



Word on Wednesday Bible Study

“The Righteousness of God”

Chapters 9-10

Minister Perseus Poku

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Chapter 9

This chapter begins with Paul’s anguish concerning Israel. Paul an Israelite by race and culture is well acquainted with this topic. As a former Pharisee, he fully understands the tenets of the Mosaic law and how the interpretation of the Law compares to the law of grace.

Astonishingly, Paul readily admits that the place of the Law in the life of Israel was not sufficient. Israel respected the Law of Moses but not the Christ. They esteemed the writings of the Pentateuch but not the Law giver in the personage of the Christ. As a result, Paul mourned for his country.

Paul was so concerned about the nation of Israel that if he could, he would trade places with them (vs. 3). Furthermore, Paul reminds us of the special bond that God had for Israel.

- They were adopted by Jehovah to fulfill his global promise of salvation (vs. 4).
- The work of God through the history of Israel points to His divine glory (vs. 4).
- God established specific covenants only with Israel (vs. 4).
- The Law was given and received only by Israel (vs. 4).
- Israel were the first nation in history to erect a temple for the true and living God (vs. 4).
- The Patriarchs were used by God as a direct connection to the Messiah (vs. 5).

God indeed revealed Himself first through Israel. However, Israel continually turned away by whoring after other Gods. It wasn’t the word of God that failed Israel. It was Israel placing the Law above the Law giver. Their worship of the Law led to false interpretations of the Law. One of the erroneous views was that Israelites were counted as righteous just because of their nationality and spiritual good works. Paul challenges this assertion. For example:

- There would be those that are Israelite by race but still will not be counted as righteous (vs. 7). He further clarifies this point by using the example of Isaac and Ishmael. The point is clear. Paul is saying that despite Isaac and Ishmael coming from the same blood, only one was chosen to inherit the promise. Likewise, there are two groups of Israelites. They both share the same blood but differ in who they worship. Those who reject Christ will not inherit the gift of salvation. On the contrary, those Israelites who accept Christ as Yeshua (Savior) will inherit the promise afforded to all Christians (vv. 7-8).

- In addition, the same motif can be found in the story of Esau and Jacob. Despite his crafty methods, it was always God's plan to give the inheritance to Jacob. This narrative is a constant motif found in the Scriptures where the older often serves the younger (vs. 12 and Genesis 25:23). It is noteworthy that normally the blessings of the family was conferred upon the first born. The firstborn was seen as a type of first fruit. Their status within the family was also linked to the deliverance of God's people while in Egypt. The death angel passed over the firstborn of the Hebrews.

1. Abel and Cain (Gen. 4:1-7/Hebrews 11:4).
2. Ephraim and his brother Manasseh (Gen. 48:1-22).
3. Moses and Aaron (Exod. 7:7).
4. Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37:5-11).
5. David and his brothers (1 Samuel 16:1-13).
6. Solomon and his brothers (1 Chron. 28:5).
7. Gideon and his brothers (Judges 6:11-16).
8. Jesus and the nation of Israel.

In short, God's mercy motivates him to choose who He desires in order to carry out His divine plan. Paul realizes that some may argue against such a revelation. They may ask "How can a fair and just God choose some over others (vs. 14)? Paul anticipates this question by pointing them back to the Scriptures (Exodus 33:19). In short, God is saying it is His prerogative because He is God.

We cannot dictate to God who should be a recipient of His mercy. God's compassion is based on His holy nature. Paul further clarifies this point by using the Egyptian story as an example. God allowed the Hebrews to go through hardship so His power could be revealed. It was His mercy that made a way for the Hebrews to escape (vv. 16-19).

Paul quotes from Hosea and Isaiah to buttress his point. If God decides to show mercy to someone, who are we to object. In other words, God has decided to offer salvation to the gentile race. It is true that the gentiles at first did not know God. They did not have the historical pedigree like the Israelites. However, the Gentiles stumbled upon salvation (vs. 30). Conversely, Israel who was acquainted with the Law fell short because of their faithlessness towards the Christ (vv. 31-33).

“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Have you heard of the cultic group The Hebrew Israelites?
2. How should you respond to those who insist on finding salvation only through nationality and culture?
3. Will practicing Jews make it to heaven?
4. How should Christians view the modern state of Israel?

Chapter 10

Paul's primary desire was for Israel to be saved. Through Jewish history the people of Israel were acquainted with God's temporal salvation (vs. 1). However, Paul in this case was speaking of eternal salvation (c.f. Jon 3:16).

In verse 2, Paul unpacks his rationale for the former treatise. He would like for his country men and women to get saved. Moreover, Paul wanted to explain to his audience why he would say such a thing regarding Israel. In this passage he explains by laying out his argument.

- They have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge (vs.2). In other words, Israel is religious but their practices has not led them to a closer relationship with God through Christ. Furthermore, Paul argues that Israel created their own standard of righteousness rather than following the righteousness established by God (vv. 2-3).
- The Law as interpreted by Israel was insufficient. God's original intent of the Law was not being followed. If they were following it correctly they would not have rejected the Christ. If they would have followed the Law appropriately it would have led them to Christ (vs. 4).

So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.-Galatians 3:24 Furthermore, Paul explains what faith is according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 18:5). This explanation is very important. Faith is keeping the principles of the Law as prescribed by God. The Law must be followed through faith while trusting in God, in contrast to faith in the Law without fully trusting God.

Paul attempts to show his readers the connection between the writing of Moses (Deut. 30:12) and the gospel (vv. 6-8). Moses wrote concerning the nearness of God's words to the believer. In the same way, the gospel of Jesus Christ is near (or) accessible. Israel did not need to go searching for the words of God. They did not need to go to heaven nor search the seas to find God's words. It was accessible to them in ancient times just as it was available to them during the time of Paul. God's words is near to all of us. In short, Israel is left without excuse.

Verse 9 in this chapter is often used to share the gospel with others. After alerting his readers about the closeness of God's words, Paul shares the plan of salvation. If one confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in their heart that God raised them from the dead, they shall be saved (Romans 10:9).

Romans 10:9 further highlights the need for the public confession of Christ by the early church. There was no such thing as a secret service Christian in the 1st Century church. Christians were not afraid nor embarrassed to align themselves with Jesus. The proclamation was not done privately but publicly so others would know about their conversion. This spiritual conversion was codified by baptism. In other words the convert after proclamation went through the rites of baptism to symbolize what had already taken place on the inside. It is with the heart that man believe unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (vs. 10).

The next two verses is vitally important. Paul informed his readers that God did not just belong to the Jews. Whoever call upon the name of God shall be saved. In other words salvation is offered to Jews as well as Gentiles (vv. 11-13). God has no respect of persons. The final section of this letter deals with the process of salvation. Paul has been dealing with the "what" of salvation. In this current section he is dealing with the "how" of salvation. According to Paul salvation involves the following process:

1. In order for someone to call and believe in God they must first hear about Him (vs. 14).
2. One cannot hear about God unless someone preaches to them (vs. 14).
3. One cannot preach unless they have been sent (vs. 15). Paul connects this principle with Isaiah 52:7.

After he encourages those that preach the gospel, Paul admonishes the church in Rome. Again, he attempts to answer an anticipated question. How can he say that Israel heard the words of God? He attempts to remind them of the situation during the time of Isaiah. Isaiah shared the good news with Israel but not all of them accepted his report (Isaiah 53:1). In short, Paul is saying it is one thing to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.



*"How beautiful
are the feet of
those who bring
good news."
Romans 10:15*

However it is another thing to hear the good news and accept it through faith. Moreover, Paul reminds them that the message was not just for Jews but also for the Gentile nations. His point is clear. God will welcome you if your heart is bent towards Him (despite a person's race). In addition, God extended salvation to the Gentiles that He would make Israel jealous (vs. 19).

This imagery is a constant reminder of God's relationship to Israel. He made a vow with Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Metaphorically God was married to Israel but they kept committing spiritual adultery (cf. the story of Hosea).

Paul argues that Israel did indeed hear the message but they were willfully obstinate (vs. 21). Isaiah preached God's words and Israel did not listen. As a result, those who did not listen faced judgment. In the same way, if the Jews in Rome do not listen they too will face the consequences.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Can a person be saved if they have profession without belief?
2. Is it mandatory for a person to accept the physical resurrection of Christ in order for them to be saved?