

Romans

What About The Jews - Part 1

July 19, 2015

I. An overview of Romans 9-11

A. Because it has been two weeks since we last talked about Romans, I want to remind you that Romans 9-11 is commonly treated as a parenthetical statement addressing a topic that is separate from the rest of Romans. And I want to remind you that there are certain verses within these three chapters that are used by the Calvinists or Reformed Theologians to bolster their theology, and other verses in these same chapters that are used by the Arminians or free will folks to bolster their theology.

1. As you may recall, I said we would not be treating Romans 9-11 as a parenthetical statement, but rather as a continuation of Romans 1-8, with the final words of Romans 8 being the primary catalyst for what follows in these three chapters. And the essence of those final words are that nothing can separate us from the love of God.
2. And as you may recall, I said it is this truth – that nothing can separate us from the love of God – which forms the basis for the implied question that Paul spends the next three chapters answering in one form or another.
3. And that implied question essentially goes like this: *“If nothing can separate us from the love of God, why is Paul teaching that the Jews are separated from His love? Why has he been saying that the Jews are not justified, but those who belong to this new religious group called “Christian” are justified in the sight of God? After all, the Jews were God’s chosen people long before Jesus Christ and Christianity came along. They are direct descendants of Abraham. They have God’s seal of circumcision. And God gave them the Law and the Temple.”*

B. Prayer

II. What about the Jews – are they really separated from God’s love?

A. Romans 9:1-3 . . . I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, [2] that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. [3] For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh . . .

1. In these first three verses, Paul defends himself against the implied accusations that he has no feelings of compassion for his fellow countrymen. But why would he need to do this?

- a. Because from the early days of Paul's conversion and especially during his public ministry, he was seen by the Jews as a traitor to his national and religious heritage.
 - b. And I suppose most of us know why he was considered a traitor, but let me remind you anyway. Where once he had been a strong advocate of the Jewish religion and a defender of their teachings, he turned to telling the Jews that they must come to God through Jesus Christ and pursue the righteousness that comes by faith.
 - c. But he did not stop there. He also told them that unless they believed in the deity and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and pursued a righteousness that transcended the righteousness they had been pursuing through their hypocritical keeping of the Law, they would be separated from the love of God, and if they died in that condition, eternally separated from God.
2. Therefore, Paul begins this section by saying that he feels great sorrow and relentless grief over his fellow Jews who are living in unbelief, are hostile toward Jesus Christ, and are rejecting the gospel. And he says this to convince both the Jews, and the new Gentile believers who were being influenced by the Jews, that in spite of what he was teaching, he longed for the salvation of his fellow countrymen.
 3. Then, in the next two verses, Paul gives nine reasons why the Jews believe they are in good standing with God, while at the same time implying that those same reasons should lead them to respond in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. Romans 9:4-5 . . . who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, [5] whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

1. Who are Israelites – which means they are God's chosen people. Out of all the people on the earth, God chose them to be His people for the purpose of being His light to the nations.
 - a. Deuteronomy 7:6 . . . For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
 - b. Isaiah 42:6 . . . I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and

I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations.

2. To whom belongs the adoption as sons –
 - a. Hosea 11:1 . . . When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.
 - b. Corporately, the Israelites were a chosen people for God's own possession. Yet individually, they were children of God by means of adoption – just like believers today are adopted into God's family.
3. And the glory – God manifested His presence to the Israelites in a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, and in the Shekinah glory which was seen over the Ark of the Covenant.
4. And the covenants – Israel had God's covenant with Abraham, the Law, the Blessings and Curses, the promise of the Messiah, and the promises of new hearts and the Holy Spirit.
5. And the giving of the Law – Of all the nations on the earth at that time, only Israel received the Law of God in written form – which made it easy for reviewing and passing on to subsequent generations.
6. And the temple service – This included the temple activities of serving God, worshiping God, and seeking God's favor or returning to good standing with God through prescribed sacrifices.
7. And the promises – Israel had the promise of a homeland that God would give them. They had God as their Father and King, the promise of living in peace and provision in bountiful supply. And they had the promise of the Messiah who would save His people from their sins.
8. Whose are the fathers – this refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the three patriarchs of Israel. There are two vital truths connected to these three names.
 - a. First, to identify that they were speaking of the God of Israel, they would refer to Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - b. Second, only full blooded Jews could trace their heritage back to all three of these men.
9. And from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. Regardless of how the Jews felt about Jesus Christ, God decided He would come from Israel.
10. Therefore, with this affirmation that Paul loves his fellow Jews, that he longs for their salvation, and that he knows the extent of their pedigree as Israelites, we return to the implied question: "*If the Jews had all this going for them, and if God had said He intended to bless the world through them, how could Paul teach that they were not in*

good standing with God simply because they did not believe in Jesus Christ and were not living by faith, as he claimed they had to in order to be justified and secure in the love of God?"

11. Which leads us to the first point in Paul's presentation about why he has been teaching that the Jews have been separated from the love of God. And Paul's first point answers the inferred question: "*If the Jews as a people are not secure in God's love, then doesn't that mean God's promises and covenants with Israel have somehow failed to produce their intended outcome?"*
- C. Romans 9:6-7a . . . But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; [7] nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants . . .
1. This first point in Paul's presentation is key to rightly understanding the rest.
 2. The first thing Paul does is affirm the fact that God's promises and covenants have not failed to fulfill their purposes just because the Jews are not automatically and eternally secure in God's love.
 3. Then, in the next two statements, Paul explains why God's word has not failed to produce its intended purpose – in spite of the fact that he has been saying that many Jews are yet unjustified and therefore separated from the love of God.
 - a. Now the reason God's word has not failed is that even though many Jews are unjustified, there have always been and will continue to be some Jews who are justified and secure in the love of God. And the fact that there are some is sufficient proof that God's covenants and promises have fulfilled their purposes regarding Israel.
 - b. And interestingly, these second two statements express a truth Paul has stated from the beginning of Romans, and that truth deals with who God justifies and to whom He gives the gift of eternal life.
 - c. Therefore, when Paul says not everyone born a Jew is a true descendent of Abraham, he is not saying anything new, for we read in –
 - (1) Romans 2:13 . . . for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.
 - (2) Romans 2:28-29 . . . For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. [29] But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision

is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

- d. In other words, just because you are a member of God's chosen people does not guarantee you will be justified by God and given the gift of eternal life. Something more is needed, and that something more is living by faith – which means living a life of faithful obedience.
 - (1) Or as Jesus said in concluding His parable about the need for proper clothing when invited to the marriage feast, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).
 - (2) And as God said through the prophet Habakkuk, it is the righteous who live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4).
- 4. Now, before moving on, I want to take a few minutes and give you a bit of Jewish history, which will help explain Israel's general condition when Paul wrote Romans, and which, if you are so inclined, you can apply to the general condition of the church today.
 - a. The Jews had become theologically foolish, because they unquestionably believed that because they were descendants of Abraham, bore the seal of circumcision, had the Law, the covenants, and the Temple worship, that they were in good standing with God, fully justified, and assured of eternal life.
 - b. And they were spiritually foolish, because they believed their birth status, the seal of circumcision, having the Law, the covenants, and the Temple worship were more important to being justified and given the gift of eternal life than rising to the standard set by God for righteous living.
 - (1) And because of their spiritual foolishness, they were notoriously hypocritical in their application of the Law and participation in the ceremonial aspects of their religion. The OT Prophets and the four Gospels clearly bear witness to their hypocrisy.
 - (2) And it is for this reason that Jesus said, “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).
 - c. Beyond their theological and spiritual foolishness, they made their own situation worse by becoming religiously arrogant. Their religious pride drove them to believe and act as if the good standing they supposed they had with God made them superior

to everyone else in the world, regardless of how they lived, or how those they looked down on lived.

5. My point is that it was their theological and spiritual foolishness and their religious arrogance that fed their belief that being born a Jew made them secure in the love of God – which is why Paul was countering their false assumption in Romans 2, 6, 8, and again here, by saying that “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants.”
 6. Which brings us to Paul's second reason in his explanation as to why only some physical descendants of Abraham are spiritual descendants and therefore justified descendants.
 - a. And Paul's next reason is essentially this: You don't tell God who is and who isn't secure in His love, regardless of your theology or supposed spirituality. God tells you, for He alone decides who He justifies and to whom He gives the gift of eternal life.
 - b. Now I know it will be easy to see these next verses through the eyes of your theology, but I am encouraging you to do your best to see them through the context of the surrounding scriptures.
- D. Romans 9:7b-8 . . . [7] *nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants* but: “Through Isaac your descendants will be named.” [8] That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.
1. As I said, this is Paul's second reason in his explanation as to why not all Jews are justified, and the essence of this reason is that God is the one who decides is justified, not man or man's customs or man's beliefs about how things should go, or man's theology.
 2. You see, historically and culturally, the first born son was the most important son, because he was the designated son to step into his father's shoes, lead the family, and carry on the family name and traditions once his father was too old to do so or had passed away.
 - a. So, according to man's beliefs, man's rules, and culture's customs, Ishmael, born to Abraham by Hagar, should have been the chosen son through whom God would bless the world.
 - b. However, in that God is the supreme being who has the power and position to make decisions all on His own, He decided that the promised seed of Abraham, whom He, that is God, would bless and use to make Abraham a great nation, would be the first born son of the union between Abraham and Sarah.

3. Therefore, solely based on the will of God, and in spite of man's customs – or we might say in spite of the will of man – Isaac, not Ishmael, became the child of promise.
4. Now in establishing that it is God's decision and God's choosing, not man's theology or cultural customs that determine who the child of promise would be, Paul describes Ishmael, the first born son, as a child of the flesh and Isaac, the second born son, as a child of the promise. This is an important distinction in support of his reasons why not all Jews are automatically justified.
5. As you know, Ishmael's mother was Hagar, Sarah's maid. And Hagar was not the wife through whom God had promised to bring the promised son of Abraham into the world – Sarah was.
 - a. And beyond that fact, Ishmael was born to Hagar by Sarah and Abraham's doing, not God's.
 - b. This happened because Sarah and Abraham took matters into their own hands in order to solve the problem of Abraham not yet having a son.
 - c. Plus, Hagar was young enough to bear a child without the additional aid of God, whereas by the time God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and Sarah, Sarah was well beyond child-bearing age – which required a miracle from God for her to bear Isaac.
 - d. Therefore, Ishmael was the child of the flesh. Or in other words, his arrival on the scene was man's choosing and man's doing, not God's choosing and God's miraculous doing.
6. In contrast to Ishmael, Isaac was God's promised seed of Abraham, through God's chosen vessel, Sarah, and accomplished by God's power entering our world and performing a miracle of birth against all the natural reasons why a birth was impossible.

III. Conclusion

- A. I would prefer to go on, but time says otherwise, so we will stop here today and hope to continue our examination of Romans 9 next Sunday.
- B. Therefore, I encourage you to read these three chapters, prayerfully, slowly, and several times during this next week.