

Series: Romans	Reference: Romans 15:8-13	Title: Taken for the Taken	Date: 1.22.17
Website Writeup:			
<p>From Genesis 3 to the end of Revelations it's a story of God's burning desire to get his family back. Today we summarize what we've learned thus far in Romans & other places. Paul brings us back to the simple Gospel and our call to reach the nations with it. Are we just standing ankle deep in the waters of Scripture or diving headlong into the Gospel calling when we hear it? Are we taken with the calling of God for those whom have been taken from Him?</p>			

Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

We have been in Romans for a while now. We've gotten through v7 of chapter 15.

In summary Paul's said, Scripture from beginning to end communicates the Gospel in simplicity. Salvation (Christ's righteousness) is by grace through faith in Jesus, and the Church is called to bring that message to all people groups of the world. He's speaking to both Jew & Gentile. He reminds them the the Gospel can be seen in the call to Abraham in Genesis 12 & extends to us today (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20).

He's spoken to the Jews in this letter, saying to them, Christ came to fulfill all righteousness - every jot & tittle of the Law! Something they couldn't do for themselves, although they had tried. He's reminding them that righteousness comes through Jesus, not in how well they live up to the standards of God's Law.

They had missed the Gospel in their reading of the Hebrew Scriptures. Misinterpreted it, and therefore, the purpose of the Law which was to reveal their need for a savior in Christ. Paul outlines this all for them from Abraham, David & others. At the same time, he's pointed out to them that from the very beginning God has called Israel to be a witness to the Nations - to all Gentiles - all People Groups. **Yet, in their self-righteous pursuits they'd committed the Great Omission, instead of practicing the Great Commission. Israel was always intended to be on a Co-mission, or in a partnership of purpose with God. A partnership to bring His righteousness to the nations of the world.**

In speaking to Gentiles, he's warned us that we can fall into the same trap. How we can add to the Gospel, making it unattainable to others. Or, how we get hung up on issues making them larger than they should be, and therefore, miss the call of God to the people groups of the world as the Church. He did that in comparing immature & mature believers in Chapter 14 & 15.

He's reminded all, this is a communal effort. An effort reflected in what we say (orthodoxy/truth) & do (orthopraxy/holiness). It matters what we say, and it matters what we do. If I say I love my wife but cheat on her, I'm not loving her & therefore, no one believes I love her. Behavior & identity are transformed into the likeness of Christ **by the Gospel Truth we assimilate from the story of God - history is HIStory, not MYstory.**

I watched a College Humor video this week called *Spiritual but Not Religious*, where they had this guy up front preaching, “We gather here today to throw out all those things in one book that we don’t like, in order to adopt parts of what we do like from a bunch of other books!” It’s the way of pop-Christianity today. His language was much more colorful, or I’d play the video, but alas, inappropriate for Sunday morning fare.

We see a communal call on the Church which is made up of both Jew & Gentile. That we all have a responsibility, *in view of God’s mercy*, as Romans 12:1 & 2 say, *to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

And over & over again in Romans and all throughout old & new testaments, it’s revealed that God’s will is - all nations would worship Him. Therefore, His call on His people before the final return of Christ is to bring that simple Gospel message to all of them.

We said nearness is likeness last week - and nearness to Jesus means a birthing of His desire in us to see all people groups of the world come to know & worship him as the one true God. Missions will end, but worship will go on forever as Christ returns.

Having said all that, we just wrapped up Romans 14 & part of 15 which instructs us how to live in faith community, not getting hung up on minor issues which derail our calling to the nations. Grow up as you grow old, know the elemental truths of the Gospel, and operate out of them. For instance the teachings on righteousness which we see brought up again starting in v8 for the benefit of the Jews listening to him...

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed

A verse very important for the Jews to hear. Christ a servant on behalf of God’s truth - which tells us that the life, words & actions of Jesus serve to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures for the Jews served by Him. He’s a servant, since it’s the character of God to serve in love, and also because they have not been. Rather, they’d been acting as arrogant masters. All in order that the promises through the patriarchs would be confirmed - and we know that Paul has harkened back to these patriarchs already. Especially to Abraham noting that the Gospel of Christ was revealed to him beforehand. That God had called Abraham out, blessed him in order that he (and his progeny) would be a blessing to all nations.

Remember they had missed the elemental truth that the Law had been put into place to lead them to Christ - and that it’s through Christ alone they might be rightly related to God once more - to find righteousness - as Abraham had done.

Verse 8 mirrors Romans 3:22 which reminds them that this Gospel of righteousness is not to be hoarded. They’d become nationalistic & racist in their ideology, but the Gospel

is for all people groups...This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile

Jesus preached the same in Matthew 21:32 when speaking to the Jews, *For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.*

Even after you see the Gospel lived out before your eyes, you still don't see it people! And what did John preach, a righteousness by faith in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

In Luke 18 Jesus told them the parable of the Pharisee & the Tax Collector - 9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

The first step in attaining righteousness comes from expressing our absolute need before God, not in claiming our self-righteousness before Him. Not in how much we give, or how well we live.

In Romans 1:17 Paul had reminded them of this, For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

In Romans 9 Paul said this, 30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal.

Paul's been banging this drum the whole time, righteousness is by faith, and all people groups having access to God through it. He's leveling the playing field, taking away any excuse for nationalism or racism, or pride of any fashion.

And in Romans 10 in speaking of the Jews he said, 2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Again, although they'd immersed themselves in the Scriptures they saw in them only that which they wanted to see. Somewhere along the way, it became a competition & show of self-righteous behavior, and not the love & acceptance of others based on the fact that we are all equal in our need before God.

I read an article this week which said, *We love power & authority more than sacrifice & submission. We love honor over humility. We love being led by popular leaders who make us feel good more than following the despised and rejected One—who has no “beauty or majesty to attract us to him” (Isa 53). We want King Saul over young David.*¹ So, we still have the same issues today Jesus & Paul were confronting then. The picture of spiritual immaturity we spoke of in the past few weeks. It's possible to live your whole life immersed in Church & surrounded by the Scriptures, and miss the point.

In Galatians 2:21 Paul says, *I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!*"

So, it's all about Jesus. He's the answer for all our ills. It's not just about his death which paid for our sin, but it's about how he lived. He lived a perfect life which satisfied the requirements of the Law - a sinless life in all ways. A righteous life. And as a result He is righteous before the Father, and His righteousness is imputed (laid upon) to us as we come into relationship with the true Biblical Jesus. It's what we call in Indonesian a Tukaran, an Exchange. He gives us His Righteousness, in exchange for the penalty of our sin. Theologians refer to it as Double Imputation.

A great book if you're looking for something to read is Philip Yancey's, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. Where he says things like, *“Power, no matter how well-intentioned, tends to cause suffering. Love, being vulnerable, absorbs it. In a point of convergence on a hill called Calvary, God renounced the one for the sake of the other.”*

Or, *“Thunderously, inarguably, the Sermon on the Mount proves that before God we all stand on level ground: murderers and temper-throwers, adulterers and lusters, thieves and coveters. We are all desperate, and that is in fact the only state appropriate to a human being who wants to know God. Having fallen from the absolute Ideal, we have nowhere to land but in the safety net of absolute grace.”*

And also, *“In a nutshell, the Bible from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 tells the story of a God reckless with desire to get his family back.”* Sort of like Liam Neeson in *Taken*.

The simple Gospel. What they'd missed. God's reckless desire to get his family back. The Gospel which Paul explains was announced to Abraham beforehand. But to what end? Certainly for the purpose of the Jews to understand how to be rightly related to God. But in v9 Paul takes it further. But let's stop here a moment....maybe you think I've made too much of this issue of the Nations? That I'm stuck on a concept. That I'm reading

¹ <https://philipmonroe.com/2017/01/16/a-cancer-within-evangelical-christianity/>

Scripture through dirty lenses. Maybe, but I think you have to wrestle with what Paul says next...

9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

In other words, it's as if Paul is saying, "You Jews missed the point. But I'm making it clear. It's all about Christ's righteousness fulfilling the requirements of the Law so that you can be made righteous before him."

But if he stopped there, this would've been just a Jewish thing. It would have reinforced their nationalistic idolatry. But Paul says clearly in verse 9, "NO, this is not just for you - but also that the Gentiles would know & glorify God as well!"

And you might say, "Well Jason, you get that from this one verse...?" If you said that, you haven't been listening, since I'd remind you of all that Paul's said in Romans & all the rest of Scripture which proclaims this truth. Then I'd have you read through v12. Remembering that Paul's speaking to Jews who highly value the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. He quotes it over & over again proclaiming to them that the Gentiles, the Nations, all culturally & linguistically distinct people groups of the earth, would praise God! That Israel is the beginning of the witness, but it flows out to the nations of the world...

As it is written:

*"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles
I will sing the praises of your name."*

10 Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

11 And again,

*"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples extol him."*

12 And again, Isaiah says,

*"The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
in him the Gentiles will hope."*

Can Paul be any more clear? Why would Jews extol Gentiles to praise God if the Gospel was not meant for them? Am I making too much of the Nations? I don't think so.

Many claim Romans to be a theology book, it is, but isn't theology just the study of God. And the study of God reveals His clearly apparent desire for the nations of the world to come to know, accept & live out of the righteousness of Christ - to worship Him for all eternity! Romans is a Missions book! Romans is a reminder of the simple Gospel, and the Churches call to overflow it to the nations as we end with v13...

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Filled with joy & peace due to what? To what Paul's been saying all along. The good news of Christ's righteousness laid upon us. His free gift of Grace. God's mercy in the cross. Christ's sinless life which has satisfied all the requirements of the Law in exchange for our sin. For all that to well up in hope & overflow out through the power of the Holy Spirit - the very life of God within us giving witness to everyone around us that Christ is alive & available for all peoples!

We're all theologians. We're all interpreters of the Scriptures. The question is, are we good ones, or not? Do we pack ourselves in the Christian subculture looking righteous from the outside - but never getting the true message? Are we the immature Paul spoke of in the last few weeks living only on the milk of the Word & not the meat? Standing ankle deep in the waters of Scripture, when by this time we should be diving headlong into the the Gospel river living out our great call to reach the nations.

Or, do we hear, see & act upon the Gospel message which God has communicated to us through a great cloud of witnesses & His Word throughout the ages? Taking risk, not getting caught up in the grey areas, tumbling over silly useless arguments as if in the religious dryer. Are we acting upon the Gospel locally & globally? Giving of our time, talent & treasure to see both our local neighbor, but all the unreached people groups of the world know Jesus?

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

There are right now about 196 different countries in the world. Those countries can be broken down to culturally distinct nations or people groups. Pakistan for instance is one country or nation, but it is made up of more than 400 nations or people groups. These people groups is to what the Scriptures refer (explain Global Summary).

Global Summary

An overview of the people groups of the world

People Groups: 16,560
Unreached Groups: 6,698
% Unreached Groups: 40.4%

Population: 7.38 Billion
Population in Unreached: 3.11 Billion
% Population in Unreached: 42.1%

If you want to learn more about who those nations are, go to joshuaproject.net (explain). And be praying for our missions team as we develop that system & make decisions how

Six:Eight will be more heavily involved in the reaching of these groups. The question is, are we taken with the calling of God for those whom have been taken from Him? Is His last command our first concern?

BENEDICTION
Responsive Reading

Psalm 67:1-3

*May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
2 so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
3 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.*

Questions for CG Leaders

1. Is the discussion of God's heart for the nations new to you? If so, what are your thoughts?
2. Watch the video Jason referred to in the sermon <https://www.facebook.com/CollegeHumor/videos/10153549542672807/>
 1. Discuss, why is this funny?
 2. Remembering last week that the insults which fall on Jesus fall on us, we can also reverse that - the insults which fall on us, fall on Jesus. So, although funny, isn't this a tragic thing that people look at young churches this way?
 3. What does that mean for our corporate/personal witness & devotion to God's Word?
3. How important is what you say (orthodoxy/truth) & do (orthopraxy/holiness) in personal witness? Your interior, public & private life.
 1. Are you growing up in the faith as you grow old?
 2. Does anyone walk with you in that journey of faith? A discipleship relationship?
4. How does your personal witness affect the communal witness of the local church? Think not only in terms of what you do & say, but in terms of what you do not do, and do not say.
 1. For instance, we could agree in word with God on all this stuff, but if we don't do anything about it practically, then what does that do to our corporate witness?
 2. If someone agrees that these principles are important but never take action when the church has a challenge, what good is that?
 3. If we see that there are almost 7000 unreached people groups in the world, but don't at the very least pray for them, what good is that?
 4. If we give only 2% of our income, what does that do to the larger Bodies ability to bless the nations?
 5. If we agree evangelism by being the hands, feet & voice of Jesus is important, but don't attend community partner activities, or take risk when we do, what good is that?
5. Take a look again at Joshua Projects website, and pray for a few people groups
 1. Make sure you prepare for this ahead of time gathering some information on these groups using those details to pray well...
 1. Do they have the Scriptures in their language yet?
 2. How many people are working among them?
 3. What efforts are being made to reach them?
 4. What are the obstacles or hurdles?
 5. What religion are they?
 6. Pray for Christians in their local context from surrounding people groups to witness to them.
6. If time allows, compare Genesis 12:1-3 (the promise to Abraham) to Psalm 67:1-3
 1. How are they similar and therefore applicable to all of us now?
 2. What is the purpose of the blessings we receive from God, material, spiritual or otherwise?