

## TUESDAY COMMUNION

**"Sin - it effects us all!"**

Hymn:

Reading: Romans 3.9-20

Prayers:

### **Read verse 9.**

Perhaps it's a good moment for a brief recap.

Paul has been saying to those mainly Jewish Christians in Rome that God isn't pro-Jew and anti-Gentile. He has given the Jewish people the law and the gift of circumcision and there is a real joy in belonging to a people who have been caught up in God's good and loving purposes.

However, just as a Jew who keeps the law is acceptable to God so is the Gentile who seeks to do what he believes is good and right and lives up the highest standards.

But now, Paul introduces a word which he will use many times, and it's the word "sin". He's introducing the idea that there is a power at work in the world which prevents us from being the people God wants us to be.

Even those who may outwardly keep the rules fall prey to the cosmic power of sin. "Sin", I think we might say, is our failure, even our inability, to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbour as ourselves. We may keep the rules but within ourselves we may also know our indifference to God and to others the selfishness of our thoughts and words and actions.

We may ask where sin comes from and maybe the answer, in part, maybe that is that it is an inevitable consequence of the selfishness involved in the whole process of becoming human. It drives a wedge between ourselves and God and other people! It is what lies behind the words we say in our Confession that we have failed God in thought and word and deed, through "ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault".

Often, we are not even aware that our lives are partly controlled by this power we call "sin".

Paul brings together a number of quotations (mainly from the Psalms but one from Isaiah) which speak of our human failure to live as God longs for us to live.

**Read verses 10-18.**

These are words from the past addressed particularly to Paul's own Jewish people. He believes that though they are painting his own people with a broad brush that they do speak of what is true about himself and his fellow Jews.

Like all human beings, whether Jews or gentiles none of them is all that God wants them to be and, indeed, none of them by their own effort is capable of becoming that kind of person,

**Read verses 19-20**

Paul's last quotation from the Psalms was:

***"There is no fear of God before their eyes."***

One of the abiding dangers of "The Law" whether it is the Jewish law or any other rules of conduct is that people can come to believe that they are good people with no need to know God or to recognise their dependence upon him. They lose that sense of what Paul calls being "accountable to God."

Human beings are not "justified" by what they do," Justified" is a word Paul often uses and is more about right relationships than right behaviour. Paul is saying that even those who achieve remarkably good behaviour by whatever standards they are judged fail in their relationship with God, each other and themselves.

It's a bit like in a marriage where both husband and wife do all that is expected of them, keep to the rules that they believe are right but do not think or speak or act out of love. There is more to life than right behaviour and that, however important, is not the be-all and end-all of life!

**So, what's to be done for people under the "power of sin".**

Are they to be told to try harder?

Are they to be punished or humiliated?

Can any of us, however much we are encouraged or threatened become the people God wants us to be?

Or are we, in a sense, helpless and in need of a way to be at one with God and become the people God wants us to be which doesn't entirely depend on ourselves?

Well, Paul's answer is, "Yes".

We'll explore that further next week!

Amen