

**The Argument/Story of Romans**

1.1-17

If you don't catch anything else from what I'm about to say, remember this:

**God is righteous. He is just. He is faithful.**

He has proven himself faithful to his promises of restoring the world, working through his faithful Son, the Messiah, to bring about both our faith in and our faithfulness to him.

Allow me to explain this further.

But first, the objections:

1.18-32

See, at first glance, the big idea above seems ridiculous. God is faithful? Have you seen the world recently? It's corrupt to the core. Idolatry, sexual immorality, violence, deception, hostility, etc. Because people refused to believe that God is who he says he is, Sin and Death have infected and affected every layer of human existence. If God is truly righteous, why is his world so unrighteous?

2.1-29

Furthermore, look at his "chosen people," the Jews! They are no better than anyone else, despite their privileged position as the ones through whom God promised to work. They have failed to understand that their identity as God's people was more inward than outward, and by boasting about their possession of God's law (instead of allowing God to change them from the inside out), they have become just as unrepentant and stubborn as the rest of the world!

3.1-8

Doesn't *Israel's* utter failure to have faith in God and fulfill their role as a conduit of God's grace to the entire world mean that God's plan and promises have failed? No. Just because some of the *Jews* failed does not mean all of them have. And it *especially* does not mean that God has. He is still faithful and righteous. But more on that later...

3.9-20

Even though everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, is corrupt...  
Despite the fact that Sin and Death, God's cosmic enemies, have polluted his creation...  
Although Scripture itself testifies that we are all unfaithful...  
Although the Law which was supposed to guide us in our pursuit of God has only highlighted just how broken we are and how far we have fallen...

3.21-31

Despite all of these things, **God is righteous.**

God has revealed his covenant faithfulness to us through Jesus the Messiah, the True and Faithful Israelite through whom God has kept his redemptive promises. Through his death, the Messiah has absorbed the wrath of God which our unfaithfulness merited. What's more, he has reconciled us to God and made possible the truly human life, one which honors God by living in perfect relationship with him and the rest of his creation. Through the Messiah, God is proving his faithfulness in redeeming the entire world.

4.1-25

However, you'll notice I said "made possible" above. This is because the benefits of what the Messiah has done are only appropriated to us, as they always have been, through faith. The unrepentant Jews made the mistake of assuming that their cultural identity of Torah-obedience was the source of their identity as God's people. Not so! Look at Abraham! The righteousness of God was appropriated to him because of his faith. After all, he wasn't even circumcised yet! Therefore, just as Abraham, we all receive the benefits of and incorporation into God's redemptive mission through faith, and not through the Law. The key is putting our faith in the faithful Messiah.

5.1-21

Pardon me, but this topic is so important that I'm going to run with it for awhile! See, this combination of the Messiah's faithfulness and our faith in him means that God has declared us faithful (righteous). Did you hear that? Not only is God faithful, but despite our unfaithfulness, he declares us faithful as well because of his faithful Son and our faith in him!

This means that we now have PEACE (and not enmity) with God!

This is possible because, get this, at every point at which our father Adam (and everyone ever since) failed, the Messiah has perfectly succeeded!

Before placing our faith in the Messiah's faithfulness, we were all "in Adam." That is, we were at enmity with God because of our unfaithfulness to him which deserved condemnation. However, the Messiah's faithful obedience didn't just undo our unrighteousness, putting us back on level ground. Instead, it has taken us to the soaring heights of God's own righteousness! We are now "in the Messiah"!

6.1-25

But that's not the only transfer that's happened! Being moved from "in Adam" to "in the Messiah" also means that we've been moved from the Death which Sin brings to the Life which the Messiah offers to us! While we were "in Adam," we were slaves to Sin and Death, dominated by them and without freedom. However, now that we are "in the Messiah," we have choices! Free choices! Sin still brings death, but we have been set free and we have the ability and opportunity to make proper choices and live life to its fullest by being truly human, giving glory to our gracious Creator!

7.1-6

All of this has radically changed our relationship to God's Law. Through the transfer from Adam to Messiah, from Death to Life, we have been set free from the Law's condemnation! We can now live a life where God's Spirit writes the Law on our hearts!

7.7-25

See, beforehand, while we were still "in Adam," the Law didn't really help us out. Because of our initial unfaithfulness, the Law highlighted our brokenness and need for a Messiah Savior. It condemned us in the sight of a holy God. Although there was nothing wrong with the Law itself, there was something profoundly wrong with *us*, and the Law was very good at showing that!

8.1-30

But our faith in Jesus the faithful Messiah changes things. As I mentioned above, we have now been set free from the Law's old condemnation! The Spirit of God writes God's law on our very heart. Not only that, the Spirit also gives us the power to live a life which is pleasing to God, in right relationship with our Creator and all of his creation. The Spirit is both our GPS and our engine. Therefore, we no longer have to worry about being condemned by the Law, because the Spirit guides and enables us to fulfill the Law's requirements as those who are "in the Messiah."

8.31-39

Take a moment to think about all I have said so far. Despite the unfaithfulness of all humanity, God has proven himself faithful, most notably through his faithful Son, the Messiah. Look at all God has done for us and given to us through the Messiah! Consider the depths of his love for us! Nothing can separate us from the love of God and the love of our Messiah! **God is indeed righteous.** Although the plan has not yet been fully accomplished, he is well on his way toward redeeming all that he has made.

However, we still haven't covered everything. If you'll remember, there's still that tricky bit about the failure of God's chosen people. Even though God has done all of this for us through the Messiah, doesn't the failure of Israel damage his righteousness? Can God still be fully faithful if it appears his specific promises to/about Israel have failed?

Despite the apparent failure of Israel, **God is still righteous and faithful!**

Consider three reasons why:

9.1-29

Firstly, if you will remember, God never promised to use every single ethnic Jew as one of his chosen people. Consider Abraham's descendants, they were numbered through Isaac and not Ishmael. Similarly, Isaac's descendants were numbered through Jacob and not Esau. This does not mean that God is unfair, for he is not obligated to show mercy to anyone! It also does not mean that God was eternally unloving to those he did not choose at specific times to work through in Israel's history toward the coming of the Messiah! The main point isn't that Ishmael and Esau were damned to hell. It's that God has never promised to choose and use every single ethnic descendant of Abraham. It is therefore unfair to act as if God has promised to always use all physical Jews. As I alluded to before, the \*true\* Jews have always been so inwardly, not *just* outwardly.

9.30-10.21

Secondly, let's not blame God for what the Israelites themselves failed to do! Just because many (but not all!) Israelites have failed to have faith throughout the years does NOT mean that God is no longer faithful. Although God never promised to choose and use every ethnic Jew as one of his chosen people, all Jews *did* have more than enough opportunities to place their faith in God and live in faithfulness to him! However, as mentioned toward the beginning, they failed to realize the key role that faith played in the process. They boasted in their ethnic/national identity of Torah-following instead of boasting in the faithfulness of their God and fulfilling their priestly duties to the world. Please do not blame this failure on God. He has remained faithful and gracious.

11.1-36

Thirdly, and finally, the story is not yet over! The failure/rejection of Israel is neither total nor permanent. God has always preserved a faithful remnant. That is, there has always existed, within ethnic Israel, the true Israel, the faithful people of God. Despite Israel's failures, there has always been a remnant, graciously preserved by God to accomplish his purposes. But this remnant will not always be partial! There will come a day in the future when God will do through Israel abundantly above and beyond what he has ever done before. A complete, full generation of Israelites will someday be rescued and used by God to bless the world, completely dispelling any notions that God has somehow failed his people. Despite Israel's faithlessness, God has remained, and will always remain, faithful and righteous.

This is more than even I can comprehend!

Praise be to God!

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In view of God's righteousness, his faithfulness in redeeming the world and putting it back together again through his faithful Son, the Messiah, let's consider what it looks like to join him in his redemptive mission! If you'll remember, our faith in the faithfulness of the Messiah is designed to bring about our own faithfulness as well!

What does this faithfulness look like, in response to all God has done?

It starts with a refusal to conform to the world's ways of life. Remember my mentioning of the consequences of Sin and Death earlier? Well, in addition to those things, you must also refuse to be conformed to the ways of pride and division. Instead of conformity, pursue transformation. Allow the Spirit of God to renew your mind, and it will revolutionize your relationships. Pursue things like unity, genuine love, harmony, and peace. In all circumstances, even when you are being persecuted, refuse to be overcome by evil. Instead, overcome evil with good.

This all more-or-less makes sense when applied to fellow believers and neighbors, but when we start talking about persecutors and the government, things get tricky! The crucial thing to remember is that, although God is in the process of invading this fallen world to establish his righteous kingdom, this does NOT mean that you should go violently overthrowing the Roman Empire, or any other empire for that matter! This is because the King we follow stands for, as I've just mentioned, genuine love, harmony, and peace. This rules-out violent rebellion and vengeful retaliation. I'm NOT arguing, by any means, that you should mindlessly participate in the currents of society and government which go against God's kingdom. Stay alert and faithfully follow the Messiah! However, instead of trying to overthrow the Empire, you should reasonably and respectfully participate in society. Trust God's sovereignty over human affairs by submitting to the authorities and paying your taxes. God's kingdom will be established from the inside out!

These things are all related. The same characteristics of your love for each other and for your neighbors should be applied to persecutors and the governing authorities. If "in Adam," then this stuff sounds ridiculous. However, we are "in the Messiah," and this radically changes everything. Let us live in LOVE, the fulfillment of God's law, as we await our Messiah's return...

14-15

...which brings me to the most pressing issue I wish to address.

See, all of this means very little if it does not impact how you Jews and Gentiles relate to each other within the body of the Messiah, the Church. Now that you are both accepted as full members of God's holy people, I realize that there has been quite a bit of social tension created, specifically with regards to food! While I could give you an apostolically-prescribed menu, that would defeat the purpose, because my main goal (and God's main goal, for that matter) in this is to see you unified, harmoniously working together as Jews and Gentiles for God's kingdom.

Here's why this is important. If you allow something as simple and amoral as food to fragment you, think of what a slap in the face that is to the Messiah, who moved heaven and earth to defeat Sin and Death and reconcile you all to God.

Sin and Death destroy relationships.

Our Messiah destroyed Sin and Death.

If you, then, go back and destroy relationships over things such as food, you are effectively undoing the work of the Messiah.

Do not let this be so! Overwhelm each other with grace and love as you pursue unity! Use these principles within the body to settle all further and future differences as well, for your unity and love for one another prove that God's mission is working in the world!

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I am confident that God has been and will continue to be at work in your lives. Deeply consider the things I have said to you. But take heart, for we serve a God who loves human beings, and that is why he has chosen to use us in his redemptive mission! Just don't forfeit this precious role by allowing people to cause dissensions among you! I have now come full circle in my argument.

Despite our failures, **God is righteous** in his mission of redeeming the world through his Son, the Messiah, and through his people, the Church, of which you are a part. His faithfulness to us through the Messiah is designed to bring about (through our faith in him) our own faithfulness and obedience to him.

May our righteous God and our faithful Messiah be praised and given glory forever!  
Amen!