Romans Class 7

Notes

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Romans chapters 10-11

ch and vs.

--10.3-4 "...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes." "And how is Christ the end of the law," says St. Irenaeus, "if He is not also the final cause of it? For He who has brought in the end has Himself also wrought the beginning; and it is He Himself who says to Moses, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them;' it being customary from the beginning with the Word of God to ascend and descend for the purpose of saving those who were in affliction" (Against Heresies, 4.12.4).

 Part of the theology of salvation is premiss that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, and that we obtain freedom from the Law in this fulfillment. Yet in Orthodoxy, though this has a distinguished place in the doctrine of salvation, it is not the primary focus of the salvatory work of Christ. For though it is true that he delivered us from the account that the law of Moses brought against us, what good is that if we still remain in bondage to death and sin in practice, even if legally we are freed? We still would remain separated from God in synergy, even though legally we are delivered from guilt. And so this deliverance, though great, is not the greatest deliverance that Christ gained for us.

 Rather, since man's worst enemy is separation from God (whether it be in the form of death, hell, fellowship with Satan, etc. all of which tie together), Christ's primary act is to trample down this separation but undergoing the means of the separation, death. Thus He emerges as Christ the Victor, the Conqueror, the Life-Bestower and thus the God-Bestower. Though He delivered us from the edicts against us as written in the Law of Moses, more importantly he delivered us from the realm of Satan, darkness, and death into that of God, Light, and Life.

 The ransoming comes in that the disobedience from the Law gives Satan free reign over us as the result of an initial inclination of our own free will. Therefore, so that Satan could not claim anymore dominion over those who would choose God, Christ came to ransom. This is a contrast from one Protestant view which sees the work of the cross as what Orthodox can only see as a fictitious ransom paid by a loving god to his vindictive father. But we see it as Son, together with Father and Holy Spirit rescuing the captives by paying as ransom the greatest treasures of Heaven: God Himself for the love of mankind undertaking everything that is human (birth, joy, saddness, growth, suffering, death) so that we might be able to undertake that which is divine, and not only that, for he did not choose death alone, but that which is the worst so that He could fully empathize with all, and so that the accuser could have nothing to say against mankind anymore, but only seek to deceive Him. For the Son by recapitulating mankind in Himself nailed the edict of sin against mankind to the life-bearing cross, for He was perfect, and we partake of His perfection in the Eucharist and by having a living faith in Him.

 How is it then that our sins have been nailed to the cross? In this sense, that the Incarnate God was nailed to the cross, and the 'nails' that killed Him were the sins of men, which were typified in Judas the betrayer. But the Lord has allowed the sins of men to be the thing that crucified Him, so that He could erase the edict against us by a short sentance: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Who were the sins against? Our Creator, who is the same Christ on the Cross. Do we not know that everytime we sin that we crucify Christ afresh? Therefore, Christ had to die, and He chose the cross. The ancestral sickness within mankind due to the original sin of Adam, perpetuation and increased illness from subequent generations required man to die and thus Christ to die since He willfully and fully undertook humanity. But Christ did not die a natural death that only was the cause of ancestral sin as the nails, but died a death due to the murderous and hateful personal sins of mankind due to the hate within (such hate as would cause mankind to kill its own God). Since this was this reason, these sins are called the 'nails' in the Cross. Orthodox Theology therefore upholds the idea of "ransom" so long as what is central to the salvation act is Christ the Conqueror Himself. This is more expressly seen in St. Paul's other works such as Colossians and Ephesians, but is found in all of St. Paul's texts and in all of New Testament Scripture, though most explicitely in the Gospel of St. John.

--10.5-6 St. Paul contrasts the righteousness/justification based upon the Law of Moses and that which is based upon faith in Christ who is the Law-giver.

--10.11 Distinctions based upon ethnic lineage have no place in the Christian order.

--11.1-5 God has not rejected the physical descendants of Israel with the ingrafting of all races into the body of the New Israel, but has kept a remnant for Himself. A majority of the Apostles and first Bishops were Jewish by descent, to show us the both ancestral Jews and Gentiles have an equal place in the New Israel and equal access to it, or as St. Paul says "full inclusion" (.12).

--11.19-20 This is a warning to all who have excessive ancestral pride, that at anytime due to "unbelief" and "pride" such "branches" can be broken off and others "grafted in." It is evident here that St. Paul is writing to a fairly "mixed" and integrated Church of Rome consisting both of Jews and Gentiles. He is telling the Jews here not to be prideful or to separate themselves from the Gentile converts. Likewise, in the following verses, he warns the Gentiles not to be prideful nor to separate themselves from those who are "ethnically" Jews and Israelites. As he will tell us later, "in Christ there is no distinction."

--11.22-25 Thus all the Gentile nations who were engrafted into the body of Christ were not "naturally" so by ancestry, but by "adoption" as it were, but even these should not gain a new kind of pride for they can be cut off too. Likewise, those who were seemingly "cut off" except for the remnant can in a majority be grafted back in. So we must wish for all men to come to repentance, or else we will be cut off.

--11.26 "All Israel will be saved," in that Christ is the true Israel through the Incarnation, and the recapitulation of mankind in Himself.

--11.32 "God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." This is a summery statement of all that St. Paul has talked about up to this point, relating what he said in recent previous verses to that which he talked about in the early chapters of Romans.

--11.36 St. Paul ends with a doxology that summarizes the theological meaning of the chapter. St. John Chrysostom likewise concludes his 19th homily with a summation of what St. Paul talked about all through this chapter: "Let us also imitate him (St. Paul) then by glorifying God in all things, by a heedful way of life, and let us not feel confidence in the virtues of our ancestry, knowing the example that has been made of the Jews. For this is not, certainly it is not, the relationship of Christians, for theirs is the kinsmanship of hte Spirit. So the Scythian becoms Abraham's son: and his son on the other hand more of an alien to him than the Scythian." (take note of the resemblance of this statement with that of the declaration of the Patriarchs on Phyletism).

 St. John continues by saying that all who are Christians are now "related to the Saints." "For of Adam we all have sprung, and no one can be more a relation than another, both as regards Adam and as regards Noah, and as regards the earth, the common mother of us all. But the relationship worthy of honor is that which distinguishes us from the wicked...Nor do we call them brothers who come of the same birthline as ourselves, but those who display the same zeal. This is the way that Christ gives men the name of children of God, and so on the other hand children of the devil..." (Rom Hom. 19)