

07-13-14 – Israel and God's Eternal Plan

Romans 9-11

As we have mentioned before, the book of Romans contains a lot of theology. In fact the first 11 chapters are all theology teaching that Paul wanted to send to this church to ensure they are on track in the truth of God. The words are written by Paul, but he received this revelation of truth directly from God by the Holy Spirit, so the theology lessons of this book are the truth of God's mind and will for humanity to use as a source of living the Christian life. Today, we conclude the heavy theology lesson phase of our walk through the book of Romans. This last doctrine is very deep, very tricky, very mis-understood, and very mysterious and confusing. Chapters 9 - 11 are all an exposition of one theological doctrine called election or predestination. Denominations were formed based on different understandings and interpretations of this doctrine. I believe Paul explained it well, but we have to look at all three chapters to really get a handle on it. So I will attempt in 30 minutes to give you a practical overview of this text. Remember it is a mystery and only God really knows the exactness of the text, but Paul did a great job in explaining it.

A quick break down of the three chapters...

Ch. 9 - deals with God's sovereignty. Included in this is the fact that humans have free will at the same time that God in his sovereignty chooses us. It's a paradox. We need to remember that the entire human race is already lost in Adam - when sin entered our world, and we were cursed. We have no rights - "no right to think God is unfair just because things don't align with our view of the world of fairness - no right to be saved, since we deserve spiritual death - no right to question God's choices - no rights at all. It is only God's grace that saves us, and we have no right to complain to God that some are saved while others are lost." (Adventuring Through the Bible, Stedman).

Ch. 10 - Here Paul links the sovereignty of God with mankind's free will. God chooses, but so do we. "While God has chosen us, we have also chosen Him." (Stedman). Every human being has free will, God built that into us - He will never violate His own design. "So, in some mysterious way that is beyond our understanding, Salvation is a choice of faith." (Stedman).

Ch. 11 - Paul shows that God set aside Israel for a time, in order that grace might be extended to the Gentiles. By this, "God set aside the fallen nature, so we might learn what God will do for us and through us." (Stedman).

Please Turn to Rom. 10 - We'll read 5 - 13 in the NTL

5 For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. 6 But faith's way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth). 7 And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)."

8 In fact, it says,

***"The message is very close at hand;
it is on your lips and in your heart."***

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: 9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. 11 As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." 12 Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. 13 For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

This seems like a weird or hard passage, but it isn't too tough to grasp...

"You need not climb up into heaven to bring Christ down or go down into the grave to bring Him up from the dead - which is what you would have to do in order to be saved by your own efforts. It can't be done. The word is already in your mouth that Jesus is Lord; only believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and you WILL be saved." (Stedman).

Paul is talking about the Israelites in these chapters, but by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so these words are applicable to all humanity and generations. He begins in Ch. 9 bearing his heart regarding the Jews who have rejected the Messiah Jesus and God's Gospel of salvation. He makes a very strong statement of love and compassion, that he would be willing to be cursed if it could possibly save the Jews, because he is a Jew and has strong feelings toward his own nation that he loves and served. How concerned are you about those who don't know Christ? He would do whatever it takes for them to be saved, but he can't. It's a God thing. So, he goes on to explain God's sovereignty.

(The following points taken from Eugene Peterson's notes in The Message Study Bible)

God is sovereign:

God is God; that's all there is to it. He was not elected or voted into position; He doesn't seek our input before making decisions; He doesn't need our approval for His actions. He is God, and we are NOT. Sometimes, we can't understand or won't agree with what God does, but He is still God and has every right to do what He wills. We don't have such rights - we have no rights at all. This is not a democracy. That disturbs us sometimes, because of how we are taught things should work. We have our own definition of what's FAIR.

Paul then uses the illustration of the potter and the clay. The potter is in complete control and has the right to make the clay into whatever he wishes. It could be something of beauty or something to be used to put out the garbage. He chooses, and that is the vessel's purpose. Basically, God is in charge, and He can do what He wants.

We are responsible:

We, just as Israel, have free will, and we have the God given ability to make our own decisions regarding what we believe. If we seem to be rejected by God, as Israel seemed, then it's our own fault, as it is theirs. They/we failed to believe. Since God is sovereign, his basic character is to GIVE.

"He can't owe us anything; He can't need anything from us. He can only offer to give. Grace is His basic attribute. All we can do is receive His gift - or not. Faith is a receptive response to God's gift. Unbelief is a refusal of that gift, and, ultimately, a refusal of the Giver." *EP*

The Jews were very religious and zealous for God and the Law. They simply refused to receive. God's rejection of them is solely based on this fact - they rejected - so God rejected. The Jews thought and still think they are right with God because they are of the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, but Paul brings out in Ch. 9 that "no one can claim to be chosen by God because of his or her heritage or good deeds." (Life Application Study Bible Notes). Rejection is a matter of receiving gifts from God or not.

Rejection is Temporary:

The rejection of the Jews is all part of God's plan in his sovereignty. This rejection made a way open to the Gentiles to receive the gift of God in Christ. It opened the way of all humanity's repentance. The door is still open for Israel to return to their God and repent. God is willing to accept them back again to the Kingdom.

Paul then uses the Olive Tree illustration to show how He can graft back into the natural tree the original branches that have been pruned. They were pruned because they were dead wood in their rejection. So God grafted in wild olive branches (Gentiles) to the natural tree (Israel) whose holy root is God. We Gentiles should not be arrogant in thinking that the Jews are forgotten. This brings the concept of election into a positive perspective. It is not that God rejected some and accepted others arbitrarily. Rather His acceptance and rejection is solely based on humanity's acceptance or rejection of His gift of salvation. The Jews became so occupied following the Law to gain acceptance with God that they ultimately rejected His Messiah and were rejected in return, but they can come back.

***"Receiving grace is necessary not simply for our eternal salvation but for all the everyday salvations we need here and now – all the daily deliverances we need from our battles with the world, the flesh, and the Devil."* EP**

Ch. 10 – Paul begins again by stating his desire for nothing less than salvation for Israel. He prays for it continuously. He can clearly see the Jews are busily working to please God by their traditions, rituals, keeping the Law – or trying to, and their own efforts. But, they are missing the fact that salvation is God's business, and they must deal with God on His terms – as we all do. We then come to the text I chose for today regarding the simple plan of God on how to be saved. ***"Confess with your mouth and believe in your heart Jesus is LORD and God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved."*** (v. 9-10)

Eugene Peterson writes this note on the subject:

“Note what this confession of faith contains specifically. You’re asked to confess that Jesus is your Master and to believe that God raised him from the dead. ...

It’s all very simple, but it isn’t at all easy. It’s simple because there’s nothing complicated about what needs to be said or done. But it’s not easy. For it involves a lifelong struggle to trust and obey. All the same, we ought never to confuse the issue. Because it’s not easy, we sometimes think it’s complicated. It’s not. It’s as simple as ‘Do you believe God raised Jesus from the dead, and do you confess that Jesus is the Master of your life?’

If a creed is the master of your life, it will change some things.

If Christ is the Master, it will change everything.

Or, more accurately, He will change everything.” (The Message Study Bible notes).

Paul goes on to explain that it is God who makes things right between Him and humanity.

v. 11-13 – ***Scripture reassures us, “No one who trusts God like this – heart and soul – will ever regret it.” It’s exactly the same no matter what a person’s religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”*** (The Message).

So why do some accept willingly and quickly while others hesitate and take a longer time to accept God’s great gift?

A Native American and a white man were deeply moved by the same sermon. That very night the Native American received Jesus as his Savior, but for days the white man refused to accept Christ. At last he, too, repented and enjoyed the sweet peace of having his sins forgiven. Later he asked his Native American friend, “Why did it take me so long, while you responded right away?”

“My brother,” he replied, “I can best explain it by this little story: At one time a rich prince wished to give each of us a new coat. You shook your head and replied, ‘I don’t think so; mine looks good enough.’ When he made the same offer to me, I looked at my old blanket and said, ‘This is good for nothing,’ and gratefully accepted the beautiful garment. You wouldn’t give up your own righteousness. But knowing I had no goodness of my own, I immediately received the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness.”

Ch – 11 – Paul gets back to the fate of the Jews. You see there will come a day when they will see again and come to their senses and return to God. We should not be so arrogant to think we only are in favor with God and the Jews blew it forever. Our acceptance of the gift of salvation was only due to their rejection of it. Our acceptance will eventually make them realize they missed out on a really good thing. That jealousy will bring them back in repentance. Our God is an equal opportunity God – accepting of all who call upon Him as Paul described earlier.

“Paul reviews his new knowledge and concludes that it’s the deep, deep wisdom of God. In a word; it’s a mystery” *EP*

Ray Stedman writes... ***“When we freely admit that without Christ we can do nothing – and when we live our lives accordingly, totally dependent upon Him – then we discover that we can do all things through Him who strengthens us (see Phil. 4:13). And what an amazing discovery that is!***

Pride, therefore, is our greatest temptation and our cruelest enemy.”

(Adventuring Through the Bible, Stedman).

Paul cited what Moses said in Deut. 30:14 – *The word or message is very near to you all. It’s in your mouth and in your heart.*

Every human has the truth right under our noses, but what will we do with that truth. What will you do with that truth?

The Message: Rom. 10:6-10

Moses wrote that anyone who insists on using the law code to live right before God soon discovers it’s not so easy—every detail of life regulated by fine print! But trusting God to shape the right living in us is a different story—no precarious climb up to heaven to recruit the Messiah, no dangerous descent into hell to rescue the Messiah. So what exactly was Moses saying?

The word that saves is right here, as near as the tongue in your mouth, as close as the heart in your chest.

It’s the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—“Jesus is my Master”—embracing, body and soul, God’s work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That’s it. You’re not “doing” anything; you’re simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That’s salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: “God has set everything right between him and me!”

What a promise from God! I know most of you have done this and understand this, but God wants everyone to experience the joy and peace of His gift of salvation. ***“The believer who doesn’t live in the confidence of God’s sovereignty will lack God’s peace and be left to the chaos of a troubled heart.”*** (Romans – Grace, Truth, and Redemption, John MacArthur, p. 66).

Do you have any doubt about your right standing with God? Are you saved? Are you still “trying” to please God instead of knowing you are in Christ’s righteousness? You can settle this issue once and for all right now. Don’t hesitate – Don’t think you’re OK for now. God wants you to jump at this opportunity today – Don’t leave here without settling this in your heart.