

Keener Romans Session05

Okay. Are you ready to like dive into some really challenging stuff? Yeah. Romans chapters two and three.

Oh yeah. We're going to be talking about God's judgment, righteousness, and where we as humans fit into all this. And thankfully we have an expert with us to kind of walk us through this.

Dr. Craig Keener's commentary is going to be really helpful for navigating this. Yeah. Absolutely.

It's pretty intense. It does. It's a very deep section of Paul.

Very deep. But very important. For sure.

And, you know, just as we jump in, it's really fascinating how Paul starts off chapter two. Okay. You know, he sets this like rhetorical trap using this technique called diatribe.

Okay. And it's kind of like, if you can imagine those like late night talk show hosts who create this ridiculous argument just to tear it apart. Yeah.

That's diatribe. Okay. So Paul basically sets up this imaginary opponent, almost like a straw man to address these potential arguments before they even come up.

So he's kind of anticipating the pushback and just like shutting it down right from the start. Yeah. And I love that he uses it to show that like no one is exempt from God's judgment.

Oh, wow. Not the Gentiles, not even the Jews. Oh, okay.

In fact, he points out that those who know the law, like the Jews, are held to an even higher standard. Well, so there's no playing favorites with God. No.

No. If you know the rules, it doesn't mean you get off the hook. Right.

It actually means like... Yeah. You should know better. Yeah.

You should know better. Exactly. The bar is higher for you.

And throughout this section, he really emphasizes this idea of God's impartiality. Okay. And he uses this literary structure called chiasm, which is like a mirror image.

Right. But it's how he really highlights that God is like perfectly fair in both rewarding those who are righteous and holding those who are wicked accountable. So it's not just about punishment.

No. It's about fairness. Yeah.

Yeah. Like true justice. Exactly.

Yeah. Okay. But then he takes it a step further, right? He does.

He tackles this whole issue of hypocrisy. Yes. And the way he does it is just so clever.

Yeah. In verses 17 through 24, Paul goes after those who brag about following the law, but they don't actually live it out. Oh, yeah.

And he uses this tool called hyperbole, where he exaggerates his opponent's claims to expose the flaw in their thinking. Right. So it's like he's saying, okay, if you're going to boast about the law, let's see how far you'll take it.

And so he paints this picture of someone claiming to be all about Jewish identity and the law. Right. Yet doing things like robbing temples, which even the Gentiles consider- Outrageous.

Completely outrageous. Yeah. And it's just brilliant how he uses that to show simply belonging to a certain group or knowing the rules doesn't make you righteous.

Right. True righteousness comes from a changed heart, not just outward action. Yeah.

You know? I know, right? It's close to home. It's so easy to get caught up in those outward appearances and totally miss the point. Yeah, it is.

But Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't. He goes on in verses 25 through 29.

Right. And he challenges the very definition of what it means to be Jewish. He does.

He argues that true Jewishness isn't about external rituals like circumcision. Right. Which was a huge deal at the time.

Huge. Circumcision was a major barrier for Gentile converts. To Judaism.

But Paul downplays its importance, especially in light of this promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Okay. And he shifts the focus to inward transformation to a circumcision of the heart.

Okay. So it's not about the physical act. No.

It's about a changed heart. Yeah. Okay.

Which is pretty radical for his time, wouldn't you say? Absolutely. It makes you think about what we might be prioritizing today that misses the mark of true heart transformation. Yeah.

For sure. Okay. But then Paul dives into some really tough theological questions.

He does. In chapter 3 verses 1 through 8. He tackles this whole issue of God's faithfulness when his chosen people, Israel, keep messing up. Right.

And it feels like he's addressing this potential crisis of faith. Right. Yeah.

I think you're right. He's engaging in something called theodicy. Okay.

Which is this attempt to explain how God can be good and just even when there's so much suffering and evil in the world. So it's not that God is ignoring the bad stuff or giving people a free pass. Exactly.

Paul uses Psalm 51 as an example. Even King David, a man after God's own heart, acknowledges his sin and his guilt, but even in the face of human failure, God remains faithful and just. So it's a reminder that God doesn't abandon his people, but he also doesn't just sweep sin under the rug.

Yeah. There are consequences. There are consequences.

Yeah. But then Paul expands this idea outward, right? He makes it clear that this isn't just an issue for Israel. Exactly.

He lays out the universal problem of sin in verses nine through 20, and he uses the string of Old Testament quotes to prove that everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, are under the power of sin. Okay. And to drive home this point, he uses a technique called Gezira Shabba, which is linking texts through common keywords.

Interesting. Yeah. And what I find really fascinating is he connects these quotes using imagery of body parts, mouths, feet eyes, to highlight how pervasive sin is.

It affects everything we do. It does. Even our thoughts.

Everything we do say. Yeah. It's kind of unsettling when you think about it.

It is. Okay. So we've established that we're all in deep trouble.

Yeah, we are. Where do we go from here? Well, thankfully, Paul doesn't leave us hanging. Okay.

He offers a solution. Okay. And that's what makes the next part of Romans so exciting.

All right. So we've got a cliffhanger. Yes, we do.

We're all sinners. We are. We're in deep trouble.

Yes. But thankfully, Paul doesn't leave us there. He doesn't.

He points to a solution, and that's what I'm excited to unpack in the next part of our deep dive. I am too. All right.

We'll see you there. It sounds good. All right.

So we left off with this cliffhanger. We're all sinners. Yeah.

We're all in deep trouble. Right. But thankfully, Paul doesn't just leave us hanging.

No, he doesn't. He points to a solution. Yes.

And that's what I'm excited to unpack now. Yeah. This is where things get really hopeful.

Right. In Romans 3.21-31, Paul reveals God's answer to this universal sin problem, justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Okay.

I'm intrigued. Break that down for me. What does justification by faith actually mean? Yeah.

So it means we're made right with God, not because of anything we do, but because of God's undeserved kindness, his grace. So it's not like a prize that you win after jumping through all the hoops. Yeah.

It's a free gift. It's a free gift. Yeah.

Okay. So no matter how hard we try to be good, it's God's grace that ultimately makes us right in his eyes. Exactly.

Our good deeds can't earn us salvation. Okay. Justification comes solely through the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus.

Redemption. That's a powerful word. Yeah.

What does it actually mean in this context? Well, you know, imagine being trapped in a dungeon with no way out. Okay. That's kind of what sin does to us.

Redemption is like being set free from that prison, from the power and the consequences of sin. And this freedom is found in Christ Jesus. Yeah.

How does that work? Well, Paul's saying that Jesus's sacrifice on the cross is what makes this redemption possible. Okay. It's the key that unlocks the dungeon door.

Gotcha. Okay. That makes sense.

But then Paul uses this other word that always throws me off. Oh, yeah. Propitiation.

Yes. In verse 25. Yeah.

Help me out here. What does that even mean? I know it's a big word, but the idea is actually pretty simple. Okay.

So remember, God is holy and just. Right. So our sin requires a response.

Okay. And so propitiation means that Jesus's death on the cross satisfied God's righteous anger towards our sin. So it's not that God was like out to get us, right? But our sin had to be dealt with.

Yeah. It had to be addressed. Yeah.

And Jesus, through his sacrifice, took the hit for us. That's it. Wow.

It's through Jesus's sacrifice that we are reconciled to God. It's the bridge that spans the gap created by sin. Okay.

But notice how Paul emphasizes that this propitiation is only accessed through faith. There's that word faith again. It seems to be like the key to unlocking all of this.

It is. Paul keeps hammering home this point that we're not justified by meticulously following rules or rituals. Okay.

It's about trusting in Jesus. That's the only way. Okay.

But then in verse 26, Paul says that God was demonstrating his righteousness by passing over sins that were committed in the past. Yeah. Doesn't that contradict the idea of God being just? Well, that's a great question.

And Paul is addressing this tension between God's patience and his justice. Okay. He didn't just like zap everyone immediately for every sin committed throughout history.

Right. He showed forbearance. Okay.

Giving people time to repent. So it's not that he was turning a blind eye to sin. Right.

But that he was allowing time for people to like turn to him. Yes. God's ultimate act of justice was displayed in sending Jesus to die on the cross, which atoned for all sin.

Wow. Past, present, and future for those who believe. So God's justice wasn't ignored.

It was fully satisfied in Christ. Yes. Beautifully put.

Now in verse 27, Paul throws out this zinger. Okay. Where then is boasting? What do you think he's getting at there? It sounds like he's saying, if we're justified by faith, not by our works, then we have absolutely no reason to brag.

Exactly. Paul is dismantling any notion that we can earn our salvation or pat ourselves on the back for being righteous. Okay.

True righteousness is a gift from God, not a trophy we earn. So all those things that we tend to like puff ourselves up about, our accomplishments, our good deeds, our religious practices, they mean nothing when it comes to our standing before God. It's humbling, isn't it? Yeah.

Justification by faith levels the playing field. It shows us that we're all equally dependent on God's grace. Okay.

None of us can boast. That's a powerful message. But then Paul circles back to the law in verses 28 to 31.

He does. What's the role of the law if we're justified by faith? Right. It seems a bit confusing.

Well, Paul's careful to clarify that he's not throwing the law out the window. Okay. He's affirming its goodness and its purpose.

Okay. But he's also making it clear that the law itself can't save us. Okay.

It can't make us righteous. So the law has a different purpose. What is it? Think of the law like a mirror.

Okay. It shows us our flaws, our imperfections, our sinfulness. Okay.

It reveals our need for a savior. Okay. It points us toward Christ who fulfilled the law perfectly.

So the law reveals the problem, but it doesn't provide the solution. Exactly. That's where facing Christ comes in.

That's it. Okay. And Paul concludes this section by emphasizing that this God of grace and justice is the God of both Jews and Gentiles.

Yes. He's tearing down those ethnic barriers. Yes.

And making it clear that salvation is available to everyone who believes. Yes. And that my friend is a revolutionary message.

Wow. It's the foundation of the Christian faith and the reason why the gospel has spread to every corner of the globe. This has been mind-blowing.

Paul's arguments are so layered and complex, but you've really helped me grasp the nuances of his thinking. Well, good. I'm glad.

As we wrap up this part of our deep dive, what are some key takeaways you think our listeners should keep in mind? Wow. This deep dive into Romans chapters two and three has been quite a journey. Yeah, it has.

We've covered so much ground, you know, from God's judgment and the problem of sin to this like incredible concept of justification by faith. It's pretty amazing, right? Yeah. As we wrap things up, I'm curious what's resonating with you the most.

You know, I think what continues to amaze me is how radical Paul's message really is. Like he's turning conventional religious thinking on its head by saying that we can't earn our way to God. Right.

It's all about grace. Yeah. It's like he's handing us this incredible gift.

And all we have to do is accept it. It's so counterintuitive to everything we're often taught. I know, right? We're conditioned to think that we have to work for everything.

Yeah. We have to like prove our worth. Yeah.

You got to earn it. Yeah. But Paul is saying, nope, it's not about your effort.

It's about God's grace. It's about God's grace. It's a total paradigm shift.

It is. And it's incredibly liberating. It is.

It frees us from that pressure of trying to be perfect. Yeah. From constantly striving to earn God's favor.

Exactly. I'm also struck by how Paul like redefines our understanding of the law. Yeah.

It's not just this set of rules to follow, but a mirror that reveals our need for a savior. It's like he's saying, the law shows you the disease, but it can't cure you. Exactly.

Only Christ can do that. That's such a helpful way to think about it. And that brings us back to this idea of spiritual circumcision that Paul talked about earlier.

Yeah. It's not about the physical act, right? No. What does it really mean to be circumcised in heart? Well, it's about a deep inward transformation.

Okay. It's about letting go of our self-righteousness and embracing the righteousness that comes from God. You know, Paul contrasts the letter of the law with the spirit of the law.

So it's not about outward conformity, but about a genuine change of heart that only the Holy Spirit can produce. So it's about aligning our hearts with God's will, not just ticking off boxes on a to-do list. Exactly.

It's about a transformed life. Yes. That reflects Christ's character.

That's it. As we wrap up this deep dive, what's one final thought you want to leave our listener with? What's the heart of Paul's message in Romans chapters two and three? You know, I think it boils down to this. We are all sinners in need of a savior.

We can't earn our salvation, but we can receive it as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. Yeah. And when we do, we're set free from the penalty and power of sin.

We're given a new life, a transformed heart, and a hope that extends beyond this world. That's a message that has the power to change everything. It does.

It's a message of hope, grace, and radical transformation. And it's a message that we all need to hear. Absolutely.

Well, thanks for joining us on this deep dive into Romans chapters two and three. It's been my pleasure. We'll see you next time.