

***“Romans, Dispensationally Considered —
“Law is the Problem and Faith Is the Answer”***

Review:

- ***Paul’s Focus on the Gospel is Dispensational — A Change Had Occurred***
- ***Paul’s Focus on the Gospel is Dispensational — Romans One Reveals It***

Our Outline Today:

- ***Law Is the Problem and Faith is the Answer!***
- ***Proof of Dispensational Change Is Easily Found***

I. Law Is the Problem and Faith is the Answer!

- ***As we have seen, law is a major topic in the Romans. Through not directly addressed in chapter one, it is found 21 times in chapter 2 and 78 times in Romans as a whole. This is astounding, since the references are barely negative. How can that be explained apart from a dispensational change in what the Lord God was doing? The Law of Moses had been the rule for so long. Let us read from chapter 3 where this is so clear:***

[READ] Galatians 3:7-13

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before *[this is a parallel statement to that one of Rom. 1:1]* the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

- ***This is a most important scripture passage. It tells us so much about the dispensational plan of God and also about scripture itself and how the revelations given regarding the redemptive plan of God***

are to be understood. We cannot dwell long on this today, but we do need to take note here on this one thing: "The scripture foresaw ..." These are important words...

- *So we see here the same reference to Hab. 2:4: "... the just shall live by faith"! But Paul says much more here than he did in the opening words of the Romans.*
- *The true depth of meaning here is, may seem beyond our comprehension, beyond our understanding. But God the Holy Spirit is always with us to help us with that, isn't he? And as we consider Paul's letter to the Romans, Dispensationally Considered, that will be so often made clear to us, Lord willing.*
- *The focus in Luther's mind was here in Romans 1, you will recall. His focus was on the gospel that called Saul, a great sinner indeed, into the realm of God's abundant grace. And through that word of the gospel of grace that monk and university professor was also called. Praise God. Saul of Tarsus and Martin Luther had spent a significant part of their lives "serving God" as best they knew. But for each the Lord God changed everything by personally intersecting with them on the path they were on, and that was literal indeed if you remember their life histories.*
 - *Verse 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.": **BOTH the Jew and the Greek are the subjects here, not the Jews only. Though at the beginning Paul went to the Jews first, later he went to the Gentiles independently of the Jews with this wonderful good news of God's abundant grace.***
 - *But one central key to understanding the change we are looking at has to do with salvation and how the law relates to that. Paul writes that the gospel of grace is the power of God unto salvation, not the Law. When Paul writes in this way he is saying so much, if one knows the context of his writing. As we noted at the beginning, the frequency of significant doctrinal / teaching words in Romans was this:*
 - *Law (78)*
 - *Justification (65)*
 - *Faith (59)*

- **Sin and Sins (48)**
- **Death (46)**
- **Righteousness (39)**
- ***The overall context of the entire letter is about justification by faith in contrast to justification by works law. And since the Jews were under God's rule of the Mosaic Law previously and as Paul writes that they were no longer under that law, the issue often loomed large in the hearts and minds of both believers and unbelievers, but religious ones nevertheless. If we take scripture literally, we see how important it was and is to know that God had promised the Jews an earthly kingdom, a critically valuable hope indeed for those that had suffered the loss so often of all that they had. To hear of grace therefore and even more, grace towards the Gentiles, would cause them instant outrage and perhaps justly so. For them, to receive this promised grace through faith alone would mean losing forever the hope of the earthly blessings so longed for and expected.***

And therefore the apostle wrote this critically important letter, a letter with teachings that would try the hearts and souls of so many Jews while warming and encouraging so many non-Jews.

The issue, you see, what what God was doing and how that differed so significantly from what he had been doing for thousands of years.

- ***Previously, the Lord had offered blessing to the Gentiles, yes, but only through Israel's "rising". For the Gentiles were to be evangelized after Israel's elect calling that was to occur as prophecy revealed during the coming period of great Tribulation. Isaiah writes of this so compellingly:***

[READ] Isaiah 60:1-3

1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

- *But now, the apostle has written, the tables have turned, as it were, for under grace it now would be through Israel's "fall" that the Gentiles would be saved. And indeed this is true for Jews also today, since there is neither Jew nor Greek today! All Jews are as Gentiles in the Lord's sight today. This is well stated in Romans 11:*

[READ] Romans 11:11-13

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is* come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

- *Oh my, such grace, God's abundant riches at Christ's expense. Praise God. So the bottom line on what God was doing is this: He was changing the dispensational plan from what it had been for so very many centuries. Israel and the Jews had been his focus. But now it would be the Gentiles. Instead of through their "rising" many Gentiles would be saved, but now through their "fall" the entire world would be offered salvation through the risen savior, our Lord Jesus. A new apostle had been raised up for this ministry of a new gospel.*

II. Proofs of Dispensational Change Is Easily Found:

- *Works are added and Paul must address that conflict with the gospel of grace. Water baptism / spirit baptism / circumcision / enduring to the end / repentance / etc.*
- *The preaching is only to Jews, a clear difference with Paul's gospel.*

- ***Let's first look into the book of Acts chapter 15:***

Acts 15:1, 5, 7-9

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

[READ] Gal. 2:11-14, 19-21

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

...

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. [Compare with Rom. 7]

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

- ***So one cannot mix grace with law and still have grace. Verse 21 proves that without a doubt.***
- ***But if salvation was always by faith how is this teaching in any way “dispensational”?***
 - ***Looking forward for the Seed of the Woman as Habakkuk did, or looking backward, as we are privileged to do.***
- ***Back here in Romans chapter one the proofs are also visible, if we have eyes to see them. The magnificent verse that changed Martin Luther’s life so completely and so many others as well itself reveals what God was and is doing.***
 - ***Verse 17 — “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”:***

So we see here that it is the gospel that reveals the righteousness of God by faith today, and not the Law. And this is one of the most fundamental teachings of the Apostle Paul in this letter, in the Galatians, and elsewhere. It is not the Law therefore that teaches us about the righteousness of God. It is the gospel itself that so teaches us because the gospel teaches us about the righteousness of Christ as he became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God by faith. This is a fundamental teaching of the word of God rightly divided.

So on the one side is the sin of making revealed from heaven. Our unrighteousness is evident and no one can really deny it. And so the wrath of God is revealed and that is the condition of the unsaved. But on the other hand is the holy and sinless Son of God. He is THE righteous one indeed. And that righteous one lived also by faith as he became the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It is that righteous

life and work that has been imputed to us, praise God. That was likely Paul's intent as he refers to Hab. 2:4. Onward to the final verse for today:

- ***Verse 18 — “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ...”: This is a universal statement indeed about fallen man and his unwavering lawlessness and sin. Next time Lord willing we will look into this and the following verses further. But for now as an introduction let's read the verses together and I will give a quick comment:***

[READ] Romans 1:18-23

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

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

- ***What therefore must we learn about this and about the truth of God, Dispensationally Considered?***
 - ***The deliverer, the Seed of the Woman, was promised from just after the fall ...***
 - ***Wrath from heaven was known and judgment awaited all ...***
 - ***Faith in that Seed was always required for salvation, but what was know varied as the revelation of God increased. Once it was written in the heavens but now that revelation is largely gone. Only some remains. Next time we will look more closely at that, Lord willing.***

- *But sometimes more was added, like obedience to Noah or following Abraham as the example of faith or keeping the religious observances of the Law of Moses or water baptism ...*
- *The bottom line: Christ came into this world as the Seed of the Woman and not the seed of the man Adam. Through his perfect humanity he became our perfect sacrifice for sin and for the sin of the world.*
- *Paul and then Martin Luther and then John Wesley had been transformed by this gospel themselves and then had dedicated their lives to the preaching of God's word. We should see them as our mentors. Will we dwell on their shoulders as it were and walk in their footsteps? Paul, our apostle, says in multiple places that we should "follow" or "imitate" him, for it was through him that the risen and ascended Christ Jesus revealed God's truth for today, the revelation of his unlimited grace.*
- *It is that preaching and teaching which the apostle of the Gentiles reveals here in this letter. But the revelation could not be given without this remaining word with its meaning and content in the very center, that of his righteousness and the absolute necessity of by faith receiving that gift:*

2 Corinthians 5:21 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.

Summary & Application: