

Sermon Notes from the Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

RCL Readings – Exodus 17:1–7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1–11; John 4:5–42.

ACNA Readings – Exodus 17:1–7; Psalm 95; Romans 1:16–32; John 4:5–42.

Introduction. We linger in Lent, with the daylight hours lengthening, and sure promises of Spring and Easter emerging everywhere. In keeping with our Lord’s forty days of fasting, the Christian calendar follows a period of penitence and fasting in preparation for Easter.

Common Theme. This week’s readings focus our attention on the importance of heartfelt faith and faithfulness in our penitential journey. What may appear to be random woes in life, might be trials from our faithful God, testing our faith in him alone to develop proven character and faithfulness within us. In every generation, at any point in time, there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are currently faithless, unrighteous, earthly-minded and oppressors – under the wrath of God – and those who are thirsting after God, trusting in him and living with believing, faithfulness – because of the righteousness of God revealed through our Lord Jesus Christ. God is spirit and so we are called to worship him in spirit and truth. Which kind of people will we prove to be in our generation?

This week contains two key verses for Yeshua-followers in tune with the vision of CMJ: “Salvation is from the Jewish nation,” and “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.”

Exodus 17:1–7. Water from Rock. Our reading follows the momentous event of Israel being led out of Egypt and passing through the Red Sea (or, “Sea of Reeds”) and out into the wilderness. Paul says of this event that “our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2–3). The opening verse of this whole section in Exodus (15:22) begins with Moses *causing* Israel to journey (*hifil*; causal verb) from the Red Sea (following the cloud), out into the wilderness, where they went through three tests or trials, and in the opening verse of our reading, for the third trial, saying literally, that they set out, “by the Lord’s mouth” (v.1). Notice too, the wording used of the Messiah Yeshua (Matt 4:1), how, after *his* baptism, when he was baptized in the Spirit and in the water, he was also “led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.”

Israel’s first trial had been regarding water that was undrinkable, because it was bitter (15:22–27), and the second trial was about a lack of food (16:1–36). Both times, Israel grumbled (*lun*, לָנַחַם)¹ against God. They did not realise that these incidents were not *bad luck* in the journey of life or worse Moses’ failure in leadership, but the Lord testing them (*nasah*, נָסָה),² to see if they would *obey* his instructions and *trust* him to take care of them. This is the essence of faith – believing, faithfulness. In the first two stories, it was the Lord testing them, but in this third story, it was them testing the Lord (17:2, 7). The third trial – our reading – was another incident about water – not bitter

¹ Exod 15:24; 16:2, 7, 8, 9, 12; 17:3.

² Exod 15:25; 16:4; 17:2, 7.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

water – but a complete lack of water. However, the similarity of the incidents should have reminded Israel of the Lord's provision in the previous incident, but no. Here again, the same word for grumbling occurs – 17:3, the seventh and final reference in the book of Exodus.

Our reading can be divided into three parts: the situation and the complaint (vv. 1–3), the cry and the miracle (vv. 4–6), and the commemoration by naming (v. 7) (NET, note 1).

If the people had learned from the previous tests, they would have prayed to God or asked Moses to pray for them, instead of blaming Moses and, in effect, testing the Lord. Their complaint showed no remembrance of God's saving work and provision. The words in verse three are literally: "Why this, did you cause us to go up from Egypt and to cause me to die and my children and my cattle with thirst." The rhetoric blames Moses for causing all this and finishes in a very personal and pointed manner. Alter says, "The switch [from first-person plural to first-person singular] allows the sharpness of the complaint to become more vivid, as the prototypical individual speaker representing the people laments his own imminent death and that of his children" (Alter I:283). In so doing, they were individually doubting God, doubting that he was amongst them, and testing him to see if he would act.

Moses is told to take the staff with which he struck the river Nile and to go before the people and lead them out to a particular rock at the mountain of Horeb (= Sinai). The Lord speaks very graphically, "Behold me standing before you there." This incident has deeper significance when one ponders on Paul's statement: "that rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4). When Moses obeyed the Lord and struck the rock, water duly came out; this is a *Type* fulfilled by Christ in his atoning work. Christ was struck at the Cross, and living water came out for the salvation of the world. The water, it seems, flowed from the rock back to their encampment via a wadi (see Deut 9:21) (JSB). Hertz puts it well: "The rod which could make the waters of the Nile undrinkable for the Egyptians could produce water to satisfy the thirst of the Israelites" (Hertz, 279).

NET quotes Benno Jacob by saying,

So water from the rock, the most impossible thing, cleared up the question of his power. Doing it at Horeb was significant because there Moses was called and told he would bring them to this place. Since they had doubted God was in their midst, he would not do this miracle in the camp, but would have Moses lead the elders out to Horeb. If people doubt God is in their midst, then he will choose not to be in their midst. And striking the rock recalled striking the Nile; there it brought death to Egypt, but here it brought life to Israel. There could be little further doubting that God was with them and able to provide for them. (NET, note 18)

And again:

The presence of Yahweh at this rock enabled Paul to develop a midrashic lesson, an analogical application: Christ was present with Israel to provide water for them in the wilderness. So this was a Christophany. But Paul takes it a step further to equate the

Sermon Notes from the Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

rock with Christ, for just as it was struck to produce water, so Christ would be struck to produce rivers of living water. The provision of bread to eat and water to drink provided for Paul a ready analogy to the provisions of Christ in the gospel (1 Cor 10:4) (NET, note 21).

The name Massah (מַסָּה, *massah*) means ‘Proving’; it is derived from the verb ‘test, prove, try.’ And the name Meribah (מֵרִיבָה, *mérivah*) means ‘Strife’; it is related to the verb ‘to strive, quarrel, contend.’ The choice of these names for the place would serve to remind Israel for all time of this failure with God. God wanted this and all subsequent generations to know how unbelief challenges God. And yet, he gave them water. So in spite of their failure, he remained faithful to his promises. The incident became proverbial, for it is the warning in Ps 95:7–8, which is quoted in Heb 3:15: ‘Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness. There your fathers tested me and tried me, and they saw my works for forty years.’ (NET, note 23).

This story of *water from rock* should be an encouragement to our faith and faithfulness, that even from the hardest times of life, God can refresh us.

Psalm 95. If only you will listen to my voice. This psalm is a call to public celebration and a challenge – a celebration of the Creator of the physical world (vv. 4–5) and of the Creator of Israel as a nation (vv. 6–7), and a challenge not to rebel as at Meribah (vv. 8–11). Also, there are two calls to worship (vv. 1–2, 6) followed by two reasons given for worship: “for” (*ki*; v. 3 and v. 7). “Later Jewish tradition made this the first in a sequence of psalms [95–99] chanted as a prelude to the Friday-evening prayer for welcoming the Sabbath, evidently because the Sabbath was seen as a celebration of creation” (Alter III:227). Notice also the repeated mention of God’s *hand*, meaning his power and authority, both in creation (vv. 4–5) and in possession of Israel (v.7).

The turn comes at verse 7d, with the unadorned plea: “Today, if at his voice you will listen,” with the sense: “If (only), when he speaks, you will hear and obey him.” Normally, such a sentence would be followed by a “then” clause, but on this occasion, the plea is left hanging—“If only...,” creating rhetorical impact. Alter explains: “It marks an abrupt pivot in the poem, as the psalm of acclaim turns into a psalm of prophetic rebuke” (Alter, 228). The poetry switches from the worshippers eulogising over who God is, and over themselves—we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep he owns—to divine speech, their God speaking bluntly: “if only you would ... Don’t harden your hearts as (at) Meribah and as (in) the day of Massah in the wilderness.” The alliteration in Hebrew adds emphasis: “Meribah ... Massah ... midbar” (wilderness). We know what these places refer to our first reading in Exod 17! Strife and testing! “Perhaps the implicit connection with the acclaiming of God’s kingship in the first part of the poem is that Israel can authentically recognise God as king only by obedience to His commands” (Alter, 228).

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

God appeals to the current generation, based on the response of the first generation, as if to say: “Even though they had seen my work, what I had done for them *in* Egypt and in bringing them *out* from Egypt ... they still rebelled.” Have we seen God’s work in our lives and in the lives of others and yet we continue to doubt his grace and goodness in our present circumstances? The description in verse ten is literally: “a people of erring heart (are) they, and they do not know my ways,” like sheep, yes (v. 7), but wandering ones, wandering from YHWH’s path. So this generation is warned of the wrath of God poured out on their forefathers’ generation: “They will not enter into my rest,” speaking of the promised land as the Shepherd’s pasture, “my resting place” – same word as in Deut 12:9. Alter concludes: “The psalm thus ends on a rather stern note of admonition, one that its listeners are expected to take to heart” (Alter, 228).

Romans 5:1–11. Proven Character. Here Paul begins the second stage of his argument with the glorious words: “Therefore, having been pronounced righteous by faith, we have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” Beale explains: “The apostle moves from speaking of Abraham and his justifying faith to Christ and his justifying death.” God works *through* our Lord Jesus Christ to give sinners peace with him! And Paul brackets the paragraph with the rejoicing we can now have in God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*, through whom we have now received this reconciliation (v.11). Beale speaks in keeping with our theme about the trials of life: “These sufferings, in which all believers participate, were also the experience of the people of God in the past, according to the witness of the Scriptures. The new life does not yet remove us from the old life of the fallen world; rather, it places us at the centre of the battle between the two orders.” (Beale, 628).

And to build our faith and faithfulness, the foundation we now have of righteousness and peace also gives us access to God’s grace and a sure hope of God’s glory! So anything that now comes at us can be met with confidence in our Saviour God. So much so, that we can rejoice in any sufferings that may come our way, as we are confident that God has a purpose for us even in suffering! If we face them with sure faith in our sovereign God, we will see the sufferings produce fruit in our lives now, and fruit that will last for eternity. The affliction works out endurance in the faithful soul, and the endurance builds a proven character, and the proven character develops hope and experiences the love of God poured out in our hearts. The word in the middle of this sequence (*dokimē*, δοκιμή) has the same sense as our “testing” word above, so the testing and trials of life result in an approved, proven character. It is possible that the love of God here could be both a subjective and an objective genitive: “The love that comes from God and that produces our love for God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (NET, note 6, quoting *ExSyn* 121). See also the OT background of the Spirit being *poured out*, in Isa 32:15 and Joel 2:28–29.

Our sense of security in all of life’s vicissitudes can be unwavering because of what God has done for us in Christ! God has demonstrated the intensity of his love for us sinners through the Messiah’s death! So if he has paid such a price to make us righteous, he is not going to lose us on the journey now, but will save us now and eternally, even from the wrath of God against sin. We can be sure that since he has reconciled us through Christ’s death; he will certainly save us through his resurrected and ascended life *now*! Such a certain future means we can rejoice in our God even in suffering!

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

John 4:5–42. God is spirit, so worship him in spirit and truth. It may help to illuminate this incident if we fill in some of the background first.³ The place where this exchange took place was by Jacob's well, with Mount Gerizim visible in the background. This was the setting where Moses told Israel to recite God's blessings (Deut 11:29; 27:12) and also where the Samaritan temple had been located. The Samaritans view(ed) themselves as descending from the two tribes of Joseph – Ephraim and Manasseh – in the northern kingdom of Israel, the ones left after the Assyrian invasion (722–721 BC), but Jews generally saw them as a mix of nations who were moved into the region after the conquest by Assyria (2 Kgs 17:24–41). Interestingly, some recent genetic studies may support the view that Samaritans descend mainly from an Israelite population dating back prior to the Assyrian invasion – also likely because of their marriage customs and because they were genetically isolated as a population.

From archaeology, it seems the temple at Shechem was built in the times of Ezra/Nehemiah (ca. 450 BC), and tensions arose with the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile when they began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:6–24) (JANT). A sharp divide occurred around 110 BC, when the Maccabean leader, John Hyrcanus, destroyed it during an acrimonious war with Samaria. The Samaritan Torah or Pentateuch (SP) is preserved on some of the most ancient copies of the Torah dating back to the second century BC. The SP is written in an offshoot of the original Paleo-Hebrew script used before the times of the Babylonian exile (587 BC). The Jews however adopted the Aramaic script during the exilic period, and this developed into the modern Hebrew script used in the Masoretic text (MT) of the Tanakh today.

The Samaritans consider that the Torah is the entire biblical canon, and view their version as the true one. Indeed, they call themselves the *Shamerim* meaning Guardians/Keepers/Watchers (of the Torah), from the Semitic root *shamar* – which means to watch or guard. The most notable substantial differences between the texts of the SP and the MT are those related to Mount Gerizim, the Samaritans' place of worship. The Samaritan version of the Ten Commandments, for instance, includes the command that an altar was to be built on Mount Gerizim, on which all sacrifices should be offered.

Both Jewish and Samaritan religious leaders taught that it was wrong to have any contact with the opposite group, and neither was to enter the other's territories or even to speak to the other, and Josephus reports numerous violent confrontations between Jews and Samaritans throughout the first half of the first century.

Now to the text. The context shows Jesus had been baptising many in Judea and it was drawing the attention of the religious leaders, so he decided to move north to Galilee. The narrative then says, that on the way: “He had to pass through Samaria.” As we have said, religious Jews often avoided contact with Samaritans as they saw them as ritually unclean. Instead, they would travel up the Jordan valley on the east side of the river, and skirt around Samaria. So how did Jesus know on this

³ See the various Wikipedia articles: Samaritans; Mount Gerizim; Samaritan Pentateuch.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

occasion, he *had* to go through Samaria? We are only guessing, of course, but John tells us Jesus always did (4:34; 5:30; 6:38) and said (12:49–50; 14:10) everything his Father told him. So, too, on this occasion. The synoptic Gospels tell us that each day Jesus would rise early in the morning to pray (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42; 5:16). On this day, the Father must have made it clear to his Son that on this day he had to go through Samaria and meet a woman at Sychar, which was in the vicinity of Shechem, near to Jacob's well. And so he went. Surely, this is a perfect example for us – the One who knows God is spirit and lives in tune with the Spirit – on the daily path of faith-full-ness.

Jesus was tired from the journey and so decided to sit down on the well around noon, and his disciples went into the nearby town to buy food. This description is a beautiful insight into the human nature of Yeshua. We are told a seemingly irrelevant point that it was near the field that Jacob had given his son Joseph. Custom infers (from Gen 48:21–22; Josh 24:32) that this was the land at Shechem that Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor (Gen 33:18–19) and which later became Joseph's burial place (Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32) (Beale, 438). The woman who approached the well at this moment was Samaritan, maybe obvious from her attire, as maybe also was Jesus' attire. She met Jesus at noon, which contrasts with Nicodemus who met him at night (3.2), but maybe both were trying to avoid contact with others at that moment. "Jesus' thirst is mentioned again only in 19:28, at the crucifixion, again at noon" (JANT). The woman's response to his request for a drink is very pointed in the original (literally): "How you, a Jew being, from me you ask to drink, a Samaritan woman being; for Jews do not have dealings with Samaritans." Note the emphasis on the fact that *he* was a Jew and *she* was a Samaritan, and more, *a woman*. It cannot easily be represented in English, but to drive the contrast home, the last two words in her sentence are "Jews, Samaritans," finishing with the subject and the object right next to each other: "... for they do not have dealings Jews (with) Samaritans."

The word *Jews* here is not being used antisemitically. It could be translated – and in John generally is – as *Judeans*, as the issue is regarding two people living in two geographical regions, but then, and still today, the ethnic cannot easily be separated from the religious.

NET translates the last verb in verse eight (*sunchraomai*, συγγράομαι) as "Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans," which makes the issue more obvious to those of us unaware of the Jewish halachic customs and practice. As religious Jews generally saw Samaritans as ritually unclean (though see *m. Ber.* 7:1; 8:8), and particularly a Samaritan woman (see *m. Nid.* 4:1), the woman expressed surprise that he would think of using a drinking vessel that she had touched, as it would make him ceremonially unclean (NET, note 20). This "underscores how Jesus was not afraid to break social barriers in the pursuit of his mission" (Beale, 438).

Notice the development in terms the woman used for Jesus. She calls him: A Jew (v. 9), Sir (vv. 11, 15), Lord (v. 19; *Kurios*, the same as 'Sir,' but probably, meaning 'Lord' at this point [JANT]), a prophet (v. 19), the Messiah (v. 29). And the words of the townsfolk, following the testimony of the woman: "the Saviour of the World" (v. 42).

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

Jesus' explanation uses the phrase *living water*. This was also used in the Greek Septuagint for "flowing water" (Num 19:17) and *refreshing* (Jer 2:14; 17:13), and the woman's response suggests she took Jesus' words literally like Nicodemus did, and so they misunderstood him (JANT). In John's Gospel, "living water" is a figure of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38–39), but it may also be alluding to the stories of Exod 17 – our first reading – and Num 20:8–11 (also 21:16–18) where water gushes from the rock providing refreshment for Israel. Also, God calls himself "the spring of living water" (Jer 2:13), and in the last days Israel "will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa 12:3), also characteristic of the Messiah, "the ultimate redeemer" (*Eccles. Rab.* 1:9). "In the future age, envisioned by the prophet, people 'will neither hunger or thirst' (Isa 49:10) ... those who follow his invitation, 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters ... that your soul may live' (Isa 55:1–3a)" (Beale 438–39).

Jesus drives home the difference in the *living water* (v. 14, literally): "Whoever drinks of the water that I give him, will never be thirsty forever." Jesus explains this water comes from a well within a person, with the water jumping or rushing and springing up and overflowing – like a spiritual artesian well! "In the LXX, [*living water*] is used to describe the "Spirit of God" as it falls on Samson and Saul. See Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Kgdms 10:2, 10 LXX (= 1 Sam 10:6, 10 ET); and Isa 35:6 (note context)" (NET, note 37).

Salvation is from the Jews, means "arising among" or "originating in" the Jewish nation. Israel was chosen as God's special people and for a special mission (Deut 4:37; 7:6–7; 10:15; 1 Kgs 3:8; Isa 44:1–2; 45:4; 65:9, 15, 22; Amos 3:2) (JANT), and Jesus clearly affirms this to this Samaritan. The Hebrew Torah and the SP indicate this in Gen 49:10. Beale says: "Jesus statement here may also echo Isa 2:3 ('For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem')" and he goes on to say: "Nevertheless, although Jesus freely acknowledges Jewish salvation-historical preeminence, he does not allow it to become a barrier keeping others from benefiting from divine salvation blessings." (Beale, 439).

The woman argues about "*the place where* it is necessary to worship" (v. 20), whether *in* this mountain or *in* Jerusalem, *in* physical places, but Jesus says the ones worshipping the Father, must do so "*in spirit and truth*" (v. 24), not in physical places. The Father is seeking worshippers who recognise God is spirit, and so are not worried about outward and physical symbols but about the spiritual realities. It is not about *place* but *heart*, not about physical locations but about spiritual motivations.

Maybe the woman missed the closing words of Jesus, about spiritual realities, because she was cut by his opening words, that the Samaritans worship what they don't understand. Since she comes back with "I do understand that the Messiah is coming, and when he comes he will declare to us everything we need to know." It is interesting that the woman uses the term *Messiah* here, as the Samaritans generally used the word *Taheb*, which means "Restorer." Her statement, "he will tell us everything we need to know," fits in with their view that the Taheb was more a teaching prophet than a royal king like the Jewish Messiah (Beale 440). Jesus' reply to this is the very dramatic, *ego eimi*,

Sermon Notes from the Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

“I am (he), the one speaking to you.” What powerful resonance there is here, both with the revelation of YHWH as the “I am,” and equating this with the coming of the Messiah. The one speaking to you IS the Messiah!

When the disciples return, John – the narrator – tells us they were shocked to find Jesus speaking with the woman. No explanation is given, but JANT says: “The overtones of an encounter between a man and a woman at a well are those of courtship.”

The mention of sowing and reaping coinciding in verses 36–37 seems to be alluding to Amos 9:13. Given the context in Amos, Jesus seems to be saying the eschatological age has dawned in his ministry and means the approaching Samaritans are now the harvest. The ministry of Jesus and his predecessors – those such as John the Baptist and the previous prophets – have done the hard work of sowing and now the followers of Jesus are the beneficiaries and will bring in the harvest (Beale, 440). NET says: “There is irony in the Samaritans’ declaration that Jesus was really *the Savior of the world*, an irony foreshadowed in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel (1:11): ‘He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.’ Yet the Samaritans welcomed Jesus and proclaimed him to be not the Jewish Messiah only, but *the Savior of the world*” (NET, note 92).

ACNA Readings

Romans 1:16–32. Salvation to Jew first and also to Gentile. What a powerful statement Paul makes here: “I’m not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and to the Gentile.” The spread of the gospel in the book of Acts showed that it indeed went first to Jews, in Jerusalem and Judea, and even as it spread out to mixed or Gentile towns, the apostles would go first to the synagogue there. The surprising thing is that this gospel was not just for God’s chosen nation, but was now going out to the whole world. As we saw above in John 4, Samaritans came to recognise Yeshua as “the Saviour of the World.”

The options about the nature of the “righteousness” described in verse 17, and the force of the genitive θεοῦ (of God) which follows, is weighed well by NET (note 35): (1) Some ... understand ‘righteousness’ to refer to the righteous status given to believers as a result of God’s justifying activity, and see the genitive ‘of God’ as a genitive of source (= ‘from God’). (2) Others see the ‘righteousness’ as God’s act or declaration that makes righteous (i.e., justifies) those who turn to him in faith, taking the genitive ‘of God’ as a subjective genitive. (3) Still others see the ‘righteousness of God’ mentioned here as the attribute of God himself, understanding the genitive ‘of God’ as a possessive genitive (‘God’s righteousness’).

The phrase “from faith to faith (*ek pisteōs eis pistin*, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν,) could also be understood in different ways. NET says: “It may have the idea that this righteousness is obtained by faith (ἐκ πίστεως) because it was designed for faith (εἰς πίστιν)” (NET, note 37).

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

The quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 is the first direct quotation in Romans. Again, there are a number of challenges for interpretation here, but the main one comes with the translation of the Hebrew sense into Greek. The Hebrew word *emuna* (אֱמוּנָה) never means ‘belief’ in an abstract sense, but ‘faithfulness’ in a concrete sense. On the other hand, the Greek word *pistis* can mean faith or faithfulness, but almost certainly the former here. It helps if one notices the antithetical parallelism in the Hebrew verse, the first line contrasting with the second line. I take the literal sense to be: “The one swollen with pride – referring to the invading Babylonians – his soul or desire is not upright in him, but the righteous one – in his faithfulness, he lives or he lives faithfully/truly.” Pride in one’s soul has the effect of twisting one’s desires out of a true sense. In contrast, the one with a heart right with God lives faithfully in keeping with God’s instructions and promises. The righteous one’s heart is true – the person of integrity – because he trusts in God’s word and obeys it faithfully, even when circumstances are difficult. The LORD is assuring Habakkuk that those who are truly innocent will be preserved through the coming oppression and judgment by their godly lifestyle, for God ultimately rewards this type of conduct. In contrast to these innocent people, those with impure desires – epitomized by the greedy Babylonians; see v. 5 – will not be able to withstand God’s judgment (v. 4a) (NET Hab 2:4, note 15).

It is important to recognise that Paul does not see “faith” as a human quality or virtue. Beale argues: “In proclamation (‘from faith’) God’s saving righteousness is *revealed* and thus effects faith (‘unto faith’). The righteousness of the one who believes (1:17b) is found in the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel (1.17a). Furthermore, as a citation of Hab 2:4, it is clear that ‘living by faith’ signifies ‘sharing in salvation’ participating in the gospel, not merely the faithful living of an individual (or community)” (Beale, 609).

Paul’s striking juxtaposition of these statements about righteousness and wrath leaves little doubt that, according to him, the revelation of God’s wrath explains the revelation of God’s saving righteousness. The promise in Hab 2:4 entails deliverance through judgment. Destruction must come in order for salvation to arrive. God’s wrath sweeps away his enemies, in this way working salvation. Paul sees the call of the Lord upon the prophet to ‘live’ by the Lord’s faithfulness in the face of the Babylonian invasion as a pattern of the Lord’s saving work – or type – that has come to fulfilment in the gospel, which imparts faith in the face of the eschatological wrath of God, which is already present in the world (Beale, 611). This resonates with the theme in our readings, that no matter what is going on in the world around us, we must live by faith in our faithful God and see his purposes work out.

Paul argues that even though the revelation of God is visible to all, people generally have ignored the revelation and given themselves over to the creature rather than the creator. The description of sins in 1:18–32 seems to be focused on Gentile nations, with 2:1–3:20 going on to argue specifically that the Jewish people are no exception. “Vice lists” like verses 28–32 can be found elsewhere in the NT in Matt 15:19; Gal 5:19–21; 1 Tim 1:9–10; and 1 Pet 4:3 (NET, note 65).

Further reading.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year A

- Alter: *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (3 vols): Robert Alter
- Beale, G.K., & Carson, Donald A. (Eds.). (2007). *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Baker Publishing Group.
- Hertz, J.H (Ed.). (1960). *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (2nd ed.). Soncino Press.
- **JANT**: Levine, A.J., & Brettler, M.Z. (2011). *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Oxford University Press.
- **JSB**: Berlin, Adele, Brettler, Marc Z., & Fishbane, Michael A. (Eds.). (2004). *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation*. Oxford University Press.
- **NET**: *The NET Bible: Translation and Notes* (2019). Thomas Nelson.

About the author. Dr Paul Hocking has had a varied career in education, leadership and management development, planting and pastoring of a social-enterprise church, supporting the leadership of many churches and Christian charities under the auspices of Evangelical Alliance Wales, and directing the Cymru Institute for Contemporary Christianity (2010-2019). He has qualifications in Microbiology, Public Health and Action Research, and a PhD on the Hebrew Bible focusing on the composition of the book of Leviticus. He has publications in health services management and the Hebrew Bible, including two papers for CMJ on the Decalogue and Leviticus. Paul is married with two adult children.