

Romans

An Overview of Romans 9-11

July 05, 2015

- I. A Review – Safe In God’s Hands In The Face Of Suffering With Christ
 - A. I want to begin today by reviewing the last part of Romans 8, where God presents six promises related to keeping us safe in spite of and in the midst of whatever pain and suffering we experience as a result of suffering with Christ.
 - B. Paul prepares us to see the precious value and essential benefits of these promises by telling us that the sufferings we experience for the sake of Christ are not worthy to be compared to the glory that God will bestow on us when we see Christ, face-to-face. In other words, the glory that will come to us as a result of suffering with Christ is of such incredible value that it makes the suffering seem insignificant by comparison.
 1. God’s first promises that we are safe in His hands even though we are suffering as a Christian, is that the Holy Spirit will intercede with God on our behalf when we do not know what to pray that will remain within the will of God in the face of suffering with Christ.
 2. The second promise is that God causes all things – including the evil and injustice the world is forcing on us – to work together for good, when we love God and are living according to His purposes. In other words, we are safe in God’s hands because He is at work causing the bad things, the painful things, and the all the costly losses to work out for good.
 3. God’s third promise concerning keeping us safe in spite of suffering as a Christian is His predetermined commitment to work in us, through the suffering, to continue transforming us into the likeness of His son, Jesus Christ. And God says this transforming work will result in being called, justified, and one day glorified.
 4. The fourth promise from God is that He is for us, and He promises to go to the same lengths and expense in keeping us safe as He did in giving His son to save us from the penalty and power of sin.
 5. God’s fifth promises is that, since He is the final judge of all mankind, there is no one who is able to charge you with a crime that would prevent you from being the recipient of all God has promised to you, including justification and the gift of eternal life.
 6. And finally, God wraps all these promises in a final, reassuring promise that there is nothing in this world or in the demonic world that can separate us from God’s love.

II. An overview of Romans 9-11

A. It is this list of great and precious promises from God concerning the protection of His people that leads us into Romans 9-11.

1. However, because Romans 9-11 is often treated as a parenthesis dealing with something different from the rest of Romans, and because these three chapters are often used by theologians to prop up their theology, I want to spend some time with an overview of this portion before working our way through the specifics of it.

2. And though this overview may seem to have little to do with how we live the Christian life, the things I want to point out are of significant concern to how we understand God and the ways of God, how we use the scriptures, and how we relate to God. Therefore, in this overview, I will address three things:

a. First, I will address the unstated question that Paul is answering in Romans 9-11, because this question provides the reason for these three chapters. My purpose in doing this is to remind you of the importance of keeping scripture within its context when seeking to understand its meaning and application.

b. Second, I will address the two most common understanding of Romans 9-11 by Protestant theologians and most modern commentaries. My purpose in this is to present the more popular understandings of these three chapters so you can see the contrast between what is commonly taught and what I am teaching.

c. Third, I will address the use of these three chapters by Calvinists or Reformed Theologians to support their view of God's sovereign activity in relation to salvation, and the use of these same three chapters by Arminians to support their view of free will in relation to salvation. My purpose here is to remind you again that God's word speaks of both God's sovereign activity in the affairs of men and man's free will in his response to God.

B. The unstated question Paul is answering in Romans 9-11

1. As I stated at the beginning, Paul leads into chapter 9 with a list of reasons why we are safe in God's hands in spite of whatever pain and loss we may endure when suffering with Christ. And Paul concludes his list of promises with these words: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

2. As I said at the beginning of our study of Romans, one of our goals is to try our best to consider the meaning and importance of each individual part in light of its immediate context of verses or chapter, the larger context of the book of Romans, and the largest context of God's word.
 3. And as I stated at the beginning of our study, Romans has many quotable statements, that when taken out of their context can easily lead to interpretations and beliefs that the rest of Romans and the rest of scripture do not support.
 4. Therefore, according to the chapters leading up to Romans 9-11, one of Paul's main points is that Judaism alone will not bring salvation. To be justified and given the gift of eternal life in NT times, we must live by faith, that is, we must live a life of faithful obedience to the will and word of God, and we must believe in the deity and in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.
 - a. In explaining this, Paul says that the Jews who are rejecting Christ and relying on keeping the outward practices of the Law to save them, will not be justified, because the Law has no power to justify anyone, and keeping parts of the Law as if God grades on a sliding scale is a long way from living a life of faithful obedience.
 - b. Therefore, at least by implication, the big question that drives the content of Romans 9-11 is: "*If nothing can separate those who belong to God from the love of God, why is Paul teaching that the Jews are separated from His love? After all, they were God's chosen people long before Jesus Christ and Christianity came along. And they are descendants of Abraham. They have the seal of circumcision. And they were given the Law and the Temple.*"
 5. Now it is true that Paul never asks this question directly, nevertheless, he appears to be answering it from the beginning of chapter 9. And he affirms that answering this question is an important part of these three chapters in Romans 11:1, where he asks, "God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"
 6. Therefore, we will look at these three chapters as Paul's explanation of why so many Jews are separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.
- C. The second thing I want to address in this overview of Romans 9-11 has to do with the two most common understandings of this section of Romans by Protestant theologians and most modern commentaries. My purpose

in this is give you the two more popular views so you can know the difference between the popular views and what I am teaching.

1. First, these three chapters are seen as a parentheses that is dealing with a separate topic from the rest of Romans. And the topic these three chapters are dealing with is Paul's love for his fellow Jews, his exposure of their current condition and standing with God, and his understanding of their future standing with God based on some of God's O.T. promises to Abraham and Israel as a nation.
2. Second, these three chapters are used to provide foundational support for the doctrines of foreknowledge, predestination and election, and God's sovereign dealings with Jews and Gentiles. Though this is often seen as the foremost purpose of Romans 9-11 by Calvinists and Reformed theologians, they do acknowledge that within these chapters Paul expresses his heartfelt love for his fellow Jews.
3. However, we will treat these three chapters as a continuation of Paul's presentation of justification, the gift of eternal life, who God justifies, to whom He gives the gift of eternal life, the security we have in God in spite of bad things happening to us in this life, and how we are to live as God's people.

D. The third thing I want to address in this overview of Romans 9-11 is the use of these chapters by Calvinists and Arminians to support their view of God's activity and man's activity in relation to salvation. To do this, we will look through a list of the scriptures used by each theology to support their position. My purpose is to show you that God's word speaks of both God's sovereign activity in the affairs of men and man's free will in response to God.

E. Calvinism, or Reformed Theology.

1. Romans 9:10-13 . . . And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; [11] for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, [12] it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." [13] Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
 - a. This portion provides the strong evidence needed by Calvinism to support its teaching that in spite of foreknowledge, God's selection of some to be saved while overlooking others is SOLELY based on His will and in NO WAY based on anything good or bad we do during our lifetime.

- b. Neither scripture nor man's theology can explain the basis on which God selects, so that question is never answered, and possibly doesn't need to be answered. However, it leaves us needing to accept what seems to some to be contradictory to God's nature of justice, love for all mankind, and not wanting any to perish.
 - 2. Romans 9:15-16 . . . For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." [16] So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.
 - a. Here we see God's sovereign power to act however He wills, for as the supreme being, He answers to no one.
 - 3. Romans 9:18 . . . So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
 - a. Again, this supports the teaching that God's selection is not based on anything good or bad we do, but solely on His own will.
 - 4. Romans 9:20-21 . . . On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? [21] Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?
 - a. Based on our position and what power we may have, we have no voice in the matter of who God selects for salvation and who He overlooks. He is the potter, the supreme being, and we are the clay – those who are either elected or left to die in our sin and spend eternity apart from God.
 - 5. Romans 11:7 . . . What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened.
 - a. This passage is used to support the teaching that God selects some, but not all, so that some are hardened, or turned against God and doomed to the consequences of such a life.
- F. Arminianism – Free will of man
- 1. Romans 9:27 . . . Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.
 - a. According to scripture, Israel is God's chosen people, yet not every Israelite will be saved, which implies there is something different about those who are and those who aren't saved. So what is the difference? Those who teach the free will of man see the difference

as the free will of each one as to whether they live a life that leads to justification or damnation.

2. Romans 9:30-33 . . . What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; [31] but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. [32] Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, [33] just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."
 - a. To not pursue righteousness by faith, when it can be pursued by faith, or to pursue righteousness by faith when others around you aren't, supports the teaching of free will.
 - b. To reject Jesus Christ as man's redeemer and cling to the works of the Law is a choice, which presupposes free will.
3. Romans 10:2-4 . . . For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. [3] For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. [4] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
 - a. The phrase, "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" infers that they could have done so if they had wanted to do so, which is classic free will teaching.
4. Romans 10:9-13 . . . if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; [13] for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."
 - a. The "IF" at the beginning of vs 9 is a conditional if, which clearly speaks of something we can do if we will do it.
 - b. The "WHOEVER" in vs 11 and vs 13 clearly speaks of something everyone can do if they will do it.
5. Romans 11:13-15 . . . But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, [14] if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and

- save some of them. [15] For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?
- a. Paul speaks of moving as many as possible to jealousy in order to motivate them toward repentance and faith in Christ. There is no reason to move someone whose salvation is set in stone by God's sovereign predestination of them.
6. Romans 11:17-23 . . . But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, [18] do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. [19] You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." [20] Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; [21] for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. [22] Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. [23] And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.
- a. Remember, Israel is God's chosen people, yet some of them were broken off, that is, they are no longer counted by God to be among His chosen people. And why were they broken off? Unbelief.
 - b. Paul the same can happen to NT Christians who become arrogant and return to sinful ways. This does not speak of the permanency election but rather the changeableness of free will.
- G. So what are we to do with the fact that Romans 9-11 supports both God's sovereign activity and man's free will in relation to salvation? Hold them both to be true, and put in the prayer and work required to gain at least some understanding of how they fit together.

III. Conclusion

- A. Romans 11:33-36 . . . Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! [34] For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? [35] Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? [36] For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.