

STUDIES IN ROMANS

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VIII. CONCLUSION AND CLIMAX OF THE DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Romans 9:1 to 10:21

I. THE HARMONY OF THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH UNBELIEF WITH THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Paul's statement of the plan of salvation closes with chapter 8, so we now take up the problem of Jewish unbelief, its effect on Paul, and the occasion and extent of his concern.

So far as this letter goes we find the discussion in 9:1-5, and in 10:1-2, but this concern is equally evident in Luke's history of his labors, addresses and sermons in Acts, and in several other letters written by Paul. One of the deepest passions of his soul was excited and stirred by this problem of Jewish unbelief.

1. The Grounds of Paul's Concern

- (1) These people were his kindred according to the flesh.
- (2) It was his nation and country, and he had an intense patriotism.
- (3) They were GOD's adopted people.
- (4) They had all of the marvelous privileges of that adoption, and these privileges are thus enumerated by him in the ninth chapter, first paragraph:

a. **"To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory."** This glory was the cloud, symbolizing the Divine Presence.

b. They had the covenants -- the covenant of grace with Abraham in Genesis 12, and the covenant of circumcision as expressed in Genesis 17.

c. Then they had the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai -- such a law as cannot be paralleled in the later world. The circumstances under which it was given were more imposing and impressive than the giving of any other code in the annals of time. They had that.

d. Then they had the promises -- the promise to Abraham, the promise to Isaac, the promise to Jacob, the promise to the nation, the promise to Moses, and so on. They had all the promises.

e. Then they had the Fathers, the patriarchs. It was an illustrious heritage. No other nation had such a list of Fathers -- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, the great leaders all through their history.

f. They had the services; that is, the imposing ritual of worship set forth in the Book of Exodus from chapter 38 to the end, and in all of the Book of Leviticus, and a great part of the Book of Numbers. That service showed the place to meet GOD, the time to meet GOD, the sacrificial

means of hearings before GOD, the mediator through whom they could approach GOD. They had that service. No other nation has ever had anything like it. All the churches of the present time have not improved that ritual, including the Romans, the Greeks, the Catholics, the Epicureans, and some Baptists who wear robes in the pulpit to intone their services.

g. The last and greatest of the privileges was, that of them came CHRIST, according to the flesh, the line running through Abel, Seth, Heber, Peleg, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and on down until we come to CHRIST Himself. They had CHRIST according to the flesh. That was the ground and the occasion of his interest. So the problem is, that CHRIST was rejected by His own people.

More than once an infidel has said to me, "If the proof and the merits of CHRIST be so obvious, why is it that His own people did not take Him?"

2. The Extent of His Concern

We now come to the extent of Paul's concern for this rejection of CHRIST.

(1) He says in chapter 10, which is a part of this section, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

(2) I sincerely desire the salvation of my people.

(3) Their rejection of CHRIST gives me continual sorrow and pain of heart.

(4) Finally, **"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."**

There is only one similar expression in the history of men, and that is where Moses, when all Israel had sinned and GOD said, **"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book,"** stood in the break and said, **"If thou wilt forgive their sin-: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book."** That disposition on the part of Moses and Paul not merely to suffer temporal death but severance from CHRIST if it would save the nation, approaches the feeling that was in the heart of the REDEEMER when He came to die the spiritual death for the salvation of men. Two others had the experience that is here illustrated; for instance, when Abraham offered up his only begotten son. And Isaac, in consenting to be so sacrificed, approximated the experience of the Son in voluntarily coming at the Father's bidding to die for the world. Higher than all the mountain peaks of time, stand these four names: Abraham, representing the sacrifice of the Father; Isaac, representing the sacrifice of the Son; Moses and Paul, represent the SPIRIT that prompted JESUS to be forsaken of GOD in order to the salvation of men.

3. We come now to the key sentence of these three chapters, in verse 6: **"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect."** The object of the plan of salvation as presented in chapter 8 has this objection against it: Since the Jewish people did not believe it, how can we harmonize with that plan the problem of the unbelief of the Jews themselves? He starts off to argue that question by the affirmation that this Jewish rejection of CHRIST does not militate against the plan of salvation as set forth. That is his proposition, and the first argument that he makes is that all of Abraham's children -- all of Abraham's lineal descendants -- were never included in that national adoption. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael and his descendants, the Ishmaelites, are not included. Keturah, Abraham's second wife, had a pretty

large family, and these Midianites, descendants of Keturah, were not included. Then the next one after Abraham, Isaac, had two children, Jacob and Esau. Esau and the Edomites descended from him, through lineal descendants, were not included.

He then presents a case of divine sovereignty concerning these two children of Isaac. He says that the selection of the one to be the people of GOD in the adopted sense and the rejection of the other, was not based upon any work and good to be done by the one or evil to be done by the other. It was not according to the wish of the parents of those children. The selection was made before the children were born -- before either one of them knew good from evil. So that it was not of Isaac that willed Esau to be the heir, nor of Esau that ran to get the venison in order that he might obtain the blessing of the heir, nor of the plotting of Rebecca and Jacob. Their plotting did not have anything to do with it. It was not of him that runneth, nor of him that plotteth; it was the act of divine sovereignty. Whatever is meant by this adoption of a nation, it was not based upon any merit in that nation, or in the particular individuals through whom this adoption came. Jerusalem when it was first established was no better than any other city; it was of GOD's sovereignty just as the raising up of Pharaoh. **"For this very purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee."** Right on the heels of that comes the question from the objector, **"Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"** Paul is not disposed to answer that question in this connection.

We will find the answer before we get through with these three chapters, but here he waives it aside with a counter-question: **"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"** (9:21) Does not the potter have the ability to take one part of the lump and make a beautiful vessel for the parlor, and to take another part and make a very inferior vessel for the kitchen? And shall either of the vessels object to the potter? He waives it for the time being by merely denying the power of the Christian to intrude into the power of the divine sovereignty. His purpose is to show that the Word of GOD touching salvation has not come to be ineffectual because the Jews rejected it. That is the argument he is on now, and he then advances in it, and says, "Not even all the lineal descendants of Abraham in the select line according to the plan of salvation were to be saved; not all of them could see these two covenants side by side; one was a national covenant, with its seal of circumcision, and promising the earthly Canaan, and the other was the grace covenant that looked to a spiritual seed."

Or, as he puts it in another place, **"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God"** (2:28-29). In the exercise of the sovereign purpose of GOD, there is nothing that the finite man can do concerning Him. It is an ocean too deep for our line to fathom. We would have to be infinite to understand it, but we do know that in all human history, without any explanation to us, GOD's purpose is working. GOD had a purpose in having this continent discovered just when it was. He had a purpose in the redemption of Texas in the battle of San Jacinto.

High above human thought, beyond the scope of human sight, of the human mind, the Omnipotence and Omniscience is ruling, and His rule is supreme, and yet nobody is taken by the hair and dragged into hell, and nobody is taken by the hair and dragged into Heaven, as he will

show more particularly later.

4. Let us explain and give the application of the vessels of wrath and mercy -- in chapter 9 is a passage, from verse 22 to the end of the chapter, about the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy. Those that were vessels of wrath, those who voluntarily stood against GOD, GOD patiently endured a long time, and His forbearance signified that He was giving them opportunity for repentance. Those vessels of mercy, they also had opportunity for salvation, whether they were Jews or Greeks. He shows that GOD is no respecter of persons in selecting the Jewish nation, every one of them to be saved in Heaven, and rejected every other nation, then the objection would have been sustained, but it had a different purpose. The election of the Jewish nation looked to the salvation of the Jews and Gentiles that received the message of GOD, also the covenants, and the coming of CHRIST from them according to the flesh. That election looked through them to others and, so far as salvation in Heaven is concerned, the Jews that believed were saved; and, so far as other nations were concerned, he quotes certain parts of Hosea and the Old Testament, the paragraph referring to the ingathering of the Gentiles: "I will call them my people, which were not my people."

In objecting to GOD's selecting one nation and calling that nation "**my people**," he says, "**I will call them my people, which were not my people**," and in a place where it was said, "**Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God**," if they believe on JESUS CHRIST. He then quotes from Isaiah who distinguishes between the holy stock of Israel and the natural stock of Israel as if he had said, "**Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved**" -- those that by faith accept CHRIST. We see he is laying the predicate for that olive tree illustration that he will introduce later in the discussion. Isaiah then goes on to say that if the grace of GOD had not been revealed, then the LORD GOD of hosts had not left a seed, the whole of them would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah. Nothing but divine grace saves those that were saved -- not their ritual, not their law. He then reaches this conclusion, "**What shall we say then?**" The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness; that is, the Jewish way, attained to righteousness because they sought it in a different way. The Jew following the law had not arrived at righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but by works; they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.

5. Next he shows that the rejection of the Jews was not total -- He commences chapter 10 by stating that as far as he is personally concerned his heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they would be saved, and he is willing to acknowledge that they had a zeal, but not the zeal of knowledge. They busied themselves to establish their own plan of righteousness, and he puts it in such a way that we cannot mistake the law righteousness and leave the faith righteousness as they did. We must not forget that the law says, "Do to live," but faith says, "Live to do." In other words, doing the will of GOD comes out of having been made alive to GOD. Life must come first; make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good. One of them makes doing the means of life and the other puts life as a means of doing. Then he shows that while Moses had handed down this law and set before them its requirements that if one would have kept its requirements in strict obedience he would have been saved; but the law required him to start right in his nature and then to continue to do everything that is contained in the law.

He goes on to quote from Moses. Paul quotes from the Hebrew and not from the Septuagint which runs thus: "**The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine**

heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above: [or bring salvation down]) **Or, who shall descend into the deep?** (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)." This the Septuagint idea. The Hebrew idea is not that a man tries to go to Heaven as the ancient Titan tried to do -- by piling Pelia on Ossa to make a stairway. Nor that he tries to go directly into the depths, down into the abyss, and wrench salvation from the depths. The Hebrew represents him, not as going down, but as going across, saying that man does not go to the other side of the sea to find salvation to bring it back. Paul changes this a little and makes it correspond better than does Moses. Instead of going across the sea, he has the man going down into the depths of the sea, and he goes on, still quoting Moses, that the real salvation does not come from afar. Paul puts this explanation on it, that it was the word that he preached: "that is, the word of faith, which we preach."

The plan of salvation is not making tedious pilgrimages; it is not wearing a hairy undershirt to irritate; it is not wearing bracelets that have thorns in them, and to keep on doing penance; it is the word of faith.

6. Thus he says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is not an intellectual faith -- it is heart-faith. But a good many people misunderstand the import of confession. It does not mean to confess sins to your brother, nor to a priest, nor even to GOD -- that is not the confession he is talking about, but it is a public confession of CHRIST as Saviour. If we have not faith enough to confess the CHRIST that we say we believe in, we have not faith enough to be saved. Confession implies that whoever makes it must have a great deal of courage. In this time of peace it does not cost much to confess CHRIST, and even now sometimes shame prevents confession by young people. The young lady going in to a city is told not to join a church because that will deprive her of all social functions. "**For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels... But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.**" And if we are afraid or ashamed to come out in public, and say, "I take CHRIST as my Saviour," then the Father will be ashamed of us.

This law has no distinction as to nationality; there was only one door to the ark. The elephant went in at the same door as the snail, and the eagle swooped down through the same door at which a little wren hopped in. And there is not a side door for a woman to go in. We all go to CHRIST through the same door. While it is true that GOD called Israel out of Egypt, the same Bible says that He called the Philistines out of Caphtor, and He is the LORD of all nations, and the universality of the plan of salvation is expressed in "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" Then comes up the question, How can any one call on GOD who has not believed in GOD, and how can he believe in a GOD of whom he has never heard? How can he hear unless somebody tells him -- unless there be a preacher -- and how can there be a preacher except he be sent? The sending there means GOD-sent. What a marvelous theme for a missionary sermon!

Having stated that, he raised another question, "**Have they not heard? Did they not have preachers?**" Has not the word gone to them? From Genesis we learn that the antediluvians had light enough to be saved, and Paul is here quoting a Psalm: ". . . **their sound went into all the earth.**" JESUS CHRIST is the true light that lights every man that comes into the world. There

has been light enough if the people had been willing to walk in the light.

I once heard a preacher state to a congregation that the heathen that did the best they could would be saved.

But he didn't produce any heathen who had done his best. And where is the man that has done his best?

The plan by which men are to be saved is the plan to make the promise sure to all. It is as quick as lightning in its application. It is a fine thing for a man to quit his meanness; it is a fine thing for a man to do the best he can, but certainly it is not the way of salvation; we do not secure salvation by that. ". . . **by a foolish nation I will anger you.**" In other words, "If you will have no GOD, you adopted people, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people"; as Isaiah said, "**I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.**" Their whole record is, no matter who called, who was sent, who preached, they rejected. Having shown them that GOD was not unjust in rejecting them, and that He did not violate the Gospel plan of salvation, Paul says, "I am one of them; not all the Jews were lost; I am one of them." Neither in its totality nor in its perpetuity were the Jews rejected. Elijah supposed once that he stood by himself, and that he was the only one left. GOD says, "**I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.**"

Having shown from chapters 9 and 10 that the rejection of the Jews was not total, we will show from chapter 11 that it was not perpetual.

II. THE LIMITATIONS AND MERCIFUL PURPOSE OF GOD'S REJECTION OF ISRAEL (11:1-36)

1. Israel's rejection was neither total nor perpetual.

The elect, or spiritual Israel, were never cast off. From Abraham to Paul every Israelite, who looked through the types and by faith laid hold of the Antitype, was saved. In this sense there were no lost tribes, but out of every tribe the elect, manifested in the circumcision of the heart, not of the flesh, were saved.

(1) The Apostle cites his own case -- That he himself was an Israelite is abundantly shown here, and even more particular elsewhere (Philippians 3:4-6; Acts 22:3-15), and yet he was saved after Israel according to the flesh was cast off and the kingdom transferred to the Gentiles, as were all the Jews from Pentecost to Paul. The number of elect Jews thus saved was always greater than appeared to human sight, as evidenced in Elijah's time.

(2) Elijah in his panic supposed himself to be alone, but JEHOVAH showed him that through grace there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

(3) So it continued to be in Paul's time; there was a remnant spared according to grace.

2. But the Apostle is careful to show that this elect remnant, never cast off, every one of them, was saved by grace, and not one of them by the works of law. Then he explains this finding of salvation by the elect Jews by the two essentially different methods of seeking salvation. The elect sought it by faith and obtained it; the rest because they persistently sought righteousness by works of the law, rejecting GOD's righteousness, were judicially blinded as shown: by the law itself, Deuteronomy 29:4; by the prophets, Isaiah 29:10; by the Psalms, Psalm 69:22-23.

Having shown that the casting off was never total, and why, he then shows that it was not intended to be perpetual by proving the ultimate restoration of all Israel as a nation, whenever it should turn to the grace-method of salvation, the scriptural proof of which is as follows:

(1) In the law itself, which denounces their casting off, is the promise of an expiation through grace (Deuteronomy 32:43).

(2) In the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple it is suggested (I Kings 8:46-53).

(3) In the prophets it is clearly foretold, and all the method of it (Isaiah 66:8; Ezekiel 36:22 to 37:28; Zechariah 12:9 to 13:1).

The element of mercy dominant in the election of Israel as a nation is that they were chosen that through them all the nations might be blessed. The element of mercy in their rejection is that through their downfall life might come to other nations. The element of mercy toward the Jews in the call of the Gentiles was that casting off Israel might be provoked to return to GOD. In saving Gentiles there was an aim at the salvation of his casting off people. This is proved in his argument thus: ". . . **through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy,**" and then he magnified his own office as an Apostle to the Gentiles to provoke the jealousy of his own people in order that he might save some. He foresees a wonderful effect on the Gentiles in the restoration of the Jews. It will be even more beneficial than their downfall: "**Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?**" (11:12, 15). Then our concern, prayer and labor for that great future event -- the restoration of GOD's ancient people -- is a concern for other nations who never will be thoroughly aroused until moved by redeemed Israel.

A passage from Peter shows the relation of the conversion of the Jews to our LORD's final advent, and a declaration of our LORD shows the time of this general salvation of the Jews. Peter says, "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; Whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.**" (Acts 3:19-21). Our LORD says, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24).

3. Then according to Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, the means and methods of this great salvation of the Jews are as follows:

- (1) It will be preceded by a gathering together of Israel out of all nations.
- (2) CHRIST whom they pierced will be lifted up in Gentile preaching.
- (3) The HOLY SPIRIT in convicting and converting power will be poured out on them, whereby they shall mourn and pray and see the LORD as their Saviour.
- (4) The nation shall be born of GOD in a day.

The apostle bases this marvelous work of GOD upon the principle that "**For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches... For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins... For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance**" (11:16, 27, 29).

4. The illustration of the olive tree -- Then follows his illustration of the olive tree, the explanation of which is as follows:

- (1) CHRIST is the root
- (2) The holy stock is the spiritual elect, Israel.
- (3) The branches broken off are the unbelieving Jews.
- (4) The branches grafted in are the believing Gentiles.
- (5) The principle is vital and spiritual connection with CHRIST, through faith, without respect to Jew or Gentile.
- (6) The unbelieving children of Abraham are like branches merely tied on the stock externally; there is no communication of the fatness of the sap into the veins of the branches tied on externally.
- (7) So a Gentile tied on externally, without this vital connection, will be broken off.

The divine purpose in shutting up both Gentile and Jew unto disobedience as shown in the argument, 3:9-20, is expressed thus: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (11:32).

III. THE DOXOLOGY

We will conclude this discussion with an analysis of the doxology which is the climax of this argument:

1. An exclamation of the profundity of the riches of both GOD's wisdom and knowledge.
2. The incomprehensibility to the finite mind of His judgments and ways.
3. No finite being knew His mind or advised His actions.
4. No beneficiary of His goodness ever first gave to GOD as a meritorious ground of the benefaction.
5. Because He is the source of all good, and the medium of salvation from its initiation to its consummation, all the glory belongs to GOD.

Amen!

QUESTIONS FOR STIMULATION AND REVIEW

1. What is the problem of Romans 9:1 to 11:36?
2. What are the marvelous privileges of the Jews' adoption?
3. What is the infidel argument on this point?
4. What are the items which indicate the extent of Paul's concern for his people?
5. What is Paul's meaning here, and what Old Testament examples of this experience and spirit?
6. What is the key sentence of chapters 9, 10, 11, and what is its meaning?
7. What is Paul's first argument on this point?
8. What is the case of divine sovereignty concerning Jacob and Esau?
9. What question from the objector is here introduced, and how does Paul dispose of it?
10. What advance did he than make in his argument, and how does he illustrate it elsewhere?
11. What illustrations of the sovereign purpose of GOD are cited by the author?
12. What is the explanation of the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy in Romans 9:22ff?
13. How does Paul show that GOD was no respecter of persons in selecting the Jewish nation?
14. What is the conclusion of all this, then, as stated in the closing part of chapter 9?
15. What is the argument of chapter 10?
16. What concession does he make in favor of the Jews in the first part of chapter 10, and what is his objection raised?
17. What is the difference between the law-righteousness and the faith-righteousness?
18. What is the meaning of the confession mentioned in this connection, and what is its relation to salvation?
19. How does Paul show here that GOD makes no distinction between peoples of different nationalities, and what is the author's illustration.
20. What is Paul's answer to the question, "Have they not heard?"
21. With what reproof of the Jewish people does Paul close chapter 10?
22. What are the limits of Israel's rejection?
23. How does he explain this finding of salvation by the elect Jews, and the casting off of the non-elect Jews?
24. How does he next show that the casting off was not intended to be perpetual?
25. What is the Scriptural proof of this ultimate restoration of Israel?
26. What element of mercy was dominant in the election of Israel as a nation?
27. What element of mercy in their rejection?
28. What element of mercy toward Jews in the call of the Gentiles?
29. What effect on the Gentiles does Paul foresee in the restoration of the Jews?
30. Quote a passage from our LORD showing the time of this general salvation of the Jews.
31. In the olive tree illustration what are the root, the holy stock, the branches broken off, the branches grafted in, the principle, the condition of the unbelieving children of Abraham, and what of the Gentile tied on externally?
32. What then is the divine purpose in shutting up both Gentile and Jew unto disobedience?
33. Give an analysis of the doxology.

LET US RETHINK THE CHAPTER

I. THE HARMONY OF THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH UNBELIEF WITH THE PLAN

OF SALVATION

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6. Not intellectual faith, but heart faith

II. THE LIMITATIONS AND MERCIFUL PURPOSE OF GOD'S REJECTION OF ISRAEL (11:1-36)

1. Neither total nor perpetual
2. The elect remnant was saved by grace
3. Means and methods of this salvation
4. The illustration of the olive tree

III. THE DOXOLOGY

1. GOD's riches and wisdom
2. All incomprehensible
3. Not advised by humans
4. No ground of merit
5. All the glory belongs to GOD

~ end of chapter 8 ~
