

Romans

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Romans 1: Questions for reflections

1. If you are a slave or freedperson, how does Paul's term "slave" make you feel? Does it give any new meaning to your role as a slave? What might it say about the rewards and demands of the gospel of Christ? What nuances can those slaves in the households of Aristobulus or Narcissus add to the discussion?
2. How do you feel about Paul's use and adaptation of the creed in 1:3-5? Do you think he comes across as favouring Jews or gentiles? Conservatives or liberals? Do you think he is trying too hard to appeal to everyone? What phrases in the creed do you relate to best? What phrases bother you?
3. In the ancient world rulers were often thought of as divine or as a son of deity. What might be the significance of Jesus being declared Son of God "with power"? What kind of power might Paul have in mind?
4. In 1:6-7, why is the greetings said in 3 phrases:
 - a. Called to belong to Jesus Christ
 - b. God's beloved in Rome
 - c. Called to be saints?Which phrase best describes you as Jew or gentile?
5. Romans 1:5 and 16:26 both include the phrase 'to bring about the obedience of faith among the gentiles.' In light of the heterogeneity among Roman house churches, what does this mean? What is "the obedience of faith"? Is it another way to blend together the spiritual and ethical aspects of the gospel, and thus to speak of both conservatives and liberals? Look for a more complete answer as you go through the entire letter of Romans.
6. In 1:8-15, what do you think of Paul's attitude? Do you like his compliments to you Christians in Rome? Or does it sound manipulative? Is Paul arrogant or humble? What do you think of his use of the word barbarian (1:14)? Do you consider yourself wise or foolish?
7. You have already learned about Paul's plans to bring the gospel to Spain (15:20-24). Now you have a chance to discuss it. How do you feel about it? Is it too ambitious? Are you afraid Paul will demand too much support from you or your house church? Do you share his enthusiasm? Are the barbarian Spaniards worth it?
8. What opinion do you as a Jew or gentile have on Paul taking a collection of money to the saints in Jerusalem? Do you think the Jerusalem Jews will want to feel equal with the gentiles Christians? Do you want to think of both Jews and gentiles as being equal in Christ? What might keep you from thinking that? Will you honour Paul's request to pray for him on his mission? Or do you think it's unnecessary and too risky?

9. In Romans 16, how do you feel about being mentioned by name (if you are?) Does it make you feel warmed – or suspicious? If you are a gentile, how do you feel about Paul referring to all those Jewish refugees? Do you think he's too pro-Jewish? Would you consider accepting any of those Jews back into your house church?
10. If an important aspect of the gospel involves having different types of people getting along together in unity, what does this say about our contemporary situations? Should we make every effort to have unity between liberals and conservatives? Between different races? Between those who have little or much education? If we cannot get along with people NOT like us, does that mean we are not living out the power of the gospel?
11. Do Paul's efforts at creating unity among different ethnicities and classes of people say anything about Christian attitudes toward people currently coming to our shores – with or without papers?

Question on Romans 1:16-18 – thesis statement

1. How do you as Jews or Gentiles feel about being included together in the thesis statement of 1:16-17? Is it discriminatory that Paul says Jews first? Do Jews feel gentiles should not be included?
2. As Jews and gentiles, do you see the gospel being this kind of power? Do you consider a part of it? As a gentile, do you feel the Christian Jews you know are including you in on this vision of the gospel?
3. Think about our context in Malaysia. Just as Paul was confronted with the Roman Empire in the proclamation of the gospel, how about us today? Aren't we also not being confronted by a present-day empire – the empire of Islamisation?
4. Think about the currents issues confronting the church – the use of Allah in the Malay Language Bible, restrictions in building church buildings and conversion to religious lands, etc. How well equipped are the Christians in addressing and responding to these issues?
5. Share some other challenges that you believe the church in Malaysia is being confronted in the faithful proclamation of the gospel. How should we respond? Are we fully equipped to address/respond to these challenges? Suggest some practical ways in which we could bring the church forward in our authentic witness for the gospel of Christ.

Romans 1:18-3:31

For gentiles:

1. How do you feel about Paul's strong words? Is he being realistic about the state of the human race? Do you resent any of it? Does Paul step on your toes? Is Paul evenhanded when including both Jews and gentiles in sin?
2. Given what you know about the religions in Rome – what evidence do you see of people worshipping the creature instead of the creator? Is Paul right?
3. What do you think of Paul's numerous scriptural quotations? Do you understand them?
4. As a gentile with conservative leanings, are you judgemental toward more-liberal Christians in any of the house churches? Is Paul too hard on you for your complaints about more liberal Christians?
5. The climax of this section is 3:21-26. Which of the 3 explanations of salvation makes most sense to you as a gentile? If you are a slave, which appeals to you most?

If you are a Jew

- 1) Is Paul too hard on the Jewish Christians? Are you as sinful as he seems to imply? How do you feel about the importance of circumcision?
- 2) Do you think Paul uses enough respect when talking about your Jewish heritage? Do you agree with the conclusion of Paul's argument in 3:21-31 that God's righteousness is shown apart from the law to all who believe? Or do you think Paul is talking out of two sides of his mouth, since he says in 3:31 that 'we uphold the law'? What attitude do you take toward the Law in your own life and practice?
- 3) If you are a Jewish refugee, do you think what you have heard from Paul will make it easier for you to reenter your former house church?

For all:

What is Jesus' role in this discussion of what the gospel is? What does this mean for you in your situation as Jew or gentile, poor or not so poor, educated or uneducated, slave or free?

Sentence Flow by Lim Kar Yong

Romans 1:18 - 2:1

¹⁸For the wrath of God
'Αποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὥργη θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ

is revealed from heaven

against all ungodliness
ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν

and
καὶ

wickedness
of humanity

who by their unrighteousness/injustice
continuously suppress the truth.

ἀδικίαν
ἀνθρώπων
τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων
(note the unusual Greek construction)

,

¹⁹ For what can be known about God
for God is manifest (plain) to them,
 has manifested (shown it) to them.

διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς·
ό θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανέρωσεν.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being understood by the things that are made,
his eternal power
and
Godhead;

τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα (plural) αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα (those
made things being understood) καθορᾶται, (is clearly seen – note singular)
ἢ τε ἀτίδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις
καὶ
θειότης,

so that they are without excuse

εἰς τὸ εἶναι (infinitive indicating purpose) αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους,

²¹ for though knowing God,
they did not honor him as God
or
give thanks to him,

διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν
οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν
ἢ
ηὐχαρίστησαν,

but
ἀλλ'

they became futile in their thinking,
and
their senseless hearts (note Greek in singular) were darkened (singular in greek).
²² Claiming to be wise,
they became fools; ²³
and
they exchanged the glory of the immortal God
for images resembling a mortal human being
and
birds
and
four-footed animals
and
reptiles.

ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν
καὶ

ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία (singular – interesting construction
where adjective appears after article).

²² φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ¹
ἐμωράνθησαν
καὶ
ῆλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ
ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου
καὶ
πετεινῶν
καὶ
τετραπόδων
καὶ
έρπετῶν.

²⁴ Therefore

God gave them up

in the lusts of their hearts
to impurity,
for the purpose of/to the degrading of their bodies among themselves,

²⁵ who exchanged

the truth about God
for a lie

and
worshiped
and
served the creature

rather than the Creator,

who is blessed forever!

Amen.

Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς
ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν
εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν
τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς.
(genitival articular infinitive construction indicating purpose)

²⁵ οἵτινες μετήλλαξαν (indicative aorist)

τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ
ἐν τῷ ψεύδει

καὶ
ἐσεβάσθησαν

καὶ
ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει
παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα,

ὅς ἔστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας,
ἀμήν.

²⁶ For this reason

God gave them up

to degrading passions.

Διὰ τοῦτο
παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς
εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας,

For their women

exchanged natural function/use for unnatural,

αἵ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν
μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν,

²⁷ and in the same way also
the men, giving up natural use/function with women,
were consumed with passion for one another.
Men committing shameless acts with men
and
receiving in their own persons the necessary penalty for their error

²⁷ ὁμοίως τε καὶ
οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας
ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὄρεξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους,
ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι
καὶ
τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἦν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς
ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God,
God gave them up
to a debased mind
to things that should not be done.

Καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει,
παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς
εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν,
ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα,

²⁹ being filled with every kind of unrighteousness/injustice:

evil,
covetousness,
malice
full of envy,
murder,
strife,
deceit,
craftiness,
they are gossipers,
³⁰ slanderers,
God-haters,
insolent,
haughty,
boastful,
inventors of evil,
rebellious toward parents,
³¹ foolish,
faithless,
heartless,
ruthless.

²⁹ πεπληρωμένους πάσῃ ἀδικίᾳ (dative)

πονηρίᾳ (dative)

πλεονεξίᾳ (dative)

κακίᾳ, (dative)

μεστοὺς (accusative – asyndeton) φθόνου (genitive)

φόνου (genitive)

ἕριδος (genitive)

δόλου (genitive)

κακοηθείας,(genitive)

ψιθυριστάς (accusative – asyndeton)

³⁰ καταλάλους

θεοστυγεῖς

ὑβριστάς

ὑπερηφάνους

ἀλαζόνας,

ἔφευρετας κακῶν,

γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς,

³¹ ἀσυνέτους (note the α)

ἀσυνθέτους

ἀστόργους

ἀνελεήμονας.

³² who knowing God's decree,
 that those who practice such things deserve to die –
 yet they not only do them
 but even
 applaud others who practice them.

³² οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες
 ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν,
οὐ μόνον αὐτὰ ποιοῦσιν
 ἀλλὰ καὶ
συνευδοκοῦσιν τοῖς πράσσουσιν.