

ROMANS - WEEK 4

IF YOU CONFESS WITH
YOUR MOUTH THAT JESUS IS
LORD, AND IN YOUR HEART
YOU HAVE FAITH THAT GOD
RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD,

**YOU WILL
BE SAVED**

ROMANS 10:9

PREDESTINATION, SALVATION AND ISRAEL'S HOPE

ICE BREAKER

What impresses you about the Jewish faith or Jewish people?

PRAYER

Say this prayer together – it is the call to worship in the Christian celebration of the Passover: ***O God, we come to you recognising you are the source of all we have and all we are. We have set apart this night (time) to remember your mighty acts as you preserved and protected us. You have given yourself to all who believe in you. We rest in your love, your sovereignty, your judgement and your redemption. We declare our faith in you as did our fathers before us.*** (Lipis, J R: Celebrate Passover Haggadah.1993. Purple Pomegranate Productions. P13)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Romans 10:9-13; 11:25-26. 28-29.

Recite together the memory verse for this week: Romans 10:9: ***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.***

REFLECTION

The perception of the gospel of grace, that Paul has explained, is that it implies that the Jewish people, God's chosen people, are rejected by God and the history of God's revealing work through is rendered pointless. In the light of this perception, the validity of the gospel of grace is challenged and Paul now sets out to address this challenge.

Expressing his personal anguish over the unbelief of his people, Paul firstly makes the point that God, in his sovereignty makes the choice as to whom he reveals himself through; and that God decides how people will be made righteous (saved). Salvation by faith is the fulfilment of God's promises to his people, so one can't say God is unfair. Neither is God unjust because he reveals himself as one whose chooses whom he wants to work through.

The second point Paul makes is the Jews are themselves responsible for their rejection by God as the means of God's continued revelation of himself. They have failed to understand that salvation is by faith; failed to see that God's righteousness IS Christ and, as such, is the end of the law. Paul stresses that salvation is for everyone and that the Jews have had plenty of opportunity to respond but did not.

Thirdly, Paul strongly insists that God did not reject Israel. The fact that Jewish people are being saved is testimony of that. Providentially the rejection of salvation by the Jews has opened the way for the salvation of the gentiles. This serves as a goad to the Jews to believe and a promise that great blessing will come from their eventual faith. Paul cautions the gentiles against arrogance, reminding them that their

experience of grace is rooted in the God revealed through the Jewish people. Paul concludes, stating his firm belief that ultimately the Jewish people will be saved, through the mercy of God.

1. What do you think makes people struggle to have faith in Christ? Was this your personal experience?
2. In your personal faith journey, did you have a kind of “Aha! Moment” when suddenly all became clear and you committed your life to Christ? What kinds of things lead people to such moments?
3. In what way does the passage call us as Christians to be respectful of people of the Jewish faith? In what way can this call be extended to apply to people of all other faiths?

There are some crucial aspects of salvation that we learn from the passage. One is that God chooses all people to know him and become like him and that he chooses all people in relationship with him to be witnesses of his grace and love. The choice of the Jews is meant to reveal exactly this.

Salvation is about a personal relationship of trust in God through Jesus and a living out of the way Christ wills for us to walk in. Again, this is revealed through God’s historical relationship with the Jewish people.

God uses tragedy, failure, disappointment and suffering in his effort to get our attention and to lead us to himself. In his economy, no experience is wasted or lost or meaningless. Again, if we reflect on Israel’s history and relationship with God, this is revealed.

The faith of the Jewish people, even though they have not embraced Christ, remains the “original plant” in which our faith is rooted and understood. Christ was not a back up plan when the Law had failed – Christ was the plan all along.

1. Can you think of an example of how God has used a tragic event to draw people to himself? Can you think of an Old Testament story where this reflected?
2. Discuss this statement: ***Believing in Jesus is not the challenge; neither is confessing that I believe in him such an issue. The BIG challenge of being a Christian is living out the way of Christ in everyday experiences of conflict, shortage of money, fear of the future, personal tragedy etc.***
3. How might a deeper knowledge of Jewish beliefs and religious traditions, enrich our Christian faith.

SOMETHING TO DO

Ask a Jewish friend or colleague about their faith and beliefs. Maybe, you can attend Synagogue with them! Alternately, look up the meaning of one Jewish feast – like the Passover or the Feast of Weeks; and read up on the possible Christian meaning of such a festival.

PRAYER

Pray for each other’s personal needs and requests. You may want to include prayer for religious tolerance and respect in South Africa and the world; for peace between Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

The recite together the memory verse again.

GOING DEEPER

1. In saying that ultimately Israel will be saved, does Paul lean towards a belief in universal salvation, that is the ultimate salvation of all people? Look at Romans 11:32 in this connection.
2. If we say that God will destroy, ultimately, those who don’t believe – do we not harbour a belief in which religious intolerance grows?