

## 2. Romans 1:18–4:25

Truths of the Gospel

Chad Harrington | Harpeth Christian Church

### Introduction

- Let's go around and tell us your name and what you hope to get out of this class in particular!

### Major divisions of Romans

- What did you come up with for the major sections? [Whiteboard]
- Here's the first and second ones: Romans 1:1–17; 1:18–4:25
- Show the relationship between the first two!
- [Explain] Your next task is to come up with subsections (3b in the "How to Do a Book Study" guide). Due this coming Thursday by 8 pm, plus the reading. And I'd like you to go ahead and read again Romans 5–8 in preparation for class.

### Approaching Romans

#### Traditional Approaches to Romans

- Romans is about how to get saved (Romans Road)
- Imparted/imputed righteousness
- Justification = Salvation
- Individualist understanding: predestination, election, sin, covenant, justification

Many of these are good questions with true answers that correlate with biblical truth. But oftentimes these approaches are missing the main message of Romans.

#### A More Raw Approach to Romans

- What does Paul actually say in this text?
- This means we look at data, knowing that every person is flawed and no single person in history has it all right.
  - Even the Reformers had different views: Calvin emphasized the covenant in the justification conversation, whereas Martin Luther did not, for example.
- In Romans, the essential question to start with is this: What problem is Paul trying to fix? Why did he write? This is called "exigency."
  - How to get saved?

- How to stay saved?
- Consider this hypothesis: Romans is not about salvation at all, but about how to be the church in light of the gospel. The question Paul asks, then, is more on the topic of ecclesiology (church) and less about soteriology (salvation). I think he's asking the question: "Who belongs at the table as legitimate members of the covenant newly formed under the banner of Jesus?"

## Outline of 1:18–4:25

Theme of this section: What to do with righteousness now that all failed to uphold the law in light of the gospel.

1. Romans 1:18–3:18 Gospel Potential: God judges Jew and Gentile equally as sinful
  - 1:18–32 All people have worshiped creation and become creatures - 2:1–16 Gentile law is insufficient for justification
  - 2:17–3:18 Jewish law is insufficient for justification
    - 2:17–23 A vision of the ideal Israelite: failure to live up
    - 2:24–29 The value of circumcision redefined: not enough
    - 3:1–18 Conclusion: Jews have been unfaithful vis-a-vis God's justice
2. Romans 3:19–27 Gospel Realized: God judges Jew and Gentile equally as justified apart from law, through Jesus' faithfulness
3. Romans 3:28–4:22 Gospel Equality: This justification of faith is anchored in Torah from the beginning
  - 3:28–3:31 Is the law null and void because of Jesus then?
  - 4:1–8 What do we do with Abraham (and David) then?
  - 4:9–4:22 Abraham is the father of all faith-filled people, who are justified

## The Text

### 1. Romans 1:18–3:20 Gospel Potential: God judges Jew and Gentile equally as sinful

#### 1:18–32 All people have worshiped creation and become creatures

- God gives us up to what we want.
- Sin is anchored in lies.
- We get what we want, but it's not what we want: we're filled with ourselves.
- The bigger point: Apart from God, even though we know better, all people are equally accused and in need.

#### 2:1–16 Gentile law is insufficient for justification

- 2:12–16: Not hearers but doers. The problem is no one can actually do it apart from Christ. In Christ, however, we do Torah.

- Three options
  1. This is a hypothetical category: No one can do it
  2. They actually can do it apart from Christ: Sinless? No.
  3. This is talking about Christian Gentiles
- The third is likely: It's Christian Gentiles who do uphold Torah in Christ (see Romans 2–12). See vs. 15: “Naturally” can mean “Gentiles naturally without Torah” (not do naturally).

## 2:17–3:20 Jewish law is insufficient for justification

- 2:17–23 A vision of the ideal Israelite: failure to live up
- 2:24–29 The value of circumcision redefined: not enough
- 3:1–18 Conclusion: Jews have been unfaithful vis-a-vis God's justice

## 2. Romans 3:21–27 Gospel Realized

God judges Jew and Gentile equally as justified apart from law, through Jesus' faithfulness

Rom 3:21–26:

21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

- Key Terms:
  - Righteousness of God
  - Law
  - Faith/fulness in/of Jesus Christ
  - Justified
  - Works
- Background: Hebrew law court language:
  - Plaintiff
  - Defendant
  - Judge
- Everyone's on the docket. But what's the deal? What's the accusation? What's at stake?
- 1. Righteousness of God
- Chart on Page 117 of *What Saint Paul Really Said*
  - God's own righteousness
  - Righteousness from God to us
- Which one? The Old Testament should inform our answer (e.g., Psalm 143).

## v. 21ff “The righteousness of God”

### Righteousness, noun (NRSV: 29x in Romans)

- Of God: 6
  - Of Abraham: 8
  - Of Christ: 3 (including Roman 8:10)
  - Of Christians: 8 (acts of righteousness, or covenant faithfulness)
  - Of Jews or Gentiles: 4
2. Law

## v. 21 “Apart from Law”

Rom 3:21 But now, apart from *law*, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the *law* and the prophets,

### “Law” Word Study (*nomos* in Greek; meaning “law” or “Torah”)

#### Data

- 74x in Romans (Greek)
- “Law”:
  - 77x NRSV
  - 78x ESV, KJV
  - 66x NLT
  - 24x The Message
  - 73x NIV

#### Law in NRSV

- It is nowhere indicating Roman governmental law.
- It is often associated with Jewish commandments.
- The best meaning is “Torah.”
- Every occurrence makes sense with law as “Torah” except in the cases of four places it’s used as a metaphor for related topics to make a point about the literal Torah:
  - 3:27: Metaphorical for “law of faith”
  - 7:3: Metaphorical law of marriage to explain literal Torah
  - 7:21–25: Metaphorical puns to make a point about the literal Torah
  - 8:2: Metaphorical law to explain new life in Christ under the law of the Spirit to contrast life exclusively under the Torah

#### Other notes on “law”

- Anti-Judaism
- Marcionism

- Anti-Nomianism
- 3. Faith/fulness in/of Jesus Christ
- 4. Justified

### To justify, verb (*dikaioo* in Greek): 15x

- To be “made right” with regard to what?
- To count someone in the right with regard to who the people of God are.
- Translation: “Counted in the family of God”
- Rom 5:9 Much more surely then, now that we have been *justified* by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.
- Rom 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also *justified*; and those whom he *justified* he also glorified.
- 5. Works

### v. 27 “By that of “works”?”

Rom 3:27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of *works*? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from *works* prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

### “Works” (Greek *ergon*; often translated “works”)

#### Meaning of Works More Broadly

- This phrase is not used in the OT (Greek or Hebrew), nor anywhere in the NT outside of Paul’s writings.
- “Works of Law” is used also in Galatians (only uses 'works of law' six times in Galatians: 2:16, 16,16; 3:2, 5, 10). Here and in Galatians, it has four common interpretations:
  1. general moral principles
  2. Jewish badges of identity (Sabbath, Circumcision, and dietary laws)
  3. All the practices associated with following the Torah
  4. A general attitude associated with the Torah that manifest itself through action
- Note: Data copied here from my paper called “Justification by the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ” in the *Asbury Journal*, 2010.
- Three sources total: NT (Paul only), plus Jewish and Greco-Roman:
  - Greco-Roman Evidence: Firstly, in *Saturae*, Juvenal (c. A.D. 60-130) speaks of the spread of Judaism to Rome and the generation of Jews after their fathers in which he specifically singles out three customs of the Jews as distinguishing: Sabbath, abstention from pork and the practice of circumcision (XIV 96-106). These support a reading of 'works of law' that pertains to social identity markers. Secondly, Epictetus (c. A.D. 50-130) lists dietary laws and

circumcision as well (Arrianus, *Diss* 1,22.4). Paul explicitly refers to these two issues as connected to Gentile exclusion in Galatians which supports the same interpretation of 'works of law' (cf. 2.11-14; 5.2).

- Jewish Evidence: A similar interpretation is supported by Jewish literature as well, most notably in three writings of Philo, Josephus and the Maccabean letters (Philo, *Mos* 1.278; Josephus, *Ant* 11.346-47; e.g. 1 Macc 1.60-63). The identity makers of the Jews are contrasted with the Imperial antagonism of Antiochus Epiphanies IV: "According to the decree (of Antiochus), they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Macc 1.60-63). Circumcision and dietary laws were so important that people lost their lives on account of them.<sup>49</sup>

### Data of "Works"

- 18x in NIV, NRSV
- 20x in ESV
- 21x in KJV and The Message
- 16x in NLT

### Data Analysis (from English in NRSV)

- I excluded all verbs and just used data of nouns
- Used as shorthand for "works of law"; after the first set of usages, it's never again "works of law" explicitly.
- Abraham had no "works" (this is only because it means works of law)
- Rom 4:4-5 (these are both verbs and not same as *ergon* in Greek): They are used metaphorically regarding working for wages as a way to explain literal works of law in contrast with grace.
- Romans 13:12 "Works" is qualified as works of darkness, so explicitly qualified as not the typical usage.
- Romans 14:20: "Works of God" so different.
- Romans 15:17: Paul's works so different

### Works

- Principle of first occurrences: Works is first used Romans 3:27-28: "Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from *works prescribed by the law*."
  - This answers the question: Is there any use in boasting about ethnicity? No.
  - "Works" are not just any works; they are specifically works prescribed by the law (also called "works of law").
- Then it's used in shorthand form as just works.

- My conclusion: This phrase, and just “works” for short, refers primarily to the boundary markers for Jews of things you can use to easily distinguish yourself from the Nations:
  - Sabbath
  - Circumcision
  - Food laws
- From “Justification” Dunn says, "Traditional interpretation of 'works of law' as self-achieved righteousness makes no sense against the background of classic Jewish theology."<sup>44</sup>
- Aside
  - James 2:14: Only time this is used with regard to salvation: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" The answer is no!

### 3. Romans 3:8–4:22 Gospel Equality

This justification of faith is anchored in Torah from the beginning

- 3:28–3:31 Is the law null and void because of Jesus then?
  - No!
- 4:1–8 What do we do with Abraham (and David) then?
  - This truth about Jesus was set up from the very beginning.
  - 4:3: Let’s go to Genesis 15 to look at what the reckoning was about
  - David Psalm 32:1–2: This Psalm represents this truth for David apart from “works.”
- 4:9–4:22 Abraham is the father of all faith-filled people, who are justified