

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

WEEK 4

PREDESTINATION, SALVATION & ISRAEL'S HOPE



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MONDAY – Anguish: why did so few Israelites accept Jesus?



Romans 9: 1-18

Romans 9: 3 & 4 *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.*

Romans 9-11 (like the Old Testament book of Job) shows that at times Bible writers raised big questions without producing simple answers. “Romans 9 is one of the most provocative and most difficult sections of Scripture.” * Duke scholar E. P. Sanders wrote: “In Romans 9–11 one finds seven major assertions: (1) Despite appearances, God is just; (2) Israel was elect and remains so; (3) The election was always selective and never covered every descendant of Abraham; (4) Israel, at least at present, has ‘stumbled’; (5) God will save only those who have faith in Christ; (6) All Israel will be saved; (7) Everyone and everything will be savedThese themes ebb and flow in the chapters as Paul seeks solid ground.” ** Paul wrestled with these issues. This week we will too. The apostle Paul didn’t produce an essay about predestination or the fate of Israelites. It was intensely

personal, a source of concern and anguish. He believed with all his heart that Jesus was the anointed Saviour. Yet it broke his heart to see many more non-Jews than Jews accepting Jesus. And he knew that in Rome both Hebrew Christians and Gentile Christians sometimes felt superior to one another, so this issue mattered to them.

Paul’s fervent words—“I have great sorrow...in my heart...I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people...” Yet synagogue leaders, even former friends (cf. Acts 26:4-6) often attacked Paul for preaching about Jesus.

Reflection:

How did Paul express God’s sorrow, rather than scorn or hatred, toward those who fought him? How can you grow more like him?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, on Your way to the cross You wept over stubborn Jerusalem. Your follower Paul wept, too, over those who refused You. Give me a heart like Yours that yearns to reach everyone. AMEN.

* <https://ukcsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Romans-9-CSF-Curriculum.pdf>

** Sanders, E. P., *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (p. 139). OUP Oxford.

TUESDAY – God “called,” but let humans choose whether to have faith



Romans 9: 19-33

Romans 9: 25I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one.

N. T. Wright wrote, “The image of potter and clay was not designed to speak in general terms about human beings as lifeless lumps of clay, over against God as the only living, thinking being. It was designed to speak very specifically about God’s purpose in choosing and calling Israel, and what would happen if Israel, like a lump of clay, failed to respond to the gentle molding of His hands.” * Israel (**and we**) choose whether to follow God’s call. Yet neither choice blocks God’s big purpose in our world.

Genesis 12: 3 clearly stated God’s aim in choosing Israel: “all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you.” God did not tell Abram, “I will only save you and yours.” God called Abram’s family to be a key means through which God’s love reached all earth’s people.

Reflection:

How can that clear calling also shape your understanding of what it means for you to be one of God’s Christian people?

In Romans 3: 9-20, Paul told the Romans that both Jews and Gentiles fell short of God’s glory and needed a Saviour. Now he used more Old Testament quotations to show that God included both Jewish and Gentile Christians in God’s “called” people. In verse 24 Paul specifically said “Israel” was spiritual rather than ethnic.

Reflection:

How can Paul’s wide-ranging vision redirect and reorder our impulses to divide God’s family into smaller and smaller “right” and “wrong” segments?



Prayer: Lord God, Your love is like that famous circle that drew people in rather than shutting them out. Forgive me for the times when I feel that only I (or my group) deserve Your love. Grow me into an includer for You. AMEN.

* Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part Two: Chapters 9-16* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 13). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

WEDNESDAY – The good news: trust God, don't DIY



Romans 10: 1-15

Romans 10: 12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Verse 12 is central to understanding Paul. “Both Jew and Gentile’ is one way of stating the theme of Romans. Paul understood his call to be primarily as an apostle to the Gentiles or nations.... But Paul was also deeply concerned about his own people, who hadn't embraced the good news about Jesus He believes that Jews and Gentiles, the cultured and the uncultured, men and women are called to a Spirit-filled unity in which they live Christ-like lives and worship God together.” *

Paul shows that never being ‘put to shame’ (v. 11) means being saved (v. 13).” ** Salvation is open to all who trust “with the heart.”

Reflection:

What has led your heart to trust God's mercy?

Acts 28: 17-28 said when Paul reached Rome as a prisoner, he invited Jewish leaders to hear him speak. Why? Hadn't he learned that wasn't likely to work? He always hoped. As he wrote in this earlier letter, “My heart's desire is for Israel's salvation. That's my prayer to God for them.”

Reflection:

Are you tempted to give up on some people you care about who it seems just will not share your faith? How can Paul's example encourage you to keep seeking loving ways to share?



Prayer: Lord God, what sounds simple— “live Christ-like lives and worship God together”—gets harder when I have to do it with other real people. Give me a greater inner hunger for “Spirit-filled unity” than for proving that I'm always right. AMEN.

Michael J. Gorman, sidebar article “Jews and Gentiles in Christ” in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 292 NT. ** NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook (Kindle Locations 256074-256084). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.



MEMORY VERSE: Romans 10: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THURSDAY – God’s faithful remnant



Romans 10: 16 – 11: 10

Romans 10: *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*

When Paul asked, “Has God rejected his people?” the answer was clear: “Absolutely not!” God loved and longed for Israelites as much as ever (cf. Deuteronomy 7: 9, Psalm 145: 9, Luke 1: 50 and 2 Peter 3: 9 all showed God’s desire to save all humans). To any Gentile Christians who wanted to disdain Jewish people as “rejected,” Paul firmly said **that** attitude completely misread God’s heart.

William Barclay said, “Paul’s argument is that the Jewish nation has not been rejected; but it is not the nation as a whole, but the faithful remnant within it who are the true Jews.” * Paul, passionate believer in Jesus that he was, was himself Jewish (11: 1)!

Reflection:

What is your idea that God “rejected” the Jews? What are the

acts and attitudes that still disgrace and distort Christian faith?

In verse 6, Paul sounded the main note of his good news: “if it is by grace, it isn’t by what’s done anymore. If it were, God’s grace wouldn’t be grace.”

N. T. Wright wrote, “Paul stresses that the company of believing Jews, himself included, exist not because they deserved to...but because, once...they found themselves in the dock along with everyone else (3: 19–20), God called them by sheer grace through the gospel.” **

Reflection:

What can help you to **daily** remember that you are in God’s family by “sheer grace”?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank you for the good news that You count me among Your people, not because of my ethnicity or denominational identity, but because of Your sheer grace. AMEN.

* William Barclay, Daily Study Bible Series: *The Letter to the Romans (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 145.

** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part Two: Chapters 9-16* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 45). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

FRIDAY – Trusting in faith, not genetics



Romans 11: 11-24

Romans 11: 22 *Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

Paul first stated the idea that Israel had “stumbled” in Romans 9: 33, with quotations from Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14. They had “stumbled,” of course, “over the gospel of a crucified Christ.” * But then, in verse 13 and onward, he returned to what he wanted to say to the Gentile Christians in Rome. He used the analogy of grafting a shoot from a wild olive tree into a cultivated tree, leaving both better off.

William Barclay wrote, “It will be a bad day when the Christian Church forgets its debt to the root from which it sprang.... Paul warns the Gentiles against contempt.... Here is the answer to those who wish to discard the Old Testament as merely a Jewish book irrelevant for Christianity.” ** *Disciple Bible Study* connects

New Testament writings with their Old Testament roots.

N. T. Wright clarified verse 22: “Some people imagine God to be always severe.... Such people urgently need to discover just how kind and gracious God has been in Jesus the Messiah, and how this grace is theirs for the asking. Other people sometimes imagine that God is simply kind and generous in a sense which would rule out His ever rebuking... anyone about anything. Such people urgently need to discover just how much God hates evil in all its destructive and damaging ways.” ***

Reflection:

What makes it vital to see both “God’s kindness and harshness”?



Prayer: God of love, thank you for the roots of your saving work in the Hebrew people among whom Jesus was born. And thank you that your love is intense enough to hate destructive, damaging evil. AMEN.

* Michael J. Gorman, study note on Romans 11:11-12 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 293 NT. ** William Barclay, Daily Study Bible Series: *The Letter to the Romans (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 150. *** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part Two: Chapters 9-16* (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 56-57). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.