

***“Romans, Dispensationally Considered — Its Themes Revealed”
Part 2***

Soaring with Paul — Ten Miles High and No End in Sight!!

Our Text: Romans 1:1 / 16:27

***"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,
called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had
promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures,)
Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness,
by the resurrection from the dead...***

...

***Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the
preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was
kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the
scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting
God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:
To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen."***

Review from Last Time:

Law (78):

Perhaps it might seem a little amazing, but the doctrinal word most used in Paul's letter to the Romans is the word "law"! Our guesses were wildly off the mark, weren't they?

- ***The Word:***

- Rom. 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.
- **Rom. 3:20-21 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**
- Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

- Rom. 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.
 - Rom. 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.
 - Rom. 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.
 - **Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:**
 - Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
- **The Content:**
 - ***That the Law was on Paul's mind always might surprise us but it shouldn't. For the apostle was the master of the Law until his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. As he writes of that in the letter to the Philippians, giving it up with all the baggage that it brought along was the ongoing challenge of his life. It was that that brought him into constant trials and tribulations and the thorn in his flesh that constantly troubled him was due to his rejection of that Law and its governess over his life and the life of believers under the new Dispensation of the Grace of God. But the Law had brought Paul only enslavement and not liberty. And that this is still true for us today is Paul's message in Romans.***

Justification (65)

- **The Word:**
 - **Rom. 3:24, 26 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ... To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**
 - Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
 - Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
 - Rom. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Content:

- ***Justification is the grand theme of Romans (3:26). The reason for the Reformation was Luther's contention that the Church had entirely lost the truth about this subject. The good news that reveals that to us is referred to in chapter 1, verses 16 & 17 as we have seen. Last time we looked back nearly 300 years to a man named John Wesley who was transformed by believing the gospel of God's grace in the early 1700's. But the same had happened in Martin Luther's life 500 years ago, 220 years before Wesley was saved, and it changed him and the lives of millions from that day onwards.***

But how did Luther come to this conviction? The story goes like this (as found in christianstudylibrary.org):

- ***"Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, on November 10th, 1483.***
- ***Luther came from a peasant family, his mother was a pious Catholic. She, especially, instilled the fear of God into her strong-willed son. Martin entered school at age five. He was a good student ...***
- ***Martin entered the University of Erfurt when just seventeen years old. The curriculum was the *trivium* which included: 1) grammar (study of classical texts) 2) rhetoric (public speaking) 3) dialectic (logic). Luther became so adept at logic that he was nick-named "the Philosopher".***
- ***Four years later, in 1505, Luther entered law school. Six months later Luther went home for a visit. Walking on the road to Stotternheim, he encountered an awesome thunderstorm. Thrown to ground by the force of the storm, Luther cried, *St. Ann, help me! I will become a monk.* He called upon Saint Ann for she was the patron saint of miners, his father's occupation. *[Some accounts add that his friend with whom he was traveling was killed by lightning that day while Martin was spared.]* After returning to law school he threw a party for his friends. He then announced that they would never see him again, and gave away his possessions, including the legal text book from his father. Not long after, Luther knocked on the foreboding doors of the Black Cloister, the home of the Observant Augustinian monks in Erfurt. We should ask why Martin Luther made such a drastic change, apparently so suddenly.***
- ***Luther was a deeply religious person; and from youth on, the question often arose in his heart, *Oh, when for once shall I become holy and do enough in order to receive the grace of God?* He sat***

under the penitential preaching of his day which was a continual preaching of hell and damnation. Penitential preaching placed a heavy burden of guilt on the hearer from the curse of the law, but never lifted this burden with the grace of the gospel.

- The monastery offered peace for his tortured spirit. Even the vow to become a monk was comforting, for it was meritorious. By it one brought the highest offering to God. Just as baptism symbolises a rebirth, so becoming a monk meant being born again to live a holy life before God. If a monk did the very best he could do, then God would give him His grace as a reward. The thunderstorm only confirmed a decision which had been percolating long before in Luther's tortured mind.
- **Have you fasted enough? Are you poor enough? Of his life in the monastery Luther said: 'I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.'**
- ***[It was all about indulgences ...]* In the year 1510 Luther was ordered to go to Rome to settle a dispute which arose in the Augustinian order. He was excited to go, for now he had a great once-in-a-life-time opportunity to earn merit for himself and his family. We must understand the Roman Catholic system of merit and indulgences. In the Catholic system some holy men and Christ died in the black. This meant that they were better than they needed to be for their salvation. Of course, the average person died in the red! The Catholic Church taught that the Pope had the power to transfer some of that surplus merit to the average person's account. This transfer of merit was called an *indulgence*. Such a transfer was given when the receptor performed certain good works or paid a sum of cash. No one questioned whether the pope could transfer credit to remit penalties for sin on earth. For example: a pilgrim who prayed before Elector Frederick the Wise's famous relic collection in Wittenberg would have 2,112,151 years and 205 days less purgatory to suffer.**
- When climbing the stairs to Pilate's palace doubt suddenly flooded his mind: *Who knows whether it is so?* A picture in the *National Geographic* shows the intense emotion on the faces of those who are still climbing these stairs today.

- Nevertheless, at this time Luther remained still a devout son of the church. He said, *"I was so drunk, yes, submerged in the pope's dogmas that I would have been ready to murder all ... who would take but a syllable from obedience to the pope"*
- After his return, Luther was transferred from Erfurt to a monastery in Wittenberg. Here, by the providence of God, Luther's break-through came. It all had to do with the sacrament of penance. One had to confess all his sins to a confessor, who would then grant him absolution. This meant that the confessor would declare his sins forgiven. Luther confessed daily, sometimes for hours at a time. His confessor grew weary, and finally told him to commit a serious sin worth confessing. Luther's problem was that he could not remember all of his sins.
- He realised that he did not even know all of his sins. He was like the Psalmist who pleaded:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24

- Luther discussed his problems and concerns with Johann Von Staupitz, vicar of the Augustinian order and his confessor. He thought that Luther was dwelling on himself too much, so he urged him to seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ. But this was the problem for, to Luther, Christ was the terrifying judge! Then Von Staupitz took the most unusual step. He told Luther that, being the learned doctor he was, he should begin preaching; and that he should assume the chair of theology at the University of Wittenberg. Luther balked; he told Von Staupitz that this amount of work would kill him. *"That's all right,"* Von Staupitz replied, *"God has plenty of work for clever men to do in heaven"*.
- Luther began to lecture to university students on the Scriptures, beginning with the Psalms in 1513. In **Psalm 22**, he was struck by the words, *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"* What could this mean? Christ was forsaken by God, Christ suffered torment, but why should Christ have suffered such torments? Luther could understand why he should suffer as cast off from God, being the weak, sinful and undeserving man he was. But Christ was divine, pure, entirely without sin! The only answer was that Christ suffered in his place. Luther was discovering the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

- Luther lectured in Romans from 1515 to 1516. Very soon came to these words in the first chapter: *'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'* [Romans 1:16-17](#)
- He left the large room where the monks socialised and went up into his study in the monastery tower to ponder the meaning of these words. He puzzled over the meaning of the phrase *the righteousness of God*. What did *righteousness* mean? To him it meant the *justice* of God as an attribute of God. He prayed, and pondered as to how the justice of God was revealed in the gospel. He read and studied further and came to: The righteous man (*just* in many translations, but it is the same word as righteous, *dikaïos*) shall live by faith (Rom.1:17b). Luther's scholarly eye saw that this was the same Greek word used in verse 17a! Then he began to see the true meaning of *the righteousness of God*. Formerly he understood righteousness of God to be an active, punishing righteousness, which demands that man keep the whole law of God. He was looking at righteousness as the divine attribute of perfect justice which is *in* God. Now he understood that the righteousness was called *of* God, for it came *from* God. This way of righteousness was demonstrated through Christ's work on the cross. If a sinner places his faith in Jesus Christ, he is justified; he appears before God just as if he never sinned. Luther understood that the just shall live by faith means not by their own works of righteousness. This faith brings one to Christ who is perfectly righteous and who justifies the sinner.
- This understanding was Luther's breakthrough! Listen to how Luther describes his conversion:
 - *'I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the justice of God," because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great*

yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by his faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.”

- *Justification is all of faith and never of works! Sola Fides, not by faith plus something we must supply but by faith alone.*

Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Today's Outline: *“Romans, Dispensationally Considered --Its Themes Revealed”*
Part 2

- **Faith (59)**
- **Sin and Sins (48)**
- **Death (46)**
- **Righteousness (39)**

Next Time: **Part 3**

- **Spirit (34)**
- **Flesh (25)**
- **Grace (24)**
- **Reckon (20)**
- **Gospel (14)**
- **Wrath (12)**

Faith (59):

- **The Word:**
 - **[READ] Rom. 1:16-18 [The verses that captured Luther's heart & Mind]**
16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power

of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

- **[READ] Rom. 3:26 To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**
- **Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**
- Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
- Rom. 10:4 For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
- Rom. 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.
- 1 Tim. 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying [lit. “The dispensation of God”] which is in faith: so do.

- **The Content:**

- ***SIN -> WRATH -> FAITH. This is the natural progression of thought in Paul's letter to the Romans. True faith has no place apart from this background and context. To speak of FAITH apart from God's sin and wrath is to take it entirely out of the Biblical, Scriptural context. Faith is presented as the REQUIREMENT in the gospel; Believe & Live!***
- ***As we have seen, this “divine logic” was well known to Luther. “The rest of the story” had not been, namely, the Righteousness of God and its imputation to sinners on the basis of their saving faith alone.***

Sin and Sins (48):

- **The Word:**

- **[READ] Rom. 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin.**
- **Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

- Rom. 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - **[READ] Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**
 - Rom. 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- **The Content: Paul draws a critical distinction here between "sins" and "sin".**
 - ***One is an act of rebellion against God; the other is a condition, a state, a nature, or a position - but NOT an act.***
 - ***One is visible; the other is invisible.***
 - ***One is the common subject of man's philosophy and religion; the other is never discussed (and not known) there--- but is the revelation of God alone to the human heart by faith.***
 - ***Both separate man from God and the heart of the gospel must deal with both; failure to know this distinction results in a works-based "salvation" (mere religion) and perverts the gospel of God's grace.***
 - ***Oh, there is so much teaching here we will have opportunity, Lord willing, to dig out and find in this precious mine of inexhaustible riches in the Romans. Looking forward with great expectation!***

Rom. 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Righteousness (39): This was the key word for Luther and should be a key for us as well, who seek to understand even better the riches of God's grace through our Lord Jesus.

- **The Word:**

Rom. 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

[READ] Rom. 3:21-22

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

[READ] Rom. 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Rom. 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of of him which believeth in Jesus.

Rom. 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

[READ] Rom. 4:19-25

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification [or, righteousness imputation].

Rom. 9:31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

Rom. 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

- **The Content:**

- ***We have reached all that we can cover today of this great subject.***
- ***What did Luther learn through all of his struggles? What were his words written later describing his spiritual struggle in those days:***

- ***“I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the justice of God,” because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.***

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by his faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.”

- ***His struggles were real. They were extended in both time and depth. We do not know either but I suspect there were many days involved.***

Part of the issue (but definitely not all of it) had to do with the Latin translation of the Bible which he had memorized word for word. In Latin the words for righteousness and justice are the same word. You see that coming into the KJV translation of verse 26 as the translators it seems had the same issue as Luther had had 80 years before. Their language “To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” where the Greek words translated “righteousness” and “just” or “justice” are all the same or related Greek words but the Greek word does not convey have same meaning as the Latin “iustitia”.

- ***What Luther learned as the Holy Spirit taught him was that this “righteousness of God” that Paul reveals here in his sacred writing is Christ’s own righteousness in having already paid fully for our sins. He was sent forth for that very purpose and fully satisfied the requirement in his death. It is that righteousness, that righteous act, that was imputed to our accounts. His righteous act was counted as***

ours. And it is by faith that that imputation of righteousness is given to us and received. That is saving faith. Amen.

- **One final comment on Luther's salvation is this: He refers to Rom. 1:17 as the verse that made the difference for him: "...For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." But why was this verse so important to Luther?**

Well, perhaps because he had been taught that it was through works that one must become just in order to have satisfied the Holy God's requirement and therefore to be granted his grace. But if so it was by works and not by faith that one is "justified". But here Paul writes that the living of those who were already righteous or just should also be by faith. So it is not a life of works that may earn that "just" reward by a Holy and Righteous God but it is by faith apart from works all along, from salvation to sanctification. The just shall also live by faith, in other words. So verse 17 and 16 go together perfectly. Salvation is by grace through faith alone apart from all works, and then those saved, those who were "just" by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, should also live by faith. Amen.

- **But is that what is being taught far and wide today? Luther's bold proclamation of it is what launched the Reformation in Germany and then all over Europe and finally around the world. But today that teaching is hard to find in our assemblies. What a sad commentary that is on our present time.**
- **Praise God for Paul and this letter! Luther's words say so much, don't they? May we also take the spirit of those words to heart with the same response:**
 - **"Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven."**

May it have been for us as well for this is the heart of the gospel, isn't it? Amen.

2 Cor. 5:19-21

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Next Time:

- Spirit (34)
- Flesh (25)
- **Grace (24)**
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