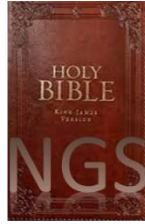


ROMANS RAMBLINGS



Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

It’s all in the words! I feel that Paul the Apostle is a master word maker. This Romans Road is not here by accident. The first part of Romans 5:8 says “But God demonstrates his own love for us.” In verse 1:20 Paul says God displays his work. We know that the Bible story begins with Adam and Eve choosing to disobey God. In essence, they rejected his pure love for the knowledge of God. To be their own God. God could have killed them. Yet, in his love for them, he chose to set up this Road to redemption. Think about it. If we buy a dog, have a child, or set up a fish tank it’s in love. We create an atmosphere for these living things to flourish and survive. God did the same for us.

Notice the next two words “in this.” In Biblical terms they are a conjunction. Many verses begin or end with therefore, with that said, since, and many others. Those conjunctions are meant to bridge the gap of understanding. God did this therefore we should do that. “In this” while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. To be honest, this is a Jewish statement, but let me dissect it into English. See the words “still sinners.” His Jewish readers considered themselves the children of God. They believed that they were set apart and holy. Paul is pointing out from his previous arguments that they and “we” are all still sinners.

Let me unpack that just a little more. Leviticus 4:20 *“and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the community,*

and they will be forgiven.” This is one of the verses that Jewish children had heard. They were to give a sin offering to God. Another verse they knew was Isaiah 53:10 “*Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin.*” Isaiah was talking about the Messiah. This word can also be translated into Christ. This person would be the chosen one to save the Jewish people and lead them home to Eden, promised land, and heaven. Imagine Paul telling the Jewish readers that they killed the Christ.

Make no mistake about it. Paul uses his words wisely and with intent. He didn’t say Jesus. Why? It’s because he is building a case for Jesus. Paul is saying that we know what God has done. We know that he is the only holy one. Now Paul is pointing out that we are not God. We are not holy. What do Jewish sinners do? They make atonement for their sins to God. It’s a sacrifice, offering, and payment. These same Jewish readers knew the story of the Messiah (Christ). Yet, for many of them and us today we have not heard about the sacrifice of this Christ. It’s found right there in Isaiah 53. God fully intended to sacrifice His best (Christ) for our sin to bring us home. Just think about it. Read Romans 5:8 again and again. The word “demonstrated” is a progressive word of action. In English it reads God intentionally made the greatest sacrifice (in love) for our mistake or sin.

I must resist telling you it’s Jesus. Paul held back from doing it to. His whole direction is to bring you to the saving knowledge of Jesus the Christ. To this point the Jewish readers of Paul had not made that connection. In fact, they have not made any connection of Gods sin requirement and the Christ. They did not see Jesus as an atonement for their sins. As I have said, many religious rulers in Paul’s day did not think they were sinners anymore. I met a guy a few years ago that said he does not willfully sin. Does he need a saviour?

1 Timothy 2:3-6 *“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.”* This is also the writing of Paul. These three verses sum up the Romans Road. Check out the last four words “at the proper time.” Paul wants us to be patient on the Romans road. Let’s take out time. We need to let this sink in. Do you think that the Jewish community embraced Paul’s teachings on the Christ and Jesus? They did stone Paul to death on one occasion. This was a learned man of God and of Jewish Biblical history. He has authority. For him to attach Jesus to that history must have been considered blasphemous.

So, where are we on this Road trip through Romans? We have passed God’s creation. Then we took a stop to look at our holiness and our connection to God and community. Then we traveled on to view the sin chasm in all its display. I sat at the Grand Canyon and everyone around me just stopped. It’s stunning! Imagine thinking you’re good enough to enter heaven. Yet, if we were all sinners and fall short of God’s heaven then it’s even more stunning! Now Paul is asking you to come across the Christ bridge; the Jesus bridge. Are you willing to get in the car and trust the bridge back to God?