

Sunday September 13, 2020
 Lesson 2: Forgiven, Rescued, Restored
 Scripture: Romans 1: 15-17; 5: 6-11

Context:

The next lesson in our series comes from the book of Romans, an epistle attributed to the apostle Paul. The scripture passages combines two chapters of the book to explore a reiterating theme: the righteous living by faith. The chapters remind us of our sinfulness and the grace offered in Jesus Christ.

Paul starts off the passage by proclaiming his readiness to preach the gospel. There is delight in how the gospel is so inclusive to whomever it is preached. If any human being of whatever race or background can stand before God on the basis of trusting in Christ, then this salvation is open to any who trust God.¹ The Roman population is full of people from different backgrounds. By Paul being able to preach to them, he receives an opportunity to reach new groups of people.

The fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans continues some of his literary arguments from the first and fourth chapter. Paul wants to continue the explanation of why humanity needs Christ and how Christ has reconciled us to God. Using logic and parallel structures, Paul presents to the readers how Christ does the transforming work of reconciliation.

In this case, Paul describes how Christ died for an ungodly people. Of course, logically this idea doesn't make sense so Paul continues to expound upon it and how this love makes God even more powerful. Continuing on with the theme of righteousness as brought up in the first chapter, Paul drives home how those who believe will be spared God's wrath. Even as enemies, God reconciles us so we may have a restored relationship with God.

The text gives a strong presentation of the power of Christ, who in his weakness, also gives great strength. Much of the reconciliation and salvation of his redemptive suffering conjures up images of the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah wrote.² Christ in his suffering brings a new reality. Because he is the paschal lamb, his death offers up new life for others.³ Because of this offering up of Jesus, all are given an opportunity to be restored to a righteous relationship with God.

Application

One of the reasons the Book of Romans holds such prominence in the Christian tradition is because of how it helps us understand God's love in tangible ways. In this case, Paul makes it clear Jesus has reconciled us to God and because of this fact we may live by faith and be made righteous. There is a redemptive opportunity offered for all

¹ Achtemeier, Paul J. "Romans," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for First and Second Kings*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2010), 37.

² Ibid., 93.

³ Ibid., 93.

people, even those who are ungodly (which is all of us!)

Sometimes I think we often put up an abstract notion of who Jesus died for on the cross. We like to focus on how it was for “the world,” and yet we don’t talk about the sinners or the “ungodly.” Those feel like people who we may not associate with or know. It’s easier for us to claim Jesus when we can say he died for someone else’s sins.

Yet the text today helps us realize that those who are sinners are us. We are those who have gone against God and yet Jesus Christ has come for us. He died for you and for me. We are the ones Christ has given his life for so we might live.

Putting it into perspective, we should be thankful for how God works in our lives. Even though we are still sinners, God has restored a relationship with us so we might live in the here and now. We are given salvation even though we have done absolutely nothing to deserve it.

As a result of such grace, we should take stock of our lives and consider if we live grateful lives in response to the gift we’ve been given. As a people of faith we should trust God will lead us in the direction we are called to go in and the gift of faith reminds us of the promise we have in Jesus Christ. Because of him, we can face whatever comes our way.

When we think of the restoration, which takes place in the relationship between God and us, we should think of the restoration of relationships we have with others. Because God has forgiven and restored a relationship with us, we should think of the ways we can forgive and restore relationships with others. At times some relationships are easier to restore than others. Sometimes it takes hard conversations and time to heal wounds. And at other times we lift up those restoration relationships to God to fix and heal.

We are also reminded of the gift of faith. Even though we are sinners, we can still live in faith and how God will reveal new things every day. The power of the gospel comes in the hope offered by Jesus Christ and the power in his life, death, and resurrection. And today, we perhaps need the good news of Jesus Christ more than ever. In a world where there is such vitriol, violence, and hatred, there is an alternative. There is Jesus Christ, who is good news yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

What is the power of God’s love dying for sinners? Do you consider yourself a sinner, someone who has erred from God? Why do you think it is easier to think of others as sinners instead of ourselves? How can we live in gratitude for all God has done in our lives?

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