

2020-2021 Bible Study

#23

3/9/21

Review of our Last Class

- Last week, I spent some time setting the stage for what constituted a first century Jewish Christian in the church of Rome
- As we could see, all that he could practice of the Jewish faith was: circumcision and the kosher laws
- Paul asked the Jewish Christians why they were condemning the Gentiles Christians for not obeying the “law” since their ancestors had often failed to obey it themselves
- He reminded them that they would be judged by God based on what they did regardless of background

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- He also pointed out that the Jews would be judged on what they did based on the “special revelation” (the law) while the Gentile would be judged on the “natural law” (both of which should be written on their hearts)
- This meant that apart from “faith in Jesus Christ,” both groups were under the wrath of God
- Father pointed out that the “law” (Torah) could be summarized as “do not worship pagan gods”
- Paul reminded his listeners that if someone (Gentile or Jew) had already been brought back to God (reconciled), why would they need the “law?”
- Further, that one was made “righteous” by doing the will of God

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- Paul also reminded them that the “law” only pointed to what was the right thing to do and that the Gentiles were able to do what was right (via natural law) without having to live by the Torah
- He said that what was important was to circumcise their hearts not their flesh

Romans 3

Romans 3 (Cont)

- **Romans 2:21** *“But now the righteousness (justification) of God had been manifested apart from the law (Torah), although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”*
 - Paul was telling his audience that “righteousness” (justification) and being returned to the family of God were manifested apart from the law (Torah)
 - Father said that the phrase “apart from the law” is a *Protestant* translation of the Greek text, based on the misreading and teaching on this passage by *Martin Luther*
 - But, some might ask, “Aren’t we reading from a “Catholic Bible?”

Romans 3 (Cont)

- The background on the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV)
 - Originally, the “standard version” of the Bible was the “King James Bible,” published in 1611
 - It was “revised” in the United States with the “American Standard Bible” in 1901
 - That edition was so popular the it was later “revised,” and became the RSV in 1952
 - Then, Catholic scholars picked up on this translation, tried to remove most of the Protestant information in it, and produced the RSV (Catholic Edition)
 - “Catholic Edition” simply means that it contains all 46 books in the Old Testament rather than the 39 books found in all Protestant Bibles was published in 1966
 - But, in several places in the Catholic RSV, some of the Protestant translations remain
- Father then asked what did “apart from the law” mean?
- The “law,” as Paul understood it, was the “*Torah*” (*first five books of the Old Testament*)
- Paul was saying that God had revealed His righteousness “apart from the Torah,” through the ascendancy of Jesus

Romans 3 (Cont)

- What the *Protestant* translators had been doing in the RSV was translating into the text Luther's ideas on "works versus faith" (the law versus faith)
- Again, this concept was based on a misreading of the text by *Luther*

Romans 3 (Cont)

- **Romans 3:24-26** *“they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,...that he justifies him who had faith in Jesus”*
 - Paul indicated that this gift of grace came from the blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus
 - He told them that if they had been baptized in Christ, they had also been crucified, died, buried, and resurrected to the newness of life through Him
 - Father said that he will go into greater detail about this in **Romans 6**
 - Paul said further, that God was faithful in what He said He would do (Remember His promises to *Abraham*)

Romans 3 (Cont)

- **Romans 3:27** *“Then what comes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? (Torah) No, but on the principle of faith”*
 - Once again, Father pointed out that Paul was talking about the “works of the Torah”
 - He said that Paul was simply shorting the statement to “works,” but it continued to mean the “works of the Law”
 - Then Paul asked, the Jewish Christians, *“What comes of our boasting?”*
 - He pointed out that this was based on the principle of “Faith,” not “works of the Torah”

Romans 3 (Cont)

- **Romans 3:28** *“For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law”*
 - This was understood to have meant “faith in Jesus”
 - Paul was not simply talking about what you believe versus what you do (faith versus works)
 - Father said that this was where Luther went wrong
 - In his commentary on **Romans 3**, *Luther* was very brief, and surprisingly, did not mention *Moses*, the *Torah*, circumcision, or the kosher laws
 - There was not one comment concerning the differences between the Jews and the Gentiles
 - Father said, that *Luther* completely missed the point of this text

Romans 3 (Cont)

- **Romans 3:29-31** *“Or is God the God of the Jews only?...On the contrary, we uphold the law”*
 - Paul asked, *“Is God not the God of Jews and Gentiles?”*
 - Father reminded us that it was circumcision and the kosher laws that separated the Jew from the Gentile Christian in the Church of Rome
 - Paul further pointed out that it was not “righteousness” that separated one group from the other because both had sinned in the past, and because God was one (equally responsive to both groups)
 - Since He was one, both sides were justified on the basis of their “faith” in Him
 - The Jews were righteous because they upheld the message of the Torah, but the Gentiles were also righteous via the natural law

Romans 4

Romans 4

- **Romans 4:1-10** *“What then shall we say about Abraham,...It was not after, but before he was circumcised”*
 - Here, Paul is speaking to the Jewish Christians in the room
 - His question to them was about how Abraham was justified (made righteous - that is, brought into a relationship with God)
 - Once again, we see that the major issue in the entire letter is the question, “did circumcision and works of the law save them?”
 - Justification was understood to mean that which will bring a person into communion with God
 - In this section, Paul demonstrated that justification would NOT be achieved via circumcision and kosher laws

Romans 4 (Cont)

- Paul said that if that had been the way, there would be a great problem for *Abraham* who was said (in the scripture) to have been justified before he was circumcised
- He was declared to be righteous (justified) in **Genesis 15** and he was not circumcised until decades later in **Genesis 17**
- Paul then asked his Jewish audience what was the purpose of circumcision

Romans 4 (Cont)

- **Romans 4:11-12** *“He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness...which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised”*
 - Obviously, according to Paul, circumcision did not cause “righteousness”
 - Because, if their father in the faith (*Abraham*) was made “righteous” in some other way, then they had a problem in what they believed
 - That would have meant that the Jewish Christians in Rome would have a different kind of “righteousness” than *Abraham*
 - Since *Abraham* was deemed “righteous” before he was circumcised, then circumcision was not the cause of his righteousness!

Romans 4 (Cont)

- **Romans 4:13-17** “*The promise to Abraham and his descendants, ... who gave life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist*”
 - Father pointed out that what Paul just said was a masterful piece of work
 - Paul had said the same thing in *Galatians* when he pointed out that circumcision came after *Abraham* was declared as “righteous,” and the kosher laws came 450 years later
 - *Abraham* did not keep kosher since when God visited *Abraham* (**Genesis 18**), he fed him curds with meat (a violation of the kosher laws)
 - Thus, Paul asked, “How can one be “justified” through the kosher laws and circumcision?”

Romans 4 (Cont)

- It was the faith of *Abraham* (who did what God asked him to do), which caused him to trust in the one true God that “justified” him
- Because “justification” is a relationship, it is restored within a relationship
- This happens when we reach out our hand to God and He grabs it, and then pulls us back into a relationship with Him
- Father said that it is very important for us to understand this concept

Romans 4 (Cont)

- **Romans 4:24** *“but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us (righteousness) who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was to put death for our trespasses and raised for our justification”*
 - Paul was saying that “righteousness” is reckoned to us who believe, like *Abraham*, as we believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead for our trespasses
 - Jesus was raised for our “justification”
 - Somehow, the death of Jesus eliminates our sin, puts to death our transgressions and His resurrection gives us life in God
 - Paul will explain how this happens in **Romans 5**