

Day 16

*Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him.
Colossians 2:6-7*

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St Mary's Christian Workers' Trust

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Jon, Tanya & Gregory Marlow at St Pancras, Plymouth

The letter to the Romans was written when Paul was in Corinth in 57-58AD, on his third journey (see map). Lots more detail on this at <http://matthewmcgee.org/paultime.html>.



Romans Study 6 (16-Nov-2016) : Romans 3:1-20 “???”

Opening Question:

This term we're looking at the NT book "Romans"

Recap what we have learned so far about Romans

Q: Who's writing the book? from where is it written?

A: *Paul is writing to the church in Rome, while staying at Corinth on his 3rd journey*

Q: What would you say is Paul's main aim in writing this letter?

A: *He knows they need more teaching, which is what this letter contains*

Q: Paul says that mankind has sinned - what is the result of sin?

A: *God's wrath*

Q: What's the difference between Jews and Gentiles when it comes to obeying the law?

A: *No difference - the fact that the Jews **have** the law doesn't make any difference to how it affects them*

Q: What does circumcision mean?

A: *it's an outward symbol only, not a guarantee of salvation*

Paul has said that someone who's been born a Jew has no advantage, in terms of salvation, over someone who's been born a Gentile. And this message is likely to be a pretty hard one to swallow, if you've been raised a Jew and brought up in the Jewish tradition, where the Jews are God's "chosen people".

Q: What do you think the Jews who are reading this letter are bursting to ask?

A: *Surely there must be **some** benefit in being Jewish?*

And that's what we'll look at tonight.

One thing to bear in mind is that the section of Romans we're reading tonight is the end of Paul's explanation about the trouble mankind is in. He is reinforcing the point that **all** have sinned, and while God has promised to be faithful, he hasn't yet explained how God can reconcile the fact that He's promised to be faithful with the fact of His wrath towards sinful man. We don't get to find out **how** God will manage this until next week.

Read Romans 3:1-8

Romans 3

1 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? 2 Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

3 What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? 4 Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

*"So that you may be proved right when you speak
and prevail when you judge." [a]*

5 But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) 6 Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? 7 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and

so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" 8 Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!.

Q: What advantage does Paul state in v2

A: *The Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God*

Q: What is the benefit of being entrusted with the words of God?

A: *Equips them to be a guide to those who don't have the words of God, children, other people; they know God's purpose and claim His promises. What greater privilege could one ask for than to possess the writings of God and to explain, proclaim and transmit them to other people?*

Imagine an island that's in the dark, and only one safe way across the bridge and out. Everyone has a tiny penlight, but one group has a huge searchlight: they not only have the means to get off the island but can also help others.

nb I think "First of all" means "Chiefly" or "Most importantly", rather than "here's a list of which this is the first item" Paul talks more about Jewish privileges in 9:1-5

Q: Had the Jews always honoured the word of God that they'd been entrusted with?

A: *Not always: The Jews may have been proud of the Torah, but their response to its message was often lacking. Instead of faithfully putting God's Word into action they put it on the shelf as a symbol of their religion. Instead of using the word of God to help themselves and others, they used it as a way of condemning others.*

Q: Do we see examples of this type of behaviour today?

A: ??

So the Jews hearing this might ask the question that Paul writes in v3:

Q: What is the worry that they might have if they accept that the Jewish people has not always been faithful?

A: *that the unfaithfulness of some of the people might ruin it for everyone*

Q: And what does Paul say to that (v4)?

A: *Not at all! No matter what man does, God will never give up on him! See John 6:37 "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" Proverbs 28:13 "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy"*

Paul says that God won't give up on man, just because men are unfaithful and sinful. And we know from what we've read in Romans so far that men **are** unfaithful and sinful.

Q: If God is going to be faithful in any case, you might wonder, what's the point in man being faithful? What does Paul say about this?

A: *(a) God does not, and cannot, ignore sin; (b) sinning to deliberately glorify God by enhancing his reputation forgiveness is silly. How could it be better than not sinning in the first place?*

In summary:

Read Romans 3:9-20

9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10 As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one."[b]

13 "Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit."[c]

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."[d]

14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."[e]

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 ruin and misery mark their ways,
17 and the way of peace they do not know." [f]
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." [g]
19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Q: From v9 Paul is re-iterating a point: can you tell, from knowing whether someone is a Jew or Gentile, whether they're more likely to be saved?

A: *No: knowing and believing the law is not the same as doing it.*

Q: Do we think that "religious" people in our society are more likely to be saved?

A: *Well.. this goes back to the question we had about judging in the previous study...*

vv10-18 are all taken from the OT although not from a single place (mixture of Psalms and Isaiah).

Q: What kind of person do you think of when you read these description?

A: *probably not every day people. Someone more like Hitler?*

Q: How easy is it for us to accept that the descriptions in vv10-18 apply to ourselves?

A: ???

10-12 all are depraved and worthless

13-14 our conversation is depraved

15-17 our conduct is depraved

18 the reason for this depravity is that we don't fear God

Paul sums up this part of his argument in vv19-20

Q: What did the Jews think that the law was for?

A: *guidelines for how to be saved*

Q: What does Paul say the law is?

A: *Something to make us realise how sinful we are, and how hopeless our position is*

Q: What's the first word of next time's study (Romans 3:21)

A: *"But"*

So there is good news on the horizon

Takeaway:

- Jews have no special privilege in terms of salvation simply because they're Jews
- Jews **do** have the privilege of having God's word
- although they may not fully understand **how**, it should be clear that God has promised to be faithful in spite of man's sin
- the purpose of the law is to make us aware of God's standards, not to give us standards to live up to
- **all** are sinful

