

Romans 9 - 1

June 11, 2012

We left our study in Romans 9 last time and we had been discussing the fact that Paul has dedicated this part of his letter to the Romans to the discussion of the future of the Jewish people, in fact, we said that the dialogue in chapters 9-11 in Romans is the most extensive prophesy of the future of God's chosen people.

We have studied the sovereignty of God when we studied that attribute and we discovered that it means that God has absolute power, dominion and control over everything and in that light we understand that God chose Abraham to begin a race of people, namely the Jews, based on God's sovereign choice, not anything that Abraham had done. Then God continued choosing which of Abraham's descendents would be the family head and through whom the Messiah would come. That is the reason for all the genealogy discussions in the Old Testament. This is important to know because men usually choose the oldest son to inherit and to become the leader, but God's ways are not our ways. God looks at the heart and not the outward appearance according to His Word. So God chose Isaac from all the sons of Abraham, God chose Jacob from the twin sons of Isaac and He chose Judah from all the sons of Jacob. God did not reject the other sons and daughters of these patriarchs from following Him, He simply designated which one would continue the family line to the Messiah.

Romans 9:22-24

So the objects of God's judgment are all nonbelievers but we are talking about the Jewish people. God is patient with their rebellions, antagonism and blasphemy because He is patient and is giving them time to repent 2 Peter 3:9. These have refused to turn to Him for salvation yet His sun shines on them and He gives them rain. Their doom is coming and God is right in exercising his judgment and His power. Just think how merciful and patient He is toward all of us.

Now in contrast are the objects of His mercy, those of us who believe. In the end we will all see that He did not change His plans because His people were rebellious. God does everything to reveal His great mercy. We should be in awe of God's wonderful offer of salvation when we do not deserve anything from Him. He is in charge, He loves to show mercy, He has a plan and He is good.

Romans 9:25-26

This is a quote from Hosea 2:23 and Paul is using it as further proof of God's call to the Gentiles. Several hundred years before Jesus was born God told Hosea of His intention to bring Gentiles into His plans. God was not surprised by Israel's rejection of their Messiah. The Jews thought they were the only ones who would be saved but all the time God had planned to save Gentiles as well. Whosoever will may come. Those who were not originally known as God's people were becoming his people by God's mercy and grace, through Jesus.

Romans 9:27-29

The first part of Hosea 2:1 includes God's promise to Abraham and Jacob that the number of his descendents will be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered. Who are Abraham's descendents?

Romans chapter 2 revealed that not everyone from Abraham's line is a Jew, not everyone who appears to be a Jew outwardly but being a descendent of Abraham is to have faith in God, that is who is as numberless as the sand of the seashore. All who believe God for salvation by faith are Abraham's descendents. Then we have the quote from Isaiah to show that this does not imply the salvation of every single Jew but only a remnant will be saved.

What does he mean by the word "remnant"? The concordance says this word means remainder or residue, understood to mean a small number out of a huge congregation. How do we apply this to our lives? There are congregations of believers in churches that contain a remnant, a small number who are Abraham's descendents. Keep in your mind these chapters 9-11 are primarily concerning the Jewish people, then from all the numberless physical descendents of Abraham, there are a few, a remnant who will believe in Jesus as their Messiah.

God cannot be blamed for Israel's failure to accept Jesus as her Messiah; no God must be thanked for showing mercy to preserve a remnant of Jews who did accept him.

Romans 9:30

Here is the crux of the matter; the majority of Israel missed their Messiah because they did not grasp that the first requirement of the LAW is faith, trusting God, not works. Israel had the right goal but pursued it the wrong way.

In other words there has never been any way to righteousness with God except by faith whether for Jews or Gentiles and that is proven by this statement we studied earlier in Romans 4:1

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'" Genesis 15:6. Abraham obtained righteousness by faith in God and this was hundreds of years before the LAW was given.

The lack of the understanding of this truth is found in the most religious circles today; whether Jew or Gentile. Do not make the mistake of thinking you can earn forgiveness and right standing with God by your good works. That has never been true and it never will be true according to the bible. There are many religions that tell you otherwise but God has revealed what we must do to be saved and that is the only sure truth about this very important matter. Righteousness is the reward for trusting God and never an earned payment for religious works.

Romans 9:32-33

Quoting Isaiah 28:16 what does this mean?

First of all we read again the Jews pursued righteousness by legalistic living, not by faith. But God had already told them He was going to do something unusual and that was "lay a stone in Zion, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense".

And God did just that by sending Jesus Christ the Jewish Messiah to Zion or Israel. Some will stumble over this Rock or over Jesus and Luke said "whoever falls on this stone will be broken in pieces, but if the stone falls on someone he will be crushed to powder. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that Messiah was a stumbling-stone to the Jews. Just think in our own day; you can speak of God anywhere but do not bring up the Name of Jesus, He is the stumbling stone or the Rock of offense.

After the warning however, we have a wonderful promise; when we build our house on the Rock, it will not fall down in a storm. When we build our lives on Jesus we will have a solid foundation for our life. We have God's promise right here "we will not be disappointed" in Jesus. All through the bible Jesus is referred to as the Rock, there is no other Rock but Jesus, so says the song. Peter was not the Rock, his name "Cephas" in Greek, means small stone. Do a study for yourself and look up all the places "rock" is mentioned, it is clear Jesus is the Rock.

Now moving to chapter 10 of Romans we find again the chapter division in a rather awkward place.

Romans 10:1

Repeating what he said in Romans 9:1-3 Paul again tells how much he longs for his people to understand that faith is the fulfillment of the Law, faith in Jesus that is. Jesus said no one can come to the Father except through Him and Paul spent his life telling this truth to whoever would listen. We cannot know God apart from knowing Jesus, He revealed God to us.

Paul has expressed his heart's desire for his fellow Jews' salvation. Is there anyone you are seeking God in prayer for his or her salvation? Remember Paul was willing to give his life, he said, for the salvation of his Jewish brethren.

Romans 10:2

Many Jews were and still are enthusiastic about their relationship with God and they practice their religion of works faithfully but their zeal, or their passion, for works is keeping them from finding the truth of salvation by faith. Remember how enthusiastic Paul was for the keeping of the law? Before he was dramatically saved on the road to Damascus He was persecuting followers of Jesus. So he understands their problem. Paul is telling us he understands the Jews are exacting about keeping the Law but their religion is not based on correct understanding of the LAW

Romans 10:3

The Jews did not understand God's righteousness and how to achieve it, nor that it would be available to all people. The Jews were clinging to their own way of achieving righteousness.

They could not see that righteousness was already provided through Jesus, they wanted to do it their way. And many today, Jews and Gentiles, are exactly the same. They want to follow the rules of their religion instead of accepting God's free gift of salvation by faith.

Romans 10:4

A more correct rendering of this verse would be; Christ is the goal of the law or Torah for righteousness to everyone who believes. The Torah or law has not ended, Jesus has fulfilled it just as He said; "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it".

In the remaining verses of chapter 10 Paul will make the point that salvation is for everyone. Salvation is for everyone, Jew and Gentile. As Gentiles that is easy for us to accept but for the Jewish people the idea that Gentiles were included in God's plans was a real stretch. We asked before "why did God give the LAW when He knew no one could keep it?" Paul told us in Galatians that the Law was given to show people their guilt-they couldn't keep it. Also the law was a type or shadow of Christ, not only the Law but also the tabernacle, the services and even the priestly garments were all pointing to Christ. The law points to Christ the final sacrifice for sin.

Romans 10:5

Paul is quoting Moses; Leviticus 18:5, instructions from God for the Jews spiritual life in the Promised Land. They were to obey the Law, which would separate them from the pagan people of the land. Just think how the Jews, obeying God's laws of diet and cleanliness would separate them from the pagan people in the wilderness. The Jews were not to eat scorpions or snakes, most likely a common diet for desert dwellers. God provided manna for them so they had heavenly food to eat. The Jews were to bathe and keep themselves clean-God provided the water for this in the desert. That would have separated them also from wilderness dwellers. These laws are what we call ceremonial laws and were all fulfilled by Jesus and are no longer needed.

Since complete obedience to the moral LAW is impossible this verse is to show the people that their righteousness is dependent faith in God. The moral law was also fulfilled by Jesus and it remains our guide, the 10 commandments are always relevant, they show us our sin, which is why no one wants to see them in public, they convict.

Romans 10:6-8

These verses teach us that our self-effort for salvation is useless. God did not need our help to give the LAW and He did not need our help to give the Messiah, He has provided all that is needed for salvation without any human help or works.

Romans 10:9-10

As a kind of conclusion Paul is telling us how salvation by faith is obtained and this applies to both Jew and Gentile. To confess means we affirm this truth with our own lips; each individual must make his own confession. This confession must come from the heart; the mere reciting of words is not enough. Here is the gospel message in a nutshell; believe and confess and you will be saved.

Romans 10:11

Paul quotes Isaiah, God will never disappoint you. People, circumstances, many things on this earth will disappoint you, but God never will disappoint, He keeps His promises.

Romans 10:12-13

No one needs to be excluded; the offer of salvation by faith is open to both Jew and Gentile.

It is a narrow gate but it is open to all people.

Here Paul is quoting Joel 2:32, showing that God's special relationship with Israel continues but it has been broadened to include whosoever will come.

Romans 10:14-15

Here is a quote from Isaiah 52:7. It is obviously a call to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The question is a good one, how can they believe if no one goes to tell them. Who have you been called to tell the good news? It might be your family or your neighbor, how can they believe if they never hear?