

Romans 8-4
June 4, 2012

Romans 8:38-39

Secure in Christ, nothing can separate us ever. No power is greater than God; nothing can affect our relationship with Him. Once you are a child of God it is impossible for you to be separated from Him. The victory is His, the keeping is His, He is reliable, and nothing can separate us. It is impossible to be separated from Christ; His death for us is the sign of His love. He tells us here of His great love so that we will feel secure in Him even in an insecure world.

As we move on in our study to chapter 9 there are some things to consider.

Paul, having given us many assurances of God's continuing love and the everlasting nature of the salvation He offers us introduces a problem to consider. The JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY says "the Book of Romans contains the New testament's most important and complete discussion of the Jewish people". Note friends, this commentary is written by and for Jewish believers in Jesus or Yeshua as their Messiah. It goes on to say that this discussion of the state of the Jewish people seems to come up at a place, which is unrelated to the previous chapter. What have we heard from Paul in our last verses? That we can rest in the assurance that God keeps His promises and that He will not only work all things together for our good but nothing can separate us from Him. Yet the following verses are asking the question the Jewish readers of Romans would have had, and here is the question; Paul, if God is as powerful and faithful as you portray Him in Chapter 8 why is it that as more and more Gentiles accept the gospel, are more and more Jews rejecting and opposing it? Didn't God say repeatedly in the Old Testament, how much He loves Israel—"with an everlasting love"? How can it be that so many Jews are refusing this love of God as expressed through their Messiah? Would this refusal of the Jews that is separating them from God cause Gentile believers to doubt? So Paul will take chapters 9-11 to explain how it is that the Jews will be saved, God can be trusted, He never lies, He keeps His promises.

So the end of chapter 8 is the conclusion of the first major section of Romans, the doctrinal section. Paul has discussed the doctrine of our universally fallen state, of being made right with God and our future. He has more to say to believers in chapters 12-15 but in between times, he has a word for his fellow Jews in Chapters 9-11. In these chapters Paul will give the prophecy for the future of Israel and the Jewish people.

Romans 9:1-3

Since Paul's ministry was to the Gentiles, perhaps the Jews thought he was no longer interested in them, not so. He affirms here his sincere grief regarding his people, Israel. He has great sorrow for the Israel's failure as a people to honor their Messiah. Remember how he said he brought the gospel to the Jew first? Can you remember another man who offered himself in the place of unbelieving Jews? The ones who made the golden calf. Moses said these same words to God when the people of Israel were unfaithful and doubting God. Exodus 32:32

What was God's answer to Moses? Exodus 32:33 And the Lord said to Moses, "whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." Neither Moses nor Paul could die for the sins of the Jewish people. Both these men understood God's holiness and the sinfulness of sin. Both were murderers who had been forgiven. Both understood there had to be substitute for the removal of sin and they prayed God would strike them and spare the people they loved. However, no one can die for sin but a perfect Lamb, the sinless Son of God can die for sin, and that is what happened.

Romans 9:4-6

It's hard to understand why the Jewish people did not respond to the gospel when they had been prepared and looking for their Messiah for hundreds of years. One reason for this was that the Jews

made a fatal mistake, instead of studying the scriptures and asking God for guidance, they studied the writings about the bible. If you want to be sure you know the truth you have to read the bible for yourself and not rely on commentaries and other people. Commentaries come in handy when you have already studied and understood but read God's Word first, asking Him, the author to give you understanding. As we have said before; Jesus did not meet the ideals of the men who wrote the commentaries, they were looking for a military leader, a wealthy, attractive and powerful ruler. When He comes again, that is exactly what He will be, but they missed the part about the "suffering servant".

Paul is not speaking to all of the Jews but those who have not come to trust in her Messiah. These verses present the problem; by rejecting the Gospel, Israel, with her many advantages, makes it appear that God's promises have failed. Did God's promises fail? Heaven forbid, no, men failed. Romans 2:28-29 Paul stated "not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew"—that is not all Jews are part of spiritual Israel. Jewish history shows us that God kept on keeping his promises even as the chosen people kept on failing to obey Him.

What were the advantages Israel was given? According to the JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY, they are as follows:

First of all they were made God's children, as stated in Exodus 4:22. The Greek word used here for "children" is the same as the one used to describe believers in Jesus in Romans 8:15

Secondly, Theirs was the glory, this phrase does not capture the Jewish flavor of Paul's remark "Shekinah" is a word used to mean "the glorious Presence of God" which was visible in the pillar of fire in the wilderness Exodus 13:31 and it was present in the Tabernacle Exodus 40:36-38 and in the Temple Ezekiel 1:28. Imagine having God visibly present what an advantage to the Jewish people to keep them aware of God and His ways. His ways toward them were loving; just think about that "glorious Presence" in the form of a pillar of fire at night. It would have provided light as they camped as well as warmth. The wilderness was a dangerous place, imagine yourself having to camp out in a wilderness with your little children, how comforting would it be to have God's visible Presence at that place? What about the daytime? God's Presence, the Shekinah glory was there in a large cloud over them, which protected them from the burning sun and other kinds of bad weather. God knows what we need.

Thirdly, they received the covenants; not only those with Abraham and Moses but also the New Covenant brought by Jesus. God made the New Covenant with Israel, although was extended to include Gentiles.

The fourth advantage consists of two parts; first the LAW or Torah, itself, containing God's words for their guidance and edification. It had been the constitution of the Jews for 1300 years when Paul wrote this. And secondly, was the actual giving of the LAW. In that moment when God gave the Law to Moses on Mt Sinai, the divine and eternal met the human and temporal in a way equaled only by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah.

Fifth; the Temple service was not merely a daily reminder to the Jewish people of God's concern for them, but was also God's provision for their spiritual survival and continued existence, cleansing them from sin through the sacrificial system and keeping them until Messiah came.

Sixth; the promises of redemption, reconciliation and ultimate victory through the Messiah were made to Israel-Isn't the whole old testament a record of God's promises to the Jewish people?

Seventh; the patriarchs are theirs. Through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the nation was founded and they received the promises. God's faithfulness to them guaranteed the fulfillment of those promises.

Eighth; from them as far as His physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah. This is no cause for pride, since the Messiah is for all mankind and not Jews only; yet it is a great honor and advantage,

which you would not expect the Jewish people to ignore. The Christ, Who is over all, means He is in charge of everything and so He is greater than all the previous advantages. Praise the LORD forever.

Romans 9:6-9

Now we look into God's sovereignty. The first one sovereignly chosen was Abraham. Here was a man of Ur of the Chaldees whom God chose to begin His race of chosen people. This man had no qualifications we know about, God chose him. Then we see that being Abraham's physical descendent did not guarantee an inheritance in the kingdom of God. Abraham had children by 3 different women but we are told that God chose Isaac, whose mother was Sarah, through whom the descendants would be counted and through whom the Messiah would come. Those who were not interested in the saving benefits of the covenant were not counted as descendants. So no one can claim to be chosen by God because of heritage or good works, its all God's choice.

The Word of God has not failed. God is not at fault for Israel rejecting their Messiah.

Romans 9:10-12

Paul's second illustration of God's sovereignty in choosing is Isaac's twin sons; Jacob and Esau, conceived at the same time, yet God chose to continue the Messianic line through Jacob. God did not turn His back on Esau, Esau had the opportunity to know and love God, just as Jacob did. This is not talking about salvation; this is talking about the sovereign choice by God to continue the Messianic line through the second son, Jacob, which was very unusual. God is working all things for our good, He welcomes everyone for salvation, and He knows who will reject Him. We know God's choices are good, we do not know why they are as they are.

Romans 9:13

This is referring to the nations flowing from these men, from Jacob came Israel, the Jews, from Esau the Edomites. Again God did not reject Esau from following Him, He rejected Esau from leading Israel. The word "hate" here has the understanding of "loved less" according to the JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY. The reason I use the JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY are many; the New Testament was written primarily by Jewish men, some think it was written in Hebrew then translated to the Greek. The Hebrew language is difficult to translate into English because it often takes an entire sentence to express in English a Hebrew Word. I like to refer to this source when there are difficult passages so that I can find the deeper meanings. The Hebrew idea of bible study is that there are several meanings for scriptures; the obvious and easy to understand, called the "pshat" or simple understanding and then something more hidden, the "remez" or hint.

Romans 9:14

God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau, not based on their works or character but according to His own sovereignty. So can we say that God is unfair? May it never be", or heaven forbid. We have seen Paul use that term several times in the letter to the Romans. Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He".

Romans 9:15-16

Here Paul is quoting Exodus 33:19 bringing into focus God's mercy along with His sovereignty. God was expressing to Moses the idea that He would show mercy even where it is unexpected and He would have compassion in surprising ways. We have to keep in mind that God can reject or choose anyone He wants to but He is merciful. Also remember at this time that important verse we have just studied; "while we were yet sinners, at just the right time, God sent His Son to be our Savior" mercy and justice.

No doubt people would rather focus the discussion on God's mercy than His attribute of justice but that can lead to thinking that God will overlook the punishment for sin. People who do not have Jesus to

stand as their atonement for sin wish and hope for mercy. Remember, Jesus combines in Himself perfect justice and perfect mercy. Jesus is our only hope.

Romans 9:17-18

Exodus 4:21 talks about God hardening Pharaoh's heart, after God placed Pharaoh in his position at that time in history, and gave Pharaoh many opportunities to repent and save himself and Egypt, five times he had the chance to repent and then he hardened his own heart after which God hardened his heart, it was God's judgment on him. Paul sees history repeating itself, the rejection of their Messiah by the Jewish people parallels Pharaoh's rejection of Moses and God.

How has this lead to God's Name being proclaimed over the whole earth? Lets think it through; how many times have you heard the story of Moses' delivery of the children of Israel, by God's grace? God was glorified through that circumstance. How many times have you heard about the Jewish people rejecting the gracious Messiah Who God sent to die for them? God is glorified through the whole earth because the Jews refusal of their Messiah opens the doors for you and for me. Israel's self will and disobedience, like Pharaoh's. serves God's merciful ends.

Romans 9: 18-19

God's judgment on Pharaoh was to harden his heart. Hardening happens when a person has a long record of disobedience and rebellion. Friends, this is a warning to you to avoid disobedience and rebellion.

Romans 9:20-21

This is a typical Jewish manner of speech; answer a question with a question. Using the illustration of the potter and the clay. This would have been a familiar illustration, since most cooking and storage was in clay pots, there were many potters. The potter has the right to make out of the clay anything he wants to make, whether a jar for decoration or a garbage can, neither has the right to ask why. The lumps of clay are equal, the potter's designs are different.

In all this reasoning Paul is directing us away from idle questioning of God and to the realization that the path is open to whosoever will come in faith to the Messiah for salvation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."

