

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 8 - July 25th, 2021

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 22-24

Mark 1-4

Readings in Class:

Romans 1-16

Leviticus 1-4

A Brief Overview of Romans

The letter to the Romans was written by the Apostle Paul sometime before he arrived in Rome in 58 AD. The best guess we have is around 55 AD. As far as we know, the congregation in Rome was established not by any apostle, but perhaps by “the visitors from Rome” who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. By the end of the first century, the congregation in Rome would become a Christian hub and one of the chief congregations in the Church.

Paul’s letter to the Romans has sometimes been called, “The Fifth Gospel.” It is, without a doubt, the chief letter that we have from Paul. Both for its length and theological content, it has always had predominance in Christian thought, life, and theology. The reason for this is that it is Paul’s letter for introducing himself. To do this, he lays out the basic tenets of the Christian faith. (1:8-15 gives Paul’s reasoning for writing) This makes the book of Romans an important catechetical letter and a basic summary of the Christian message (1-11) and Christian life (12-16).

Here is a basic rundown of the flow of the letter:

1. Introduction 1:1-15
2. Theme of Letter: Righteous Shall live by Faith 1:16-17
3. Who is Righteous? 1:18-3:20
4. God is Righteous! 3:21-4:25
5. The Righteous by Faith Live: 5:1-8:39
6. The Righteous are now the True Israel: 9:1-11:36
7. The life that the Righteous by Faith live: 12:1-15:13
8. Conclusion 15:14-16:27

Original Sin: Romans contains some of the most pointed words on the Doctrine of Original Sin. Original Sin is the guilt/poison of sin that we have inherited from Adam who is the Father of us all. Paul makes note that there is no such thing as a good person. All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. In Adam, all have died. By right of conception into the human race, all have received this. And no amount of our own righteousness will correct or restore it. This only leads to sin and despair. But as Paul will note, that while in Adam all die. In Christ, all are made alive. Jesus comes and is making a new humanity in us. Christ makes us good and this is the work of God.

The Righteousness of Faith: Romans 3:21-31 contains a portion of Scripture that ignited for Luther the Gospel. While righteousness is not something we can attain by our efforts or works, it is a gift of God to those who believe in Jesus Christ. The righteous live by faith. The object of this faith is the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. That what Jesus has done has been done for you. This faith restores a right relation to God, overcomes sin, and puts us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul will extol the work of God in chapters 4-5. That we are now in Christ. That Christ makes life from death, forgiveness from sin—in short, a new creation. He uses Abraham to confirm that this is nothing new, but this is how all people have always been saved. Faith in God's promise and work of the Christ.

Chapters 6-8 hammer in on the applications of being made righteous in Christ. Abuses are corrected by Paul. Being made righteous in Christ, for example, is not an excuse to sin more or a license to do as we please. Who would want to return to sin after being rescued from it!! Though grace will always be present, a believer in Christ will seek, even with frail attempts, to overcome and avoid sin.

God's Election: In Chapters 9-11 are some of the most wrestled about words of Scripture. The struggle with the rejection of the Jews of their own Messiah, Paul's deliberation concerning the efficacy of God's Word. Who is responsible for our salvation: God! Who is responsible for our damnation: ourselves! Paul wrestles with the implications and notes that the logic doesn't add up, but yet this is how God works. God chooses who will be his. God wants all saved. But yet, some refuse this and reject God.

The entire focus of these chapters is Paul's struggle as he works this out. The best answer to arrive at for us is to do what Paul notes: give praise and doxology to God who far surpasses us in wisdom and insight. The Triune God alone is responsible for saving us. Mankind is responsible for when this is rejected. To each belongs their proper work. For the individual who struggles as they think this, it drives us to pray, "thy kingdom come to me!" And then rejoice when you hear that your sins are forgiven and God's sacrament comes to you.

A final key point to highlight here is the fact that as Gentiles, we are grafted onto Israel. Israel and the Church are not separate entities. We, as 21st century Christians, are the true people of Israel because of Jesus Christ.

Christian Life: Chapters 12-15 are then Paul's discourse on the life that we now live in faith. A life of being righteous by faith is an active life, not a passive life. Since we live in God's kingdom, we show the same grace that we have received toward others. Our lives are now a sacrifice. This even means listening to the authorities, to not pass judgment on various customs and cultures and even eating habits! And to work on building one another up in God's Word and following that example from Christ. Paul concludes by pointing that all people are now granted a new life in Christ.