

Romans Summary
Week 6, Wednesday October 19, 2016
Romans 3:21-31

Let's face it, Paul ended the last section on a pretty dim note; both Jew and Gentile stood together, under God's justified wrath with no defence left for themselves — guilty. As well, with the last verse there seems to be little hope since the possession of the Law only brings the knowledge of sin. Against, this dark background Paul's words, "But now," ring out with new hope. More, this hope is apart from the law.

Apart from the law comes the (long hoped for) righteousness of God (=fulfilling of covenant promises). While being apart from the Law, this righteousness is witnessed by both the Law and the Prophets (Scripture). This new revelation is not rooted in the past, but is in continuity with the whole history of God — it must be because it forms the basis of the righteousness of God.

The basis of this new revelation is that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile — both have sinned and have lost God's glory. Because of this, the justification which comes to both Jew and Gentile is a gift of God's grace. Paul again uses the slave market language of redemption, but continuing in the vein of the Jewish story it also evokes the whole Exodus story. Jew and Gentile have been redeemed from the Power of Sin in Jesus Christ.

This new revelation is manifested in Jesus Christ, therefore he was displayed publicly as a propitiation. The Greek word is *hilasterion* which translates as 'propitiation' or 'expiation'. Both are in view here. Propitiation has to do with God's wrath. For God to be righteous he must judge and punish sin without partiality. This he does in the cross of Christ, therefore his wrath is propitiated — dealt with. However, there is also the issue of our sin; it needs to be dealt with. Therefore, our sin is expiated — taken away — so we can be the renewed people of God (justified). So, in Jesus as the *hilasterion* God is and is seen to be both just and justifier; his wrath is dealt with and our sin is dealt with. Jesus the Messiah is the faithful Israelite which God's plan has called for all along and those who are in the Messiah benefit from this work.

Because this work comes completely freely, as a gift, and apart from works of the Law (those things which distinguished Israel from the pagan nations) there is no room for boasting. Paul continues to have a high view of Torah (Law) and says that this is established by the Law of faith not the Law of works. This is so because God cannot be the God of the Jews only. Because God is one (Shema) he must have one people, therefore what forms that people cannot be an instrument of division which the Law of works is by dividing Jew from Gentile.

Paul finishes by claiming that he has not nullified the Law but established it, so he must now demonstrate how that is to be understood.

"But Now" reflection and discussion questions:

1. What is the theological principal of the first order?
2. According to Paul what is Sin?
3. What is God's wrath against and who is it not against? Why does this cause rejoicing?