



Today we finished off our series 'sin and how to solve it' by looking at Romans 3 and considering Law-Breaking.

We began by considering Genesis 2:25-27 the fundamental and foundational 'law' that God established for the first man and woman - not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. By breaking that law they show they don't want to live under God's good rule and so broken-ness comes and sin and suffering enter the world. Friendship with God is no longer possible - gone are the days of 'walking with God in the cool of the day'. The conundrum then arises which encompasses the whole bible story - how does a sinful humanity interact with a pure and good God?

The answer the bible gives is sacrifice. God establishes a sacrificial system whereby death happens for sin, but not the death of the sinner - rather the death of an animal. There's no doubt as to who the animal is dying for as the animal is slaughter.

One such sacrifice that sits behind Romans 3 is the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. The annual Day when the High Priest - once a year is able to make atonement for the sins of the people (having washed correctly, worn the correct clothes and make a sacrifice for him and his family, as well as cleansing by pouring blood over the place and the articles used for the sacrifice). Year after year, sacrifice after sacrifice is made for the people - yet Romans 3:25 states that ultimately they were not effective in and of themselves, only because the true Day of Atonement of Jesus covered them.

At the heart of Romans 3 is the word 'atonement' which simply means 'to make at one'. God is dealing with his own anger to bring reconciliation between himself and his people. We noted however that as many are familiar with Romans 3 and the concept of atonement, what is important for this series is that we bring with us the idea of sin being relational and don't 'just' think of it as crossing lines or breaking laws.

We noted 3 questions / objections that people often have (both from inside and outside the church) with the model of atonement:

1) is it real? Some argue this is simply 'a legal fiction' that is just an idea or a philosophy, Paul is very clear this was a real sacrificial atoning death that dealt with real sin for real people.

2) is it for everyone? Paul is clear it is both for Jews and Gentiles - just as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, so all can be justified freely by his grace. Whatever your bloodline or background, story or skeletons, the death of Jesus is enough.

3) is it fair? No! It is by Gods grace. Grace means we can never deserve it, but simply have to take it by faith. It's not something we can earn or work for, it can nay ever be ours by trusting God for his plan.

We finished by meditating on the end of the bible where friendship with God is more intimate than first seen. God will be with us face to face and know us, wiping away tears and all suffering.

Here are some questions - as always scrap or adapt for your group as necessary...

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What have been the key thoughts / challenges from this series so far?

Why is Genesis 2v15-17 so foundational to this concept of Law Breaking?

Why do you think God established the sacrificial system?

What did it actually achieve?

Do you think the people resented it or loved it?

Romans 3

Read the passage and note the recurring words. Define them.

Summarise the core of what this passage is about in one sentence.

What does it mean to be righteous?

In v25 why does Paul say the sins beforehand had gone unpunished? What does this mean?

How is the cross a demonstration of his righteousness?

How is God both just and the one who justifies?

How do we receive the blessings of Jesus' death for us!?

What does it **mean** to have faith?

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