

Soul-Full: Living Out a Robust Faith

A Study in Romans

Week 7- Romans 9 – 11 – Same Lord Over all

In Romans 9 - 11 Paul writes about Israel's spiritual history: past, present, and future. It is important to understand that Paul is referencing the nation of Israel and the Gentiles as people groups and not primarily individuals. The apostle explains how God could set aside His chosen people and save the Gentiles, and how He will restore the nation at a future date.

When Paul penned this letter, the temple was still standing in Jerusalem. Sacrifices were still being offered despite the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time" was now seated "at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). The elaborate ritual of Judaism, rendered meaningless by the cross, was being continued because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus.

I. God's Past Dealing With the Jews-Romans 9:1-33

Paul wrote, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Paul's anguish over Israel's unbelief was genuine and he longed to see his kinsmen according to the flesh to turn to Jesus. Obviously, God had chosen the Jewish nation to be His covenant people with special access and privileges. Sadly the Jews, by and large, rejected Jesus as their long awaited Messiah. John 1:11 says, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

National Israel refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Messiah. Paul uses two examples from Israel's early patriarchal history to show that birth into the family of Abraham did not automatically equate salvation. Isaac and Ishmael were born into the same family. One was chosen and the other rejected. Similarly, Jacob and Esau were born into the same family, but one was chosen and the other rejected. The Arab nations, bitter enemies of Israel to this day, came through the lineage of Ishmael. Likewise, Esau's descendants were considered some of Israel's fiercest enemies. Both Ishmael and Esau chose to rebel against God, but God's purpose does not depend on man's decision. "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps. 115:3). In both instances the outworking demonstrated the far-seeing wisdom of God's choice. These examples also served to prove that salvation (for Jew or Gentile) has always been on **the basis of faith**. Hebrews 11:1-2 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval."

God exercises His sovereign will to accomplish His perfect plan. Psalm 135:6 says, "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps." God used Pharaoh to demonstrate His power and proclaim His name throughout the whole earth (see Rom. 9:17). God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to repent, but

each miracle resulted in the hardening of his heart. God gave him over to the consequence of an unrepentant heart (see Rom. 1:18-32). We cannot explain the relationship between man's choice and God's purpose, but both truths are taught in God's Word. Paul uses the potter and the clay to illustrate. "The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" (Rom. 9:20). Our only reasonable response to our Creator and Sovereign God should be "...to present [our] bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual service of worship" (Rom. 12:1).

"God is under no obligation to explain His ways to men. He is sovereign and does whatever He pleases. Since He is God, what He does is always right and cannot legitimately be questioned by men who are limited in intelligence and in knowledge and whose moral and spiritual capacities are impaired by sin." (John Phillips, *Exploring Romans*, p.148).

Throughout this chapter, Paul exalts the sovereignty of God without minimizing the responsibility of mankind to respond in faith. Israel was chosen to be God's people but failed to follow God's plan. This failure on Israel's part opened the door for the Gentiles to be included, not in Judaism, but in Christ. This is a divine paradox. The Jews sought to be righteous and were rejected while the Gentiles readily received righteousness by grace through faith and were saved. In Romans 9:30-32 Paul wrote, "What shall we say then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law . . . because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone," the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews sought to be in a right relationship with their God through "works of righteousness" and trusted in their familial relationship with Father Abraham. Abraham himself was saved by faith and not by works (see Rom. 4). The Jews refused a crucified Christ and rejected Jesus in part because they were looking for a military Messiah who could defeat the Romans and lead them to political freedom. While the Jews relied on the Law, their religious rituals, and their ancestral connection with Abraham, the Gentiles eagerly received righteousness by grace through faith. The Gentiles in general were not pursuing righteousness and were typically engaged in all manner of wickedness and idolatry. However, when they heard the glorious message of the gospel, many "...turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). A divine paradox indeed!

II. God's Present Dealing With the Jews-Romans 10:1-21

Paul wrote, "My heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation" (Rom. 10:1). The Jews had become so enamored with their (vain) attempts to achieve strict adherence to the Law that they stumbled over the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Jews were striving for a "works righteousness" that was impossible to achieve. Paul wrote, "They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge"

(Rom. 10:2). The Jews' racial and religious pride turned them away from simple faith to blinding religion.

The apostle Paul had an impeccable Jewish pedigree (see Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:4-6), but after his encounter with Jesus Christ, he was gloriously saved. Paul wrote, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:8-9). Paul prayed that his countrymen would have a similar experience and exchange "a works-based righteousness" for faith in Jesus Christ.

National Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah. "But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people'" (Rom. 10:21- which is an OT quote from Is. 65:2, a text the Jews would have known). Therefore, the nation has been set aside for a season due to their blindness and unbelief. The result of Israel's rejection is that God has turned to the Gentiles. "By their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now . . . their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11-12). God, referring to the Gentiles, said, "'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you'" (Rom. 10:19 - a quote from Deut. 32:21).

God yearns after the unsaved Jew (see Matt. 23:37) just as He does the lost Gentile. In Christ, "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved'" (Rom. 10:12-13 - an OT reference from Joel 2:32). No one can keep the Law (see Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5-6). James 2:10 says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." **No one** can keep the Law but **anyone** can respond to Jesus' gracious offer of salvation by repentance and faith (see Acts 20:17-21). Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever (Jew or Gentile) shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved" (KJV). Everyone who repents, believes, and receives the gospel will be saved. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). God clearly extends His invitation and desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). See John 3:16-17; Rom. 8:32; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2, 4:14; and Rev. 22:17.

III. **God's Future Dealings With the Jews-Romans 11:1-36**

So, our study begs the question, "Is God through with the Jew?" Absolutely not. "May it never be!... God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (Rom. 11:1-2). The setting aside of Israel as a nation, for the time being, is in keeping with God's dispensational purpose, namely the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul writes, "By their (the Jews) transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous" (Rom. 11:11 parenthesis mine). The Jews were full of rage and resented any extension of

religious privilege to the Gentiles. They didn't want the gospel but they didn't want the Gentiles to have it either.

Paul was certain of a future for Israel as a nation. He uses a parable of an olive tree, which represents the nation of Israel. Again, Paul is not talking about salvation of individual Christians, but the position of Jews and Gentiles as people groups in the program of God. Israel failed to bear fruit for God so God broke off some of the branches and grafted the Gentiles into a "wild olive tree" (Rom 11:17). This type of grafting was contrary to nature for it is the horticultural practice to graft the good branch into the poorer stock. God grafted the weak Gentiles into the good stock of Israel's religious privilege. Paul warns believing Gentiles not to fall into the trap of religious pride, lest we forget the benefits of our spiritual heritage of Israel. (This passage speaks in terms of national not personal- God will not "break off" true believers from their salvation. In Romans 8:35-38 Paul was quite clear that nothing can "...separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus"). In a spiritual sense, we are children of Abraham who is "the father" of all who believe. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

Paul states that through the disobedience of the Jews, Gentiles have come to faith in what is known as the Church Age which was ushered in on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 1-3). There is coming a time when the Jews will recognize Christ as their Savior and be gloriously saved. Zechariah 12:10 proclaims, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced . . ." Zechariah 13:1 says, "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."

The role of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man in salvation are parallel truths that can only be reconciled in the heart and mind of God. Both are taught in Scripture but we can never untangle these truths with our limited knowledge and understanding. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways...For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33, 36).

Beloved, let the Lord satisfy the deepest longing of your soul with His glorious truth. May you have your Soul-full of Jesus and may you live out a Robust Faith in the obedience of truth "for the sake of the Name" (3 John 1:7).