



The Park Church: Corporate Bible Study

BIBLE JOURNEY: ROMANS— LESSONS 2&3

JAMES NICHOLS

Review: Looking Back, Moving Forward

Romans: Book of Foundational Doctrine- Treatise of Theological truths

- ▶ Salvation by Grace alone(Sola Gratia)
- ▶ Justification by Faith alone(Sola Fide)
- ▶ Found in and through Christ alone(Sola Christus)

Moving Forward: How do the disparate members of the church come together when their cultures are radically different

Foundational Text: Romans 3:21-24(ESV)

- ▶ ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
- ▶ ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
- ▶ ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- ▶ ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
- ▶ ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Romans as an Occasional Letter

- ▶ Remember that this is a letter written with a specific purpose for a specific church. Consider the reason that Paul wrote to the Roman church, and how might that change how you understand it? What if the letter has lots to do with the difference between Jews and Gentiles
- ▶ Consider how Paul takes wider theological ideas and truths and contextualizes them for the specific issues in the 1st century Roman church. Also, think about how we can take wider theological ideas and bring them to bear in our own modern contexts

Examples of Community Conflict

- ▶ Romans 14:2-4:
- ▶ “² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”
- ▶ Gentiles did not have the same dietary restrictions that Jews did under Jewish law. Paul is telling them in this passage not to judge Jews for their stricter dietary code, and for the Jews not to condemn the Gentiles for their lack of restrictions.

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Play Video(both):

In | A Letter for Jews & Gentiles, Part 3

In | Mystery & Unity

(Lesson 2)

The Summation of all Doctrine

- ▶ Romans represents a crucial moment in the life of early Christianity when making sense of the common faith of Gentiles and Jews was in question.
- ▶ Some of the praise for Romans that we've discussed can give the impression that this letter is a kind of biblical index or glossary that we can refer to for the purest and most distilled form of biblical ideas. This would be an overstatement.
- ▶ As important as Romans is, it doesn't cover everything in Paul's theology. Along with communion and the Second Coming, there is also no doctrinal teaching about the universal Church as a community in Romans. There are references to specific churches at the end of the letter, but no insights regarding the nature of the Church as we find in other letters.

TROUBLED HISTORY OF JEWS IN ROME

The Struggles of Jews in Rome

DATE	EVENT
139 BC	GNAIUS CORNELIUS HISPANUS EXPELLED JEWS FROM ROME.
62 BC	POMPEY BROUGHT MANY JEWS TO ROME AS SLAVES, AND THEN MANY WERE FREED.
AD 19-31	TIBERIUS, INFLUENCED BY THE ANTI-SEMITE GENERAL SEJANUS, EXPELLED JEWS FROM ROME.
AD 49 (or 41)-54	CLAUDIUS WITHDREW THE RIGHT OF JEWS TO ASSEMBLE, THEN EXPELLED THEM DUE TO A DISTURBANCE OVER 'CHRISTUS'.

SOURCES: CLAUDIUS SUETONIUS, 25.4; ACTS 18.2



Behind the Text

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In Front | Church Today: Jews & Gentiles
(Lesson 2)

The Internal Struggle of Christian Life-

Romans 7:14-25(ESV)

- ▶ ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.
- ▶ ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Romans 7:14-25(ESV) Cont.

- ▶ ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
- ▶ ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Slavery and Righteousness(Romans 6)

Life of Slavery	Life of Righteousness
Sin(v. 6)	Holiness(v. 19)
Death(v. 23)	Eternal Life(v. 23)
Bondage(v. 6)	Freedom(v. 7)
Instruments of Weakness(v. 13)	Instrument of Righteousness(v. 13)
Disobedience(v. 16)	Obedience(v. 16)

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In | Slavery & Righteousness
(Lesson 3)

Are we really Free? Your turn:

▶ Consider these questions at home:

- ▶ In what ways has modern culture mistaken slavery for freedom?
- ▶ Can you give examples when people use the language of “freedom” and “liberty” in ways that are really disguising their slavery to sin?
- ▶ Are there ways in which you have done this personally?

The Peace of God

- ▶ **Romans 1:7, 29-31**
- ▶ **Romans 2:6-10;**
- ▶ **Romans 3:15-18**
- ▶ **Romans 5:1-2, 10-11**
- ▶ **Romans 8:6**
- ▶ **Romans 11:15**
- ▶ **Romans 12:18**
- ▶ **Romans 14:17, 19**
- ▶ **Romans 15:13, 33**
- ▶ **Romans 16:20**

God is the ultimate source of our peace, and comes as a reward for those of us who believe and are faithful.

Adoption into One Family

- ▶ Paul will introduce the main pathway of unity and peace in the church, that of being one family, in the introduction of this letter. As noted by Dr. E Randolph Richards:
- ▶ *“We should expect the address to read something like “Saulos Paulos of Tarsus.” Since his family was somewhat prominent ... we expect him to identify himself by his family name, as was customary. Paul, however, does not.”*
- ▶ *“Rather than using his earthly household, he identifies himself as a member of a new household ... “Paul a servant of Jesus Christ.” Instead of identifying himself as the son of a prominent household he identifies himself as the slave of another.”*

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Behind | Adoption & God's Household

Lesson 3

Entrance into the Family by the Spirit

- ▶ The theology of the New Testament, beginning with the Gospels, is unavoidably Christ-centered, or “Christo-centric.” The catalyst for the New Testament narrative is the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. However, relationship to Jesus and membership in his Body and Family is now only possible through the Holy Spirit. Paul’s letter to the Romans says this in no uncertain terms, as he reminds them of the significance of the life of the Spirit in them (Rom. 8:9)
- ▶ In other words, if we don’t have the Spirit of Christ, we are not Christians. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the definition of Christianity. We are saved *in Christ through* the Spirit. This is also reflected towards the end of John’s Gospel.

The work of the Holy Spirit in Paul's works

- ▶ When reading Paul's works, especially Romans, keep a look out for the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of the Church and Believers. Here are some examples from the latter half of Romans (cf Rom 8:2, 14, 26-27; 14:17; 15:13, 16).

Work of the Holy Spirit	Evidence of the Holy Spirit
sets us free from law of Sin and death, intercedes for us in our weakness and prayers, helping us to abound in hope, Sanctifies us	put to death deeds of the body, are sons of God, presence of righteousness, peace, and Joy, joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope

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In Front | Spiritual Intuition in Context

Lesson 3

Things to Consider: Zeal without Knowledge

- ▶ Don't forget where we were before entrance into the body. Before becoming an Apostle, Paul really believed he was doing the right thing in persecuting the church. He was a brilliant Bible scholar and a zealous believer. But, he got it wrong. If it could happen to him, it can happen to anyone.
- ▶ Consider in your own life:
 - ▶ Where in your own life might you have more zeal than knowledge?
 - ▶ Are there times when you are more certain than you should be as to what it means to follow Jesus?
 - ▶ Do your passion and Bible knowledge ever interfere with your goodwill for others and your focus on their best interest?

Final Thoughts

- ▶ The judicial dimension of our life with God is transactional and final. But the relational and transformational dimension is captured best with references to life as adopted children of God being led by his Spirit.
- ▶ The freedom that comes from being “in Christ,” is not just freedom **from** slavery to sin but freedom **to** a life of fruitful service.
- ▶ In preparation for the next lesson, consider what that new life looks like in the past for Paul’s audience, similarities to our every day “Rome,” and how it is possible to be faithful Christians in a hostile culture