

A Study in Romans
Section 3 - 10 weeks

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This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Have you ever heard someone try to convince others - that God will not provide for His children here on this earth? It is more common than some people may think. There are those who just seem to be on a mission - to destroy hope in others wherever they find someone with a little hope.

We have looked at several passages - where the Christian has been encouraged and exhorted to live the life of Christ - Encouraged to continue with the Christ-like life - even when things don't look so good - Promised that God will take everything that is thrown at us - and turn it around to make it a benefit to us - rather than a detriment.

Read Romans 8:31 and make notes:

So, what shall we say in response to all of this? The summary statement, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Some suggests that we interpret this statement as a question - they see the "IF" as indicating some doubt - as in - Well maybe God isn't for all of us - But for those God is for - then it will be okay.

This is so far from the truth - the "If" in this statement isn't even in the slightest way questionable - it is part of the condition explaining why we don't need to worry. It might help us to understand" what it is saying in today's language is something like this; "Since God is for us, who is it that we have to worry about - if they come against us?" What it means is that there simply is no enemy - no adversary - that is of any account when compared to God!

Do you remember from the previous lesson from this letter to the Romans - the promise that God will take everything that comes into the life of a true Christian - and just make it work out for our good? If you remember that - then you can understand this simple principle - If God is going to make everything work out for my good - then there isn't any "against" me in anything that comes my way! Whatever is sent my way - God is going to work it out for my good - so where is the "against" me in anything?

Read Romans 8:32 and make notes:

What could possibly be seen as greater than God giving up His own Son - to save us from our sins? Since God has already done the greatest thing that could be done for us - Since God has already shown the highest and greatest act of love toward us - Since God has already given us the greatest gift possible - Since God has already given us the most valuable thing He has - Then why do any of us doubt that He would not give us the less valuable things?

Since God has given us the greatest value - then there is no/reason to believe that He will withhold things of lesser value. God has already proven His willingness to give us the things we need - such as earthly provision and earthly protection - by already having given us His most precious and most valuable Heavenly and Divine Treasure.

People will come and try to convince us that God won't give his people what they need on this earth. People will use great emotion and speak with great conviction in an effort to convince us that God will not help his children here on this earth with the most basic needs. God has already defused this argument. Since God has already given us His best - then He will surely give us "all things." It is foolish for us to believe anything else.

Read Romans 8:33-34 and make notes:

For every person who is living their life in accordance with what God has laid out for us - Who is it that we should spend one minute worrying about bringing some charge against us? Who is it that has any chance of condemning us before God?

God is the one who "justifies" every believer in Jesus Christ! Since God is the one who has justified me - who could possibly come before God and have any chance of convincing Him to condemn me? While I am thoroughly convinced that having been justified by God would be more than sufficient - in addition to having been justified by God Himself - we also have Jesus Christ right there at the right hand of God - and what He is doing there is "interceding for us!"

Every believer is Justified by God. When we believers do mess up and fall - there is Jesus Christ standing at God's right hand - making intercession for us to counter any condemning charges that Satan or his workers attempt to bring against us. We are servants of the Lord. We are free to serve Him and to worship Him without any concern of being condemned!

Read Romans 8:35-37 and make notes:

We have already addressed the question "who could be against us?" - And the question "who could possibly bring a charge against us?" - And the question "who could condemn us?" Now we address the final question, "who can separate us from the love of Christ?"

Will trouble separate us from the One who would never leave us?

Will hardships or persecution separate us from the One who said he would be our help in the time of trouble?

Will famine separate us from the One who fed His people with manna falling from the sky and by multiplying a couple of fish to feed more than 5,000 people?

Will nakedness separate us from the One who clothed Adam and Eve in the garden and kept clothes from wearing out for 40 years in the wilderness?

Will any kind of danger separate us from the One who shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel and protected the three Hebrews from the flames of the furnace?

Will the threat of physical death separate us from the One who promised that when we are absent from the physical body we will be present with Him?

The answer to all of these questions is, NO! For in all these things we are more than conquerors - through the One who loved us.

Read Romans 8:38-39 and make notes:

Death can't separate us from God because He said believers will never really die. Life can't keep us from God because He promised to never leave us or forsake us. No angel can separate us from God because they are God's servants to man. No demon can separate us from God because Christ has made the demons subject to what we tell them.

There is nothing in this present age nor in any future age that can separate us from God's love for us. There is no power that can separate us because God has made every power in heaven, on earth, and beneath this earth subject to Jesus Christ. There is nothing too high to keep us from God - there is nothing too deep to keep us from God – because God is every where present! There simply isn't anything in all of creation that can keep us from God's love for us. So what is the basis for one moment's worry- for those who are in Christ Jesus?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever seen someone love another person so much that they were willing to give up all they had for the person they loved? Have you ever seen someone who had been given so much - and yet were so ungrateful that they wouldn't even give time to the one who gave them so much?

Read Romans 9:1-2 and make notes:

Paul could have stopped at simply saying "I speak the truth." His reputation was such that he was known to be truthful. He did not need to make any additional statements to support his truthfulness - or to give evidence of his truthfulness.

When Paul adds "in Christ" to the statement "I speak the truth" - this isn't a qualifier like someone saying "so help me God." It is not Paul's way of saying "I promise I am telling the truth." Paul is saying something of the union that he has developed with Christ. Paul is saying that he is speaking the truth - and that the source of the truth he is speaking - is "The Truth" himself - Jesus Christ! I am speaking the truth because I am in union with Christ - and Christ is "The Truth."

"I am not lying." If he is speaking from being inspired and directed by the one known as "The Truth"- then there can be no lie connected with what he is saying. Because Paul is in union with Christ - there is no room for "enhancing" what is said - there is no room for "exaggerating" the facts. When our source is "The Truth" - there can be no hint of lie in what we say.

I am convinced that it disturbs our Heavenly Father - when Christians - and I will say especially Ministers - exaggerate or enhance an account of something God has done- or is doing. God does not need us to "build up" his testimony - God does not need us to "enhance" the reports of what he is doing. When we can mingle a little bit of "untruth" in our report - then we are not speaking as one who is "inspired of God." There is no room for any portion of a lie - when we are speaking with the inspiration of Christ.

"My conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit." This is no small statement. Our conscience is our toughest critic. There are times when a person is said to be right - according to the law - or maybe according to the apparent facts surrounding the issue - But, while they appear to be justified by the technical facts of the issue - their conscience is eating them alive on the inside. Unfortunately, there has been numerous times - when someone has justified their horrible acts - justified them to just about everyone - except their conscience.

Paul knows that some people are having -and will have - a difficult time with some of the things he has been saying. He has been refuting some of the claims of the Jews - some of the very same things that he recently held strongly to - some of the very things he was willing to kill others over.

Now that Paul is not wanting to kill these people anymore - "well, he is just trying to justify his breaking of the law but his conscience will get him" - "my conscience is clear - and the Holy Spirit confirms this to me." Oh, that we all would have our consciences clear - and have the Holy Spirit come to us and say - "you are right in what you are saying"- "you are right in what you are doing."

Part of the truth that Paul is speaking is this - "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Paul was experiencing great sorrow and emotional pain - over the gravity of the situation concerning Israel's unbelief.

I have had the experience of hurting so badly for someone - and seeing them apparently not even be concerned the least little bit - and that made my pain even worse. As I read this passage - and the verses that follow - I can't help but believe that kind of pain is similar to what Paul was experiencing. He was truly hurting over the prospect that these people were ignoring their only chance for salvation - and they didn't even seem to care.

Read Romans 9:3 and make notes:

Paul is expressing just how much he wants this people to come to salvation. If it meant that this people could be saved - he would choose to be cursed and cut off from Christ - if that is what it would take to get them saved. I have seen mothers and dads feel this way - I have heard them pray "Lord, if it will get my child saved, I will agree to spend eternity in hell." Of course we can't bargain with God - and we can't acquire salvation for anyone else - not even our children - but these parents were serious in their desire to see their child saved. They were so serious about it that they were offering to give up their salvation - if it would mean their child could get saved. That is the love Paul is expressing toward the Jewish people of his day.

Isn't it a sad commentary on our generation? There are so many parents today - who do not love their children enough to give them discipline - or love them enough to teach them responsibility or respect. There are too many parents today - who spend no time with their children - if it would interfere with what the parent wants to do. These parents DO NOT love their children.

So, it should not a surprise to us that these same parents - will not make any real efforts to make sure their children find salvation in Christ Jesus - and certainly, these parents will not make any kind of sacrifice - to help their children find salvation in Jesus. I shouldn't have to extend this, but I will - these people do not love their fellow man enough - to make any sacrifice to help their friends, family, or neighbors find salvation in Jesus.

Paul did love his countrymen this much. As we pick it up with the last phrase of verse 3, let us read the next verse - "those of my own race."

Read Romans 9:4 and make notes:

When Paul calls these "the people of Israel" - this is reminiscent of the dignity that was given to Jacob when God changed his name to Israel. These were not just a bunch of bums - or outcast of society. This people had a heritage of dignity.

When Paul says this people was "adopted as sons" - this reminds us of the immense grace that God poured out upon them. God did not have to adopt this people - He could have simply taken them in as privileged slaves - He could have simply taken them in as a guardian - but God poured forth his Grace and adopted them into His family. As a result - they received the full privileges of being a member of the family of God.

This is not a people who have been without experiences with Father God. When Paul says "theirs is the divine glory" - this is reminiscent of the glory they experienced at Sinai - The glory that filled the tabernacle - The glory that appeared on the mercy seat – and the glory that filled the temple. This glory had served as a significant sign of God's presence with this people.

When Paul says "theirs is the covenants" - this is reminiscent of the progressive covenant disclosure of God's purpose - God's love, - God's character, - and God's expectations of his people. There was no feature of Israel's history that so marked their uniqueness - and so revealed the grace of God - as did the covenants God established with various people of their history. Theirs is “the receiving of the Law, the temple worship, and the promises.”

Read Romans 9:5 and make notes:

When reflecting upon all this and the simple fact that the Christ took his human ancestry from this people - How could they do anything except embrace Christ and follow him? And yet, the vast majority of this people - who had received so much and so many blessings from God - were turning away from God and ignoring God's gracious pleas to come to salvation.

Does this sound anything like our nation today? Just look at how God has blessed this nation. Just look at how many times God's intervention has been evident. Just look at how many ways God's grace has been poured forth upon the people of our nation. Do we see great numbers of people turning to God - or turning away from God?

I know there are some things wrong in this country - but we are still the most blessed nation in the world. I am not making light of the situation and experience of being poor - of those who do not have enough to meet their daily living needs. I am agreeing with the concept - that if a person finds themselves poor - it is at least a blessing to be a poor person in America – as opposed to being a poor person in any other nation.

We are a blessed people. We are blessed to live here. Are we so foolish as to think - we could be so blessed if it were not for the grace of God?

It isn't any of the things we have done as a nation that has made this country great. It isn't our form of government that has made this nation great. It is - and always has been - the grace of God and the blessings of God - that has made this nation great.

God Loved us enough to Sacrifice. He gave His only begotten Son, so that we could be saved.

Is there anyone we love enough that we are willing to sacrifice for them?

Saved person, do you really love those around you?

Saved person, what are you willing to sacrifice - to help your fellow man find salvation in Jesus Christ?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Has anyone ever heard it taught - man messed up so bad that he destroyed God's original plan for man - and then God - out His limitless grace - came up with another plan to save man. Has anyone ever heard it taught - God's Word failed to come to pass because of Man's sin? Both of these have been and are taught - and several variations of them but is this really true?

Read Romans 9:6 and make notes:

When it says, "It is not as though God's word had failed" - this is not referring to the Bible - as we often times call it God's Word. Rather, this is referring to the previous verses where it made reference to the covenants made with people of the Old Testament and the promises God made to them. In the previous verses – a list of privileges and blessings was given to indicate how much reason the Jewish People had to worship and praise God. And yet the majority of them were rejecting Christ as Savior.

What the Holy Spirit is saying in the message through Paul - is that even though it looks like the majority of Jews are ignoring God and turning from Him - the Covenant of God and the Promise of God - HAS NOT FAILED!

Look at the last half of verse 6 - "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." Everyone who is born into the tribe of Israel - or the nation of Israel - is NOT truly Israel.

Earlier in this letter to the Romans - Paul was inspired of the Holy Spirit to say that everyone who is born a Jew is not a Jew. Here, he is simply saying the same thing in another way. The Holy Spirit knew that we would need to hear it more than once. People today are still having problem with this concept. Anyone born of an Israelite father and Israelite mother - is considered biologically to be an Israelite. But not everyone who is born biologically an Israelite is a true Israelite.

Most of us do understand this principle - but we have been misled by some religious teaching - and we fail to apply it properly when it comes to being a true Israelite. Anyone who is born to a father and mother who are both American citizens - is automatically considered an American - but we have painfully discovered that everyone born an American - is Not a true American.

Let's look at how the Holy Spirit explains this through Paul:

Read Romans 9:7 and make notes:

To help clarify this important concept - it is taken back past Israel to Abraham. The Jews of Paul's day understood this much - Abraham was the father of the Jews. Just because you are a descendant of Abraham - doesn't mean you are a Jew. They knew that Abraham had descendants through other children besides Isaac. None of them were considered Jews. In fact, most of the Jews held strongly to that work spoken to Abraham - that said only those descendants through Isaac will be considered your offspring - in relation to the covenant promise made to Abraham concerning his offspring.

With this concept in mind - just because a person was a natural descendant of Abraham - did not make them a Jew. Lets read the next statement:

Read Romans 9:8-9 and make notes:

There were those in Paul's day - and there are those today - who want to argue that the reason only the children of Isaac are considered the children of promise - is because only the children of Isaac were the offspring of Abraham AND Sarah - while the other children had Abraham as their father - they had another mother. these people argue that it was the combination of Abraham and Sarah that qualified the children - to be the children of promise. Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.

Read Romans 9:10-12 and make notes:

Okay, so only the descendants of Isaac will be considered true Jews. But Isaac had two sons by the very same mother - and only one of these were considered to be truly Jew. These are not two sons born at different times and under different circumstances. These two sons were conceived at the same time - they developed in the womb at the same time - and before they were born - before either one of them could do or say anything good or bad - one was chosen to be the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled - and the one chosen was not the one that would naturally receive the birthright according to the customs of that day. It wasn't the first born. It would be the second born through whom the promise would be fulfilled.

Out of all the children of Abraham - only through his son Isaac would they be considered Jews - and out of the children of Isaac - only through his son Jacob would they be considered Jews.

This passage is such a rich vein that there are so many things - that could be brought out from it - But there are 2 major points I feel led to ask you to take home from this lesson:

#1

God's plan and God's Word has never failed.

There are those who teach that man kept defeating God's plan for mankind – and God kept on having to come up with another plan. Look at verse 11 again - "in order that God's purpose in election might stand." Saying that it "might stand" implies that it already was in existence. God already had a plan before these boys were conceived - and certainly before their having been born. So, the way they would live their lives was not going to defeat God's plan. Neither can you or I - or anyone else - defeat God's plan today. God's plan has always been to provide a means of intimate fellowship for those who would walk with Him according to His ways. So don't ever allow anyone to convince you that God is so easily defeated that He has had to come up with Plan B, Plan C, or any other plan - Except the plan of Salvation - Which He had in place before the foundations of this earth were ever laid.

Look back at verse 8 for a moment - "it is not the natural children who are God's children"

#2

Just because we are born into a godly family does not guarantee us of our salvation.

People born biologically into a family – are sometimes purposefully left out of the will - and do not inherit that which their father and mother had to give. In the same manner that just because you are born into a family - does not guarantee that you will have any inheritance in that family - neither does being born into a family that loves and serves God- mean that you are automatically saved.

We are not going to heaven because our grandfathers and grandmothers were right with God. We are not going to heaven because our fathers and mothers are right with God. We are not going to heaven because our whole family - except us- is right with God. We are not going to heaven because we were born into the right country. We are not going to heaven because we belong to the right church.

Not everyone born into a Christian family - is truly a Christian. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian- is truly a Christian. Just like there are some who are considered by God - to truly be Jews – even though they are not descendants of Israel - there are those who are truly children of God - whose whole family is going to hell in a hand basket. This is true because those who are considered to be true children of God - are those who are living according to the Covenant relationship God has offered to us.

Part of the Good News is this: Regardless of what everyone else is doing - we can choose to accept the Covenant being offered by our Heavenly Father - and we can be saved - and we can have an inheritance with Jesus. This offer and promise is being made to us - and to all those who are far off - and to as many as will accept Jesus as Savior.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

This passage has caused great concern for some - and when this passage has been taken and interpreted without comparing to other important Scriptures - it has caused great confusion to go along with the great concern.

Read Romans 9:13-14 and make notes:

In verses 6-12, we saw the argument that God's faithfulness to his covenant is not to be judged by the faithfulness - or lack of faithfulness - by those who are biological descendants of Abraham. The word of God concerning the covenant promise Has Not Failed!

In referring to Jacob and Esau -even before they were born - it appears that God is seen to love one and hate other. If neither person has had the opportunity to offend - then it is a natural question to pose, “Is God being Unjust in loving one and hating the other?” The answer given by the Holy Spirit as he dictates this through the apostle Paul - is in the strongest terms possible. It is much like one who would vehemently deny blasphemy. “Is God Unjust?” “Not At All!”

Read Romans 9:15-18 and make notes

This passage taken alone - can lead us to no other conclusion - than God has mercy on some - and God hardens the hearts of others. If this is the correct interpretation - then we should not condemn the person who has a hardened heart. After all, God is the one who chose to harden their heart instead of giving them mercy like the mercy he gave me.

There is quite a large number of people who believe this is the correct message of this passage. This is only a slight variation from those who believe God creates some people to be lost and others to be saved. They believe those created to be lost will be lost regardless of any evangelistic efforts put forth. Then there are those who believe every person as they are born could be saved - it is possible - but, God determines to have mercy on some and to harden the heart of others. Obviously, those on whom God has mercy, can be saved- but those who have their heart hardened by God, can never be saved.

If God will have mercy on some - and harden the heart of others - then God is being unjust! For God to be Just, then it is necessary for Him to treat us all the same. Justice means each person is blessed the same for the same level of obedience- and each person is punished the same for the same level of disobedience. If you believe God hardens the hearts of some – then at least admit that God is unjust. You can say He has the right to be unjust because He is God, but at least acknowledge this isn't treating everyone the same.

If we are going to say the part is true that God is Just – and deny with strong language the accusation that God is Unjust - then we cannot accept the interpretation that God simply chooses to harden the heart of some while giving mercy to others. And yes, if we read this passage as it is - and we don't consider any other Scripture - then that is what it appears to clearly say. But we must always consider other Scripture - We must never interpret any small text from Scripture - without comparing it to all the other Scripture texts. That's how false doctrines get started. That's how heresy gets into the church. That's how cults lead people away to their early death.

Look again at verse 17 - this is quoting Exodus 9:16. If all we do is look at Exodus 9:16 - we will say "yep, that's a correct quote alright." But what is the context of Exodus 9:16? This was near the end of God's message to Pharaoh. Consider Exodus 9:15 – God says that He could have struck Pharaoh and his people and wiped them off the face of the earth. The message to Pharaoh had more to do with the fact that God had been protecting Pharaoh from complete destruction.

If it had not been for God's mercy – Pharaoh would have already been totally destroyed. Let me interject at this point - this passage did not tell Pharaoh that he had been created for this purpose. Instead of wiping you off the earth, I raised you up - I protected you from destruction for a purpose. Rather than Pharaoh having been created for this purpose - he has been protected and raised up for this purpose.

There are a number of Old Testament texts that support this interpretation of someone "being raised up"- as their being protected by God. One of these is Habakkuk 1:6, where God says He s “raising up” the Babylonians.

When God spoke this message through the prophet Habakkuk,- the Babylonians were already a ruthless and impetuous people. They were already a people who sweep across the earth seizing homes and entire cities. God wasn't telling the people through Habakkuk that He was going to create such a people - He was saying that he was going to protect and "raise them up" above their possible destruction. And of course he was going to "raise up" or protect them for a purpose.

Another is Zechariah 11:16, where God says He is going to “raise up” a worthless shepherd. There were already "worthless" shepherds in the land. There were already shepherds who did not care for the lost – who did not protect the young – who did not heal the injured. There were already shepherds who were using and abusing the sheep. God's message through Zechariah was NOT that he was going to create such a shepherd. His message was that he was going to "raise up" - protect – strengthen - one of these worthless and harmful shepherds. There are several other texts that indicate God's "raising up" of someone - had more to do with Him lifting up someone who was here on earth - than Him creating someone for a bad purpose.

What about Pharaoh's hardened heart? Pharaoh hardened his own heart – according to Exodus 8:32. God could have had mercy on Pharaoh - God could have intervened and kept Pharaoh from hardening his heart - but God did allow Pharaoh to harden his own heart.

So, while it is appropriate on one level to say God did it - since he could have prevented it but chose not to - it is most technically accurate to say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart - and God simply chose not to intervene – to make Pharaoh to do anything different from what was already in his heart to do.

We must be careful about this kind of logic. This logic says, “since God could have made Pharaoh keep his heart soft – but did not – this makes God share in the responsibility of Pharaoh's hard heart. This logic would also make God share in the responsibility of all those who are lost – and refused to accept Jesus as their Savior – because He could have made them do so.

Read Romans 9:18 and make notes:

If we were to receive only Justice - then everyone of us would be suffering - not only in the world to come- but we would be suffering in this world - since we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Since the just penalty for sin is death - spiritual death - every one of us deserves death - but God has mercy on whom he wanted to have mercy.

There are many people today who have evil intent in their hearts. They intend to take advantage of their family and friends. They intend to act friendly to others just so that they can take what they have. There are people today who have it in their hearts - that if they could find that certain person - they will make them suffer greatly - or They will kill them. There are those who have it in their heart to steal from someone else as soon as the opportunity is right. There are those who have it in their heart to intoxicate their body as soon as they can get the stuff and get out of sight of those who object.

Some of these people actually say things like, “I will get right with God some day - a little later - you know - sometime before I die - but for now, I'm going to do what I want - regardless of what anyone thinks is right or wrong”.

I have sat and talked with people who only had weeks or days to live - when their family was sure they were lost and desperately wanted them to get saved before they die. After sharing the Scriptures concerning salvation - I've listened as these people agree that they are lost and will go to hell when they die - but for some reason, they just won't - or maybe can't - accept Jesus as Savior. I have had that experience with a close relative. I would have given most anything I have on this earth - if they would have just accepted Jesus as Savior before they died. But they would just make a stern expression on their face - and shake their head "no."

God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy - and God will allow some to harden their heart. If God is showing mercy toward us today - and inviting us to receive forgiveness from our sins today - and inviting us to be cleansed today - and we say "no" today - what makes us so sure that God will show us this mercy later? His Word clearly says that he will also allow some to harden their heart.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

There are people today who are claiming that they should not be condemned for living certain sinful lifestyles. Their argument is that they are the way they are - because God made them this way. Since God made them this way, the rest of us should not say that what they are doing is sin - we should accept them as okay because - "After all, God made me this way."

I'm fairly sure it won't take you long to have some sinful lifestyle in mind - because we have one that is fairly well brought to the forefront of the news frequently. But this argument is being applied to a wide range of things - and this argument was already used and shot down a long time ago.

Read Romans 9:19 and make notes:

The objection is that which comes from those who are stuck on what is said in verse 18; "God will harden whoever he wants to harden." Even though it was explained that it was actually the person who hardened their own heart - and God just allowed them to do so - there were those in Paul's day, just like there are people today - who just can't - or won't - accept it as the choice and decision of the individual. They are still blaming God for the person who has chosen to live their life with a hardened heart. So, the explanation takes a turn at this point - and responds to these people using their own analogy of why some people have so hard of a heart.

The people who have decided that it is God who causes some people to have a hard heart - are also the people who say that we should blame God instead of the person with the hard heart. Their point being "who can resist God's will"- "since God willed this person to have a hard heart, they can't help it" - "so we must accept this person with the hard heart as okay since God made them this way."

I have to point out before we read through this argument, - that while the argument flows for a short time as though God does in fact make some people have hard hearts - the argument never agrees that it is okay for a person to have a hard heart. The argument never agrees that it is acceptable to be a sinner - even if God made someone to be a sinner.

Read Romans 9:20-21 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, is talking to these Jews with an analogy that they should all be familiar with. It was a fairly common thought in the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Isaiah 29:16, God says the people of Israel are turning things upside down, as if they clay accuses the potter of knowing nothing. In Isaiah 45:9, God tells them they are like the clay questioning the potter in regards to what he is making. He also says they are like a broken piece of pottery among a pile broken pieces.

In Isaiah 64:8, the prophet Isaiah cries out, “You are our Father. We are the clay, You are the Potter.” God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah, “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand” (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

The analogy of the Jewish people being like clay in the hand of the potter - to be made into whatever the potter decided is one with which every Jew was probably familiar. The message is that God not only has the power to make a person into whatever he chooses - God has the authority to make a person into whatever he chooses. God has this authority and power over entire nations of people as well as individuals - and this isn't really up for debate.

Without having to get anyone's approval or permission - God can make a person into whatever he wants - God can make a person do whatever he wants - God can make a person go wherever he wants- and no one, anywhere, has the authority to question God about this.

Read Romans 9:22 and make notes:

So, What If, - God in his sovereign power and sovereign right, - decides to make someone a person to be lost and to receive punishment. Who is anyone - to say anything about it? Who could possibly have the right to challenge God's decisions? This is basically a rhetorical question asking the same thing that has been stated in the previous couple of verses.

What if God did make someone to be lost - to use them to be an example to show his wrath and power - and then He chose to bear with them in great patience instead of smashing them right off the bat? Even if God made someone to be lost and then did NOT punish them for a very long time - What right does anyone have to complain? God has the sovereign right to make something for a purpose - and then decide how long he will let it exist before actually using it for that purpose. At this point, it can sound like Paul is agreeing with the objections.

Read Romans 9:23-24 and make notes:

"The objects of God's mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory - even us, whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" This reference to both Jews and Gentiles as objects of God's mercy whom he prepared in advance for glory.

Is very important - if one was to look only at those who were biologically Jews in Paul's day, - it could lead you to the conclusion that the covenant promise had failed. The covenant promise has not failed - but indeed, the covenant promise was coming into effect in the True Israel - The true children of God, - the true seed!

The covenant promise and the grace of God has a much broader scope - than simply the biological Jews - but also from the Gentiles. Remember what Paul said earlier in Romans 4:16? "The promise" comes by faith - "the promise" doesn't come by works - and "the promise" doesn't come by biology. "The promise" comes to those who are truly part of the family and Abraham is the father of all of us who have faith!

Read Romans 9:25-26 and make notes:

Don't let the devil tell you these verses are confusing - as some commentators say. Through Hosea, God says "I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel" (Hosea 1:6). Some want to interpret this to be a final statement that will last from Hosea's time right through to the end of time. That's it - no more mercy for the house of Israel - never again as long as the earth last.

But we know later, - when the house of Israel repented and turned again to God,- that He forgave them and certainly did have mercy on the house of Israel again. Some who want to see the statement in Hosea as a final decision - then later see God having mercy on Israel - come to the conclusion that God either lied or God changed his mind.

The Bible tells us that God cannot lie - The Bible tells us that God changes not - He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And for those who have spent a little time studying God's Word, - we know that God has said in more than one place - and in more than one way - that I will not dwell with a people who sin against me - but I will return to them and restore them when they repent and turn again to me.

For those of us who know God's Word says this - then we know" the statement that "I will no more have mercy on the House of Israel" - was intended to be interpreted as "until you turn from your wicked ways, repent of your sins, and turn again unto me." It was never intended to be a forever final condition.

So, why have I spent time with this? Because in the same way that God will turn again to the House of Israel and give them mercy after having had to cut them off from his mercy because of their sins - in the very same way, God will give mercy to the Gentiles - and call them His people when earlier he had cut the Gentiles off from his mercy and said "you are not my people."

I submit to you that God sets out to make everyone into a vessel of honor. But, if we refuse to be shaped, molded, and formed by Him – then He will allow us to become vessels of dis-honor. But that is not God's preferred choice for us.

Look again at Romans 9:26. There is good news for those who feel cut off from receiving God's blessings and favor. Being “cut off” does not have to be permanent. If we call out to God and repent – He will bring us close to Him – He will embrace us – He will pour His fullness upon us- and will give us every good and perfect gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is “our sin” and “our selfishness” is all that is standing between us and God's fullness. Even if we have committed despicable sins – and it feels as though God is no where near – He will forgive – He will cleanse – and He will joyfully call us His child – when we repent and turn from our wicked ways.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

When we look at the promise in the Bible - that the Jews will be restored - or that the Jews will be saved - Does that apply to everyone who is a Jew? When we look at the Covenant Promise to the Israelites in the Bible - are we correct to apply that Covenant Promise to everyone who is genetically an Israelite today?

Some people are making some strong statements about things that have to happen in the nation of Israel - because of what the Covenant Promise recorded in the Bible. Are they right?

Some today, teach that it really doesn't matter how we live, if we are really saved. Are they right?

Read Romans 9:27-29 and make notes:

The previous sections of the Letter to the Romans - explained that the Covenant Promise of God had not failed - even though it might look like it – to those who were to survey the condition of those who make up the national people known as Jews in Paul's day.

The Holy Spirit directs Paul to remind the people of something that had been prophesied through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. When we slow down and read Isaiah 10:22-23 slowly- it is clear that the promise did not guarantee the salvation of all of ethnic Israel. As far back as Isaiah it was prophesied that only a remnant would be saved. Even Isaiah declared that if it had not been for the merciful grace of God - the Israelites would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah - totally wiped off the face of the earth.

If the promise of the Covenant was a guarantee to all of ethnic Israel - then there could be no danger of Israel being wiped off the face of the earth. If the promise of the Covenant was a guarantee to all of ethnic Israel - then there could be no danger of great number of Israelites being destroyed and only a remnant remaining. If we stop long enough to consider what was said through Isaiah - we can't help but understand that the covenant promise was not a guarantee to all of ethnic Israel - or else there would be no discussion of saving only a remnant.

In Isaiah, this word was being spoken to the nation of Israel in the context of God allowing the Assyrians to devastate the Israelites. The people of Israel, as a whole, had been very unfaithful to God. Now, God was allowing Assyria to do damage to Israel as part of their punishment. But God guaranteed that at least a remnant would be saved. Most will be lost - but a seed will be saved.

If God's promise did not apply to all of ethnic Israel in Isaiah's day - and God's promise did not apply to all of ethnic Israel in Paul's day - why do so many people today, - believe that God's promise applies to all of ethnic Israel today? This question is not a negative message - when you consider it fully - it is actually a message of hope and encouragement - and I will explain that a little later.

Read Isaiah 14:24 and make notes:

God told the Israelites, through Isaiah, that their destruction was going to be a very thorough destruction. Their destruction was indeed going to be widespread - but God also told them that He would finish what He intended. He would save enough seed Israelites to fulfill His Word.

If they had paid close attention to God's Word in Isaiah's day - they would not have come to the conclusion that they are safe – and that it doesn't matter how they live - because they have the Covenant Promise of God. If they had paid close attention - they would have known that the Covenant Promise - only applied to those who maintained a relationship with the Heavenly Father. But they, like so many of us, had heard only what they wanted to hear. By Paul's day the Israelites were less concerned with living in accordance with the Covenant relationship with God - and more concerned with being able to prove that they had descended from an Israelite. They spent too much time proving and presenting their genealogy - and basically no time maintaining the Covenant relationship.

Read Romans 9:30-33 and make notes:

In verses 6-13 we are told that the unbelief - and the rejection of ethnic Israel as a whole - did not invalidate God's covenant promise. The promise had respect to and was realized by grace.

In verses 14-18 this procedure of grace is vindicated by the sovereign will of God. In verses 19-29 we are told that man is not relieved of responsibility on the grounds of God's will making them the way they are. In this section it is disclosed that only a small number would be saved was God's plan all along.

It was never a promise that all of ethnic Israel was going to be saved. The original purpose of God stands fast. Those who remain in Covenant relationship by faith - Will be saved.

This last section is important to keep connected to the previous section. In the previous section – it was explained that men can not justify being a sinner - on the grounds that he is the way he is because of the will of God. The previous section made it clear that man is still responsible for being who he is. Man is still responsible for living his life the way he does.

This current section of the letter makes it clear that it was always God's plan - that not everyone would be saved - but only those who remained within the Covenant relationship. God saw early on that this number would be small.

If God has a will for man - even specifically a will for each man - and yet man is still responsible for his choices - and his obedience or lack of - can it be said that the will of man controls the will of God?

There is a correlation between the will of God and the will of man. There is a relationship between the will of God and the will of man. However, the will of man does not control the will of God. The sovereignty of God makes it possible for God to control the will of man - BUT - God loves man so much that He chooses to allow man to make his own choices - even if man's choices are contrary to the will of God for that man.

God's will remains intact. God's will is for every person to live in a Covenant relationship with Him - and as a result they will share in all the benefits that are part of the Covenant relationship. It is also God's will that those who exercise their free will to reject the Covenant relationship with God- do not share in the benefits that are made available to those who choose to live in Covenant relationship. Either way, whatever a person decides to do with their own personal will - they will wind up in accordance with God's will. If they reject living in Covenant relationship with God - they will live in accordance with God's disciplinary will - instead of His blessing will.

So, here are the Jews in Paul's day - they have been brought up and trained to make sure they know their genealogy - and to be able to prove their Jewish genealogy. They have been trained to struggle to make sure they observe every legal detail of worship and religious observance. They have strained at times to achieve this religious justification - in pursuit of being declared righteous by God.

Here are these Gentiles who haven't even tried to observe the feast days at all - let alone in a proper manner. These Gentiles, who don't even have a single drop of Jewish blood within their veins - who have not participated in the very important ritual of circumcision - who seem to ignore every important detail of religious observance as it has been handed down through the generations - Here they are being declared righteous. "What are we to say to this?"

This idea that Gentiles could have achieved any level of religious justification - and that so many of us Jews have not - this is so abnormal by every standard we have held to "What are we to make of all of this?"

The Gentiles were "outside" the circle of special revelation. The Israelites on the other hand - had been given the very oracles of God. They had been given special revelation from God - they had been privileged to experience special visitations from God. Now so many of the Jews were NOT being counted righteous - and they were being told that Gentiles were being counted righteous - "How can this be?"

I am sure it would have been very difficult to convince many of the Jews in Paul's day - that every Gentile was not totally without morals and ethics. The basic Jewish view of Gentiles - was that all Gentiles are dogs - they have no good moral quality and know nothing of ethics. But the truth of the matter - was that there were some Gentiles who lived good moral lives - and held to a high standard of ethics. Even though these Gentiles - nor any of the ancestors - had ever had a special visitation from God - and perhaps none of them had ever been touched by an angel - they still tried to do the right thing.

And when Jesus came in the flesh - these Gentiles readily accepted Jesus as God's Son - and readily accepted Him as Savior - while these who had been given such special favor from God - couldn't consider accepting Jesus as the Messiah. Those who had not been privileged with special favor from God- were responding in Faith to God's invitation - while those who had been given such great favor from God - were rejecting God's invitation - and responding in great doubt and serious skepticism.

Look back at Verse 30 - "the Gentiles, ... obtained ... a righteousness that is by faith." Jesus came to be a "precious cornerstone" - to be a "sure foundation" - and yet, instead of building with Jesus as the corner stone of reference - so many of the ethnic Jews "stumbled" over the cornerstone and fell. Their falling had fatal results.

I mentioned earlier - the message that all of ethnic Israel is not going to be saved - is not a negative message. It is in fact a message of hope and encouragement. This last section of the letter to the Romans that we have just looked at - explains why this is a positive message more so than a negative message. It has always been those who would live by faith that would be saved - not those of some particular ethnic background.

For every one of us who can't find even the smallest hint - that there was ever any Jewish blood in our family tree - it really doesn't matter. The covenant promise was always to the people who would have faith - not to the people who would have the right kind of blood - or the right color of skin - or the right accent to their speech. The covenant promise has always been to "whosoever will believe."

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the previous lessons - much was said about the sovereignty of God, and the will of God. It was also mentioned that some people wind up with hardened hearts - and others wind up with soft and pliable hearts. We considered how some people work hard to convince others that God creates some people to be saved and others to be lost - and there's nothing that we can do to change a person's outcome. These people actually take some of the teachings of the Holy Spirit that were given through the Apostle Paul - and try to say that Paul believed this. If Paul believed that was true - there is no reasonable explanation as to why he wrote chapter 10 in the letter to the Romans.

Read Romans 10:1 and make notes:

If a person truly believed that God actually created some people to be lost - and it was God's will that they live on this earth for a span of years - then spend an eternity in hell - Then what sense would it make for them to have a "heart's desire" for these very people to be saved? What sense would it make for a dedicated servant of God to spend their time "praying" to God that these people would become saved?

So it should be fairly obvious that Paul did not believe that some people were created to be lost. The original word translated "desire" in this verse - literally means "good pleasure." "It is my hearts good pleasure that these Israelites be saved." This is so much like what God said through the Prophet Ezekiel. It was his "good pleasure" that the wicked turn from their wicked ways and live for him.

When we see the Holy Spirit expressing this message through Paul - and we remember the message God spoke through Ezekiel - it points out once again - that God's plan and God's will for man has not changed throughout the ages.

When we read in this chapter about the "good pleasure" that these Israelites might be saved - it helps us understand that in chapter 9 where it talked about the pain and sorrow of heart. It was not emotions of hopelessness and complete despair. It is to be more clearly understood that when these people remained in their lost state. It was the "good pleasure" of the heart - not being fulfilled - thus causing pain.

Read Romans 10:2 and make notes:

Who would know first hand and understand the "zeal" of the Israelites for serving God - better than the Apostle Paul? He had indeed been a Pharisee of Pharisees. He had been among the most zealous of all the Pharisees before he met Jesus face to face on that road to Damascus.

Paul could legitimately stand and give credible testimony regarding just how zealous the Israelites were for God. But, while he could honestly testify of the great level of "zeal" - he also had to testify that their "zeal" was not based on knowledge.

I have observed in life - frequently, the most zealous people for a particular cause - are often fairly ignorant to the actual facts of the cause. I have witnessed people become overly zealous for some particular cause - then go out in their "zeal" - and actually hurt a number of people – sometimes hurt the very cause for which they are expressing their "zeal." Later, when they become aware of the facts concerning their cause - and discover that their "zeal" was so misdirected - and so misused that it harmed the cause.

I have witnessed people pick up on someone's hurt or disappointment - and not be aware of all the facts regarding this person's hurt - they go out on a "zealous" crusade to right the wrong against this person. In their "zeal" they hurt a number of people - they cause harm between the person they are crusading for and others. The person for whom they are crusading - becomes alienated from others because of this crusader's words and actions. They later discover the facts concerning the original hurt - and realize that their "zeal" was not only out of order - but caused the greatest harm long term. Is this like Saul, the Jew, defending Judaism against Christianity before he became Paul, the Christian?

"Zeal" without knowledge is what Paul declared the Israelites to have. "Zeal" without knowledge causes great harm and destruction. It was not only true in Paul's day, but it is true in our day as well. How often have we picked up a cause for someone - and in our "zeal" without knowledge have caused even more harm - and have caused more separation between friends?

Read Romans 10:3 and make notes:

This explains the reason the Israelite's zeal was not according to knowledge. They simply did not know the righteousness that comes from God. They were so busy seeking their own righteousness - that they were not able to submit to God's righteousness.

When we read the Old Testament quickly - and consider basic human nature - we can see how they came to the conclusions that they did. And, we can understand how the Israelites came to be so focused on the requirements of covenant stipulations - that they thought these covenant requirements were the means of righteousness - Instead of the actual relationship itself.

However, when we read the Old Testament more slowly - and we take into account all of the Scriptures - it is clear that the righteousness that God desired for the Israelites to obtain - was the righteousness that he would give them - because of their faith in him - rather than their works and service to him. It is exactly the same way we are to receive righteousness today; Not by works - but by faith.

When people today - get so focused on doing the "work of God" - that they do not have time to spend with God - then they can not hear from God - and they do not receive righteousness. As a result - become just like the Israelites of Paul's day - and have a "zeal without knowledge" – but do not have true righteousness.

Chapter 9 closed with the statement that God had sent the Israelites a precious cornerstone. This precious cornerstone was sent - to build the New Covenant relationship with God. These "zealous" Israelites stumbled over the cornerstone instead of building on it.

Have we sometimes been so zealous in our work for God- that we stumbled over the very things that God sent to help us in our relationship with Him? How do we respond to those things over which we stumble? Is our response something like, "who put this cursed thing right in my way?" - "if I could just get my hands on the one who left this here" - "grumble - growl- grumble – growl." The giver of all good gifts is left with tears in his eyes because we did not appreciate His gift and failed to see it as a gift - but complained about it being a troublesome thing.

Read Romans 10:4 and make notes;

The law has never delivered righteousness. First, because no one ever was able to completely fulfill the law. Secondly, even if someone had fulfilled all the law - that still would not have granted them righteousness.

The purpose of the law was always to provide instructions on how to live out the covenant relationship with God. Obeying the law simply delayed the punishment for sins that were committed - until the ultimate sacrifice could be made. When Christ fulfilled the ultimate and perfect sacrifice for man's sins - there was no longer any requirement for sacrifice.

Only the requirement to live in covenant relationship with God. Now there is righteousness for all those who had believed that a Messiah would come and make things right between them and God. There is righteousness for all of us today who do believe. Jesus is the one who has made things right between us and God. There is righteousness for all those who will believe - Jesus is the one who has made things right between them and God.

Because of Jesus – there is now a righteousness that is not only available to just one tribe - one nation - or one ethnic group. There is now a righteousness that is available for EVERYONE who believes.

Read Romans 10:5 and make notes:

Verse 5 is a quote from Leviticus 18. This is important in helping to establish the purpose and plan of God as having always been what it is today. Whether we are talking about those in Paul's day or people today - for those who believe that righteousness is going to be obtained by a strict observance of the law - they must be told that the person who lives by the law will be judged by the law.

"If you choose to do the things of the law - then you will be expected to live by the things of the law" - and that will be the basis of your judgment. Since we know that the Word of God tells us that "All have sinned"- and it says that no one - except Jesus - has ever been able to live all the law - personally, this should frighten us to death. To think that we are going to be judged one day on how well we lived up to the Law - we might as well start packing our things for hell right now.

I am grateful that I am going to be judged according to my faith in Christ - instead of my having fulfilled the law. I am fully aware that my faith is not perfect - sometimes my faith falls short - but my faith is still so much better than my ability to fulfill the law.

Read Romans 10:6-8 and make notes:

Verses 6-8 is a quote from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. The interpretations of these verses have gone in several directions. Lets keep it simple. Lets take God's Word at face value as often as we can.

There are those groups today who teach their people - that they must do certain works if they want to go to heaven. When we put our faith in obtaining righteousness in our ability to accomplish certain works - then we are putting our faith in going to heaven in our works. We are saying that "I will ascend into heaven" because of my accomplishments. This makes Christ having come to earth in a fleshly body to be of no use.

When we take on the attitude - that I hope that I will have done enough good deeds to outweigh the bad deeds and thus be allowed to get into heaven - we are saying that Christ's birth, life, and death on this earth means nothing to me. It is saying, "I am going to earn my way into heaven."

There are some today who teach their people - that they must do battle with the forces of evil - and they must win over them if they want to go to heaven. They teach them they must go into the pits of death and defeat death itself so they will be allowed into heaven.

I listened as one was trying to warn another that they were being distracted from the battle with death and evil - and if they weren't careful that they would be so distracted from the real battle- that they would lose their chance at salvation.

When we take on the attitude that we must go into the pits of death - and defeat it so that we can have a chance to go to heaven - then we are saying that the death and resurrection of Jesus means nothing.

Verse 8 is such a wonderful text - especially when we realize it is quoting from Deuteronomy 30: 14. Maybe it is because we have the New Testament to help us - that we can more easily see it's meaning than they did in Moses' day. But it is important for us to know that even in the day of Moses when the Israelites were given the law - they were told they didn't have to ascend to heaven - nor did they have to go into far away places - the word is so very near you - it is in your own mouth.

Many of the Israelites made the mistake of seeing this as saying the Word of God was what they had to have in their mouth - so they tried to answer as much as they could by saying Scriptures. We have people today - who try to answer any question by quoting some verse of Scripture. Trying to make sure that you say verses of Scripture is not the way to obtain righteousness. The Holy Spirit wanted to make sure we didn't continue in this misunderstanding - of what was said in Deuteronomy 30: 14 - so He gave Paul a more complete statement concerning this.

Paul said it "is the word of faith we are proclaiming." It was never meant that the Scriptures were to be used as some magical words of incantation that would make things happen. It was always that God's people were expected to have the words of FAITH in their mouth.

Let's be practical with this for a moment or two. Which does the most harm:
The first scenario - A person is always speaking words of faith - and always expressing their faith that things will turn out well - always saying they think the better of things will happen - and encourages people to expect it to turn out well. Of course - sometimes things don't turn out well.
The second scenario - A person is always speaking words of doom and gloom - and always expressing their doubt that things will turn out well - and saying they think the worst is sure to come about - and encourages people to go ahead and accept defeat. Of course - sometimes things do turn out well anyway.

Now, which of these 2 scenarios does the most harm?

The person who continuously speaks words of faith - will keep other peoples spirits and hope alive. When things don't turn out well - these other people are certainly disappointed and hurt.

The person who continuously speaks words of doubt - will kill and destroy the spirits and hopes of others. Many people will give up and quit trying - Often just short of actually achieving success - just because they listened to the doom and gloom. They cause other people to be disappointed and hurt – most of the time. This is especially true if these other people discover how close they came and now add regret to their disappointment.

I submit to you that we do more harm to ourselves and to those around us - when we fail to have faith in our mouth. We do inspire ourselves and those around us to keep trying - when we have faith in our mouth.

Look again at Verse 8. In Deuteronomy it said the "word is near you - it is in your mouth." Here in the letter to the Romans - it says "the word is in your mouth and in your heart."

It was never magical words. Having the "word of faith" continually in the mouth - would just naturally bring about some changes in the heart – and ultimately into the life of the person. Many of us really don't want to have to admit this - but we human beings are very much influenced by the power of suggestion. I know that some of us like to think that we are so strong - and nobody can convince us of anything. However, the truth is that we are all influenced by what we hear. If we keep hearing something over and over and over - we just can't help it - we come to believe it.

There is a saying that is passed around in the secular world - that says "if a lie is told long enough it is accepted as truth" -even if everyone initially knew it was a lie. So part of the practical part of this message is this - even if I know that the faith in my heart is still not as strong as it should be – if I keep faith in my mouth - every time I speak faith - my ears hear faith. My mind process this faith that I hear - and one day my heart will embrace this faith more fully. One day the faith of my heart will be as strong as the faith of my words.

This is not talking about mind over matter. This is keeping the Word of Faith in our mouth - for our own health and for the health of those around us. God's Word says that if we "confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord" - AND - "believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead" - WE Will Be Saved!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

How many of us actually confess what we truly believe in our hearts? What is the most effective "confession"?

Sometimes people make a confession with the straightest face - and still they are not believed. Sometimes a person will make a confession with the voice not quivering the least amount - and still they are not believed. Sometimes people make a confession with tears streaming down their face - and still they are not believed. So, what is it that makes a confession believable?

Read Romans 10:9-10 and make notes:

These two verses give us a summary of the gospel message. We must "confess with the mouth" - AND we must "believe in the heart." As we have said with other passages, it is important that we do not separate this passage from the preceding one. Verse 8 stated that the "word of faith we are proclaiming ... is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart." Verse 9 explains that the "word of faith" in our mouth is how we confess our faith - and the "word of faith" in our heart is how we live our faith. Verse 10 explains "it is with the heart that we believe and are justified" - while "it is with our mouth that we confess and are saved."

In the previous lesson – we discussed the importance of having the Word of Faith in our mouth. It was stated that "confessing our faith with our mouth" - led to having stronger faith in our hearts. It was also pointed out that I was not talking about "mind over matter." We do not want to diminish or take anything away from the previous lesson – but we do want to go a little further in this lesson.

If you recall from the previous message - the more we confess our faith with our mouth - the stronger our faith in our heart will become. It is not that simply confessing faith with our mouth would place faith in our hearts.

Verse 8 declared how close the Word of Faith is to the believer. It is in the mouth AND in the heart. Verse 9 explains the salvation process involves both the confessing with the mouth - AND the believing with the heart.

Stopping here and failing to read more of this passage -has led some to come to an error. There are those who teach that if you just say you believe long enough, - that you will finally wind up believing. They will often encourage those who are struggling with faith, - those who are having trouble believing, - to just go ahead and say they believe, - even though they really don't believe - and expect to become a believer real soon, just because they keep confessing it. Error in this area has led to “just Name It and Claim it.”

Verse 10 explains why this is not true as it explains what verse 9 is talking about. The reason what is said in verse 9 is true is pointed out in verse 10 – "For." The reason verse 9 is true - is because "it is with the heart that you believe and are justified." When we are saying something that we do not believe – is a false statement. Confessing something that we do not believe is a false confession! It is only a "true confession" when we are saying what we believe!

In a court of law - when someone says something that they don't know to be true - they only think - it might be true - they see how it could be true - but they don't know that it is true - that is called "here say" and NOT testimony!

When we actually believe it in our heart - then we are justified. And when we actually confess it with our mouth - what we truly believe in our hearts - then we are saved.

Have you ever witnessed someone telling another person to “just repeat these words after me” - and when they finished – they declared, “now you are saved” ?

If it was just a matter of getting people to say some words - then I would take me a couple of "big mean guys" - and we would go around holding people down and giving them some pain until they would say the words. We would have the whole community saved in a short time - whether they wanted to be saved or not.

You may be thinking that this analogy is stupid - "why pastor, we all know you can't get people saved by tricking them into saying certain words." Okay, replace the "two big mean guys" with a group of people surrounding you in the altar. Replace the physical pain with the mental and emotional pain of what everyone around you is expecting. How is it different?

Confession of words without the corresponding faith in the heart is nothing but vain speaking. And faith in the heart without the corresponding confessing is nothing but vain believing.

If you believe you have found the very best restaurant in the world, - and you wish so much that all of your friends would come and experience this dining experience - but you never tell anyone, - what is the chances that they will enjoy this wonderful dining experience you are so hoping they do? "Oh, I believe this is the best, and I want all my friends to experience eating here, but I'm not going to tell anyone." What good is your believing this to be the best restaurant, if you won't tell anyone?

Our "faith" is unto justification. Our "confession" is unto salvation. Remember that we cannot separate "justification" from "salvation."

The lesson began with a couple of questions:

“What is the most effective confession?” and “What makes a confession believable?”

When we live our life in such a way that it is evident as to what we believe in our heart. A lifestyle consistent with the words we say, is the most effective testimony!

Read Romans 10:11 and make notes:

Verse 10 is repeating what was said through the prophet Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 28:16 and make notes:

In Isaiah, it says "the one who trusts." Unfortunately, the Israelites interpreted this to mean "the Israelite one who trust." In Romans 10:11, it says "Anyone who trust in him"- "will never be put to shame." To help us not to make the same mistake those before us have made;

Read Romans 10:12-13 and make notes:

Verse 13 is a partial quote from Joel 2.32 - "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Before it is quoted - just to make sure that we don't mistakenly interpret it to say - "Everyone who is an Israelite who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" - The Holy Spirit put in verse 12 - "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile-" "the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him."

There is a huge difference between seeing yourself as a "blessed" person – and seeing yourself as an "elite" person. The Jews, as a whole, had mistakenly come to see themselves as the "elite" - and very special people of God - rather than seeing themselves as the "blessed" people of God.

There is nothing about seeing yourself as "blessed" that prevents you from believing that others could be just as blessed. But, when we begin to see ourselves as "elite" and as the "special ones" - then we have a hard time seeing others as anything but "inferior" and "not as good as."

When we see ourselves as the "elite" - we can't help but see God as "Our" God, but not the God of those inferior to us. Why inconvenience ourselves trying to tell these inferior people about Him? But verse 11 declares that the Lord is the Lord of all who call on him - and richly blesses all who call upon him.

So seeing myself as blessed - and not elite - helps me to keep in focus the simple but important truth - that the Lord who richly blesses me - will richly bless all those others - whoever they may be - if they just call upon him. This makes it much more important that we tell others about God - and how He desires to richly bless them.

Read Romans 10:14-15 and make notes:

As stated in the last lesson, this chapter is such a wonderful evidence against those who declare Paul believed only certain people could be saved. He has declared that - "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." And - "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." And - "the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him" - both Jew and Gentile alike.

But alas, "how can they call on the one they have not believed in?" - and "how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" - and "how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" - and "how can they preach unless they are sent?"

It is the sharing of the gospel that makes it possible for others to "hear the gospel" - and it is the hearing of the gospel message that makes it possible for someone to "believe in Jesus" - and it is the believing in Jesus that makes it possible for them to "confess" with their mouth.

Look at Romans 10:15 again. The least lovely part of our body is probably the feet. Oh, when we are born - our little feet are probably just about perfect in shape. The cute little toes are all about the right size and shape for the foot. But as we grow through life - our feet take on some interesting characteristics - calluses form on some areas - some of the toes take a turn in one direction or another - a toe nail might take on some weird shape or color - and sometimes one of the bones that was supposed to stay inside the foot - decides it wants to stick itself outside the foot.

The truth is that as we go through life - our feet become less cute. They sometimes become real interesting to look at -but no longer cute. Even though the foot is no longer symmetrical - even though it may have humps and bumps in the wrong places - even though the toes may be just going in the wrong direction - "oh how lovely these feet appear" - when they are bringing the "good news" of Jesus Christ.

Many of us know what it is like to have someone who never brings anything but bad news. Regardless of how "cute" they may be in the physical - it is not a pleasant sight when we see them coming - because we know they will have nothing to say but "bad news." We don't have to be nearly as concerned about being "good looking" physically - when we are busy bringing "good news" to those around us. Even the least pretty part of the human body "looks good" - when we are bringing the good news of Jesus Christ. If we don't bring the "good news" - how will they believe? If they don't believe - then they will never be saved?

Most people DO NOT get saved because of the fine compelling sermon they heard from the pulpit. Most people get saved because of the compelling sermon they have seen lived out in someone's life where they live or work. It is the testimony in the lifestyle in the everyday world that leads people to accept Jesus as their savior. The most effective testimony is the one others see in our lifestyle!

We should ask God to "send us with good news" to those around us. This doesn't mean we are asking God to give us a pulpit in a church somewhere. It simply means we are willing to live out in the open - what we believe in the privacy of our heart. When we do this - we will be "lovely."

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever heard someone say God understands that we are human - and then use this as the basis to excuse doing wrong? How much margin does God allow us because of our fleshly weakness? How much sin in our life does God excuse because of our humanness?

Read Romans 10:16 and make notes:

In verse 16, the Holy Spirit brings Paul once again to the subject that seems to permeate this part of the letter to the Romans -The Un-Belief of Israel. "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news." This is not a new issue. It appears it has been this way since Isaiah's time.

Paul is experiencing some of the pain that was felt by the prophet Isaiah - "Lord, who has believed our message?" In other words - "Lord, where are the Believers?"

I served in a church once - where the men of the church simply did not want to follow after Christ. They wanted something like a civic organization - but they did not want to have a church that promoted and expected people to be Christ-like. And before you think I am being some kind of judgmental Christian fanatic - Some of the men who desired to have places of leadership said to me - "Pastor, we don't want to be doing the Christian thing all the time - we prefer to do worldly stuff - but we will do the Christian thing from time to time - we're good people, surely God doesn't really expect people to live this Christian thing everyday." My level of pain was great at this point.

I believe I felt something of the pain and frustration that was expressed by Isaiah and by the apostle Paul. I remember wanting to just quit the ministry all together. I remember saying to God that it doesn't seem that there are many, if there are any, who really take being a Christian seriously. "Lord, if you will just let me quit being a minister, I will be faithful to you all the rest of my life."

Now it is important for me to say this - It wasn't that God went out and created a group of people who really wanted to be Christians just because of my whining to him. They weren't where I was serving at that time, - but there was already a group of people who wanted to be Christians everyday. God took me to a place and allowed me to meet people from several different denominations. Some were more mature than others, but most all of them wanting to be Christ-like in their everyday life.

So, here was Paul, looking at his people – and feeling a certain level of despair - "Oh Lord, where are the Believers?" Then, as if to remind himself:

Read Romans 10:17 and make notes:

Earlier in this letter, it was said" faith comes from hearing the gospel - or from hearing the "good news." Here in verse 17 it is made specifically clear what "good news" it is that brings faith. Just so that there could be no misunderstanding as to what "good news" it is that brings people to have faith - it is the "Word of Christ!"

Read Romans 10:18 and make notes:

I can just feel Paul wrestling with this right here. Remember, Paul is struggling with the fact that "not all Israelites" have accepted the "good news." Paul is truly bothered by the fact that so many of his people have not accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit reminds Paul that people come to have faith from hearing the "Word of Christ" - and then Paul begins to reason - "now wait a minute - didn't they HEAR?" He answers his own question - "Of course they heard." The Word started with the Jews and has now been proclaimed to the ends of the world - "These people have heard, Lord, why are they not believing?"

Read Romans 10:19-21 and make notes:

Okay, the Israelites did hear the message - but did they UNDERSTAND the message? Paul is reminded of the message given to the Israelites through Moses - "my people were warned by Moses - didn't they understand he was referring to the Gentiles." Nothing could carry more weight with the Israelite people than the testimony of Moses. "And my people were warned by Isaiah - didn't they understand he also was referring to the Gentiles."

Paul must have recalled the simple fact that a court case was settled in his time by the testimony of 2 witnesses - and Paul was able to recall 2 witnesses against his people with immediate ease. If Israel would just remember what they had been told - a long time ago - they would have to acknowledge that they were told that strangers and aliens would indeed become partakers of the covenant favor and the covenant blessing.

Verses 20 and 21 present a significant contrast – and we must slow down and take it in. Verse 20 speaks clearly of the Grace of God - "I was found by those who did not seek me" - "I revealed myself to those who did not ask me to reveal myself to them."

The point is that it wasn't that these Gentiles finally sought God with the right level of diligence that God said, "okay, that's enough, now you can find me." The point is that it wasn't that the Gentiles asked God in the right tone of voice or in the acceptable way that God said, "okay, you finally asked correctly, now I will reveal myself." The Gentiles finding God and having God to reveal Himself to them was purely the Grace of God being poured out upon them. God's grace poured out on the Gentiles, like people walking through a waterfall.

Now compare this to verse 21- "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." If God would pour Himself out upon the Gentiles - wouldn't it just make sense that God would also pour Himself out on His chosen people? And while some may have become discouraged over the apparent loss of God's favor and blessing - look at what God said - "I have been standing here a very long time - with hands outstretched" - "I have been standing here a very long time - with my everlasting arms wide open" - "and yet, this people has remained disobedient and obstinate."

The whole time that God was pouring out His Grace on the Gentiles who humbled themselves - God was holding out his open arms to His chosen people. Rather than running into the arms of God where they would have been affectionately embraced - they chose to turn up their noses at God - and continued to be obstinate and continued to disobey - what they KNEW was the right thing. So, there really is no basis for complaint on the part of the Israelite people in Paul's day.

In this chapter of the Letter to the Romans - the failure of Israel is dealt with in a clear manner. It begins with the indictment that their zeal is without knowledge. Then the indictment continues that they did not give obedience to the message that they had been given personally. And the indictment is concluded by pointing out how the Israelites had become obstinate instead of grateful.

The verdict can be nothing other than the Israelites are without excuse. They knew in advance about the design of God concerning the call to the Gentiles. They knew in advance about the warning of having their favor and blessings given to another if they became disobedient. So, what does this have to say to the church today?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever met anyone who was convinced they had "no hope"? It is truly a painful place to be. I have walked through some really tough places with people who had come to that conclusion.

I don't know anything that makes me sadder - than for someone to believe they have no hope. I don't know of anything that makes me madder - than for someone to try to convince another person - that they have no hope and they should just give up. It is tragic, but the truth is that there are many people in the church today - who have become convinced that they have no hope. This is not new. Let's look at a response to a message of "no hope."

Read Romans 11:1 and make notes:

From the preceding chapters it is reasonable for someone to come to ask this question - "well, as a result of Israel's unbelief - in the face of all of God's special grace toward them - did God reject Israel?" The frequent and thorough apostasy of the people of Israel would surely be enough reason for God to reject them as his chosen, or special people.

If we would be honest - for the great majority of us - if someone treated us just half as badly as the people of Israel treated God - We would write them off! If someone offended us just half as many times as the Israelites offended God - we would cast them aside and move on to someone else.

Paul answers this question with a very strong emphatic NO! Paul who has already confessed to his being saved - called of God - anointed of God - and gifted of God - Points out that he is an Israelite - if God had rejected the Israelites - then he would not be a minister of the Gospel.

This is worth slowing down to look at! Was Paul a minister of the Gospel because he had so faithfully followed God and obeyed God? Was Paul an apostle of God because he had lived such a righteous and holy life?

No doubt Paul had been a faithful Jew - he had been an exemplary Pharisee. But Paul had not accepted the Gospel message when it was first presented. In fact, Paul had gone on a crusade to punish with physical pain - all those who were following after Jesus as Messiah. Paul had gone on a crusade to put into prison and even kill those who refused to give up their new found faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul became a Christian himself when he repented of his sins and accepted Jesus as Savior. Paul became a minister of the Gospel and an apostle when he became obedient to the leading of the Lord Jesus Christ - and turned from his previous ways.

Now here's the point - If Paul, a murderous Israelite, could become saved and have a place among the saved- then every other Israelite can become saved and have a place among the saved. The majority of the Israelites had only been guilty of simply rejecting Christ's invitation to salvation. They had not actually gone out and killed and injured Christians.

Paul, the Israelite, had gone out and committed the worst of atrocities against Christians - and yet, when he repented of his attitude and his actions - he became a saved and sanctified Israelite - acceptable to the Lord. So, this means that every Israelite could be saved - if only they would repent of their attitude and their actions. This marvelous salvation and cleansing and freedom in Christ Jesus was in reality available to every Israelite!

For those who were a good student of the Old Testament Scriptures - they would not have ever come to asking such a question as was posed in Verse 1 of Chapter 11. When the people of Israel realized they had accumulated a lot of sins against God, - they asked the prophet Samuel to pray to God on their behalf - they said they were concerned that God would completely destroy them for all their cumulative sins. Samuel told the people:

Read 1 Samuel 12:22 and make notes:

When David was proclaiming just how blessed a person is that God loves enough to discipline them - he said:

Read Psalm 94:14 and make notes:

I don't want you to go out and start a new church doctrine over what I am about to share - but I do want to share something I have observed in my lifetime. It seems God is so good at keeping a remnant of his people that man simply cannot outdo God. I have observed people who have vehemently opposed Jesus Christ - and the message of salvation in Christ - they have been abusive to those who have tried to share the gospel with them - and many times, it seems that one of their children will accept Jesus as their Savior. God manages to maintain a remnant - even among the family of those who decide they will militantly oppose God and the Gospel message.

Don't you just marvel at God's grace in such things - especially when you know that most of us would just blow these people off and move on. It might seem that nothing further needs to be said in answer to the above question - but the Holy Spirit leads Paul to continue the answer with a few examples that every Israelite would be familiar with.

Read Romans 11:2-10 and make notes:

Those individuals who accepted the invitation - the elect - have been blessed - and all those who have rejected it have been hardened. Those with hardened hearts – are unable to see things as they really are - they move about with distorted vision - and usually get angry at others who don't see it the way they do. They go about unable to understand things - they remain confused - and usually get angry at those who won't accept their distorted interpretation.

Read Romans 11:11-12 and make notes:

The big message of the preceding verses is that the Israelites as a whole had been rejected from the righteousness of God - but the rejection of the Israelites was not complete or thorough. While the Israelites as a whole had been rejected - not every single Israelite had been rejected. God still had a remnant of Believers within this body of rejected people. The big message in these verses is that the rejection of the Israelites as a whole does not have to be final.

Paul begins to address the possible purpose of the Israelites falling from their special place with God: "Did they stumble - just so they could fall beyond the point of recovery?" Another emphatic negative answer - "NOT AT ALL!"

The stumbling of the Israelites - opened the door to take the "riches of the gospel" to the world - the Gentiles. The Israelites lost their spiritual riches and their spiritual riches were given to the Gentiles. Now if the spiritual riches that are taken from an unbelieving Israel - are such a great blessing to the Gentiles. Can you imagine what a tremendous blessing it would be for the spiritual riches of a BELIEVING Israelite to be taken and shared with a Gentile?

The fullness of an Israelite refers to them not only - but they are also a saved believer in Jesus Christ as well. Try to imagine - if someone had their riches taken from them and given to you. You would be blessed because of what has been given to you. Try to imagine how much better your blessing would be - if this person did not have their riches taken from them - but instead came to you and said, "I want to share my riches with you" - "not just today - but from now on" - "and I want to adopt you and make you a part of my family" - "and I want to share with you the stories of the relationships of the people in my family." How much greater would be your blessing in this second scenario?

Read Romans 11:13-15 and make notes:

Look back at the last part of Verse 11 - "salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." Paul accepts his ministry to the Gentiles - but he also sees in it the potential to cause some envy in the Israelite people. Oh, how it must have affected those Israelites to see the Gentiles receiving a righteousness that the Israelites never attained. How it must have affected the Israelites to see the Gentiles entering into a relationship with God that had a freedom that the Israelites never experienced.

These last 2 verses make it clear that Paul did not see it as being too late for the Israelites. He is still hoping that by these Gentiles coming to Christ Jesus and being Saved - at least some of the Israelites will accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Paul is also stating that it is not too late for the Israelites - in verse 15 where he remarks – if the rejection of the gospel by the Israelites brought reconciliation to the world - when these Israelites begin accepting the gospel it will be Resurrection from the dead!

In the last 20 years or so - I fear the church has proclaimed a half-truth. It seems there a lot of people running around with only half of the gospel message. We have people who are lost - but somehow believe God loves people too much to punish them for sin. We have people who claim to be saved - and somehow believe. God will not punish saved people for sin. So it doesn't matter what we do or say. It appears that most of the people today fall into one of these categories.

Then there are a few others who fall into this category. They have come to believe that since they have rejected God - and have committed certain sins - they can never be right with God.

Please don't miss this - Even if we have rejected the call of God to come to Salvation - even if we have been saved and rejected the call of God to go further with him - even if we have been mean and abusive to those who have tried to bring the Word of God to us - IF we repent from our sin - Repent for our attitude - Repent for our actions and words - We can be Saved. We can be restored - We can be taken on to a place of fullness. It is not too late - but one day it will be.

The message for today isn't "that one day it will be too late" The message for today is that "It is Not Too Late!" The Grace of God is abounding today - for many of the saved. It is time that we commit to take this message of hope - that the rejection of God does not have to be final - and encourage All of Those around us to turn to God - regardless of how they have responded to him before.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Write your thoughts concerning this Third Section of studies from Romans: