A Romans Rap

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Students at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary had an End of the Year Awards event, the point of which was to act a bit goofy and have a good laugh. I was approached to do a rap since the previous year I had done a short rap called "Luvination" for a spoof entitled "Calvin Does Casablanca" (replacing Humphrey Bogart in the famous movie with John Calvin). For this year's event I decided to write a rap that summarizes the message of Romans. The mode is humorous but I did make a serious effort to represent the distinctive message of Romans accurately. Slightly long perhaps for a rap song (at 5-6 minutes, though many rap songs approach 5 min.) but not long enough, certainly, to do full justice to Romans. The second stanza was supposed to serve as a refrain but the text was already too long for it to serve that purpose. The exercise was fun.

Hear me, my friends … and don’t turn me off!
I realize I’m not … the usual prof.
Rarely will you see … a professor like me
Recount Paul’s Romans … in a rap symphony.
I rap not for me … but for the tripping rock.
That’s Jesus Christ … and call me “Snoop Doc.”

It’s a Romans rap … it’s a Romans rap!
You might not know it … but it’s a layered trap.
Just when you think … that you’re off the hook,
God’s righteousness … makes you take a second look.
There’s only one real way … that you can boast:
Put your boast in God … or end up as toast.

Paul makes clear … that he works like a priest.
He offers up Gentiles—not a brute beast!
Obedience of faith … is the name of the game;
the fruit of holiness … by any other name.
Sharing his gift … is what he’s gonna do;
proclaiming the gospel … to the Romans too.
The renewal of the mind … not to the age conform;
rather by the gospel … be fully transformed.
He starts by saying … that he’s not ashamed
of the gospel, you know, God’s power to claim
every life that holds … no rightness of its own
but rests instead … on Christ’s death to atone
The righteousness of God … best story ever told.
God’s faithfulness and truth … to promises of old.
God sent his very Son … just to make amends
for the universal sin … that you know offends.

First he traps the Gentile … then he traps the Jew.
Look out, bro and sis … the next trap’s for you!
Gentiles suppressing … the truth in creation,
In God’s eyes … that’s a big abomination!
Ignoring God’s power … and great divinity,
They worshiped human statues … embraced idolatry.
God gave them over … to their impurity;
so against nature … no complementarity.
The net widens further … to arrogance and greed.
It’s obvious to the Jew … Gentiles are bad seed.

But the Jew who judges … is also without excuse;
for to sin against the law … is also an abuse.
Though he might sin less … and less egregiously,
he knows more than others … that’s plain for him to see.
And though he has the law … and the sign of circumcision,
these things won’t save him—they give no exemption.

Christians who read this … and think they get a pass,
you who say you know Christ—wait, not so fast!
Just ’cause you’re forgiven … you say “Why not sin?”
But if sin is your lord … you’re not going to win.
Jesus, you know … is raised from the dead;
and you’re baptized … into Jesus as your head.
So if you live … so that sin is your lord,
“The wages of sin” … will be your reward.
Let’s remember this … there’s not one law but four. The law of my mind … wants the law of God more. But then the law of sin … comes knockin’ on the door. The result of all that … is I lose the whole war. So there’s a fourth law … it’s really needed now—the gift of the Spirit … that empowers you somehow.

It’s true not just for … the other guy but you: two ways still … I’ll tell you what to do. One way leads to life … the other leads to death; life when you kill … the sinful deeds of the flesh. Mouthing the confession … that “Jesus is my Lord,” when not led by the Spirit … won’t keep you on board.

Now let’s all return … to bragging in how good God and Christ were … when estranged we stood. While we were sinners … Christ died for us. Do you think now … he’ll throw you under the bus? Nothing outside you … in all material creation can separate you … from God’s “luvination.”

But how could God be right … if most of Israel is lost? Did he save the world … at such a horrible cost? Let’s get one thing straight: … It’s not God’s fault. The Messiah whom God sent … they did not exalt. Yet does that mean … that God is through with them? No, God will remove … the hardness that condemns.

First the fullness of … the Gentiles must come in; then comes the fullness … of Israel, God’s friend. Stop to think, Gentiles, … how easy it would be to remove your wild branches … from the olive tree. So don’t boast over Israel … but just remember this: God can restore them if … in unbelief they don’t persist.
There’s more that could be said … to you, Paul’s pupils; instead I’ll push on now … to an issue of Jewish scruples. Fighting in Roman churches … over meat and calendar! Don’t you guys get it?—they’re *adiaphora*; “matters of indifference” … to the kingdom of God, which consists of righteousness … not pork or scrod. Now don’t misunderstand—we’re not talking about sex. Immorality must be cast off … or face a train wreck.

But things that don’t matter … please just leave alone; and focus on how God … welcomed you all home. United praise of God … for pouring out his grace, that’s the surest way … for the church to run the race. We’ve won something better … than a lottery; by divine design, not chance … I think you’ll agree.

Now I’ve told my tale … of Romans in rap. It’s far from perfect … I’m an ordinary chap. But God is wonderful … to him doff your hat. Who’d have ever guessed … God would do all that! So glory be to God … who is the King of kings; for from him *and* through him *and* to him … are all things.