

299 Good News: really helpful translation

My excitement level is growing as I again study Romans, and I can see the strands of my six-year journey coming together in Tom Wright's commentary, especially what he says about 1:16,17, Paul's famous statement, 'I am not ashamed of the good news...'

Here, I'll use Tom's commentary and his translation to focus my thoughts.

The main theme is God's overall plan, starting with Abraham, to rescue the whole world from evil, corruption and death and to bring his restorative justice to the whole world.

Then, to answer our question, 'Yes, but how?!', we hear that (my bold) God's covenant justice is unveiled in it [the good news] and the just shall live by faith. Two key words.

One problem in working out *how*, is that we have to use English words, but thankfully Tom's translation has helped me to see how the different bits fit together (I think!).

Referring to God's plan, we know that he can bring his restorative justice to the whole world. And that is, in the end, what 'God's righteousness' or 'God's justice' means. I have translated the word as 'God's covenant justice' here in order to hold all these ideas together. As it's one of the central themes in the letter, it's vital that we get it straight.

So let me see if I've got this. Things are wrong, we're wrong, we've rebelled. God wants to sort out our mess and the world's mess. God's chief concern is restoration, and by God's grace we are forgiven, just as God's people were. Even in BC times, they were forgiven by faith, by trusting God to take away their sin.

But grace isn't fair (Yancey's classic *What's so amazing about grace* is good on this). **How** can people who do the Romans 1 stuff ('them') be freely forgiven; indeed, **how** can people who have Romans 2 judgmentalism ('us'?) be freely forgiven? It's unfair, really.

The answer in the early centuries was that the cross and resurrection simply brought victory over the powers of sin and death, and that God forgives whom he forgives (those who come to him in faith), as God did in the OT. Why do we keep asking **how**?

Jesus' parable of the prodigal father illustrates the unfairness. I think the older brother was right to be unhappy when the wayward son, having squandered half the family fortune, is given a ring and reinstated. **How**?

The woman caught in adultery? She was guilty, but Jesus declined to condemn her. **How**?

But why do we feel we need to 'explain' grace? Let's just accept it with grateful thanks, and let's get on and work with God on the great restoration plan.

Anyway, logically, if we're freely forgiven, does it matter if, as believers, we sin a little bit? Yes it does! say Paul and Tom: Romans 6 is a bracing chapter. Holiness *does* matter, because the wages paid by sin, you see, are death; but God's free gift...^[6:23]