

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 196 – July 15th – Romans 2:25-3:8

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

- Barrett, CK *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1957.
 Dunn, JDG *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary Vols 38A, 38B, Dallas, Word, 1988.
 Moo, Douglas, J *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
 Murray, John *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959 & 1965.
 Wright, NT *The Letter to The Romans*, The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002.

Verse 25

Περιτομή μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης·
ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾦς, ἡ περιτομή σου
ἄκροβυστία γέγονεν.

περιτομη, ης f circumcision

Circumcision was considered such a vital distinctive of the Jew, marking them off as the people of God, that the term itself was used of Judaism, cf. Eph 2:11.

ὠφελεω gain, profit, achieve, benefit
ἐὰν if, if it should be
πρασσω practice, do

Moo thinks that v.25a makes a negative point. "Circumcision has no value to rescue Jews from God's wrath because their obedience to the law never reaches the level required for salvation. The second part of verse 25 simply states the negative corollary of this point: Failing to obey the law can annul the value of circumcision."

It is probably better to view Paul as simply making the point that circumcision is a mark not merely of privilege but also of obligation, and that those who pride themselves in the sign have failed to live up to their obligation or calling. Cf. 1 Cor 7:19.

παραβατης, ου m one who breaks God's
law, transgressor

ᾦς Verb, pres subj, 2 s εἰμι
ἄκροβυστια, ας f uncircumcision, non-Jews
γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γίνομαι

Verse 26

ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἄκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ
νόμου φυλάσση, οὐχ ἡ ἄκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς
περιτομήν λογισθήσεται;

δικαιωμα, τος n regulation, requirement

That which the law requires if a person is to be righteous before God.

φυλασσω keep

λογισθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s
λογίζομαι reckon, count

Godet, followed by Murray, thinks that Paul here refers to Gentile Christians who, though uncircumcised, live in obedience to the demands of God, cf. 8:4 where Paul again uses the phrase το δικαιομα του νομου. Moo, however, favours the (unfulfilled) hypothetical: "The apostle makes clear elsewhere that there is, in fact, no person who can do the law and be saved (3:20). Thus, he must again here be speaking hypothetically, theorising about the existence of a law-observant Gentile and what the consequences would be." The argument for the former view is strengthened by v.29 and is strongly argued by Wright who believes that "Paul's description of this parallel 'Jewishness,' this new sort of 'circumcision,' is replete with overtones of 'new covenant' passages both in scripture and elsewhere in his writings." He argues that Paul's words are an abbreviated version of Ezek 36:27, and that his thoughts here are developed further in 10:5-11.

Verse 27

καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἄκροβυστία τὸν νόμον
τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς
παραβάτην νόμου.

κρινεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s κρινω
φυσις, εως f nature, natural condition
τελεω fulfill, carry out
γραμμα, τος n letter (of alphabet), letter

διὰ γραμματος 'possessing the written law' διὰ
of 'attendant circumstances'

Verse 28

οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν, οὐδὲ ἡ
ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή·

φανερως, α, ον evident, plain, visible
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

Verse 29

ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, καὶ περιτομῇ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

"In referring to the secret/heart/spirit people, Paul clearly means to designate those in whom the gospel of the Messiah has done its work. The promises of God through Deuteronomy 30, Ezekiel 36, and elsewhere have come true. God has done, in Jesus and the Spirit, what he had promised; the result is the creation of the people of the new covenant. Paul's clearest statement of this point may be found in 2 Cor 3:1-6, where the letter/spirit contrast is again prominent. There are several other passages in which a similar theological understanding may be discerned, not least Romans 8 and 10." Wright.

κρυπτος, η, ον hidden, secret, private

Perhaps the 'inner man' cf. Eph 3:16.

περιτομῇ καρδίας cf. Deut 10:16, also Jer 4:4 and Phil 3:3.

πνευματι a reference to the Spirit (not man's spirit). Paul contrasts the life-giving power of the Spirit of God with the powerlessness of the mere letter of the law, cf. 8:4-17.

ἔπαινος, ου m praise, approval

The name 'Judah' (and hence the title 'Jew') means 'praise', cf. Gen 29:35; 49:8. Hence these are the people who receive the name 'Judah' from God.

"What he does, then, at the end of this chapter, is to anticipate the direction of his argument. He will show that only those who, through faith in Christ, have received the Spirit of God make up God's true people. Implicit here is a radical redefinition of 'Jew' that will require a lot more explanation as Paul moves forward in this letter." Moo.

Romans 3:1

Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου, ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς;

Paul anticipates the questions that may be in his readers' minds.

περισσος, η, ον more, τὸ περισσὸν advantage
ὠφέλεια, ας f advantage, benefit
περιτομη, ης see 2:25

Verse 2

πολὸν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ.

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ γεν πολλου, ης, ου much

τρόπος, ου m way; κατα παντα τ. in every way

"The Jew has an advantage which he can never lose, since it rests not on his merit but upon God's faithfulness to his declared word." Barrett.

πρῶτον first, in the first place, first of all

Moo thinks Paul intended to give a list but got side-tracked.

πιστευω have faith (in), entrust

λογια, ον n oracles, words

In accordance with the covenant promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:3) and repeated to Jacob/Israel (Gen 28:14), "The Jews were 'entrusted' with messages for the world; not simply with Torah itself, but, through their living under Torah, with words of instruction, of life and light, for the Gentile world. They were to be God's messengers." Wright.

Verse 3

τί γάρ; εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει;

ἀπιστεω fail or refuse to believe

ἀπιστια, ας f unbelief, unfaithfulness

The meaning here is 'unfaithfulness' to the covenant – contrasted then with God's covenant faithfulness.

πιστις, εως f faith

καταργεω render ineffective, cancel

Paul may have been echoing a Jewish objection against his teaching to the effect that, 'Supposing we admit that the Jews have at times been unfaithful, surely this does not annul the covenant as you seem to suggest (2:25). Surely their unfaithfulness does not undermine the faithfulness of God.' Paul's ultimate answer is that the covenant faithfulness of God has been displayed supremely in Jesus the Christ.

Verse 4

μὴ γένοιτο· γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθῆς, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεῦστης, καθὼς γέγραπται· Ὅπως ἂν δικαιοθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσεις ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε.

γένειτο Verb, aor opt, 3s γινομαι

μὴ γένοιτο 'may it never be,' 'not at all' cf., 3:6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11.

γινέσθω Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 3 s

γινομαι

ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, genuine

ψευστης, ου m liar

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

The following quotation is from Ps 51:4.
"Jews in Paul's day tended to think of God's faithfulness as oriented positively toward themselves: God would do good things for his people. But, as Paul reminds them, God is also faithful when he punishes the sin of his people – as David himself acknowledges." Moo.

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἄν) that, in order that
δικαιωθῆς Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s δικαιωω
justify, declare & treat as righteous
νικήσεις Verb, aor act subj, 2 s νικαω
conquer, overcome, win the verdict
κρίνεσθαί Verb, pres pass infin κρίνω
σε Pronoun, acc s συ

Verse 5

εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην
συνίστησιν, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ
ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν; κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω.

ἀδικία, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin
δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness, what is
right, what God requires, justice
συνίστησιν Verb, pres act indic, 3 s
συνιστημι and συνιστανω commend,
demonstrate
ἐροῦμεν Verb, fut act indic, 1 pl λεγω
ἀδικος, ον unjust
ἐπιφέρω bring upon, inflict, pronounce
ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

Moo thinks that the objection here is from the Jews "wondering how God can be 'righteous' when he judges the sins of the Jews... Paul seems to be grappling here with the common Jewish belief that God's 'righteousness,' his 'covenant faithfulness,' gave the Jews virtual immunity from judgment." – I.e. God must side with his people.

Verse 6

μὴ γένοιτο· ἐπεὶ πῶς κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον;
γένειτο see v.4
ἐπεὶ since, because, for
πῶς how(?)
κρίνει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s

Paul expects no-one to doubt that God will indeed judge the world. The logic of the argument here may be understood in a number of ways:

- i) If God is unrighteous how is he to judge ...
- ii) If God is not to use his wrath, how is he to judge ...
- iii) If God does not punish Jews as well as Gentiles, how is he to judge *the world*?

Verse 7

εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι
ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, τί ἔτι κἀγὼ
ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι,

Most MSS read εἰ γὰρ rather than εἰ δε, though the quality of support for δε is fairly good. Metzger writes, "A majority of the Committee, feeling that Paul's argument requires a parallel between verses 5 and 7, preferred the reading εἰ δε and regarded εἰ γὰρ as a rather inept scribal substitution, perhaps of Western origin."

ἀληθεια, ας f truth
ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

Paul here identifies himself with Israel.

ψευσμα, τος n untruthfulness,
deceitfulness

περισσευω abound, increase

δοξα, ης f glory

ἐτι still, yet

κἀγω a compound word = και ἐγω

ἁμαρτωλος, ον sinful, sinner

ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς here perhaps with the force 'just like a *Gentile* sinner.'

"But the Jewish objector is still not satisfied, arguing it is unfair to God to condemn Jews for acts that enhance his glory (v.7). Paul responds with a counter question intended to show the absurdity of such an objection (v.8): should we then take it that any act is justified so long as it brings good in the end?" Moo.

Verse 8

καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημοῦμεθα καὶ καθὼς
φασίν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι Ποιήσωμεν τὰ
κακά ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; ὧν τὸ κρίμα ἐνδικόν
ἐστιν.

βλασφημεω speak against, slander
φασίν Verb, pres act indic, 3 s φημι say

"As is slanderously reported of us and as some affirm that we say"

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

κριμα, τος n judgement, condemnation,
punishment

ἐνδικος, ον just, deserved

This objection is not answered (except by way of condemning his accusers) until chapter 6.

Moo understands v.8 as a counter question by Paul designed to show the absurdity of the objection in v.7. "If the objector is right, and if God should not condemn Jews when they sin because their sin enhances God's glory, then the general inference would be that sin is justified as long as it eventually brings good. 'Let us do evil that good may result' is the logical conclusion from this way of looking at sin. In an ironic twist, Paul adds a parenthesis, noting that some people (probably Jews) have accused Paul of teaching this very thing! Therefore, Paul concludes, the 'condemnation' of people who argue that way 'is deserved.' Jews cannot excuse their sin just because God uses it for good in his salvation-historical scheme."

The questions raised by Paul in these verses are dealt with more fully in chapters 9 and 10 of this letter.

Wright concludes his comments on 3:1-8 by writing, "If God is to be true to character, if the promises are to be fulfilled, what is needed is a faithful Israelite who will act on behalf of, and in the place of, faithless Israel. Paul will argue in 3:21-26 that God has provided exactly that."