

Faith Formation Lent 2021

St. Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome

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Week 2: Chapters 1 – 4

- 1) Chapter 1: 1-15 Opening address
- 2) Chapter 1: 16 = 4: 23 The Salvation of the Jews
- 3) Chapter 1: 18-23 Idolatry: The Corruption of Religion

Opening Address (Ch. 1: 1-16)

- Paul introduces himself
- Paul greets the church at Rome
- Paul speaks of his affection for the church at Rome and his desire to visit
- Paul addresses both Jew and Gentile as being guilty before God
- Paul defines both the righteousness of God and divine wrath
- Paul defines what results in human knowledge of God
- Paul gives thanks (vss. 8-15)

Vss. 16-17 constitute the thesis statements of Romans

- Transitions from intro to expos by centering on the power of God
- Righteousness of God (theme of supreme importance)
- Righteousness = Hebrew term: tsedeq = conformity to a standard or norm (The Covenant)
- Righteousness of God: 1) is demonstrated by God; 2) comes from God in the form of grace

Knowledge of God

- Natural theology = the knowing of God's existence through reflections on the world that he has created (Anselm's Ontological Argument; Aquinas' Summa Theologica)
- Vatican I (1870) Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and ending of all things, can be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason from a consideration of created things.
- Vatican II God, who creates and conserves all thing by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities.

Immorality: The Corruption of Life (Ch. 1: 24-32)

- Idolatry is the source of all evil
- Paul lists immoralities beginning with sexual impurity...then narrows his focus to homosexuality
- Paul uses the expression (3 times in this passage) "God handed them over..."
- Paul gives 3 types of human iniquity
 - 1) religious rebellion
 - 2) sexual rebellion
 - 3) moral rebellion
- Paul then presents his "grocery list" of sins

Romans 2: 1-29

The Just Judgment of God

- Romans chapter 2 does not begin a new idea; Paul is in the middle of his thought
- Paul initiates a diatribe with the “interlocutor”. Paul addresses this person simply as “you” In verse 17 we learn that the interlocutor is a self-professed Jew
- Paul addresses every Jew who has ever passed judgment on a Gentile
- Paul warns against “presumption”

The Doers of the Law (2: 12-16)

- Mosaic Law
- Knowing the Law does not imply keeping the Law

Concept of Justification

- To be justified = to be in right relation with God
- Justification according to works

Romans 2: 1-16 passage presents 2 troublesome points

- 1) Paul asserts that: 1) eternal life is for those who persevere in doing good works (v.7/ 2) eternal life is a gift from God (6: 23)
- 2) Paul asserts that: 1) those who observe the Law will be justified (v. 13) / 2) a person is justified by faith apart from works (3: 28)

The Law and True Circumcision (2: 17-29)

- Issue of hypocrisy comes to the forefront
- Paul targets the Law of circumcision that distinctly marked the Jew, a mark of divine favor
- Circumcision of the heart
- Circumcision for the New Testament Jew
- Circumcision of the flesh/circumcision of the heart

We are in the same state today. Just as for the Jew circumcision required him to observe the Law, so does baptism require us to follow the Gospel

Chapter Three: Judgment on Sin and Justification in Christ

Romans : 1-31

The faithfulness and justice of God (3: 1-8)

- God is unchanging
- Does the infidelity of the Chosen People nullify the fidelity of God?

The universal dominion of sin (3: 9-20)

- Well then, are we better off?

The Righteousness of God manifested (3: 21-26)

- Vss. 1-26 bring us to a new section of the letter; how God has redeemed the world from its sorry state of sin
- This now occurs apart from the Law

**** Now comes the great controversy between Christians

- Paul contends that no distinction can be made between persons because ALL have sinned
- Are there exceptions?
- If there is ONE exception, then the popular interpretation of Paul's words cannot be correct

Justification by Faith (3: 27-31)

- Jews and Gentiles both:
 - Equal sinners
 - Equal candidates for salvation
 - Justified in Christ on equal terms
- Justification now takes place apart from the Law
- Final verse of chapter 3 is transitional

The Faith and Fatherhood of Abraham

Chapter 4: 1-25

The Justification of Abraham (1-12)

- How was Abraham justified?
- When was Abraham justified?
- Biblical mis-translation makes this confusing
 - "What then can we say Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh?" (modern)
 - "What then shall we say of Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?" (NAB)
 - "What then can we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?" (Original Greek)

Pope Francis on Abraham, our Father in Faith Encyclical: Lumen Fidei

The Timing of Abraham's Justification

- Abraham's justification is recorded in Genesis 15
- Abraham's circumcision is recorded in Genesis 17

The Promise of Abraham (4: 13-17)

- Abraham's inheritance comes to foreground
- Paul says Abraham will inherit the world (a typology)
- World Covenant is not fully reached until the Messiah comes
- The promise to Abraham did not come through the Law. In the time of Abraham there was no Law

- Paul states his conclusion: Abrahamic sonship, and the inheritance that goes with it, depends on faith, which means that God bestows it as a free gift rather than a payment to those who adhere to the Law

The faith of Abraham (4: 18-25)

- Paul draws a line from the faith of Abraham to the faith of the Christian believer
- With Abraham there is hope...from a human perspective, hoping in something that is utterly hopeless
- Paul draws a parallel: the faith of Abraham//the faith of the Church

Final verse of Romans, Chapter 4: is an ancient confession of faith (pre-dating all Creeds) “the Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification”

Thomas Aquinas on the Resurrection and Justification

- 2 things are implied in the soul's justification: remission of sin and newness of life
- Both are the result of grace
- Both are brought about by the power of God