation**. Freedom to marry another.

Illustration for what has happened to the law – once you die to the old way there is a new way you are free to pursue.

Reading Romans 7 properly:

- Temptation is to read Romans 1 chapter at a time and see them as disconnected pieces
 - If you do that you read chapter 6 and slaves and sin then 7 about marriage and struggling with sin. Marriage seems out of place then...like it doesn’t belong.
 - It is an illustration to make the same point he was making in Romans 6 – death releases from previous obligations.

- Connection point - If you die to sin you are not bound to live by it as you used to be.

Romans 7:1-3 – Not so much a theology of marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. He is making a point they would already agree with and using it as an illustration of what he is trying to get them to see.

- Clearly a Jewish component here – “men who know the law.”
- They have been leaning on works of the law for their connection with God (circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc) as that is how they had been taught to be holy.
- Paul is changing their paradigm. He is unteaching them those things. He is showing them that all those things have been fulfilled and need to be put to rest because God has put something better on the table.

Romans 7:4-6 – You have died to sin and the law and released (like a spouse or a slave) We saw in Romans 6 – need to die to sin/flesh in order to live for God. But there is still one **barrier** that does not need to get in the way – THE LAW!

Why would they need to die to the law?

- They need to drop their preconceived ideas that someone needs the law to approach God properly. Something better has come in its place (8:1 ff)
- The law served its purpose – Paul will tell us what that was start in verse 7.
“so that we serve in a new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”
- He is referring back specifically to Roman 6 – dying to sin/flesh and being raised.

Romans 7:7-13 – Struggling with Sin:

- The whole point here is that the law, by itself and left unfulfilled was dead and impotent.
- Paul anticipates their question – die to be released from the law? Paul, you are making the law sound like sin itself. “Is the law sin?” (7:7)
- The law was incomplete because it was not able to kill sin and death. It was not able to conquer the problem we faced. In fact, sin was able to manipulate us to use the law for evil rather than for good.
 - 7:8 – sin seized opportunity
 - 7:9 – intent of the law was to bring life.
 - Why didn’t that happen?
 - Because the law was powerless against sin. The law only showed us clearly what sin was but could not conquer sin, could not bring victory of sin. In fact, some people might not have thought of sinning in certain ways if the commandment had not existed.
 - Trina example – don’t jump in that pool! He would have never thought of that if he had not been warned not to do it.
- 7:11 – sin manipulated the law and deceived people. The law did not deceive, sin using the law deceived.
- 7:12 – Paul makes it clear that the law and commandment were both holy in and of themselves, they were just prone to be manipulated by sin to work out in our lives death instead of life.

Here is the point – the law was insufficient because it couldn’t kill sin and death. So God had planned in advance a new covenant that could bring victory and instead of bringing death, bring life to his people.

7:13 – Did the law then turn into death?

- 7:7 – the law is not sin.
- 7:12 – the law is holy, righteous and good.

- Answer = certainly not!

Confusing verse alert #1

- The law showed us what sin was.
- The law demands death for sin = “produced death in me”
- Again calls the law good – because it puts sin in its place.

Romans 7:14-25 – “Adam’s Lost Race” (BWIII)

- Who is Paul talking about here?
 - I = Himself?
 - Before he was a Christian – but he speaks in the present tense.
 - After he was a Christian – he shouldn’t be struggling with sin and law like this. How can he ask question in 7:24 – who will deliver?
 - Any lost person?
 - This is Witherington’s view – connecting people with the problem of Adam/sin.
 - Jews without Christ and only with the law?:
 - Pro – all the talk of the law & that they know the law (7:1)
 - This is Wright’s view.

Hard to answer – Dilemma: If Paul is talking about himself, we figure he should have already been over these things since he was baptized. People offer two solutions:

Bottom line – you cannot reason your way through this to find the perfect situation Paul is speaking for. It breaks down in multiple ways when you apply too much logic to it.

What you are left with is someone who is not able to have life through sin or life through the law and so there has to be deliverance from somewhere else – The answer is Jesus! (7:25)

- Key verse – “sold as a slave to sin” also bookended at verse 25 “slave to the law of sin”
 - Makes sense of much of what he is saying – I do what I don’t want to do, hate what I do, and can’t do what I want to do.
- 7:17 – it is sin living in him that is doing it – not himself. Again, the slavemaster is running the show in his life.
- 7:18 - Desire to do what is good but cannot carry it out – Why? Because the slavemaster won’t allow him to do it.
- This whole section is from the perspective of a person whose life has been mastered by the slave master of sin. This was supposed to be put to death (Rom 5,6,7) and so we wouldn’t think this would actually apply to Paul himself.
- But he says that this does apply to him (7:25).
 - In his mind a slave to God’s law
 - In his sinful nature – a slave to the law of sin.
 - Both of these were supposed to have ended:
 - End of slavery to the law – 7:1-6
 - 7:6 – released from the law by death
 - End of slavery to sin – 6:1-6, 6:21-23
- Paul faces the reality we all face – ideally we have died to those things but in reality they still crop up. What is the answer? Romans 8:1-4

- There is new life that has sprung up and has made up the difference through grace. There is no condemnation where there should have been, by law, condemnation. God finishes the job for us because we are unable.

That leads us into chapter 8 – See **Romans 8:1-4**:

- Continued theme of being set free and God’s continuous pursuit of his people. God is willing to personally fulfill whatever needs to be done to bridge the way past sin to us.

Application:

- What are you still a slave to that you need to realize Christ has set you free from?
- Do you still find yourself in a spiritual wrestling match? How can you allow God to help you get out of it?
- What is the toughest part about being a Christian.
- How do these words bring us peace and joy (like we talked about in Romans 5)?
 - We have died and been set free from the shackles of sin. Yet we often dwell back in it. It is like being set free from prison only to run back in and lock the door behind you.

Romans 8 – Which Spirit are You Living By?

21 of 35 instances of “pneuma” in Romans occur in chapter 8 – there is something to it.

Romans 8:1-4 – Our freedom is from Christ who did what we and the law were unable to do:

- Romans 5:18 – “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was *condemnation* for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”
- Romans 8:1 – Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

Therefore – points back to 7:24-24 – That our deliverance from the struggle with our sinful nature (7:14-23) is Jesus Christ. What has Christ done?

- 3:24 – brought redemption
- 5:1 – we have peace
- 5:6,8 – Christ died for the ungodly (who deserved condemnation)
- 5:11 – brought reconciliation
- 5:15 – brought grace
- 5:21, 6:23 – brought eternal life
- 7:4 – brought death to the law

Christ has acted on our behalf to bring us back into relationship with God.

Being “in” Christ (8:1-2) – Romans 6:3 tells us how we get “in” Christ – through baptism and what God does to us in that submissive act.

- 8:2 says he brought freedom. This is what we have been talking about in chapter 6 & 7 – death brings freedom from obligation (7:1-4)

8:3-4 – A power issue and the law’s fulfillment in us

- The law was powerless due to the sinful nature – that is what he was talking about in 7:7-13 (especially 7:11). Sin manipulated the law to make it something it was not supposed to be.
- The law was not powerful enough to overcome sin on its own – it was only able to say “yep, that’s sin.”
- Sin had to be done away with
- Law couldn’t do it – why? 8:3 - powerless
- So we have a power issue here
- Enter Christ – he did have the power to take care of sin.
- Requirements of the law had to be met – Christ enabled that to happen.

What does it mean in your life to know that Christ is more powerful than sin?

How does that inform us about our struggles (like in chapter 7)?

- God has given us an advocate who has the power to overcome them.

Our struggles are a power issue – we have to hand it over to God or else give in to the powers that want to see our death.

8:5-17 - Which Spirit are you Living for?

- Dichotomy here between sinful nature and the Holy Spirit
- Paul notes some differences between the two:
 - The things we do
 - Where they lead

8:8 - What do you think about 8:8?

- A little bit of a scary verse

Is there a difference between sinning and being controlled by the sinful nature?

- Jim and I’s talk today – if you think a bad thought and then get hit by a car are you lost?
- Jimmy Allen’s line with up’s and down’s.

8:9 – Talks to them directly – those who have the Spirit of God in them are controlled by that nature

- *How do we get the Spirit of God?*
 - Acts 2:38 – baptism.
 - Full Gospel says only those who have the gifts of the Spirit in their life will be saved.

8:11 – Jesus’ resurrection points to our own:

- We saw this in Rom 6 – connected with Christ in his death and resurrection.
- This is a promise – Jesus bears witness to it and paves the way to show that God can make good on this promise of resurrection to eternal life.
- This is not like Lazarus – he died again.

8:12-17 – We have an obligation as children, not as slaves.

- Some people have a hard time with seeing themselves as God’s child because they had a poor relationship with their father.
- This is a good thing!
- Those who are led by the Spirit are children of God. Not those who claim to be children, but those who are in step with the Spirit.

Spirit of fear – *How does sin hold us hostage through fear?*

How is it possible for some Christians to follow God through fear? (8:15)

- Paul wants us to mature beyond fear in our following God and move on to see him as our father.
- Here is what makes God awesome – sin deserves death (6:23) and we all have done it. God has every right to kill us for our sin because we have rebelled against our creator. But when we respond with faith in Christ he takes us back. He forgives. He gives life again. He brings us out of darkness and makes us a light. We praise him for this generous and unmerited favor!

8:18-30 – Groaning for the Future

- Have you ever just sat down and wondered why the world had to be like this?
- What is the deal with “the creation” in these verses?
 - Creation is not all that it was intended to be. Like us, it needs restored. Like us, it waits in eager anticipation of what God has in store.
 - Remember, Adam and Eve were put in charge over creation and they failed. Now creation too needs restored.
 - This tends to fly in the face of the idea that everything will be burned up and destroyed for all time (**2 Peter 3:10-13 – even that ends with new earth**)
- We groan and the creation groans – both in light that we all know there is something better in store for the world.
- Creation groaning like in childbirth? – Childbirth is traumatic but new life springs forth from the pain. There is something new about to be born in what was old.
- *Why do bad things happen to good people?*
 - Sin – this world has been corrupted and is not functioning the way that God initially intended. God is not doing evil to us. We broke it.
- Tension here – we know how things are and we know how they will be – response that generates in us is a longing for our home with God.

Spirit interceding for us – what is the tie in here?

- Connection with groaning (8:23) & hope because we cannot see it all (8:24)
- Comfort it brings to know that God is in touch with the Spirit that is in us. Why? Because we live in a messed up world and there are times we need to cry out for him.
- “He who searches our hearts” – *Have you ever thought about God searching your heart?*
 - This is more than a “what would he find” application that scares us into thinking better or keeping only good things in our hearts.
- Why is God searching? Because he is seeking to redeem our hearts as well.

8:28 – famous verse:

- Trust issue here – if you know God is working for your good in ALL things then we are able to endure it. If we don’t trust God then we aren’t so certain that he is always working for us or that it will necessarily result in good.
- *What does it mean to be “called according to his purpose”?*
 - We need to be living out our calling. This does not mean we all have to be full time ministers in order for God to work all things for the good.

8:29-30 – Christ the firstborn:

- Christ paved the way and we follow.

- This is what we were made for – to be reconciled back to the image of God. Sin distorts that within us but here in 8:29 – we are called back to conformity with God’s image through Christ.

8:31-39 – All is set

- We learned in 8:29-30 that God has done everything it takes for us to be in relationship with Him (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified).
- Sin can try to bring us death but God has been busy reconciling us from our sins through Christ.
- So only God could pull the plug on this master plan and we know that he isn’t going to because he has promised he wouldn’t and has already gone out of his way to show us the way.
- The Spirit is pulling for us, God is pulling for us, Christ is pulling for us – who can overpower them?
- No matter what you are going through, it isn’t big enough to pull you away from Christ. The only thing powerful enough to pull you away from Christ is you. Because we have to respond to God in faith.
- Satan is the adversary and accuser – he cannot separate us from the love of God.

Appendix A - The Law and Early Christians

Questions:

1. What happened to the law after Christ rose from the dead?
 1. typically – nailed to the cross
2. Did the God open the door to the Gentiles based on a Jewish acceptance or rejection of the Gospel?
 1. See Gal 3:14 – He redeemed us to make a way for the Gentiles.
3. Was the law totally done away with after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
4. What was the accusation leveled against Paul in the book of Acts?
 1. Apostasy from the law
5. Could someone be forgiven under the OT covenant?
 1. See scriptures below including Heb 10

Background of Jew/Gentiles in NT:

Jesus’ ministry:

- Woman at the well (John 4)
- Syrophonecian woman (Mark 7:24)
- Greeks who came to see him (John 20)
- John 10:16 – Jesus makes reference of other sheep who will later come in the sheep pen (Gentiles).
- Great commission – go into all the world (Mtt 28:19ff)

Jesus first had a mission to the people of Israel. The mission to the Gentiles was left to the apostles and is recorded in Acts.

- Commission in Acts 1:8 – to the ends of the earth.
- That doesn't happen for 10 chapters in Acts

Acts 10 – Peter and the sheet (clean and unclean) – a metaphor for the Gentiles and also an end to dietary laws.

Law - Jews & Gentiles, Blessings & Curses (Gal 3:10-14)

Those who were part of the covenant community were considered blessed. Those who were outside of that community (Gentiles) were considered under a curse. Additionally those inside the community could find themselves under a curse, not if they were sinless, but if they did not abide by all that was in the law. What is the difference? To be sinless would mean to keep every rule every time. That is impossible. But it was not seen as impossible to remain within the law all of the time. “In Jewish thought to ‘abide within all that was written in the law and do it’ meant living within the provisions of the law, including all its provisions for sin, through repentance and atonement. That was why Paul was able to describe himself as “blameless” before his conversion (Phil 3:6); not because he committed no sin, not because he fulfilled every law without exception, but because the righteousness of the law included use of the sacrificial cult and benefit of the Day of Atonement.” - p.171.

So the law had provision for taking care of (forgiving sin). To be in line with the law did not mean to live perfectly. It meant to keep the commands and if you failed, to do what you do with the heart you are supposed to have when you fail at the commands.

The did NOT view themselves as out if they failed a command and in if they kept it all perfectly (works righteousness).

Another problem with 3:10 comes in translation. The NIV translates this verse, “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse...” But a better translation is, “All who rely on works of the law are under a curse.” What is the difference? For Paul the works of the law are distinctive Jewish markers (circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc) that set them apart from the Gentiles. The Gentiles in Galatia have not done those things and so the Jews are excluding them. Paul is saying the distinctive marker of our identity and relationship with God is faith and not those “works of the law.” That means the Gentiles can be accepted without having to be circumcised, etc. Paul is not talking about the whole law here as the NIV translates it. He traditionally uses “works of the law” to mean the distinctive markers of the Jewish community that traditionally set them apart from the pagans/Gentiles. Paul is saying those Jews who put all their eggs in the circumcision basket above faith are under a curse because the blessings under the Abrahamic covenant came by faith and not by works of the law (circumcision, etc).

I have always read this passage as Paul speaking poorly about the law. Paul is not speaking poorly of the law. He is speaking poorly of those who misuse and abuse the law to the exclusion of their Gentile brothers and sisters in the faith.

The rubber meets the road in 3:13-14 - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” Paul says this

discussion of blessings and curses/who is “in” and who is “out” has further implications when it comes to redemption. What did Christ do in redemption of both Jews and Gentiles on the cross and in the resurrection? The Dead Sea Scrolls connect being “hung on a tree” with crucifixion. It is possible that people were saying Jesus couldn’t be the messiah because he was crucified and those who are “hung on a tree” are under a curse (Deut 21:23). Remember what was said above, being cursed means you are put outside of the covenant community. “The curses of Deut 27 and 28 not only involve the withdrawal of covenant blessing, but climax in being put outside the promised land to live among the Gentiles...To affirm that the crucified Jesus was cursed by God, therefore, was tantamount to saying that he had been put outside the covenant, outside the people of God. Which also meant...that God’s resurrection of Jesus signified God’s acceptance of the ‘outsider’, the cursed law-breaker, the Gentile sinner.” - p.178. In other words on the cross Christ experienced the curses of being put outside of the covenant and its promises. In doing so he related with the Gentiles who were in the very same position. “The barrier between blessing and curse had been broken down; now ‘in Christ’ the blessing could come to Gentiles too....This is the conclusion Paul draws from his understanding of Christ’s death as bearing the curse of the law that the effects of the curse have been abolished for Gentiles, that the restrictiveness of a law which marked off Jew from Gentile as such had been overcome, not that the law had been abolished, rendered null and void, or without further relevance to Christians...” - p.179

This clarifies a few things for me. It clarifies what part of the law Paul is talking about here (works of the law - circumcision, etc). Again my tendency when reading this passage in the past has been to focus on law and seeing it in a negative light rather than realize the context and which part of the law Paul is talking about. It helps me understand blessings and curses a little better (being in or out of the community comes with blessings and curses and how Gentiles are viewed as a result). It also helps me understand how these concepts had an impact on Paul’s message and his handling of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia.

Scriptures traditionally used to say the Law was dead:

- Romans 3:21 – “But now **apart from the law** the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”
- Galatians 2:15-21 – “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is **not justified by observing the law**, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in ^[d] Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. 17 "But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. 19 "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"
- Gal 3:10 – those who rely on the law are under a **curse**
- Hebrews 3:3 – “Jesus has been found worthy of **greater honor than Moses**, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

- Hebrews 7:11-12 & 27-28 – “If **perfection** could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed **the law given** to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, the **law must be changed also**.... Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which **came after the law**, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.”
- Hebrews 8:6- “But the ministry Jesus has received is as **superior** to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.”
- Colossians 2:13b-15 “He forgave us all our sins, 14having **canceled the written code**, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, **nailing it to the cross**. 15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

Scriptures that challenge that thinking:

- Peter
 - Acts 0 - was still keeping the law in Acts 10
- Paul
 - Acts 18:18 – Paul had taken a Nazirite vow
 - Acts 21:20-26 – Paul makes a vow and pays for purity rites for some men to show he is still in keeping with the law
 - Acts 25:8 – ““I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”
 - 2:17 - “If you call yourself a Jew” – yes, they even Christian Jews were still Jews
 - 2:25 – “Circumcision has value if you **observe the law**, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.” He is talking to Christian Jews here...circumcision still has value.
 - 3:1 – “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”
 - 3:20 – “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

Problem – Our logic says, “If no one will be declared righteous by observing the law then there was/is no place left for the law.” That is, if you only view the law as something important to salvation.

Old view – the law was about works righteousness. You had to do everything exactly right or else God wouldn’t save you. Thought you have heard - no grace when there was law.

So God gave the law until Jesus came, Jesus died and nailed the law to the cross and now everyone is just a Christian with no thought of the law whatsoever.

Problems

- Grace is all over the place in the OT. They understood their need for God’s grace just as much as we do.
- Jesus’ own words – Mtt 5:17 – He did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. Jesus actually reinterpreted the law with a stricter standard than ever before.

Problem – we think that once something no longer has power to save that it would be kept. But it was...this was part of their identity with God.

Grace & Forgiveness in the Old Testament

Hebrews 10:1-6 – “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
6with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased. “

Seems to say that sacrifices did not result in forgiveness of sins. But so does Isaiah 1:13-17, Amos 5:21-24, Micah 6:6-8, etc. Then you have passages like those below:

- Leviticus 4:20ff – he will be forgiven.
- Exodus 34:6-7 – Highlights God’s grace and willingness to forgive sins and rebellion.
- Number 14:18-19 – Again God’s willingness to forgive.
- Jeremiah 36:3 – God will forgive those who turn to Him.
- Micah 7:18-19 – Shows God’s compassion and mercy and willingness to forgive.

Many, many more...notice in none of these does it say you will be forgiven once the Messiah comes. They were forgiven then and there.

The point is, God forgives those who turn to Him and God has always been full of grace. Jesus Christ did away with the need for sacrifice and also made a way for the Gentiles apart from the law. The early Jewish Christians still held onto many of their roots and kept many of their traditions.