JUSTIFICATION AND GROUP IDENTITY

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Some excellent and controversial thoughts from a very good book.
Category: Quotes

I am thoroughly enjoying reading Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and MissionÂ by Jackson W. I'll do a longer review when I actually finish it. For the moment, I'd simply say that it is the best book I've read on Romans (or Paul) for quite a while. However, as the book does touch on to the broader subject matter of this blog, I thought that I'd give you a few quotes from the discussion on Romans Chapter 3.

> *... Jews dirctly opposed the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham. God never treated Israel as an end in themselves. Rather, they were chosen to be a means of grace for the world. Whereas God promised to bless all the nations, Paul's opponents limited God's salvation to Israel. They supposed on must first become a Jew before being reckoned righteous. Thus, God's blessing could not extend to all nations but only to one ethnic group. Tragically, those who claimed to be Abraham's offspring implicitly deny the promisse he believed.*
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> *... If we are justified through works of the law, we must become Jews. But this implies that God is only God of the Jews, not Gentiles. Paul denies that idea as an affront to Jewish monotheism. God is God of both Jews and Gentiles "since God is one." Because Jews feel a narrow sense of group superiority, they essentially reduce God to a local tribal deity. They narrow the scope of God's kingdom to one people.*
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> *Collective identity reflects our view of God. What happens when we define ourselves by gender, education, language or other social distinctions? We subtly speak of God as if he is partial to us against others.*
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> *There are serious consequences when we blur the lines between belonging to a social group and being Christian. For example, if believers in the United States see themselves as Christian Americans (as opposed to American Christians), they could easily see America as a kind of Israel or promised land, Political ideologies merge indistinguishably with theological convictions. Wars and political policies take on the status of devine mandate.*

Individualised Christianity which focuses on "me and my personal saviour" rather than on membership of God's people faces a particular danger in this regard as it does not challenge our primary allegiance to social and political groupings. We are living through a time when the consequences of this are all to evident.