

Keener Romans Session03

Have you ever wondered like how the earliest Christians actually like lived out their faith? What did it mean for them day to day? Yeah. Today we're going to be diving into some lectures by Dr. Craig Keener, who's a top scholar on the book of Romans. And get this, it's all about how this radical message of the gospel just clashed with the ancient world obsession with honor and status.

It is fascinating because Paul, who wrote the book of Romans, he's writing to a church he's never even met. He's totally driven by this urge to share the good news about Jesus with everyone, especially those outside the Jewish community. Okay, so what is the good news they're buzzing about? Well, Paul makes it very clear that this is not some newfangled idea.

He's connecting it back to the Old Testament prophecies, showing how Jewish tradition and Christian message are actually intertwined. So it's not a total break, but it's like a continuation of what came before. Exactly.

And the centerpiece is the resurrection of Jesus. Paul uses this as proof of Jesus's divinity, linking it to the spirit of holiness and God's power. This wasn't just theory.

This was a world changing event he's basing everything on. Now, here's where it gets really interesting for me. Paul calls the Roman Christians saints, which let's be honest, doesn't mean they were perfect angels.

Definitely not. Keener explains that back then, saints simply meant being set apart for God's purpose. Okay, so like an object in the temple.

It's not for everyday use. It's dedicated to something bigger. Exactly.

But what does that mean for us today? What would it look like to be set apart in the modern world? That's a great question. It might mean dedicating yourself wholeheartedly to a cause, a belief, even a craft. It's about living with intention, knowing that you're serving something beyond yourself.

And talk about dedication. Paul was really committed to spreading this gospel, even though it went against everything his culture valued. Can you imagine boasting about a crucified Messiah when crucifixion was the most shameful way to die? Right.

In that culture, honor and public perception were everything. Right. To embrace a message centered on a crucified man, that was scandalous.

Wait, so how on earth did Paul square that circle? How could he boast about something that was to most people, the ultimate symbol of defeat and shame? That's where we'll pick up in part two, because Paul's argument is incredibly bold and it might just challenge some of your assumptions about power and faith. Welcome back. Remember how we left off with Paul like basically flipping the script on how the world saw power? Right.

Like he's saying, you think that's weak. You haven't seen real power. Exactly.

Paul's argument is that the gospel itself, this message of a crucified and risen savior is God's power for salvation. Keener points out how this ties into the resurrection, the spirit of holiness, God actively working in the world. It's not just talk.

It's a force. So it's not just about believing the right things. No.

But something actually changing you. Absolutely. And here's where Paul's emphasis on both Jews and Greeks or Gentiles comes in.

Okay. He's adamant that this good news is universal. Right.

It doesn't matter where you come from. Hold on. He says to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Yeah. That sounds kind of biased, doesn't it? Are Jewish folks getting special treatment? It's not about favoritism, but context. Okay.

The gospel is rooted in Jewish tradition and prophecy, so it makes sense to start there. Right. Imagine trying to explain something brand new using a language someone already understands.

So he's building a bridge showing how the Old and New Testaments fit together. Right. Plus, most early Christians in Rome were probably Gentiles anyway, so Paul's definitely including them in his mission.

Okay. He saw spreading the gospel as a debt he owed, like it was his responsibility to share this truth with everyone. Okay.

That makes sense. Yeah. Now, let's unpack this righteousness thing a bit more.

Okay. Because it seems super important to Paul. This is where things get nuanced.

Okay. You see, in everyday Greek, righteousness just meant fairness, justice. But in the Old Testament, especially the Greek translation Paul used, it's often about God's faithfulness and covenant loyalty.

So it's not just about being a good person or following rules perfectly. It's way bigger than that. It's about God's character, his commitment to his people.

Right. His desire to make things right. And that leads to a radical idea.

Okay. God justifying the wicked. Whoa.

Justifying the wicked. That sounds like he's letting bad people off the hook. Not quite.

Justify here means to acquit, to declare someone righteous. Okay. And in the Old Testament, it's not a legal trick.

It's acknowledging that someone's truly in right standing with God. So more than forgiveness, like a real change has happened. Precisely.

And that change happens through faith. But remember, faith for Paul isn't just saying, I believe that. Right.

It's deep trust in God's faithfulness leading to a changed life. Okay. Not ignoring doubts, but choosing to rely on God's promises.

This connects to what said about faith not being blind, but a step into the light of truth. Yes. Sometimes I struggle with that, you know? Yeah.

Like how much doubt is okay before it's not really faith anymore. That's a great point and one many people grapple with. Yeah.

For Paul, it's about aligning yourself with God's reality, trusting he is who he says he is. Okay. It's not about feeling certain all the time, but making the choice to rely on him.

So how does this tie back to that Habakkuk quote, the righteous shall live by faith? Ah, that's where the debate comes in. Okay. Whose faith are we talking about? God's faithfulness or ours in him.

Keener leans toward the believer's faith, but Paul leaves out the pronoun on purpose. He's leaving it open-ended. Yes.

Almost like he's saying, don't just take my word for it. Wrestle with the text yourself. That's so cool.

Yeah. It's not about having all the answers pre-packaged. Right.

But being open to the mystery. Right. But there's still this tension, right? Yeah.

Like if God is so righteous and we're not, how does that work? That's a fantastic question and one that Paul tackles head on in the next section of Romans. Get ready because this is where he really dives into the messiness of the human condition and how the gospel offers a radical solution. Okay.

So we're back for the final part of our Romans deep dive and things are about to get real. We've talked about the gospel's power and this whole righteousness thing and how faith isn't just blind belief, but now, now we're getting into the like nitty gritty sin, God's justice, and where hope fits into all this. What's fascinating is that Paul doesn't sugarcoat things.

He acknowledges that we all like mess up. We make bad choices. You know, we stray from the path.

Right. He's not presenting some like perfect Instagram worthy version of faith. Oh, thank goodness for that.

Right. If someone told me they had it all figured out, I wouldn't believe him for a second. Right.

Paul's honesty is refreshing because he's dealing with the reality that, you know, we live in a broken world and we're all affected by it. So how does he explain this whole sin thing and

what it means for us? Well, he uses this image of God, like handing people over to their own destructive desires. Hold on.

Handing them over. So it's like God's making them sin. Not exactly.

It's more like he's allowing them to experience the natural consequences of rejecting him. Okay. Think of it like a parent letting a child learn a tough lesson by making their own mistakes.

It's not that they want the child to get hurt, but they know sometimes that's the only way to truly learn and grow. So it's like the more we turn away from God, the more lost and confused we become. Exactly.

And this isn't just about personal morality. It affects how we see the world, how we understand truth, how we treat each other. Right.

Paul paints a pretty bleak picture of what happens when we try to, you know, go it alone without God. Okay. That sounds pretty heavy.

Yeah. But you mentioned hope earlier, right? So it's not all doom and gloom. Not at all.

That's the incredible thing about the gospel. It doesn't leave us wallowing in our mess. It offers a way out, a solution.

Okay. And that solution is found in Jesus Christ. So how does Jesus's death and resurrection actually like fix this sin problem? Well, remember how we talked about Jesus being the ultimate expression of God's righteousness? Yes.

Well, through his sacrifice, he takes on the penalty for our sin, bridging the gap between us and God. Right. And through his resurrection, he offers us a fresh start, a way to break free from the power of sin and death.

Wow. Okay. So it's not just about getting into heaven someday, but about experiencing a real change like right now.

Exactly. Paul's talking about becoming new creations in Christ, letting the Holy Spirit transform our hearts and minds. Right.

It's about living a life that reflects God's love and justice. So we've talked about sin, righteousness, faith, hope. What's the big takeaway? What does all this mean for us sitting here listening today? Well, if we connect this to the bigger picture, Paul is essentially giving us a roadmap for a life that's in tune with God.

It's not a bunch of rules or rituals. Right. It's a relationship built on grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit's power to change us from the inside out.

That's a powerful thought. It makes you think about what parts of your life could use a bit of that transformation, right? Absolutely. What stands out to you from Paul's message? What resonates with your own experiences and struggles? Honestly, it's the reminder that none of us have it all figured out.

We're all in need of God's grace, and that grace is freely available to anyone who chooses to trust in him. That's a beautiful insight, and it's a truth that has spoken to people for centuries. Paul's letter to the Romans isn't just an ancient text.

It's a living, breathing message that speaks to the deepest parts of us. I couldn't agree more. Well, folks, we've reached the end of our Romans deep dive.

We've covered a lot of ground, but there's always more to uncover in this incredible book. Yeah, and it's fascinating to remember that even in this early Christian community, there was room for different interpretations and lively debate. It reminds us that engaging with these ideas isn't about finding the one right answer, but about wrestling with the text and discovering what it means for our lives.

So keep digging, keep questioning, and keep seeking truth. Until next time, happy diving.