

26-0405sc Transcript

26-0405sc - *The Book of Romans*, Steve Cain

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26-0405 - The Book of Romans

Romans 2:17-29 - historical and spiritual background

Transcript (0:04 - 43:59), Teacher: Steve Cain

(0:04) Okay, I guess it's time for us to get started ourselves. (0:08) Having read through Romans umpteen times, I've come up with an approach to prayer that (0:19) I think you'll find interesting too. It's an approach to that, (0:24) it's a modification of how I start my prayers.

(0:28) So we'll give you a demonstration. It's time for us to get started. (0:34) May as well begin with the prayer.

Most gracious Heavenly Father, (0:40) thank you for blessing us with your grace and mercy. We thank you for the opportunity we have (0:48) to come to you through Jesus, whom you provided us with to be our priest, who functions as our (1:00) priest. He's presenting a sacrifice to you for our sins.

He's providing us with the righteousness (1:09) that we need to approach him. And we're very grateful for you blessing us with that grace (1:16) and mercy. We come to you at this time asking that you be with us and that you will bless us (1:26) with the understanding and insight that we need, and to be able to comprehend your Word, (1:33) and to be able to put application into our lives and to understand what Paul is trying to get (1:38) across to us.

We pray these things in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. (1:47) We're looking at Romans, the third chapter.

We delved a little bit into it last week, (1:53) and I'd like to take a look at it and see what we can do with it. Start from the beginning again. (2:03) And it's still crucial.

There's two things that I find very crucial, (2:10) and I know that you appreciate this too. And that is that we have to really believe a God. (2:21) We need to believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

(2:27) And we fall in that category. We are diligently seeking him, and we have to recognize the fact that (2:42) his role in our lives is complete. He does divinely intervene in our lives providentially, (2:52) and we pray that we recognize that role in our lives.

And so therefore, we need to be trusting (3:00) in him in every aspect of our lives. I get that. I don't

know if you've been adopting policy or the (3:11) habit that I have, and that is reading five psalms and one proverb every day.

And that gets you (3:20) through it. But you read the psalms, and the psalmist definitely believes in the divine (3:26) intervention and providence of God. He definitely believes that he exists in God, and God has (3:35) complete control over his life.

So as we reflect upon what Paul's writing about, we need to know (3:44) the history of the Jews in particular, because this is what he's approaching here in talking (3:54) about circumcision and so on, and realizing that God played a complete role in the providence of (4:06) Israel, and that they need to believe in the God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed in, (4:16) and they're completely accept that over idolatry and the other things that are going on in the (4:25) world. So he's talking to the Israelites, or the Christian Jews, and I believe he's (4:37) addressing the Christian Jews, those who are Christians with Jewish background, (4:43) that they are so proud, and that their heritage is such that they believe that everybody else (4:53) ought to be conforming to their understanding of what life ought to be. And so they're being (5:02) very critical of the Gentile, the person, the Gentile who became a Christian, because the (5:09) Gentile who became a Christian does not have the background that the Israelites have.

And so their (5:16) heritage is such that, as I pointed out in Psalms 147, that the very last part of it, (5:26) where the psalmist points out the fact that God treated Israel, the nation of Israel, (5:34) far differently, and blessed them with His instructions and His presence that He did not (5:41) do with the rest of the world. And we need to recognize that, because when God brought the (5:51) Israelites out of Egypt, He came to them on Mount Sinai, and what did He offer them? (6:00) He made a proposition to them. You remember what that proposition was? He says to them, (6:10) I want to be your God if you'll be my people.

And I think that's very important, because (6:19) He's saying to this specific group of people, He's not making an offer to the rest of the world, (6:27) He's saying just to this specific group of people, I want to be your God if you'll be my people. (6:37) He's excluding the rest of the world, and He's letting them continue in their ignorance, (6:44) He's letting them continue to grope about trying to figure out how to worship Him, (6:50) and of course they're not looking to Him, they're looking at superstition, circumstances, (6:59) they're looking at idolatry, and various other things to answer the questions they have about (7:05) life, and especially about superior being, God, because it is within man that he has to believe (7:16) there is a God. And of course that's what atheists says, that's a weakness.

You don't need (7:25) God, you are God, you are your own master of your own faith. But we know better, and so we see that (7:35) God made a promise to them, I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you, (7:43) and I want you to recognize me as God. So what did they do? They recognized the opportunity, (7:54) and they said, how can we lose? We'll do it.

And so they made a pledge to God that they would be, (8:05) that He would be their God, and they would be His people. So what's the very first thing that (8:13) happens after they leave Mount Sinai? God is starting to take them to the promised land. (8:23) What happens? They turn, the hardship comes in, and when hardship comes in, what do you do? You (8:36) look to a God, or you look to something that you hope will bring peace and comfort to you, (8:47) that's the reason why you turn to superstition, that's the reason why you turn to idolatry.

(8:56) Yeah, the old ways seemed to be working, and they had become used to the worship (9:03) that the Egyptians were doing, and quite a few people, (9:13) the group of people that God is making that promise to, are not 100% Israelites. They're (9:21) not 100% Israelites. Some of that population are Egyptians who are hanging on to their coattails, (9:29) and so the Egyptians want to recognize and be blessed in the same way that (9:35) the Israelites are being blessed.

So when the Israelites left Egypt, many Egyptians went with (9:45) them. And so that's one of the reasons why they said, why are you bringing us out of Egypt? (9:53) Was there not enough graves there? And then when they get into the hardships and out into the (10:04) wilderness, they start worshipping their old gods, like you said. The old ways seem to be working, (10:12) and of course we have a tendency, I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to play (10:17) both ends against the middle.

God, idolatry, good luck. (10:25) And that seems to be the way it goes. So we see that the Christians who have the Jewish background (10:40) are dealing with heritage and tradition, and so they have to be able to separate those things, (10:54) and to be able to bring themselves to accept a group of people who don't have the same background.

(11:04) Because they are worshipers of the true and living God, they think that they have superiority (11:12) over the Christians who do not have the Jewish background. (11:19) So Paul's talking about them, and he's saying, remember, we finished up. (11:28) Let's do this one more time.

Let's go to chapter 2 and see where Paul is writing to the church, (11:38) and I think that he's focusing in on the population there at the church of those who (11:45) have the Jewish background and hanging on to their heritage. It's not anything different today. (11:57) I find that when you get into the areas of the United States where the churches of Christ (12:08) had its start, and you'll see that, oh, my grandfather was a preacher, or I knew (12:22) Alexander Campbell, or I knew this brother who baptized me, you know, and so I call them (12:33) bluebloods.

I call them bluebloods, and it's very obvious when you get into their presence. (12:42) They are very prideful about their background of being in the church. You know, aha! Yeah, (12:49) and so what do they do? They have a tendency to put you down, you know, if they find out that (12:59) you're from Ohio, especially from Michigan.

They have the true church of Michigan? (13:10) And so that's really the whole crux. Are you a real, real follower of Alexander Campbell, (13:22) or Stone, or one of the others who helped us? And so they hold on to that, (13:30) and so their traditions follow them, and it makes it sometimes a little (13:39) difficult to deal with them, especially if you don't have their background, and you're, you know, (13:47) what is the church here in this area? A lot of them are displaced Christians from the South, (13:56) and so they hold on to those traditions. But many of us who are not from the South and do not have (14:05) that background and are converts from this area, we're either first-century Christians, or we're (14:15) second-generation Christians.

Many of us have never been a third-generation Christian, (14:22) and so there's a difference. And so this is what we see, or in my mind, this is what we see going on (14:30) in Rome, in the church there in Rome. We have people who have the blue bloods, or the traditions (14:38) that come from the past, their heritage, and they're proud of it.

I'm circumcised. What does (14:48) that mean? I'm a relative or descendant of Jacob, in particular,

because Jacob is Israel, (14:59) and that's where Israel gets their name is from Jacob, because God changed Jacob's name to Israel. (15:08) And so they're Israelites, or Jacobites, and they're proud of the fact that they worship the (15:14) God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so should we.

But they have a tradition. Their tradition (15:24) comes out of a Jewish background. I lead in, help ending, so let's take a look again at chapter 2 (15:38) and concluding, and then try to go into chapter 3 and deal with what Paul's really saying in chapter (15:46) 3, starting with verse 17, chapter 2, and I'm reading from the New International Version.

(15:59) Now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and boast in God, (16:07) if you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law, (16:15) if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, (16:21) an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the (16:29) embodiment of knowledge and truth, you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? (16:39) You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, (16:47) do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, (16:57) do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the (17:05) Gentiles because of you. Now he wants them to focus in on their circumcision, their tradition (17:15) of circumcision. Circumcision has a value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, (17:26) you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

I've never looked at it from that (17:33) standpoint, have you? That's them. I'm saying that for them. Once again, circumcision has value if you (17:42) observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

(17:51) So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, (17:57) will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised (18:05) physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code (18:14) and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, (18:25) nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, (18:33) and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, not by the written code.

Such a (18:43) person's praise is not from other people, but from God. Any comments or any thoughts about what we (18:53) just got through reading? So that's going to lead us into chapter 3, because he hasn't changed his (19:01) focus. His focus is on the Christian who has a Jewish background, and they're so prideful about (19:10) the fact that they're circumcised, and they can come back and say, I am a worshiper of the God of (19:18) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I have that background, and I'm proud of it.

He's talking (19:28) about the fact that, and he's going to refer to Abraham, and he's going to ask the question about (19:39) where did circumcision come in in the first place? Well, what's the purpose of circumcision? Why did (19:46) God initiate circumcision? And so Paul wants us to realize that circumcision has nothing to do (19:57) with, in this particular case, with whether they're righteous or not. Circumcision, in this case, has (20:05) everything to do as to whether or not they can take their genealogy all the way back to Abraham. (20:12) So who practices circumcision? Do the Islamics practice circumcision? (20:24) I think they do.

Because Ishmael was circumcised, wasn't he? For what reason? How about the rest of (20:40) the people that were employed by Abraham? He had to circumcise them too, didn't he? And he had to

(20:49) circumcise anybody that became a resident or a citizen of his community. He had to circumcise (20:56) them. So circumcision had really nothing to do with, in their particular case, whether or not (21:06) they testified that they were believers of God or not, but circumcision of Abraham had a specific (21:15) purpose, didn't it? Paul wants us to know what that specific purpose was, because when we look at (21:25) Abraham in particular, he was just a regular Jehovah in the community.

He was a worshiper, (21:35) perhaps, of the idol or the goddess of that temple. And so apparently, you know, God wanted to (21:45) pick him out, and he knew he was of the right disposition and the right mentality that he would (21:52) recognize God for being God. So when God came to him and said, I will bless you if you will follow (22:04) me and go where I lead you and be with me.

He said, I will make of you a great nation. I will (22:15) bless your seed, and through your seed, I will bless the world. And there was one other promise.

(22:22) There was a land promise, a nation promise, and a seed promise. And God made that promise to him. (22:29) Somehow, somehow, it's beyond my imagination, Abraham recognized that this was God, not an idol, (22:38) not what everybody else was worshiping.

This was really God. And this God is making an offer to me (22:50) that I can't turn down. And so he takes his wife and his Sarah and so on.

And so we see that God (23:00) then has to bring Abraham to the full point where he is completely, 100% trusting in God. (23:16) Now, when do we see that transition happening? (23:23) And he offers Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar. He starts to offer Isaac as a (23:29) sacrifice on the altar.

God changes his heart. But in the meantime, that travel to that, (23:38) as somebody says, when they look at his tombstone from 1941 to 19 or 2026, there's a little dash. (23:47) That dash means there's something that happened between there and here.

So what happened from (23:55) there to here in Abraham's life? He had to learn to completely trust in God. (24:04) But he didn't completely trust in God. And God was true.

And God protected Abraham. (24:17) And God looked after Abraham just like he said he would. And so we see that with all of that, (24:27) God is earning his trust.

God earns yours and my trust. And he's wanting us to get to the point (24:38) in our lives where we will completely trust him just as Abraham did. (24:43) And that's one of the things we have about Hebrews, the 11th chapter, (24:48) because what did we call the 11th chapter of Hebrews? (24:52) The Hall of Faith.

Because there, the Hebrew writer lists many, many, many people (25:04) about who had enough faith to endure the trials and tribulations that were in their lives. (25:13) And they believed in God. And so that's the reason why we want to say, (25:19) we believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because God showed himself true through (25:27) Isaac and Jacob.

And he earned their faith, especially Jacob's. I love the story of Jacob (25:36) when you see how he's going off, running away from Esau. And he has an encounter with God.

(25:45) And what does he tell God when he's out there and he sees this vision of angels ascending

and (25:55) descending from the ladder? And God makes a proposition to him that he made to Abraham, (26:01) Isaac, and his forefather. What was it? Abraham, or Jacob, says to him, (26:10) I will worship you if you will get me back to my family, safe and sound. (26:20) If you don't recognize that, read the account, because that's exactly what he says.

(26:27) I will worship you and I will be true to you if you will get me back safely to my family. (26:34) And so what happens from the time that he leaves his mother and father and goes up to be with his (26:42) uncle and then comes back? What happens? You read the story. God is faithful to—God took him up on (26:57) his proposition, and God brought him back safely.

And we see that when he encounters Esau, that's (27:06) when he realizes God got himself back. Under what circumstances did God or Jacob (27:17) confront his brother Esau? Remember? He's coming back home, he has his family all with him, (27:29) and he hears that Esau is coming to meet him. (27:34) He sends everybody ahead of him so that Esau would see that he was going to be by himself or so.

(27:46) He has a wrestling match. He has a wrestling match. And what happens in that wrestling match? (27:57) No.

Well, you may have then, but I don't recall that. He has a wrestling match, and he is (28:08) produced to be lame, because the angel reaches up and dislocates his hip, and he's lame. (28:17) There is no way he's going to be able to confront Esau on even terms.

(28:25) He's disabled, and he's hobbling to see his brother and what's the condition. Remember? (28:38) Esau says, what is the purpose of all this stuff that you send ahead of us? He says, I wanted to (28:46) to get your mindset right for me, and I'm at a living right moment. And Esau says, (28:59) I've forgiven you for all of that.

I'm not going to fight you. And they embrace one another, (29:06) and they make a proposition or a covenant, and then Jacob goes on back to be with his family. (29:15) And that's when Jacob recognizes that God is God, and divinely intervenes in his life.

(29:24) So these are all these things. This is tradition. This is what an Israelite knows, (29:34) just like we know what went on in the United States.

We supposedly know what. (29:39) Okay. It all depends on which historian you look at listening to.

(29:47) But we know that (29:52) Americans who know their history are proud. There's no two ways about it. So (30:02) they have this going for them.

So with all of that said, let's go to chapter three, and (30:11) we've got a few minutes to get into it. So Paul has tried his level best to bring them off their (30:21) high horse. They're on a high horse.

They're proud. They became Christians because God made (30:33) a promise to our forefathers, and he fulfilled that promise through Jesus. And we're in that (30:41) relationship with God now that God promised he would through Abraham's seed.

We're the product (30:54) of that promise, and yes they are. But he wants to get them off their high horse because the (31:04) Christians who do not have a Jewish background, the Christian who has a Gentile background (31:16) doesn't have that history, but they are the product of the promise that

God made to Abraham. (31:26) And stop and think about this now because, oh, I asked the question and I didn't answer it.

(31:34) What was the purpose of circumcision with Abraham? Why did God circumcise Abraham? (31:42) Paul is going to point that out to us here in the Roman letter. And the purpose of (31:51) is that when God tested Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on an altar, (32:01) he stopped it, and he recognized Abraham's faith, and that's the faith that we need to have, (32:12) and that's the faith that he wants us to have. Trust, 100% trust, because the Hebrew writer (32:19) tells us that Abraham went ahead and was going, and really was going to sacrifice his son Isaac (32:28) on this altar.

Why? Because he had the faith that God would raise him from the dead, because that boy (32:39) was God's promise to him that through that boy the world would be blessed. So Abraham, (32:50) knowing full well what Isaac represented and was the future of that promise that God gave to (32:59) Abraham, if God was going to have him destroy it and stop it, he had to bring him back to life. (33:07) He believed that.

That's what the Hebrew writer tells us in chapter 11. Abraham believed (33:15) that God would bring him back to life. So he had that faith, 100% complete trust, (33:25) and God recognized that faith.

God recognized that trust. God recognized that Abraham completely, (33:36) 100%, believed in God. He reckoned him, God reckoned him as being a righteous individual (33:52) without baptism, without circumcision, nothing.

He believed God, and God said, (34:01) you are righteous. Now what does that tell us? Abraham was a symbol or a recognition of the fact (34:15) that this is what God was going to do to the rest of the world, because Israelites were not existing (34:22) at that time. The only thing that was existing at that time was him and the rest of the world.

(34:29) He was a symbol of the world. Abraham was a symbol of the world, and that God was going to do the (34:40) same thing to anybody. Of course, at that time, Gentiles weren't recognized as being Gentiles.

(34:48) They were either barbaric or whatever. He was going to offer the same thing to the rest of the world, (35:01) righteousness, and God was going to impute righteousness to those who have the same faith (35:09) that Abraham had. So God recognized and imputed to him righteousness, and Paul's going to ask, (35:21) was that before or after circumcision? Well, it was before.

Paul answers that question, doesn't he? (35:34) It was before. God credited Abraham with righteousness before circumcision. So what (35:45) was the purpose of circumcision? In Paul's writing, the purpose of circumcision was to say to (35:55) Abraham, I recognize you, and that's a symbol.

That circumcision is a symbol that I recognize (36:04) you as being righteous. And then he says, through your seed, and so in my mind, and I have to say (36:17) this is Steve Keynes' mind, in my mind, the circumcision that followed that was to indicate (36:27) that they were descendants of Abraham, a way of following the tree. (36:38) Because just because you were circumcised didn't mean anything other than the fact that you were a (36:48) relative of Abraham, and that God had made a promise to Abraham that through your seed, (36:55) the world would be blessed.

So we're going to be indicating that, yes, that person is a (37:02) descendant of Abraham. Yes, that descendant is, but he had to be specific, didn't he? And Paul (37:08) points out the fact that we had to be specific, and he points that out in Galatians. And he points (37:16) out to us in Galatians that as specific as this was, it had to be a descendant of Isaac, not just (37:25) Abraham, because here's Ishmael, and Ishmael's circumcised just as well as Isaac is circumcised, (37:33) but so are the other people who are in Abraham's family.

They're all circumcised. (37:41) We want to know specifically what tree, what part of the tree of Abraham are you? So you have to (37:51) come to him through Isaac, and then you also have to come to him through Jacob. So it's not (38:00) any good just because you're circumcised.

It's not any good just to know that I am a descendant of (38:06) Abraham. You have to know that you are specifically a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. (38:14) So you have to take your lineage all the way back to Abraham through Jacob and Isaac, and so on.

(38:25) So why do we have a lineage given to us about Jesus? And I asked this question last week. (38:34) Why do we have the knowledge of Jesus' lineage found in Matthew and Luke? (38:47) To show that it was, that he was from Abraham, and he was from David, and it traces his land. (39:01) It shows that his lineage is in the right tree, the right limb of the tree of heritage, (39:10) and that's the reason why it is.

And so it takes him back through David, takes him back through (39:18) Ruth, takes him back to Boaz, all the way back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (39:27) And then the one takes him all the way back to Adam. So the purpose of that is to show (39:37) that Jesus is, and this is, this is the purpose to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of that (39:45) prophecy, that he is of the right lineage, and he is able to proclaim himself as being king, (39:55) and they knew that.

What was the purpose of the book of the lineage that was intact until (40:04) the destruction of 70 AD? The purpose was to show who was to be the high priest, (40:16) who was supposed to be the king, and their land inheritance. So that's the three purposes of (40:26) keeping track of the heritage, to know who is supposed to be the promised, who's supposed to be (40:35) the king, who is supposed to be the high priest, and who is supposed to have property rights. (40:47) So when Jesus comes in, what happened before his crucifixion? He's riding in on a donkey, isn't he? (40:59) And they're all saying, hallelujah, hail! And this is Palm Sunday, I imagine.

(41:08) And why are they doing that? Because they recognized him as being from the lineage of David. (41:19) They recognized his lineage as being a rightful heir of the kingship. (41:27) So we see that being throughout everything.

Just the other day, the Shah of Iran, (41:36) his son is living here in the United States, and when we're bombing Iran, what happens? (41:49) People were thinking, oh, we're going to overthrow the regime, and we're going to be able to reclaim (41:54) the regime. And so the son was being interviewed, and apparently he had several people around him, (42:03) and he gave an announcement. I don't know if you heard this on the news or not, but I did.

(42:08) So after he got through saying what he thought about the change in the regime, (42:15) everybody that was around there said, hail King Shah! Because they knew that he was (42:22) an unauthorized or legitimate claim to the king, of being a king of Iran. They knew that. So Jesus, (42:31) they knew Jesus' lineage.

There's no question about it. And they knew he had to be (42:41) the result of the promise that God gave to Abraham. They knew that.

There's no question about it. (42:51) So he has the right to be called what? King, prophet, and savior. So he has the right to be (43:06) called any of those and hold those offices.

Prophet, priest, and king. Prophet, priest, and king. (43:17) So I gave you a history lesson instead of chapter 3. Our time is up.

Thank you so much for (43:26) being very patient with me. We'll get into chapter 3, maybe a year from now, but we'll get into (43:31) chapter 3. So he says, what advantage then is there in being a Jew? Or what value is there (43:39) in circumcision? Much in every way. And first of all, he says, Jews have been entrusted with (43:49) the very words of God.

No question about it. Thank you so much for your attention. (43:55) And we'll get, besides that, we'll get into chapter 3 next week.