

A Study in Romans

Study Ten

Romans 9:30-11:5

Day One

30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;

31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.

32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

vs. 30&31—You should have the idea by now that the issue of Gentiles in the church was a major issue, not only for Paul's audience, but also for Paul. The Gentiles were not looking for God, albeit they were religious people as evidenced by their idolatry. But God in His mercy offered the Gentiles entrance into His family through faith and some of the Gentiles accepted (and are still accepting) the invitation.

v. 32 – God never went out of His way to clarify the questions around Jesus. When men asked Jesus who He was, He asked them, "Who do you think I am?" Jesus' birth was shrouded in mystery. He did things to shake up the religious establishment of the day. Yet He did great miracles and the debate raged about who He was in His day, and it still rages today.

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep"(John 10:25-27).

Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp (John 10:37-39).

At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (John 10:19-21).

Jesus came to stipulate the way to God and the one and only way was and is faith in God's Son, Jesus the Christ. The way to God wasn't through the Jews or any other ethnic tie; it wasn't through works or noble deeds. It was and is through faith:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

v. 33 – As we saw from the passages in John’s gospel, Jesus was indeed a stone over which many have stumbled, are stumbling and will stumble. He seldom meets the expectations of man, for some look for a mighty secular king, others look for an aloof philosopher, and still others for a man given to social good deeds. But Jesus did not come to meet the expectations of man, but of God. It is not up to Jesus to fit into my expectations, but for me to fit into His.

Day Two

10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

v. 1 – This certainly answers the question whether a Jew is going to heaven. Paul, a Jew himself, knew that they were not unless they came through Jesus. Paul was crying out to God in prayer for his people, for he knew that they needed a Savior. The problem was the Jews knew that too, but their expectations caused them to look past their true Savior to a false, religious connotation of what He would look and act like.

v. 2 – If zeal and sincerity were qualifiers, then many would be able to come into God’s presence. But you can be zealous and sincere, and still be zealously and sincerely wrong! Good intentions are not the key to pleasing God; faith in Christ is.

v. 3 – That is a powerful phrase, “sought to establish their own [righteousness].” We have all been guilty of this, even the most spiritual of people. King David did this when he tried to bring back the ark of the covenant to Israel. Instead of bringing it back according to God’s direction, he tried to do something bigger and better—he tried to improve on God’s ways:

They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there

beside the ark of God. Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:3-8).

God had instructed that the ark be transported by Levites by using poles. David tried to improve on that and used a new cart with great pageantry. In other words, he tried to establish his own righteousness, his own way of doing things.

v. 4 – Christ is the way, everything else the equivalent of David's oxcart. A system may carry the ark for a little while, but it won't carry it long. Only God's ways work!

Day Three

5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."

6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:

9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Vs. 5-7 – The Law did have life for those who made every effort to keep it, but now the end of the Law—Christ—has come and no amount of legalistic Law-keeping can provide the benefits of salvation that Christ can bring. Paul was really saying that Christ was the “best deal” any Jew or Gentile could make with God.

v. 8 – Christ was just a simple confession away from coming into anyone's life. A word of faith will bring favor from God in a way that no amount of Law-keeping could do. It is interesting that God actually simplified access to heaven, but many people were upset. They didn't want it simplified; they wanted it as it always had been.

I have found that religious people want a system to follow, rules to obey, so that they can have a part in earning God's favor. But the word of faith that is available to everyone. The way of a disciple after he or she has put faith in Christ can be very difficult and unpredictable, but the salvation experience is a quite simple transaction.

Religious people want rules very often because rules would allow people to control God. I have often said that if anyone has a rule that can control God, that rule actually becomes God!

v. 9 – How simple this is! If anyone confesses Jesus as Lord and has faith that God raised Him from the dead, that person will be saved. But pleasing God is never by faith alone. Some action is always required to validate faith. Here it is faith and speaking.

Faith always requires that you do something—write a letter, make a phone call, write it down, tell someone. Faith without action, as we have quoted again and again, is useless.

Day Four

10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

v. 10 – The salvation process involves the entire being—body (mouth), soul (heart), and spirit. This relates to the greatest commandment as identified by Jesus:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

Whereas man had to find external ways to keep God's law before his mind and heart, the Spirit now empowers from within to obey and please God.

v. 11 – There is absolutely no way that someone would put their trust in God for salvation through Christ and not receive that salvation. It is impossible. The writer of Hebrews stated:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for (Hebrews 11:1-2).

I do believe, however, that some people have laid claim to the truth of this verse only to see their loved one die, their financial deliverance not arrive or their hopes dashed in some other area, leaving them disillusioned. If you are one of those people, you may say, "I trusted but now I feel abandoned." If that is you, read the words of A. W. Tozer:

In spite of tears and pain and death we believe that the God who made us all is infinitely wise and good. As Abraham staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving the glory to God, and was fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform, so do we base our hope in God alone and hope against hope till the day breaks. We rest in *what God is*. I believe that this alone is truth faith. Any faith that must be supported by the evidence of the senses is not real faith. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou has seen me, thou has believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The testimony of faith is that, no matter how things look in this fallen world, all God's acts are wrought in perfect wisdom. The incarnation of the Eternal Son in human flesh was one of God's mighty deeds, and we may be sure that this awesome deed was done with a perfection possible only to the Infinite [God]. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." – *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

vs. 12&13 – How many different ways can Paul state it? Faith opens the way to God for both Jew and Gentile; God responds to the faith from either group of people. Those who followed the Law, while having a better foundation in God, have no special standing with God. Faith is now the access code to God's saving grace. And there is an unlimited supply for everyone who has faith.

Perhaps it would be good to read all of Hebrews 11 now to get a good dose of faith and those who walked it out.

Day Five

14 How, then, 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?

15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

v. 14 – Paul now made a case for the importance of preaching faith. Faith usually doesn't just well up in someone's heart. They must first hear about faith in Christ, and then have the chance to say "yes" or "no." I think this pertains particularly to salvation, for now I can read God's word and put my faith in it. But when I was saved, I responded to a spoken message from an evangelist.

v. 15 – Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7 here. This once again points out that faith without action is dead. We need to put feet to our faith; that's it—"faith feet." Faith isn't just doctrine. If you believe that Christ was raised from the dead, you can have faith for anything— healing, money, or ministry. And we need to actively involved in preaching to those who don't have faith, by either preaching faith or supporting those who do with prayer and finance.

Do you have faith feet? Are you doing what you can to preach faith to those who live in Law or darkness?

Day Six

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

19 Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."

20 And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

v. 17 – While I have digressed to talk about faith in general, I think Paul was specifically writing about faith unto salvation in this context. And the phrase “word of Christ” catches my attention here. Is this a word about Christ or are these the words that belong to Christ, so that the speaker is actually delivering the message that Christ Himself would deliver? When you are preaching the gospel, you are standing where Jesus would stand if He were present. Your words are not your own; they are His. That may seem insignificant to you, but I both a privilege and awesome responsibility in preaching the “word of Christ.”

v. 18 – Paul quoted an interesting verse from Psalm 19 here:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world (Psalm 19:1-4).

This passage refers to what theologians call “general revelation.” God’s creation gives testimony to God’s existence. It does not outline how to reach God, but it declares that God exists. Jews had the Law and an understanding of creation that allowed them to understand God’s existence in a way that the Gentiles could not.

v. 19 – Yet while Israel had the Law and general revelation, when what is called “specific revelation” about Jesus came, they rejected the truth. But now God, in a special effort to reach the Jews, has allowed Gentiles into a covenant relationship with Himself that is meant to stir the Jews to anger and jealousy. Hopefully at some point in history, this anger and jealousy will cause them to reach out to find God. So far, that has not happened in significant numbers from the Jews.

v. 20 – Paul then understood the words from Isaiah 65 in the context of his call to go to the Gentiles. This wasn’t some reaction to some doctrine Paul disagreed with. Paul’s mission to the Gentiles was God’s idea and God foretold of this mission throughout the Old Testament. The Jews thought they “owned” God. They did not, for God was the God of all ethnic groups.

v. 21 – While God is patient and merciful, there is a time when He moves on and says, “Enough.” God consistently reached out to the Jews, who rejected His overtures. They maintained an outward appearance of righteousness and relied heavily on their heritage of what God had done for their forefathers. In Paul’s day, God was doing something new among the Gentiles and the Jews, even the Jewish believers didn’t particularly like it.

While God is merciful, there is a day when He transitions from mercy to judgment. And when He does that, it doesn’t make God any less merciful.

Day Seven

11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah-how he appealed to God against Israel:

3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?

4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

v. 1 – God did not reject His people; He sent His Son to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He called Paul from their midst to serve Him. The original “apostles of the Lamb” were all Jews. The New Testament was written by Jews, except for Luke’s portion.

v. 2 – Keep in mind that Paul was writing about this well before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Paul was opposing a formidable Jewish religious machine that had permeated the Roman Empire. Paul was a Jewish prophet who saw what God was doing in the earth and it included Jews as long as they were able to make room in their hearts and theology for the Gentiles. History has showed that what Paul saw was correct. But the fact that he wrote so much about this meant that this was a significant issue in the early church.

v. 3 – Elijah was in a cave in 1 Kings 19, depressed after his encounter with the prophets of Baal and Jezebel’s threats. He was making exaggerated statements that he was the only one left in Israel who was worshipping God. Do you ever get depressed over the condition of the Church or of God’s work? Then you know how Elijah felt.

v. 4 – God responded to Elijah that he was not alone—there were 7,000 who were just like him. God knew the exact number and gave that information to the prophet. God knows those who are His. No one escapes His notice. After God gave Elijah this report, He then told him to leave his place of depression and go about the work that God had for him to do. That may be a message you need to hear. Are you depressed? Discouraged? Then know that God is with you and then get going!

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v. 5 – The implication is clear. For Paul there was another remnant of true believers among Israel, this time composed of those who had put their faith in Jesus. These true believers exist because of grace, not because of anything they have done.

As we close this week's study, I hope that you have a better understanding of the concept of faith and how important it is that we help anyone who is preaching faith, whether in your country or in another one as a missionary. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Jesus. Let's give as many people as possible a chance to hear and respond.