

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 20
Romans, Part 8 (the Servant in Philippians 2)
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Teacher: Matthew Halsted

Episode Summary:

This episode serves as a bridge of sorts between Romans 3 and 4. In the last episode, Matt discussed Paul's idea that God's righteousness is revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah. This took listeners back to Genesis 11-12, as well to Isaiah's "Servant Songs" and connected those back to Jesus. In this episode, Matt look further into Paul's understanding of Isaiah's servant -- only this time taking a detour through Philippians 2:5-11, the "Christ Hymn." In this passage, Paul quotes from Isaiah, taking a YHWH text and reconfiguring it around Jesus the Messiah -- what one might call a christological interpretation. This is important to observe, not least in light of the next episode on Romans 4, where Paul reads the Abraham story christologically. In this episode (and the next), listeners get a look at the core of Paul's interpretive approach to the Old Testament.

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey everybody! Welcome to another episode of the Bible Unmuted! Super great to be with you again this week. Hope each of you are doing well. In this episode today we're going to look at another text that is not in Romans but is one that complements our discussions that we've had so far about Romans. And I'm talking about Philippians. So, Philippians was written by Paul as well. And there are some things that he says in Philippians that I think will be very helpful for each of us as we think deeply about some of the arguments that we've been exploring that Paul has making, not least in Romans 3. So last week we looked at Romans 3. And I thought maybe this we would look at Philippians chapter 2 because... I think the last episode could stand on its own and we could jump straight into Romans 4, but there are some things that we could probably look at even further here in Philippians. We will actually end up back in Isaiah like we were last week too, because it's going to add some muscle to our skeleton that we are building here. I think it's a good way to put it. I think it'll be helpful.

So the thing about Romans is that it's a complex book. It's a book that is a million feet wide and a million feet deep. It's a book that you could spend the rest of your life exploring and looking into, and praying through, and thinking about, and preaching and writing about...the list goes on. Romans is one of those books. And so...and that's a blessing, I think, because I wrote a book on Romans and there are a million other books on Romans. The thing about Romans though, is that if you're not careful, you will end up spending all your time there and you'll forget that there are other books in the Bible. And a lot of Pauline scholars do that sometimes. Not intentionally, of course, but sometimes we just get pigeon holed or siloed into one little section, our own little section, and we forget the other things. Well, I think today's episode is going to help push back against that and help us to think broadly with respect to Romans. Because I don't want us to think that Romans is the most important book in the New Testament. I don't think that

would be fair to Paul or fair to what Paul is trying to do in Romans. I think there are other things all throughout Scripture that we should have a good grasp of so that we can appreciate Romans all the more. And that means that we need to engage the book of Romans through dialog with those other texts. I hope all that make sense and I think today we will see how all that makes sense.

What we will see here is how some of the themes that we've talked about last week in Romans 3, weren't just quick little thoughts that Paul had as he was jotting down his letter to the church at Rome. No, these are things that Paul has immersed himself in thoroughly such that they are on his mind all the time even when he's pinning a letter to the church at Philippi. I think Paul has done a lot of thinking, a lot of praying, and he has had a lot of experiences that really have formed his theology, in a sense. So we are going to look at Philippians chapter 2 today and see how some of these similar themes come up. And how, by the way, Paul has conceived of this concept of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and the way that fits into the larger story of Israel, specifically with respect to Isaiah's servant. So you remember from last week we talked about Isaiah's servant and we looked at several texts like Isaiah 41, 42, and Isaiah 49. And so, those were texts that talked about the servant motif. And we are going to see more of that in Philippians, and as a result we'll see a great picture that Paul has painted. And that, I think, is the key to his entire theology.

4:33 So, just a brief recap. In the last episode we talked about Romans 3, of course. And in that text, we looked at this phrase, "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." This comes in Romans 3 verses 20, 21, and 22. And those are three very important verses in Romans 3. So anyway, we talked about how God's own faithfulness was revealed *through* the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah. And if you don't quite remember that, peruse through the transcript or go back and listen to it because I think Romans 3 is a very pivotal chapter with a pivotal commentary that we are working through. And the comments that we are making are very pivotal in the larger scheme of things. So the faithfulness of Jesus Christ is the way that God showed his faithfulness to Israel and to the world. Now, why is that important? Well, you will remember that in the first part of Romans 3, Paul has this dilemma. He has this conundrum – if Israel has proven to be unfaithful to their mandate to be a light to the nations, and if God has promised that he would use the children of Abraham (Israel) to rescue the world, but if Israel isn't usable, than what is God going to do? God has a problem on his hands. Because he promised Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 that he would use Abraham's family to rescue the world. And God is no liar so that means if he's promised something he'll do it. So he will use Abraham. But again, the catch is that Abraham's family cannot be used because, I mean, how can they rescue the world? They need to be rescued themselves because they are sinful, as the rest of the world. So for Paul, God's got a problem on his hands, in a sense. Okay, God doesn't think there is a problem, because God always had a way. God has always had a plan. But, from an earthly perspective, it seems like a dilemma. What is God going to do? He can't lie, he can't go back on his promise. He has to use Israel. But how – how is he going to use Israel? So, Paul asks this question at the beginning of Romans 3. Does the unfaithfulness of Israel nullify or negate the faithfulness of God? And Paul says, "By no means! Absolutely not!" God will be faithful. Even if every person were a liar, God will still prove to be faithful. God will always be righteous.

And we talked about how the faithfulness of God and the righteousness of God were equated. For Paul, God's righteousness is his faithfulness to the covenant. God is righteous because he is faithful to the covenant. They go hand in hand and are quite synonymous in Romans chapter 3, especially when you compare verse 3 and verse 5 to each other. They kind of parallel each other.

So, we talked about that, and we talked about Israel's vocation. If Israel is unfaithful, what are they unfaithful to? What are they unfaithful with? Well, they are unfaithful with the vocation that they have been given. Now, this is where the concept of election comes in. God has elected Israel in Genesis chapter 12 in verses 1-3 – he has elected the family of Abraham to be a blessing to the nations. Of course they are elected to be blessed, but they are elected to be a *blessing* to the non-elect – to the nations. And that is why you have this major theme throughout the Scripture, specifically in Isaiah where Israel is called a light to the nations. Israel is God's servant. That's the language that Isaiah uses. As God's

servant, Israel is called to be a light to the nations to show the world how to live. To be a holy example for all to see. Yeah – and that didn't work out, did it? Israel has failed. And of course, we dare not say this with a hypocritical eye. None of us, not you, not me, nobody is faithful. We have not been faithful. We have been unfaithful. "There is none righteous, not even one", says Paul. So we can't look at each other and say, "Man, you really messed up." No, we can look at ourselves and say, we have messed up. Israel has messed up, as well. They were called to be that blessing. That was their vocation. They were the rescue plan for world. The world has messed up. Read Genesis 3 -11. And Israel has been called to rescue them – Genesis 12. And we looked at Isaiah who picked up on this theme, very much, that Israel is there called God's servant.

So, Isaiah has these servant songs. There is this strong motif, this theme, all throughout Isaiah that is all about this mysterious servant. But, it's really not that mysterious, right? We looked at texts last week that showed quite clearly that the servant is defined. The servant is Israel. Israel is the servant. And yet, throughout Isaiah, there are sections where Isaiah does call Israel the servant, he also says the servant is someone who is going to rescue Israel. So the servant must be Israel, but it must be an Israelite who is different from the rest of Israel who is capable of rescuing Israel. And as a result, will rescue the world, rescue the nations, and be a light to the nations. And we talked quite emphatically about that and we mentioned how Jesus himself is the servant that Isaiah is talking about. Now, we look at that retrospectively, of course. And quite rightly. Jesus has been crucified. He is the suffering servant of Isaiah 52, 53. He has been resurrected and has shown himself to be the divine Son of God. Jesus is Isaiah's servant.

And that's why we looked at some passages in Matthew's gospel where it was fascinating really, where Jesus is re-enacting the story of Israel. He and Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt and they go back. And in Matthew chapter 2, Matthew says that was to fulfill what the prophet said, "that out of Egypt I have called my son." So there, Jesus is re-enacting the exodus. He is also re-enacting entrance into the Promised Land through his baptism in the Jordan River. Which, interestingly was to "fulfill all righteousness." And that did not mean that Jesus needed his sins washed away. No, no, no. Baptism is there for Jesus is a re-enactment into the Promised Land. Well, Jesus also spent 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the enemy. Interestingly enough, those temptations parallel the temptations went through in their 40 year wilderness journeys. The difference being though, that Jesus comes out of his wilderness temptations as righteous, holy and having defeated the enemy. Unfortunately, Israel in the Old Testament could not say that because Israel succumbed to her temptations, a lot of them. Many of them. To her detriment. But Jesus is fulfilling them.

Jesus in Matthew chapters 5-7 he is on a mountain re-enacting the story of Moses and the giving of the law to Israel. There again, Jesus is the New Testament's law giver and he is showing us the way. He is showing us in the Sermon on the Mount what it means to be a light to the nations. We are a city on a hill – a light to all, for all to see. And we are a beatitudes people. We are a meek people. We are supposed to be a merciful people. We are supposed to be a people who are pure in heart and so forth. He is giving us kingdom ethics. So you have in all of that, Jesus re-enacting the story of Israel.

Now why did he do that? Well, because God has to use Israel to rescue the world. Why? Well, because he promised Abraham. Well, why didn't he use Abraham's family? Well, because they were unusable due to their sin. And yet, God still found a way to use them through the faithful Israelite, Jesus. See here's the thing – salvation is found only in Israel. Salvation belongs to Israel. Go read John chapter 4 when Jesus says that salvation belongs to the family of Abraham. And yet it does belong to Israel, but it's for the world through Israel. That's a very important motif. That is the Genesis 11, 12 motif that I talked about. Genesis 11; you know the story of the tower of Babel. How the nations are fractured and broken. And Genesis 12; God has the repair plan put in place. The nations will be blessed through who? Through the family of Abraham, through Jesus the Messiah.

So that is where we were last week. And we have been building towards that through Romans 1 and 2, and finally in Romans 3 where Paul wants to ask, “When is God going to show himself to be faithful to the covenant? How is God going to make it all work?” Well, that is through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ the Messiah. God’s righteousness is revealed through Jesus’s own faithfulness. Because Jesus is the servant.

14:20 So let’s talk a little bit more about that servant – that servant motif. And that brings us to Philippians chapter 2. And we are going to look specifically at verses 5-11, which is traditionally known as the Christ hymn. But before we get to verse 5, I want us to start with verse 1 where Paul introduces the substance of his discussion here. So I’m going to read Philippians chapter 2 starting with verse 1 and I’ll go through verse 4. Paul says this,

1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

And that right there is a very important text, is it not? It’s one of those texts that every church probably needs to consider and every Christian needs to heed. And the context here seems to be that at the church at Philippi, there seems to be some disagreements going on, and probably some schismatic sort of things happening. This wasn’t just little disagreements, this probably was something pretty big. And so Paul feels the need to address this whole idea of unity within the church. Now he says, here in verse 2, “*be of the same mind, having the same love*”. Now it is important that Paul is talking about unity here. He is not talking about uniformity. Nowhere in the Bible, nowhere in the New Testament, nowhere in Paul are we commanded to be in uniform agreement with one another. Meaning, you are allowed to disagree with me and I’m allowed to disagree with you. We can agree to disagree. Christians are a part of a big family and as a part of a big family, we’re going to have disagreements. We are going to have different perspectives, we’re going to have different ideas and so forth. And that’s okay. There’s beauty in diversity. But what Paul is saying is that we need unity. Now, unity is different than uniformity because uniformity means that we all have to think alike. Exactly alike. Unity means that we can have different thoughts about things and different ideas, but we are none the less going to be together in the mission. And I think that is what Paul is saying here. He’s saying, “Look, come together in unity. Come together in disagreements. Work those out. Get a game plan in place so that you’re not beating each other up.” And I think that’s huge, is it not, in today’s church.

Let me just stop here for just a moment. We talk about theology. I love theology, I love digging deep, I love all that stuff. But at the end of the day, we need to realize that theology, at least for Paul and the New Testament itself as a whole, it’s all practical. There’s always practical bearings that these texts are geared toward. And I think we need to never miss that. This is not ivory tower stuff. This is every day stuff. This is real world living. And I just don’t want us to miss that. I don’t want to teach Scripture in a way that has no application. Because I think that when you try to teach Scripture abstractly, and you forget the application part, than I think that you are neglecting the understanding part.

I have been influenced by this German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer and he has this whole philosophical system in his book called *Truth and Method*. He says basically, that application and understanding are the same thing. It’s one process. In other words, you don’t understand something until it’s being applied and lived out. And I think that’s a really good way of understanding the concept of understanding. You really don’t understand something unless it becomes part of your life and becomes part of your praxis. We talk about orthodoxy, orthodox right Christian belief. But we also need to talk about orthopraxy, right living. Because they go together.

So you see that here in Paul, for sure. He says, “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.*” Don’t look out for yourselves, look out for other people.

This is Christianity 101. And we need to be reminded of those sorts of things. Now, Paul is not content to leave it there. He wants to give us something concrete to walk upon. He wants to give us a foundation for living that sort of life. And as a result, he points us to Jesus. Jesus was very humble, who was full of love, who was full of compassion and others centeredness. He was a very selfless person. He is a very selfless person. And so it makes sense that Paul would point us to Jesus. So basically, in verses 5-11, that's what he does. He points us to Jesus. Here's what Paul says. Verse 5,

5 *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,*
6 *who, though he was in the form of God,*
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
7 *but emptied himself,*
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 *he humbled himself*
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
9 *Therefore God also highly exalted him*
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 *so that at the name of Jesus*
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 *and every tongue should confess*
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

So this is the Christ hymn. This is what I mentioned earlier. The Christ hymn has a little bit of rhythm and rhyme to it. It probably was a song that was sung. There is debate over whether Paul actually wrote this part or if he's just quoting it because it was part of early Christian literary. It was part of Christian worship or something, who knows. Either way, whether Paul wrote this or he's quoting it and using it in his letter here, it's clear that Paul agrees with it. That's why he's quoting it. But I suspect that, I don't know, maybe Paul actually wrote this. Maybe this is his creation, if you will. It would make sense to me. There is debate about all this of course, but I don't want to get in too much to that.

But I want to dive more into this text with the time that we have left because it is so important. It's immensely important. If we want to understand Paul's worldview, if we want to understand his theology, his Christology, if we want to understand what Paul was doing in Romans chapter 3, I think this might help. Consider this text a footnote to the stuff in Romans 3 that we talked about. This is an addendum, if you will, of all that discussion. So let's dive into this and go through it line by line.

22:15 So, we pick up again in verse 5, "*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*" That was verse 5, and so what sort of mindset is Paul talking about? He saying let this mindset dwell in you. Let this way of living dwell in you. The way of living the mindset of Jesus. That is how you should be. You should think like Jesus thought. You should live like Jesus lived.

And then in verse 6 we pick up on more details about the way Jesus lived. Jesus, verse 6, Jesus was someone who was in the form of God and did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, or grasped, or held onto in an exploitive sort of way; or in a way that is not other centeredness. I think that might be a good way to put it. All Paul is saying here is that Jesus is equal with God – he is fully divine... this is slightly anachronistic here, but I think Paul would certainly agree it. It's like the Christian creed that Jesus is a very God. He is completely God. He's not one hundred percent God and halfway man, though. He is fully man, fully human and fully divine. And of course, later Christian tradition is going

to come out and parse that out very beautifully, I would say, and help us make sense of how that's possible.

This past week and more I've been reading Thomas Aquinas on the incarnation. It's been fascinating. I highly recommend checking out Thomas Aquinas's writings on the incarnation. It's been really fun to get into that. I don't get into theology proper much. I'm more of a biblical studies guy, but I find myself wading into theology quite a bit.

So anyway, Jesus is someone who as God, has all of the prerogatives of God. He enjoys the glory, the benefits of "Godness", if you will. And yet, he is someone who empties himself nonetheless. So, verse 7, "*but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.*" So that was verses 7 and 8. In other words, Jesus as God is someone who did not hold on to his throne and the divine prerogatives thereof, in a way that was selfish, in a way that was not other centered, if that makes sense. What this means is that he became human. Now what Paul is *not* saying here, is that when he became human he ceased to be God. That is not what Paul is saying. I know that some heresies would say something like that, but that is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that this God, Jesus himself, was willing to empty himself. To pour out himself for others. Think of Jesus in Matthew chapter 20, where Jesus tells his disciples, "Look, I have not come to be served, but I have come to serve and to give myself as a ransom for many people." That's fascinating. God did not come to be served, but to serve others. And Jesus is someone who washes feet. He is someone who in Philippians 2 here, becomes obedient even to the point of death. Even death on a cross. Which for us, that last line there, "even death on a cross", kind of loses its original significance because today the cross is a piece of jewelry. The cross is decoration. But back then in the first century, not only was the cross a place of gruesome execution, but it was a place of shame. It was a place of defeat, moral and political – the whole thing. It was a place of scorn. So it was a place of dishonor. So to be crucified by Rome would have been a complete humiliation. It was what Rome did to her worst enemies. And so here you have God Almighty... Picture this, you have God Almighty full of glory and splendor and yet, nonetheless, willing to lay down his life for you and for me, and for all. And that's shocking. And it alters our conception of all that we've been told about God.

Well, maybe you grew up in an environment that got God right. You knew that God was love kind, God was kind and compassionate. But let's face it, many people grow up in an environment where they hear that God is actually quite vicious. Maybe even blood thirsty and angry all the time. And people who grow up in those worlds, with that mindset – let me just say, that is not the mindset of the gospel. That is not the mindset of Jesus. That is not the mindset of God. That's a false representation of God. That's a misrepresentation of who God is. I've said this before on the podcast but it is worth repeating. God is not someone whose default mode is anger. No! He's someone who has a default mode of mercy. He does get angry... I mean, anybody who is loving will get angry. Because how can you look at people you love getting hurt and not get angry about that? God is someone who gets angry, but it's not his default mode is not anger in a sense that he's always looking for you to go wrong. No! God is always looking for ways to rescue us. And of course, from all eternity past, he's always had the way picked out. God didn't have trouble figuring that one out. But, my point is, that God always has our best intentions in mind if we will get on board with the program. If we will get on board with what he's doing. The point here is that God Almighty was willing to chain himself to an instrument of shame, i.e., the cross.

Now Jesus was obedient to do that and he was vindicated in the end. We know he was vindicated through his resurrection. His resurrection showed him to be who he said he was all along, because let's face it, if you can raise yourself from the dead, you can pretty much do whatever you want. So Jesus has been vindicated from the shame of the cross. Could you imagine, people seeing Jesus – maybe they didn't know who he was, or maybe they knew him peripherally. But seeing Jesus on the cross, you would immediately think, "Oh there's another criminal. After all, he's tied up between two criminals here" And so Jesus's vindication would have shown him, "No, no, no. I am a different sort of person. I am righteous. I have divine favor. I have conquered. I have even conquered the conqueror." And so the resurrection

has vindicated Jesus. And that's why in verse 9 it says, *"Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name"*. So Jesus's vindication comes through his exaltation, namely his resurrection and of course his ascension. His ascension to the throne. So he has come from heaven and has gone back to heaven and has assumed his throne such that he is overseeing the world. And he is ruling. He is ruling and reigning. All authority on heaven and earth has been given to Jesus and that's why he can call us out to go into world as our emissaries and spread the good news of how he is rescuing the world.

30:33 Now since Jesus has been given the name above every name that means that everybody comes to him in worship. Everybody should, and is called to come to him in worship, that is. And that's why it says, *"Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend (MH: or bow), in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

So this is a very important text because I think this is where we see the heart of Paul's theology. Paul is a good Jew. He is a monotheist. And what that means is that there is one creator and that is YHWH. Of course, the Psalms and other texts in the in the Old Testament do speak of gods (little g-o-d-s). These are sub-deities, as it were. They are not equal to YHWH in a sense that YHWH is their creator. So the point here, what I am trying to say is that Paul is a monotheist. He believes that YHWH is unique. He is the Most High God. He is the God of gods. Here in this text though, we see that Paul's monotheism, his Jewish monotheism, is being re-construed or reconfigured around his Christology. Paul's conception of God is essentially Christo-centric or Christological. Now how can I say that? Where do I get that in verses 9, 10, and 11? Well, it's actually pretty interesting because here in this text, Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45:23. He has quoted from that text and I'm going to read that verse so that we can get a sense of what is going on here. And I'm going to actually read starting at verse 22. It says,

22 *Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.*
23 *By myself I have sworn,
from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
"To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear."*

So this is Isaiah 45 verses 22 and 23. So, this in context is talking about YHWH. It is to YHWH that every knee will bow and every tongue shall swear, or pledge allegiance. Now, that sounds very familiar because we just read it in Philippians chapter 2. So I will go back to Philippians chapter 2:10-11. It says, *"...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* So, what Paul has essentially done here, is he has taken a YHWH text and he has applied it to Jesus. Here's the thing here. Is Paul thinking in his mind, "okay, back in the day this was applied to YHWH, but now we're going to apply it to this man named Jesus."? I don't think that captures what Paul is doing. I don't think he's doing that at all. What he is doing, is he is understanding that concept of YHWH itself, in light of his Christology. In light of what he believes about Jesus's resurrection and life ministry. He is re-understanding, or re-interpreting I guess you could say this YHWH text and saying, "Yup, that's Jesus." What he's not saying is, "You know, previously we worshiped YHWH and now we are going to worship this Jesus figure." No, no, no! Again, Paul is a devoted monotheist. Only YHWH is someone who is worthy of worship, but he's understanding YHWH in light of Jesus the Messiah. Which makes a lot of sense on theological grounds, and scriptural grounds. Or on storied grounds.

So, let me explain that. On theological grounds from the creeds that you might be familiar with... so I'm thinking of like the Nicene Creed, for example, and all the Christological deliberations and the Trinitarian

deliberations in early Christian history... we know that this idea of Jesus being equal with the Father with respect to divinity – that there is only one God but there are three persons in the one God, in the Godhead. So we know how that works theologically. Again, go and read the creeds and go back to read up on those Christological controversies and Trinitarian debates. You might read Gregory of Nyssa, for example on the Trinity and there is a host of others as well. And on the incarnations as well, like I said, go read Thomas Aquinas. So, theologically the church has made sense of that and has done a pretty good job of it, no doubt. It makes sense to me. I'm a credal person. I'm a Christian so I am someone who adheres to the creeds and I think the creeds have done a good job in understanding these mysteries.

36:00 So, you also have the storied aspect of all this. Just like we've been talking about in Romans chapter 3, it is through the faithfulness of Jesus that the righteousness of God is revealed. So, there is this essential unity between God's righteousness and Jesus's faithfulness that we see in Romans 3. And Paul is presenting even there, a way for us to understand the unity of the Son of God and the Father. He doesn't go into the language there, but it is very consistent with that Trinitarian idea in Romans 3. So, how is God going to be faithful? How is God going to act? How is God going to work? How is God going to fulfill the covenant that he made with Abraham? Through the faithfulness of Jesus. The faithfulness of God is through the faithfulness of Jesus. And I think you see that very well here in that text. So this is what I would call the storied aspect of it all. Because again, Jesus is fulfilling the story of Israel and Jesus is the outworking of the faithfulness of God the Father. So there's this whole story that is being told from Genesis 11, 12 to Isaiah, to Romans chapter 3 where God is flushing out his story through the person of Jesus Christ.

It's super cool to think of it. You have the storied aspect and you have the theological aspect. And all that makes sense of how Paul could quote this text and quote it christologically. It is interesting when you go back Isaiah chapter 45 and you read the surrounding context. I read a moment ago from Isaiah 45:22 & 23, where YHWH says, "I am God, there is no other. By myself I have sworn." And then it says, "To me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear" So he is saying there is nobody like me. I am the one God. Again, classic Jewish monotheism. And he is saying, "To me", and we can read that there as saying, "only to me shall a knee bow and a tongue confess." And elsewhere if you read in the verse prior to that he says, "There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is no one besides me." So you have very strict Jewish monotheism all throughout Isaiah 45 and no doubt Paul is very familiar with that. You also get this in verse 5 of Isaiah 45. He says, "I am YHWH and there is no other; besides me there is no god." Again, all throughout here you get this very strong monotheistic idea that only YHWH is worthy of worship. Only YHWH is worthy of bending the knee to and swearing allegiance to. And no doubt Paul as a good Jewish monotheist, he would have known these texts. For crying out loud, he quotes one of these texts, so he knows Isaiah 45 quite well. And that's why it's all the more fascinating that he will take a text and apply it to Jesus.

So the question that we need to ask here is, "Okay, does Paul think that there is someone other than YHWH that is worthy of worship?" And the answer, of course, is no. Jesus is so unified with YHWH that he cannot conceive of YHWH without thinking of Jesus. And he cannot think of Jesus without thinking of YHWH. There is a plurality there that we can acknowledge. A plurality of persons we could say. Which is consistent with the Trinitarian formula. But, there is an essential unity there that is still nonetheless upheld. So it's tri-unity. It's Trinity. Of course we haven't talked about the Holy Spirit here, but that's for another conversation. But this idea is very important.

And of course, I would recommend to everybody – assuming that most of you are familiar with this – but I would highly recommend checking out the work of Mike Heiser. Dr. Mike Heiser. He has written on this kind of stuff before – two powers in heaven idea – and all of that. All of that very consistent with what I'm saying here. I think there is a lot of similarities in what I'm saying here. I am just looking at through a different angle. Namely, I am looking at it through Paul's interpretive lens because I'm getting all of this by simply paying attention to the way that Paul interprets the Old Testament. I love reading Paul read

Scripture. That's just what I love to do. And here I am reading Paul read Scripture in a way that is Christological and in a way that's Christocentric. And I think that's super, super important.

40:55 And here is why that is important. Here's why that is essential to understanding Romans chapter 3. You remember all I said at the beginning of this episode and what I said in the last episode about Isaiah and the servant. How for Isaiah, the servant is Israel and for Isaiah the servant is also someone who rescues Israel so that the world can be rescued. Well, this is very interesting in light of our discussion just now on Philippians 2 and Paul's exegesis, and interpretation of Isaiah. Here is why it is important in how it all comes together. You have to ask yourself, "Who is the servant of Isaiah?" Well, it's Israel. It's also Jesus. And as it turns out, it's YHWH. YHWH is the servant. YHWH is the one who rescues the world. And this is a beautiful conclusion to our discussion that started last week in Romans 3 that God himself is the only Savior. God himself is the only one who can rescue any of us. If God is going to use a human being to rescue the world, it will have to be a human being who is fully divine. And as it turns out, that is Jesus. And that is how God's righteousness is revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ because Jesus is the servant figure. And Jesus is the one who, according to Paul in Philippians chapter 2, is worthy of the worship that belongs only to YHWH. And I think all of this fits together like hand in glove. It helps us to see Paul's worldview. It helps us to see Paul's theological commitments. It helps us also to see his interpretive activity, the way he interprets Scripture.

Okay so let's go there for just a moment. How does Paul interpret Scripture? Well, here at least, we see that he interprets it christologically. And he's not imposing on the text of the Old Testament in a unilateral sort of way. No, he's engaging the text in a dialogical sort of way. Paul is someone who respects the original horizon of understanding of the Old Testament text. He respects its world, its context. And yet he wants it to speak afresh in light of what God has done through Jesus Christ. For Paul you see this idea of dialog. I mentioned this before in the podcast. I'll say it again though because I think it's worth considering again even here. It's that for Paul, the Old Testament is a text that he converses with. The Old Testament is the answer to his questions, and the Old Testament is a question to his answers. So what I mean by that is, for Paul, he is so convinced that Jesus Christ is the Messiah (and understandably so, because he saw him on the Damascus Road for himself and with his own eyes); he is so convinced that Jesus is the Messiah that he can go back and read these Old Testament texts in light of Jesus the Messiah. So again, these Old Testament texts become answers to his questions about Jesus. "Who is this Jesus who appeared to me? Oh wow, this is all what the old testament has pointed us to." The Old Testament has given us this messianic profile, to quote Mike Heiser. This messianic profile helps us to contextualize Jesus, his life and his ministry, and all of his works on the earth, and his crucifixion and his resurrection. It gives me categories for thinking about this person named Jesus. So the Old Testament becomes a lens through which he interprets Jesus.

But it works the other way around too. The Old Testament is interpreted through a lens of Jesus for Paul. And we see that here very clearly here in Philp 2 verse 11 that he has interpreted the Old Testament in light of his Christological convictions. Paul's hermeneutic is Christological. He interprets everything through the Jesus lens. He interprets Scripture through the Jesus lens. He interprets life and reality through and events through the Jesus lens. And think of it here, in the context of Philippians chapter 2. He's interpreting church life through the Jesus lens. That's why he tells the church, "Don't do anything because of selfish ambition. Don't do anything out of conceit, but in humility look to others more important than yourself. And look out for their needs. And he's saying, "After all, this is what Jesus did, and we should have the mindset of Jesus the Messiah." And this is what I mean, all Paul is doing there is interpreting the situation in light of Jesus. He's saying, "Guys, let's interpret our disagreements in light of Jesus. And let's conform them to Jesus. Let's live out the Jesus life in these situations." In other words, what I'm saying is that Paul is an interpreter. And you are an interpreter. And I am an interpreter. The question is, through which lens will we interpret things? And Paul is saying, interpret everything in light of Jesus the Messiah.

46:15 Okay, one final thing that I want to end on here. This idea of Paul's Christological interpretation is going to be super, super important for how we are going to understand Romans chapter 4. In Romans chapter 4, Paul is going to tell the Abraham story. He is going to talk about Abraham, which makes sense in light of all the stuff we've been talking about so far in Romans chapters 1, 2, and 3. Because it was Abraham's family that was called and elected to the light to the world. And it was Abraham's family that have failed at that vocation. Just like everyone else – all of humanity. The Gentiles have failed at their vocation, too of being a people who honor God. We have not honored God. We have not acknowledged him. We have not seen fit to worship him. Instead we have worshiped our idols. It makes sense why Paul is going to spend some time talking about Abraham. Because he's been alluding to it all throughout. He's been talking about circumcision. He's been talking about faith and all of that. Well, it's time to talk about Abraham. And in Romans 4, without further delay, that is what Paul is going to do.

So, in our next segment together, in our next time together, we are going to spend time looking at Romans 4. Now, here is what we need to do to prepare. We need to consider all that we have talked about here today. Paul is an interpreter of Scripture in the sense that he interprets it through his Christological lens. And I think we need to spend some time really thinking about that concept because in Romans 4, Paul is going to interpret the Abraham christologically as well. So this is why this time together in Philippians 2 is, I think, really beneficial. Because it gives us some context to understanding Romans chapter 3 and it builds us a bridge to travel on into Romans chapter 4 where he talks about Abraham and where he interprets the Abraham story christologically. So, I think some homework that we can do is to come back to Philippians 2, maybe through the whole book of Philippians, the whole letter here, and think of ways... Or let me say this, we should read Philippians 2, read all of Philippians and notice the ways in which Paul interprets things there christologically. He's interpreting an event, these disagreements that are happening there christologically. He wants to interpret life christologically. He's interpreting Isaiah christologically. And so, just kind of get familiar with that idea. Maybe go back and read Matthew chapters 1-7 and see how the story of Israel is being interpreted christologically here. My point in saying all this is to say just think about that. Meditate on that and maybe pray about it too. Maybe we could be thinking about the things we are going through in our own life today. Our struggles, our anxieties that we are going through this week. Maybe we can start looking at our own situations through the Jesus lens. Maybe that's good practice for studying through Romans. I think it is. But it's also just helpful that we can interpret things through the Jesus lens. That we can face any obstacle through the Jesus lens and we are much better off when we do. At any rate, those are just ways that we can prepare for coming to Romans chapter 4. Because for some of us this might be a new concept of reading the text christologically. And it's going to be fascinating because Romans 4 will be really helpful for us to get another glimpse of some of Paul's most basic pre-understandings, his most basic commitments with respect to his interpretive approach to Scripture.

50:15 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.