

Weekly Recap: The Heart of Romans: “Therefore...”

Jared set the stage for the study of Romans and chapter 8 in particular. He started by running through a list of the most important conjunctions and connecting phrases that are the hallmark of this letter. Romans is full of so many crossroads and connections that it is important to spend some real time studying the “geography” of the letter. N.T. Wright, in *The Heart of Romans*, talks about how taxi drivers in London spend years walking the streets of the city to prepare for one of the most difficult exams in their field. As they learn over 25,000 streets, they must also understand the traffic flow, the locations of restaurants and hotels, and all the alternate routes to avoid traffic jams. During this process, the part of their brain that holds this information actually changes shape and grows in size. Wright asserts that this is what should happen as we study Romans. We need “taxi drivers” who are able to get us where God wants us to go. Jared spent a semester studying Romans while getting his degree. His professor, J.T. Davis, spoke of the value of “getting” Romans, introducing them to the quote, “If you get Romans, God gets you.” There was tension in the churches in Rome because of the presence of many Gentile believers, along with many returning Jewish believers. This tension exists in different forms in our church today, but Paul’s teaching speaks into our world as much today as ever. Jared then began to work backwards to show how “therefore” points back to not only chapters 5-7, but all the chapters that came before:

Chapter 7 shows the struggle of trying to do right in spite of ourselves. Verse 24:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Chapter 6 shows the weight of sin and the victory through Jesus. Verse 23:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 5 shows the purpose of the Law to bring life. Verse 20:

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 4 asks, “Do we boast in our works?” Verse 3:

What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Chapter 3 asks, “Is God only the God of the Jews?” Verses 22-23:

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

Chapter 2 speaks against the self-righteousness of the Jews. Verse 1:

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Chapter 1: There is godlessness and wickedness everywhere. Verse 18:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness...

Then he took us to Romans 1:16-17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 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.”

“Therefore, there is...”

Chris began by discussing how “therefore” points both backwards and forwards. The “Why, Why, Why?” of Romans 7 is answered by “Because, Because, Because!” of Romans 8:1-17. For now, look at verses 1-4:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement (Wright “proper verdict”) of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

A brief discussion about the Chiastic (“sandwich”) structure of Romans and of Romans 8 in particular:

Romans 1 and Romans 16 (Deeply personal relationships in the mission of God)

Romans 2 and Romans 15 (Gentiles)

Romans 3 and Romans 14 (Judgment)

Romans 4 and Romans 12-13 (Faith, Peace and Hope/ Love SUPREME)

Romans 5,6,7 (Despair of Israel) and Romans 9,10, and 11 (Hope of and through Israel)

All points to Romans 8: **“No Condemnation”** (1-4) / **“More than Conquerors”** (31-39)

Creation and Frustration, Suffering and Glory, Going from Death to Life, from Slavery to Sonship, from Bondage to Freedom. This all centers on Romans 8:28-30.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (RSV)

This is a **New Genesis** and a **New Exodus**. This is the fulfillment of **Isaiah** and **Hosea**. This is **Gospel**, **Hebrews**, and **Revelation**.

This is life in Messiah. In Christ. The Anointed life following the Anointed One.

This is the NOW and NOT YET FULLY COME Kingdom of the Living God.