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February 26th: Lamentations 2 & Romans 10

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The utter destruction of Jerusalem. The election of grace and God's formation of his people. The Word is near you.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Lamentations chapter 2. How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud. He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel. He has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob. In his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah. He has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.

He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel. He has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy. He has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around.

He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe. And he has killed

all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion. He has poured out his fury like fire.

The Lord has become like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all its palaces.

He has laid in ruins its strongholds. And he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place.

The Lord has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath. And in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary.

He has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces. They raised a clamor in the house of the Lord, as on the day of festival. The Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion.

He stretched out the measuring line. He did not restrain his hand from destroying. He caused rampart and wall to lament.

They languished together. Her gates have sunk into the ground. He has ruined and broken her bars.

Her king and princes are among the nations. The law is no more. And her prophets find no vision from the Lord.

The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence. They have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

My eyes are spent with weeping. My stomach churns. My bile is poured out to the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babies faint in the streets of the city.

They cry to their mothers, where is bread and wine? As they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mother's bosom. What can I say for you? To what compare you, oh daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you that I may comfort you, oh virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is as vast as the sea. Who can heal you? Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions.

They have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading. All who pass along the way clap their hands at you. They hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem.

Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth? All your enemies rail against you. They hiss, they gnash their teeth. They cry, we have swallowed

her.

Ah, this is the day we longed for. Now we have it, we see it. The Lord has done what he purposed.

He has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago. He has thrown down without pity. He has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.

Their heart cried to the Lord, oh wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears stream down like a torrent day and night. Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite. Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the night watchers.

Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord. Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children who faint for hunger at the head of every street. Look, oh Lord, and see with whom have you dealt thus? Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old.

My young women and my young men have fallen by the sword. You have killed them on the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity. You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side.

And on the day of the anger of the Lord, no one escaped or survived. Those whom I held and raised, my enemy destroyed. As in the case of chapter one, Lamentations chapter two follows an acrostic form, albeit not as pronounced as it will be in chapter three.

While chapter two can stand alone as a lament poem complete in itself, it also picks up many of the themes and various pieces of imagery from the preceding chapter. It focuses particularly upon the severity and the totality of the Lord's judgment. Once again, the acrostic form invites us to think in terms of a complete account of a particular aspect of Jerusalem's downfall.

In the preceding chapter, there were alternating voices. The first was the voice of the narrator, and then there was the first person voice of Jerusalem. In this chapter, it begins with a third person description of Jerusalem in verses one to 10, then a first person speech speaking of Jerusalem in the third person in verses 11 and 12, and then addressing her directly in 13 to 19, followed by a first person speech of Jerusalem herself in verses 20 to 22.

The strong literary structure of the chapter is seen even further in the chiasm or book-ended structure that Johann Renkemer has noticed within it. Paul House mentions this in his commentary. Verses one and 22 stress the day of the Lord's anger.

Verses two and 21 mention God's lack of mercy. Verses three and 20 include consuming

imagery. Verses four and 19 use the phrase pour out.

Verses five and 18 are connected by the use of the word Lord or Adonai. Verses six and 17 use the name Lord in the sense of Yahweh. Verses seven and 16 mention the enemies of Israel.

Verses eight and 15 use the word daughter. Verses nine and 14 mention prophets and visions. Verses 10 and 13 mention daughter Zion.

And then verses 11 and 12 at the center of the chiasm describe fainting in the street. The chapter begins by describing the devastating impact of the wrath of the Lord. The Lord brought the destruction of Jerusalem upon it and the destruction is utter and complete.

In three powerful verses, it describes the annihilation of the glory of Zion. The Lord has not remembered his footstool. The footstool of the Lord is especially associated with the Ark of the Covenant, by extension the temple, and even further with Jerusalem itself.

We see its connection with the Ark of the Covenant and perhaps also with the temple in 1 Chronicles 28 verse two. Then King David rose to his feet and said, hear me my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God and I made preparations for building.

The splendor of Israel rose up to heaven, but the Lord has cast it down to earth. The Lord has cast down, he has swallowed, he has broken down, he has brought down, he has cut down, he has withdrawn, he has burned. He has brought just about every form of destruction upon Jerusalem.

And this is all an expression of the Lord's anger, his wrath, his fierce anger. The burning fury of the Lord has come upon Jerusalem and she is now utterly dishonored. In verse three we read of the Lord withdrawing from Judah his right hand when their enemy fights against them.

In verses four and five, this withdrawn right hand, the hand that empowered and equipped them to fight against their foes, is not just withdrawn, it is now wielded in service of their enemies. If it weren't already clear enough from verses one to three, which focused upon the destruction wrought by the Lord, in verses four to five it focuses upon the fact that the Lord himself has become the enemy of Jerusalem. He is not just indifferent and withdrawn from her, his anger burns against her and he is warring against her through her enemies.

Verses six to seven express the fact that the temple of the Lord has been in a special focus of the Lord's wrath. The Lord has obliterated his sanctuary, summoning the enemies of his people as if in some great festal day in order that it might be utterly

destroyed. In considering the reason for the Lord's destruction of his sanctuary, a mind might be drawn back to places like Isaiah chapter one, verses 11 to 15 and 24 to 26.

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices, says the Lord. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats.

When you come to appear before me, who has required this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to me, new moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations. I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hates. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.

Therefore the Lord declares, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself for my foes. I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning.

Afterwards, you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. As Jeremiah had taught in his great temple prophecy back in chapter seven of his book, Jerusalem had started to treat the temple as a sort of talisman, as if it were a den of robbers that they could retreat to to find security against pursuit of justice, rather than a place of true worship of the Lord and a house of prayer for all nations. As a result, they were like an occupying force within the Lord's house that he wanted to remove.

In destroying his sanctuary, the Lord was granting himself relief from this abomination that was constantly before his face. The description of the destruction of the house of the Lord is similar to that found in Psalm 74 verses four to eight. Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place.

They set up their own signs for signs. They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees and all its carved wood, they broke down with hatchets and hammers. They set your sanctuary on fire.

They profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground. They said to themselves, we will utterly subdue them. They burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

Verses eight to nine make clear that this was a purposeful act of destruction. The Lord had determined to bring this ruin upon Jerusalem. He stretched out the measuring line as we see in Amos chapter seven, verses seven to nine.

This is a preparation for an act of judgment. This is what he showed me. Behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand.

And the Lord said to me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, a plumb line. Then the Lord said, behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will never again pass by them.

The high places of Isaac shall be made desolate and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. In these verses, the Lord is breaking down the buildings, the walls, the gates, and all of the defenses of the city.

As we move beyond the beginning of verse nine and into verse 10, the utter demolition of Jerusalem is described not just as the demolition of a walled city, but also of the entirety of its polity. Her king and her princes are removed from the land, either in captivity in Babylon or as refugees among the nations. The law is no more.

This presumably is associated particularly with the priests who would have taught and upheld the law among the people. The word of the prophets has been silenced. The Lord does not speak to them and they are struck dumb.

Not just the rulers, but the general population have been devastated. The elders, the people who would be looked to for wisdom and counsel, who would represent the tradition and the continuation of the past, they are in a state of mourning. Likewise, the young women, who were the group most associated with youth, beauty, the future, and joy, their songs have been silenced, their dancing has stopped, and now they too sink down to the ground in a state of mourning.

In verse 11, the voice switches to the first person. Perhaps this is the voice of Jeremiah the prophet. The sort of expressions that we read in these verses are very similar to those we find in places like Jeremiah chapter eight, verses 19 to 22.

Behold the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land. Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her king not in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded.

I mourn and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored? The poet describes the slow death of infants in the city, fainting of hunger, and then expiring on their mother's breasts. The voice of the lamenting poet now turns to address Jerusalem herself.

He vainly struggles to try and think of some comparison by which he could take the

measure of her suffering, but it is a futile quest. Words are completely insufficient to do justice to the extent of her shatteredness. Verse 14 describes the way that the false prophets played such a role in bringing about her ruin.

We see these figures throughout the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah struggles trying to deal with these false prophets and their words of false peace by which they discouraged Jerusalem from any sort of real repentance, dulling their ears to the true voice of the Lord delivered through Jeremiah. Some commentators have observed the similarity between the first half of verse 14 and Ezekiel chapter 13, verses one to 16.

In verse one to six of that chapter, we'll get a sense of the similarities. The word of the Lord came to me, son of man prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.

Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel, you have not gone up into the breaches or built up a wall for the house of Israel that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord. They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, declares the Lord, when the Lord has not sent them and yet they expect him to fulfill their word.

Some have argued on the basis of these resemblances that the book of Lamentations must be dated to a point after the book of Ezekiel. However, the prophecies of Ezekiel would have been circulating prior to the completion of the book, so it need not be dated later. The lamenting poet now describes the response of the enemies of Judah.

They mock and hiss at the city. They gloat over her downfall and take pride in their part in it. The poet makes clear that it is the Lord that has brought this fate upon Jerusalem.

She must take it as the Lord's action, not just as something that her enemies have done to her. The appropriate response is described in verses 18 and 19, weeping in repentance and desolation, entreating the Lord to take some compassion upon her. The voice of Jerusalem re-enters in verses 20 to 22.

She cries out to the Lord, declaring the horrors that she has seen. One of the most gruesome signs of judgment, one of the great curses upon Israel in the curses of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28, verses 56 to 57, is women eating their own children. The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will be grudged the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything, she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you in your towns.

In 2 Kings 6, an example of this is described in the city of Samaria. Besides this, priests and prophets have been killed in the sanctuary of the Lord. Dead bodies lie littered throughout the city, victims of the day of the Lord's wrath.

The day of the Lord's judgment is described again like a festival day that the Lord invited all these different nations to in order that he might destroy his people, that he might visit upon them the destruction that they deserved. A question to consider, in verses six and seven, we see described the special fury that the Lord had against his sanctuary. The sin of Judah that had been paraded before the Lord in that place made it a special abomination to him and a particular object of his judgment.

Where else in scripture do we see the judgment of the Lord being especially focused upon the worship of a sinful people? Romans chapter 10. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

But the righteousness based on faith says, do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? That is to bring Christ down. But who will descend into the abyss? That is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart.

That is the word of faith that we proclaim. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

For the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for their voice has gone out to all the earth and their words to the ends of the

world. But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation.

With a foolish nation I will make you angry. Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.

But of Israel he says, all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. In Romans chapter 10, Paul continues to address the great question and the tragedy of Israel's failure to receive the gospel message. Israel had not attained to the righteousness by faith, although Gentiles had.

Rather Israel had stumbled upon the stumbling stone. Paul begins by expressing his deep desire that Israel come to know God's salvation, which they were currently rejecting. He addresses the Roman Christians here as brothers.

Earlier in chapter 9 verse 3, he spoke of the Jews as his brothers, his kinsmen according to the flesh. He wants the Romans to join with him in his desire for his fellow Jews' salvation. As in the case of Paul himself prior to his conversion, the Jews are zealous for God, but their zeal is tragically ignorant.

They fail to recognize how God has actually acted. They have been ignorant of the righteousness of God, oblivious to God's act of saving justice enacted in Jesus the Messiah, a saving righteousness by which God justifies the ungodly, bringing people into good standing with himself without respect to ancestry, covenant membership, Torah observance or status. Israel, however, has sought to establish its own standing with God on the basis of the Torah through covenant membership and Torah observance.

While the failure of Israel that Paul is speaking about here is a more general failure, it is a failure revealed at a crucial moment when it really counted. When the Messiah came, Israel dropped the ball. When God acted decisively in their history, revealing his righteousness, they should have submitted to it, recognizing the surprising manner of God's action in Christ and joyfully receiving it.

However, that was not what happened. Instead, they were blind to what God was doing in Christ and rather than receiving it, they rejected and opposed it in unbelief. The point here isn't so much that Israel was trying to earn their own salvation, as many have understood it.

Rather, Israel perceived its standing with God to be a matter of their own covenant status and Torah observance. In many respects, this was an understandable and reasonable belief. It wasn't a belief that they could earn salvation, nor was it a belief in the necessity of absolutely perfect obedience.

Rather, it was the belief that when God's saving justice appeared, it would be shown to

people deemed more worthy, i.e., Torah observant Jews. Living in a Torah observant way, as a people set apart from the Gentiles, was a good and necessary thing in its time, provided that they never forgot that these things were never the ultimate basis of their standing with God. That was God's grace alone.

However, when God's long-awaited saving justice, the righteousness of God, was revealed, it took an unexpected form. At this point, Israel faced a choice. Would they submit to what God was doing, or would they continue to insist upon pursuing their standing with God in the way of Torah observance? Would they relate to God on his own terms, recognizing the more temporary role that the law was playing in God's purposes? Or would they cling on to a status gained from the law, even when God was establishing his new covenant people on a very different footing? Jesus the Messiah is the goal at which the law always aimed, with everyone who believes enjoying good standing with God on the basis of what Christ has achieved.

In Christ, the law arrives at its intended destination, accomplishing its design. The law was never a bad thing to be abolished, but a good thing to be fulfilled. The problem was not with the law itself, as Paul argues, the law is spiritual.

Rather, the problem was always with sinful flesh, and its allergic reaction to the law. In Christ, the law can finally achieve its intended goal, as the righteous requirement of the law can be fulfilled in us, as we walk no longer according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. The meaning of Paul's statement in verses 5 to 11 may not be immediately obvious, and has provoked much debate, as many other things in the book of Romans.

One of the more jarring things is the fact that Paul seems to be juxtaposing the righteousness that is based on the law, and the righteousness based on faith. However, if this is Paul's intent, he seems to be using the wrong verses to do so. He alludes to Leviticus chapter 18, verse 5, as the statement of the righteousness of the law.

"You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules. "If a person does them, he shall live by them. "I am the Lord." Yet the verses around which he structures his proclamation of the righteousness of faith, are taken from Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses 11 to 14.

If we read verses 11 to 20, we'll get a better sense of the original context. For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, "that we may hear it and do it?" "Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, "that we may hear it and do it?" "But the word is very near you.

"It is in your mouth and in your heart, "so that you can do it. "See, I have set before you today life and good, "death and evil. "If you obey the commandments of the Lord

your God "that I command you today, "by loving the Lord your God, "by walking in his ways, "and by keeping his commandments "and his statutes and his rules, "then you shall live and multiply, "and the Lord your God will bless you in the land "that you are entering to take possession of it.

"But if your heart turns away, "and you will not hear, "but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, "I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. "You shall not live long in the land "that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today "that I have set before you life and death, "blessing and curse.

"Therefore, choose life, "that you and your offspring may live, "loving the Lord your God, "obeying his voice and holding fast to him, "for he is your life and length of days, "that you may dwell in the land "that the Lord swore to your fathers, "to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Robert Alter, commenting upon the teaching of these verses, remarks that Deuteronomy, "having given God's teaching a local place "and habitation in the text available to all, "proceeds to reject the older mythological notion "of the secrets or wisdom of the gods. "It is the daring hero of the pagan epic "who unlike ordinary man makes bold to climb the sky "or cross the great sea "to bring back the secret of immortality. "This mythological and heroic era is at an end, "for God's word inscribed in a book "has become the intimate property of every person.

"The law contains great depths and wealth of wisdom, "but it isn't far off from anyone. "This word is in the mouths of Israel "and can be in their hearts as they memorize it, "meditate upon it, learn its principles of wisdom, "delight in it, and sing it forth, "and display its principles "from the very heart of their lives." Deuteronomy chapter six, verses four to six, describes this sort of relationship with the law. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart "and with all your soul and with all your might. "And these words that I command you today "shall be on your heart." "The law is at its heart "a remarkably democratic document. "It isn't written merely for a scribal, judicial, "or royal elite.

"It doesn't require the great feats of epic heroes, "the deep learning of philosophers, "or the wandering of mystical pilgrims. "It is written for the learning, understanding, "and practice of every Israelite, "from the least to the greatest. "It isn't a shadowy and arbitrary set of principles "imposed upon them from without, "but a book full of rationales, explanations, and persuasion "designed to enlist the will, the desires, "and the understanding.

"God is close to every Israelite, "not just to the high priest, the sage, "the prophet, or the king." Now, Paul is not a careless reader of the scriptures. It seems strange that he would use a reworked text advocating for the keeping of the law as his clincher text for

the righteousness of faith over against the righteousness of the law. What is he doing here? One thing to note here is that Deuteronomy chapter 30 is the great passage about God's work of grace in the future, the work by which he will restore his wayward people, circumcising their hearts in verse six, so that they will love him as they ought and live.

This is what it will look like when the law finally gives the life it intended through an utterly unmerited act of divine grace. Perhaps, rather than presenting a great contrast between the righteousness of faith in verses six to 11 and the righteousness of the law in verse five, Paul is actually revealing a fundamental continuity. So perhaps verse six should begin with an and rather than a but.

The statement of Leviticus chapter 18, verse five, that the person who does these things will live by them is fulfilled in the covenant restoring and establishing act of God by which his word comes so very near to us, entering into our very hearts. Nevertheless, we should notice that even in the fulfillment, there remains a contrast. The word of the law is primarily a word of command to be obeyed and done.

The word of Christ is primarily a word of command to promise and grace, to be believed and confessed. Salvation and the promised restoration of the new covenant comes with the believing reception of this word of the gospel, the message that Jesus is Lord. As Richard Hayes observes, Paul has also mixed the Deuteronomy 30 quotation with an expression found elsewhere in the book of Deuteronomy, particularly in chapter eight, verse 17 and nine, verse four.

Beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. And then in chapter nine, verse four, do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, it is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land. Whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you.

Paul probably hopes that attentive readers will pick up on these echoes. Both of these texts underline the sheer grace by which Israel enjoys its standing with God and its place in the land. Likewise, the reception of the word of Christ does not depend upon the great deeds of heroes, the lofty wisdom of sages or the powers of human rulers.

In God's action in the gospel, his revelation has come near to us all in a way that reaches directly into our unworthy condition, wherever we may find ourselves. He doesn't require great feats of bravery, genius or power of us, just the reception of faith by which we can be saved. The law called for obedience as the means of life.

However, the law also promised that God in a great act of grace would realize the law's intention for people who are unfaithful and would unavoidably come under the law's curse in their history. The law was not merely command, but was also promise. And in Paul's movement from Leviticus chapter 18, verse five to Deuteronomy chapter 30, Paul

follows the shift from command to promise and manifest the fulfillment of the promise that has occurred in Christ.

Christ is God's revelation come near to us all so that the law might be fulfilled and humanity restored in relationship with God. Salvation is now made accessible for everyone who believes. The promise of the gospel is a universal one.

God is the God of all, Jews and Gentiles alike, referencing Joel chapter two, verse 32, who prophesies concerning the great day of the Lord when the fortunes of Israel will be restored and reversed. Paul declares that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. This also prepares us for some of the points that he will go on to make about Israel in the following chapter.

In verses 14 to 15, Paul expresses the Gentile mission in terms of this new covenant fulfillment framework. For the prophecy of an indiscriminate gift of salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike to be fulfilled, the message needs to go out to Gentiles, which is where Paul's own work fits in. Quoting Isaiah chapter 52, verse seven, he describes the wonderful character of the heralds of the good news or the gospel, the message that Jesus is Lord, that God is establishing his kingdom in his son.

Yet not everyone who hears the message of Paul's gospel responds with obedient submission to Israel's Messiah and the world's true Lord. The gospel as the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus the Messiah is not just a message that we can take or leave. We must bow the knee to Christ or else stand in rebellion against him.

Just as Isaiah expressed the widespread rejection of his message, so Paul's gospel proclamation is widely rejected, even among Gentiles. Faith comes from the heard report and the heard report comes through the word of Christ that has come near to mankind in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. God's revelation of his son, Jesus Christ, the word that has come near to us, is what drives and lies at the heart of the proclamation of the gospel.

Paul quotes Psalm 19, verse four, in an admittedly rather confusing verse. As usual, we should pay attention to the context. Psalm 19, verses one to four, speak of the universal revelation of the glory of God by the heavens.

The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. Perhaps Paul's point here is that no one, not even the Gentiles, are without excuse. While the word of God has come near in Jesus and the proclamation of the word of the gospel, it is not as if the Gentiles were completely without revelation.

God has already spoken to them in the creation itself. The chapter ends with a statement of the truth that Israel had not been left without warnings of this situation, of the good news of God's kingdom and his saving justice going to the Gentiles while they rejected it. They should have known.

He quotes from Deuteronomy 32, verse 21 and Isaiah 65, verse one and then verse two. In such places, Israel had already been warned by God that as they rejected the gospel, God's grace would be shown to people who had never sought it, ultimately with the effect of moving Israel to jealousy. Paul is here returning to some of the points with which he concluded chapter nine and setting things up for the chapter that follows.

A question to consider, how does the connection between the promise of Deuteronomy chapter 30 and the call to live by the law in Leviticus chapter 18, verse five help us to understand the proper place of the law in the larger picture and story of scripture?