

The Roman Road Week 2: Insider information

We have stopped passing the plate because of COVID. **The problem** with that is that giving stops being a part of our worship. **Worship is what we offer** back to God. We are bringing this back. We believe that this is a part of worship when God asks us to trust him, by releasing what we really want to keep hold of and control, and that is our money. This is particularly difficult during these tough economic times.

Review the Roman Road Challenge...We are just getting started on a new summer teaching series called the Roman Road. **We are calling this The Roman Road because we are going to travel through the book together this summer.** Romans is a letter written from the Apostle Paul to a church in Rome. It's not only a road through the book, but it is **also a path for you as a person.** This road, pathway is how God can **help you to experience life as a disciple of Jesus.** It can also **help us as a church** to demonstrate to God that we are prepared for him to do great things in use and, through us, this coming year.

If you notice the picture on the screen, it is of one of the original roads that were built to help the Roman army move quickly around their vast empire. Yes, some of these are still used. The names typically began with "Via," which means way. **These same roads were the way the gospel spread** around that vast empire, eventually changing it completely. **The Roman roads were the way, which was what this early Jesus movement was called.**

You have been given a **table tent** and a copy of the "Gospel is..." The table tent explains **how we are going to take this Roman Road together.** It begins each **Sunday with our teaching time.** Come whenever possible, but when you are taking another road, or out on the open road, find us online. **You have also received a journal** that is our gift to you to use as a tool during this summer trip together. (Read through steps).

Here's a portion of one of the videos by the bible project that talks about chapters 1, which we covered last week and chapter 2 for this week. [Video 3:23-4:27](#)

If there is a **central passage** from Romans, it would be this: ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for it is the **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed** from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

Let's remind ourselves **what is foundational for this chapter**. **God is righteous**. The righteousness of God is something that **runs all through the Old Testament** (the pre-Jesus part of the Bible) right up to the time Paul is writing. **But what does this really mean?**

1. He always does what is just and right.
2. He is faithful to his promises.

Division between returning Jewish Christ followers and the gentile Christ followers who had remained in Rome...Paul has just finished ripping the gentiles.

Therefore **you** have no excuse, O man, **every one of you who judges**. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² **We** know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to **repentance**? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the **Jew first** and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality. Romans 2:1-11

So, who is he preaching to? Those Jews who have returned to Rome and are judging the church because it is not "Jewish enough."

"Therefore you have no excuse..." Goes from third person "they" to second person, singular. This is a signal that he is now **talking to an individual representative** of the Jewish Christian group in the Roman church.

Paul knows from experience that the **Jewish Christians at this point in the reading of the letter are giving hearty "amens"** to what Paul has said about the gentiles suppressing the truth. **He now turns his gaze right at those who think he is on their side and opens up both barrels.**

Now that we know who Paul is talking to, let's read a little bit more from Romans 2. ¹⁷ **But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God** ¹⁸ **and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;** ¹⁹ **and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,** ²⁰ **an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—** ²¹ **you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?** ²² **You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?** ²³ **You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.** ²⁴ **For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."** Romans 2:17-24

If God is righteous he cannot show favoritism.

Let's look at the definition of "God's righteousness".

Is it right, or just, to practice favoritism with a group of people who are acting just as badly as the one on the outside? The favored group is **actually behaving worse** because they have had the instruction, structure, presence of God, etc. **that the outsiders didn't have.**

Therefore, God cannot be righteous and favor the Jewish people over the non-Jewish people. He would be like **any human leader** who favors who he wants, who is like him or who provides advantages for him.

Picture these two groups sitting in a room on opposite sides of a room as someone reads the letter out loud. We don't know that it happened this way, but this is how I picture it.

The Jewish people are the insiders. They have all the **insider information.** They have the answers to the test. They have been experiencing *God's* presence and hearing his voice for generations. **The non-Jewish people** in this church are the outsiders. **They have been invited by Jesus** and by Paul, but they don't have any of the background that the Jewish Christians have.

This chapter is about what he is saying to the Jewish people who are returning to the church in Rome and wanting to see their brothers and sisters in Christ become more Jewish, which is what they are comfortable with.

So, how many people of Jewish heritage do we have in the audience today? Probably zero or close to it. **Wow, I guess this is going to be a short sermon.** I had this all planned to talk about **how Jewish Christ followers needed to act toward the non-Jewish who didn't have their advantages.** I am at a loss at what to do. I guess we should sing, **"Just as I am,"** pass the plate and head to Bdubs.

Here's a crazy thought. Maybe there is another group of people who are in church who have had **many advantages or access to the things of God** that others haven't had. They have been hearing the truth about Jesus **in their homes, in Sunday School, in youth groups, camp meetings...** **Are insiders a different group now than they were in Rome?**

Insiders are people like me, and many of you who have no excuse for not following Jesus, because we have had access to this gospel that saves for many years. Therefore, what we need to talk about is... **What is Paul saying to those with insider information...like me?**

This first is a word of caution to any who have been insiders and are put in relation to those who have been on the outside. **Watch out for a sense of entitlement.**

Entitlement is defined as..."A belief that one is inherently deserving of privilege and special treatment.

It can mean this, "I deserve to get my needs met?" That is a completely different view of the Christian life than what Jesus describes. He calls it dying to your own self-interest and giving away your life.

Paul says this very clearly to the insiders, the Jews. ⁹ **There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,** ¹⁰ **but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.** ¹¹ **For God shows no partiality.**
Romans 2:9-11

We are entitled to punishment for our sins. That's what you deserve, but there is grace for those who trust in Jesus.

Paul is saying to these Jewish Christians, "You aren't entitled to special treatment within the church."

You aren't entitled to more comfort because you are an insider. It's not like when you have a **special membership to an airline** and you get that special lounge with private restrooms and a quiet place to recover during the rigors of travel. I'm only guessing what is in there, because **I fly Spirit Airlines**, the cattle car of the skies. I'm the **guy pressing his sweaty face against the glass looking in.**

There was a sense in the Jewish people that they were **immune to God's wrath and our sin doesn't really matter.** He will overlook it. I'm entitled to second, third, and fourth chances. **If life were like golf, I would get infinite "mulligans".**

They were privileged because they had had access to the Law, the teaching of Moses, the story of God's goodness to their ancestors. But if your privilege is that you have the Law of Moses, **but aren't obeying it,** then what does having it really do for you?

Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." Micah 3:11

"Lean on the Lord," is like a kid who has been bad cuddling up to mom asking for money and the car keys. That doesn't fit does it? You want to cuddle up to and lean on God, but you don't have that type of intimate relationship. To lean on him is when we trust him enough to do what he tells us to do. Then we have the right to lean. But leaning on God just to avoid any negative consequences is like flirting with the judge in a murder case where you are the defendant.

I prayed the prayer and I'm "a Christian" which means I'm in, I've already crossed the finish line. God will overlook my sin and it's not really a big deal. But wait, isn't God righteous? That means he's just and right, keeping his promises. Is it just to let sin go without the punishment? No, but the person who is trusting in Jesus as king comes under the forgiveness he earned through his death and resurrection.

This is the opposite response to our sin. **What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Romans 6:1 Yes, I'm still prone to it, but it no longer owns me. I belong to Jesus.**

Here's the attitude an insider should have. **²³ Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD." Jeremiah 9:23-24**

Living like we are entitled to God's protection and forgiveness because we have been around his church for a long time, is boasting in our pedigree. I've gone to church all my life, that's why I'm ok. No, the only reason I'm ok is that God has come close to me through Jesus Christ. We can only boast in Jesus. We can only lean on him in our time of need if we have leaned on him through faith.

The next thing Paul wants insiders to know starts with this question...**Why are outsiders without our advantages acting more like Jesus?**

Do you believe that a person can be on the wrong side of an issue and still behave more Christ-like than someone else who is on the correct side?

We cannot fight like the devil for the things of God. Then a dying world looks at us and doesn't want to hear anything about our Jesus. How we are acting during this time in America's history, we are driving a generation to the answers that our culture brings, not the love of Jesus.

Andy Stanley in his book, *Not in it to Win It*, says that we are alienating a generation of lost outsiders because they see how we act and believe that we only want to protect our turf, we want to win.

The end result of discipleship is living and loving like Jesus. It isn't knowing the Bible really well and being someone who is negative, verbally abusive, slanderous and unlikable.

Paul says it this way. ²³ **You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.** ²⁴ **For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Romans 2:23-24**

When we make it about ourselves, getting our needs met, having things the way we prefer, being around people who think just like us, then we make Jesus look bad in the eyes of those who are lost and need him. That brings us to the next thing Paul wants to say to insiders like me. To whom much is given much is expected.

I'm going to point the finger at myself. I was born to two wonderful Christian people. Not perfect, but I was able to get through childhood feeling loved, secure in their love. They raised me to see my need for God and to trust in Jesus. As a young boy, I did that very thing. They took me to a church from the very beginning that had very good leadership where I was able to learn God's word and make lifelong friends who are still following Jesus. Even in my high school, I had Christian friends who I went through that with. Then my parents enabled me to go to **Anderson University, our Church of God college. There I got excellent teaching where I majored in Bible. **I acquired more Christian friends.** During that**

time, I rubbed shoulders with **amazing disciple makers in Young Life**. After graduating, my **parents continued to help me go to seminary** in Southern California. I was able to go to one of the great evangelical seminaries in the world, **Fuller Theological Seminary**. There I **rubbed shoulders** with students who were preparing to serve God and his church all around the world. **All along feeling the support of my parents, friends, and home church**. Then, returning to Anderson for my last semesters of seminary, **I got reacquainted with a cute blond named Robin Jones**. She amazingly agreed to marry me and, **even more shockingly, was excited about a future that would not include economic prosperity**. And then I land in a church of God in Columbus, Ohio where my boss, **Bob Boyd**, actually wanted to disciple/mentor me, not just hire me to do youth ministry so he didn't have to.

I have been given much. I have no excuse. There is much expected of me, because I have had access to all of God's best. Now it hasn't been all smooth sailing, but God expects me to be a part of building his kingdom.

Many people didn't have all of that access to knowing Jesus. And this generation that we are trying to reach doesn't have any of what I described. They are a **post-Christian generation** meaning they haven't had any real access to seeing who Jesus is and how much he loves them. **It's time to start thinking about them and not protecting our own territory.**

Have you had the advantage of...

Attending a church since you were young.

Christian parent (s) or Grandparents.

Being taken to Sunday School.

Involvement in a youth group, Young Life or YFC.

Owning a Bible.

Being taught Bible stories by a parent or grandparent.

Someone brought you to church.

Free access to online Bible study tools.

Had a Christian coach.

Attend a Christian school or college.

Married to a Christian spouse.

The freedom to gather for worship, fellowship or learning without being harassed.

In the top 11% of wealth world wide.

Here's what the heritage of being Jewish and then coming to Christ gave these Romans. "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:6-7 NIV God is righteous because he is keeping his promise to the Jews that he would make them a light to the nations or the gentiles. Now they just need to start acting like that is what they are instead of coming back into this church and whining about it not being Jewish enough.

There's a good way to make sure you don't reach any more of those pagans living in Rome.

Are they willing to sacrifice some of their Jewishness for unity in the church or would they go the route of becoming a Jewish sect. That brings us to the final thing that Paul wants these ultimate insiders to know. It's also phrased as a question. Are you willing to sacrifice for others who didn't get what you received?

It would be a travesty not to read Philippians 2 at this point. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-7

A willingness to sacrifice for others is the most Jesus' like attribute of all.

In church, we make the outsiders cross all of the cultural boundaries. We are called to go, not stay where we're comfortable and invited. Like I said before, we are in a post-Christian culture. The data shows that over

60% of the population have no intention of ever coming to a church for any reason. And yet we make church so difficult to access, because it's foreign to them.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21

Steps of Obedience:

1. Commit to walk The Roman Road this summer.

Refer to the table tent and gospel page. Commit to watching online when you are traveling.

2. What are you willing to sacrifice?

There is a card you received when you arrived. It asks if I will make this sacrifice for others, particularly those who have not had my advantages and access to the things of God. **What is that for you?** Is it **money or time**? I'm willing to start giving, practicing tithing, even though **I don't see how that could work** and it's because I want people to have what I have. I will sacrifice my **criticism**. Maybe it's some part of your **time**. You'll give up going to the lake every Sunday from May till October. **I'll sacrifice time to volunteer at Cultivate**, to meet people who need Jesus. Maybe it's an **attitude**. Maybe it's **to have worship the way I'd like it to be**. Maybe it's having the **preaching, children's ministry, or youth ministry the way I like it**. **This is your act of worship, to bring it forward and leave it on the altar**. **No names**, just a word or phrase. **If you want to linger** and pray for the strength to do it.

We are going to be empty nesters soon. What is it that I need to be willing to sacrifice in order to be obedient to Jesus? **Maybe it's some privacy**. You are going to **be open and real and join a bridge group**. Or I'm going to **start discipling that child, grandchild, neighbor etc**.

3. When I hear complaints from myself or other Christ followers I will respond...How can I listen and yet redirect that person who has been given much toward focusing on others and not themselves. **First of all, don't judge yourself for it**. I would encourage you to laugh and say, **"there I go again**. God, how can you be so good to me as an insider, even though my attitude so often goes toward entitlement. **Then focus on something you need to do to serve others**. If it's another person, then **direct them to**

the person responsible because they need to know this. Also encourage them to ask them to think about if their criticism is about **getting what they prefer as opposed to what will help us reach the lost.**