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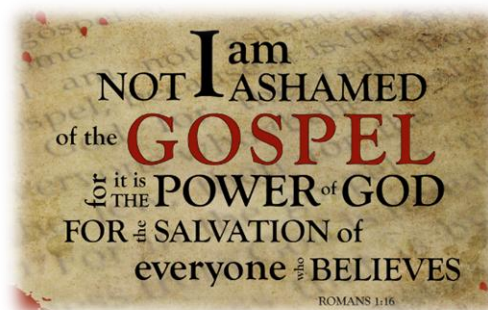
January 9, 2019: "Justified by Faith!"

I Prayer

II Overview and Objectives

During the latter part of 2018, after our Easter Season analysis of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances, we enjoyed a series of foundational studies focused on the establishment of Israel in the Old Testament (Book of Joshua). It is popularly accepted, and we shall discuss this evening, how God and God's gift of salvation came first to Israel (Jews) and then to all (Gentiles). As you will recall from our study of Acts, Jesus's ambassador to the Jews was Peter. With respect to Gentiles, however, Jesus's chosen vessel was Paul. During most of 2019, we will look at practical and theological aspects of our faith through Paul, the writer or direct influencer of 13 of the 27 books/epistles/writings comprising the New Testament. In understanding Paul's theology, there is arguably no better place to begin than Romans.

It is widely believed that Paul wrote Romans, a letter detailing his theological beliefs like no other (Galatians is close), while resting for three months in Corinth (Acts 20:2-3). It is also believed Romans was Paul's last epistle, written after all the others. At the time Paul wrote Romans, he had not yet visited their growing church (1:11-13). Unlike the Corinthian correspondence where, for example, Paul wrote to address divisions as a specific issue (1 Cor. 1:11), Romans is more theological. It focuses primarily on "justification by faith." Indeed, this theology of salvation was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation, as Martin Luther publically embraced the doctrine of *sola fide* (along with *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*) (**brief discussion**).



Although we don't know exactly when Christianity came to Rome, Luke tells us that two Jewish Christians, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, fled from Rome, under Claudius's order, and became closely acquainted with Paul, in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). Paul also sends special greetings to them, after their return to Rome (presumably after Claudius's death) (Rom. 16:3-4).

III Reflective Matters for Consideration


As we enter into the space of Romans 1 & 2, please keep in mind that Paul is writing from Corinth, a place where lust, idolatry, and decadence rule the day. Please consider whether you see similar things in current society and how the warning in Romans (*i.e.*, “idolatry,” or sexual immorality) might apply today. Please also consider how you feel about justification/salvation by faith alone, as a hallmark of Paul’s theology (consider differences between Catholicism and Protestantism). Please also consider when God “gives people up” because of their misdoings and whether you believe God will again (how) accept those who are wayward. Also consider the progression of faith to the Jews **first**, **then** Gentiles and how that progression might apply to us today, as contemporary evangelists.

IV Textual Examination (reading select portions of Romans 1 and 2)

- In 1:5-6, as Paul greets the church at Rome, he writes about “obedience of faith to all the Gentiles.” From what you know about Paul and the presumed place from which he writes (Corinth), on what and to whom is he placing emphasis?
- 1:16-17 is the focal message of Romans. Paul says, “salvation for **everyone** who has faith, to the **Jew first** and **then to the Greek** (Gentile).” (Matt. 10:5-6 & discussion of Acts 2 & 10). How does this relate to our understanding of God’s revelation through **G.R.A.C.E.**? (Galatians 3:23-28). Paul also refers to an old Hebrew scripture by writing, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” (Hab. 2:4) What does this tell us about how Paul regards faith? How do you feel about the differences between “the law” and “faith,” as they apply today?

Matthew 10:5,6
5—“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans.
6—But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
- In 1:18-25, Paul is clearly admonishing those who choose to not honor God, in their actions, which include idolatry (see Deut. 4:16-19). He even writes that some “worshiped the creature instead of the Creator . . .” Are we guilty of (tacit) idolatry today?
- 1:26 & 28 both indicate God “gave them up,” implying that God left them free to their own devices. Do we still see instances like this today? Do you ever see people “fallout” with God or decide it’s more popular to be “in the world” than “in the church?” When do people “come back” and does God welcome them back? What does your answer say about how we should live and accept or reject others?

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.
Romans 2:1


- Paul begins chapter 2 by cautioning us in being judgmental. How, theologically, can we work to prevent ourselves from being judgmental of others?

- 2:11-12 indicates God shows no partiality with respect to punishment, since both Jew and Gentiles sin. In other words, punishment is evenhanded, when you know better. Is there a similar reference, with Jews and Gentiles both belonging to the church (Acts 10:34-35)?



- 2:17-26 can be summarized as “Practice What You Preach!” We are supposed to connect our heads and hearts! Do we see contemporary examples of when the head and heart don’t align? (*e.g.*, the proverbial wolf in sheep’s clothing in clergy abuse sex scandals or “violent criminals” wearing the cross

during the commission of crimes, *etc.*) Should we be guided by “the flesh” or “our faith?” (**unpack**)

- In 2:29 Paul writes about “real circumcision.” What does this reference mean to you? What is it to “circumscribe” our actions? In other words, how does someone **know** that **YOU KNOW** Christ? Actions speaks louder than words!

V Follow-up Questions

VI Closing Prayer