

A HELPFUL HUMILITY

General George Armstrong Custer pretended to be friendly to the Indians, but he never really listened to their pleas. The Sioux and Cheyenne came to view Custer as their enemy, and killed him the battle of Little Big Horn.

As the story goes, when the Indian squaws found Custer's body, they took a sharp awl and pierced countless holes in his ears. They believed the holes would help him listen better in the after-world! Actually, the *Indian myth* reflects a *biblical truth* – whether our ears are pierced or not, we'll all hear better in the after-world.

1 Corinthians 13:12 tells us, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."

Concepts we struggle with comprehending today – doctrines that dumfounded us now – will one day be perfectly explained

and expounded on by God Himself.

This is a truth we need to remember when we approach Romans 9-11...

In these chapters we're thrown head-first into a sticky subject - some thorny theology. The doctrines of predestination and free will have been discussed and debated since the Church first opened its doors. Complete comprehension – total understanding – won't be grasped this side of heaven. We need to start our study tonight with a healthy realization of our limitations. Humility is helpful.

Romans 1-8 dealt with *principles of salvation – our deliverance*. Romans 12-16 deals with *practicals of salvation – our duty*. But between the principles and the practicals – Romans 9-11 tackles a *problem with salvation – a dilemma*.

Devotion Box - Head And Heart

Romans 9 is heady stuff – it's a collection of Paul's most intellectual arguments – but it's interesting that he begins by exposing his heart. Paul says in verse 2, "I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart" over the lostness of Israel. Unless you have a family member who doesn't know Jesus it's difficult to grasp the depth of Paul's grief. The Jews were his "countrymen according to the flesh".

Paul recalls the amazing benefits God gave the Jews... they were adopted - the glory cloud resided in their temple - God established terms of relationship, or covenants, with the Jews. He gave them the law, and the sacrifices. Jesus was even born a Jew. The Jews had been God's roommate. In Paul's mind, their many privileges only enhanced his pain. Look at how they'd blown their opportunity.

Despite all their privileges the Jews were lost in their sin and headed to hell. They rejected Jesus - missed their Messiah... As John 1:11 says, "Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." The thought of his family and friends, and colleagues and countrymen burning in the flames of hell crushed Paul's heart.

Paul makes an amazing statement in verse 2, "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren..." Note what Paul says... the Greek word translated "accursed" or "*anathema*" means "to deliver to eternal damnation". *Paul is willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could go to heaven!*

Paul is about to say hard things to the Jews, but before he does he wants them to know how much

he loves them... can you imagine a greater love than this!

The Secret Service agent who guards President Bush has to be willing to take a bullet for his commander-in-chief. That's a serious sacrifice, but going to hell for the President is a different story... Yet Paul loved the Jews that much!

Two men were discussing their respective churches... The first guy said, "You guys just got a new pastor. Why did you fire the first one?" His buddy answered, "*Well, he spoke too much on hell.*" "What about the new pastor, what subject does he speak on?" "*He speaks on hell, too.*"

The guy was confused... "What's the difference if both pastors speak on hell?" His friend explained, "*Well, when the old pastor told people they were going to hell it sounded like he was glad, but when the new pastor tells people they're going to hell it sounds like it's breaking his heart...*" Paul understood- "People won't care what we know - until they know that we care." Do you care for lost people?

Paul was willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could be saved... why won't we walk next door... or go to lunch with a co-worker... or make a phone call?

In the next 30 seconds 39 people will die. Every hour 5000 people leave this world to meet their Maker – and most step out into a Christ-less eternity. It all should coax a tear... cause a prayer... motivate us to share our faith.

Bible Scan - Romans 9-11

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ROMANS 9 - PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL

For the 2000 years prior to Paul the Jews had occupied a special place in God's plan. That's why Paul's readers were puzzled as to why they weren't saved.

I would've answered their question by insisting that the Jews had a choice, and they had chose to reject Jesus... but Paul surprises us. He takes a different tact. Paul says what's happened to the Jews is a result of God's choice!

The Jews had trusted that their *bloodline and behavior* would save them. Verses 6-8 remind us that Ishmael was a member of Abraham's bloodline, but the man God chose to receive His promise was Isaac. *Bloodline* was a bust. Then in verses 10-13 Paul brings up *behavior*. But before either kid was born, or had "done any good or evil" - God chose Jacob over Esau... "the older to serve the younger."

Verse 11, "...that the purpose of God according to election might stand." Paul says, in one sense, it's God's choice - not man's - that decides a person's eternal destiny. God saves whom He chooses, and condemns whom He chooses.

Now before you cry foul and protest on the grounds of *equal opportunity salvation* - just remember if God is God, He can do whatever He pleases. In verse 15 God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Paul says again in verse 18, "He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."

You're glad God has given you a choice - why begrudge Him a choice? Paul says in verse 20, what right has the clay to argue with the potter? Verse 21, "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" Guys, *the clay has no say!*

You'll not fully appreciate God's salvation until you acknowledge His sovereignty and predestination.

Once a wise old woman commented to her pastor on the doctrine of election, "I've settled that issue. If God didn't choose me before I was born, I'm sure He would've seen nothing in me to choose afterwards."

God has made salvation so accessible we think it's our right - but God owes us nothing. We forget the only reason God chooses to save any of us is to demonstrate His amazing mercy and grace.

So what does the Bible teach? Predestination - that my eternal destiny was decided before I was born? Or free will - that each human has a responsibility to accept or reject Jesus? *I believe the Bible teaches both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.* God chose me... but it's also up to me to choose Him.

In Romans 9 Paul pounds away at predestination,

while in the next chapter, 10:13, Paul tells us, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I believe both of these doctrines, because the Bible teaches them both - but here's the rub... *how to reconcile these truths remains a mystery.*

It's like me holding up a quarter between us, and asking you to describe what you see... "George Washington's head." Then you ask me what I see: "I see an eagle." Though our descriptions seem irreconcilable - the truth is, we're looking at the same object... just from two different angles.

This is the case with our salvation. God commands us to choose. From our perspective, it's all up to us - it depends on our free will. But once we choose we realize that before the foundation of the world God predestined us to be saved.

Someone has suggested when we enter the gate in heaven - engraved above it will be the words, "Whosoever will may come." Once we enter we'll look at the inside of the gate and see the words, "Chosen before the foundation of the world."

Picture two ropes hanging from the ceiling... when one goes up - the other down. The arrangement looks unrelated - both ropes look to be moving in opposite directions. But what if you popped a few ceiling tiles, and discovered the two ropes were actually the same rope strung over a pulley.

This is similar to the discovery we'll make when we get to heaven. We'll discover, in a way we never imagined, our free will and God's sovereignty were working hand and hand in our salvation. There was no contradiction at all - a higher logic known only to God was at work reconciling the two truths.

Remember Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

A fellow once said, "Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul." I believe in predestination... as a comfort. God chose me! It means He loves me. *It's a comfort, but not a cop-out...*

Don't come to me and say, "Pastor Sandy, God must not have chosen me, I'm not a Christian." I'll respond, "*The Bible promises, 'Whosoever will may come.'*" Hey, if you're not chosen, don't blame God! Drop to your knees right now, repent of your sin, trust in Jesus, and you'll be among the chosen!

Henry Ward Beecher put it, "The elect are the whosoever will, and the non-elect are the whosoever won't." Predestination and election were revealed as a comfort to the saint - not a cop-out for the sinner.

Devotion Box - Religious But Lost

The Jews were the most religious folks in the world, yet Paul knew that *religion didn't equal relationship with God*. The Jews were religious, but lost.

Romans 10:2 points out the problem, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." *Zeal alone is no big deal.*

Guys, zeal alone won't get you into heaven. People who say it doesn't matter what you believe in as long as you're sincere should read Romans 10:2. The Jews were sincere, but they tried to obtain a right standing with God the wrong way.

The Jews opted for their own brand of righteousness. They were the Smith Barney's of the ancient world. They would probably have used the line from the commercial, "We make righteousness the old-fashioned way... we earn it!"

Americans believe hard work and persistence are omnipotent. Work hard enough, long enough - and you'll get to the top - but verse 4 makes a powerful statement, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Hard work gets you nowhere with God. His righteousness is a gift of grace received by simple faith...

Devotion Box - Beautiful Feet

Paul says in verse 15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" On frequent occasions someone will compliment me... usually on my dashing handsome features... They'll make some remark about my muscular physique, or movie star eyes. People especially admire my chin... *both of them*. But no one has ever made a comment about my feet... Only God praises feet - feet are His favorite feature.

When God finds a pair of feet that carry the Gospel to needy people in needy places He thinks they're beautiful! All husbands admire their wives - and Jesus is no exception. The bridegroom looks at His bride, and thinks she's beautiful... but what turns Him on is not her hair, face, or figure... but feet that carry the Gospel.

ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS

Paul divides his countrymen into two categories: *the believing minority* and *the blinded majority*. Romans 11:8 quotes Isaiah 29, and with it Paul brings up a frightening concept... *judicial blindness*.

Our natural blindness is the result of our being born into sin - but judicial blindness is a specific judgment of God. If you harden your heart over and over to God's repeated warnings, eventually He may just let you have your way, and reap sin's consequences.

This has happened to Israel today... they're blinded to the truth of their own Messiah. When I asked one of our Israeli tour guides what he thought of the claims of Jesus, he replied, "I don't think about it all. I'm not allowed to think about it." The rabbis have convinced most Jews it's a sin to even consider Jesus as the Messiah. As verse 8 says, they've put their people into a spiritual stupor.

Devotion Box - Simple Faith

Romans 10:6, "But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above)" - don't think you can do some great deed to coax or draw God's attention.

"Or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Neither can you conjure God up by mystical methods and incantations.

We've all met people who were into the so-called "*deep things*". They chanted and meditated - they wore crystals - they went on metaphysical retreats. But Paul is saying connecting with God is the result of simple faith - not mystical formulas.

Paul says in verse 8, "But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):" A right relationship with God is so simple and attainable it's on the tip of your tongue...

Verse 9, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." You don't earn God's righteousness with muscle or mysticism... it's a result of simple faith.

Devotion Box - How To Grow Faith

Verse 17 is one of the cornerstones of Calvary Chapel. It's the reason we place such an emphasis on teaching God's Word. Paul writes, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

There are all kinds of short-cuts to spiritual growth... Emotionally-charged meetings, soul-stirring music, attention-grabbing gimmicks, and spine-tingling experiences - but in the end they are short-cuts that lead to dead-ends.

Jeremiah spoke of this issue when he said in 23:28-29, "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" Guys, there are no substitutes for wheat of the Word in a healthy diet. The only way to grow a faith and add spiritual muscle is steady feedings of God's Word.

DL Moody said he spent years praying for God to increase his faith... but his prayers were in vain. One day he recalled Romans 10:17, got up from his knees, and opened His Bible. He said his faith had been growing ever since...

JEALOUSY EVANGELISM

God created a new form of evangelism to reach the Jews... *jealousy evangelism*. Salvation came to the Gentiles to motivate the Jews.

Often a coach will bench a player and elevate someone else to motivate the benched athlete. He uses jealousy to light a fire underneath him..

This was God's strategy with the Jews. He benched the Hebrew nation, and exalted the Gentiles, to make the Jews jealous and to bring them to salvation.

Bible Scan - Romans 9-11

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - Men's Raft Trip, Sunday, May 19th—Monday, May 20th
High School/Middle School Retreat: Sunday, July 14th-Sunday, July 21st
Kid's Camp: 1-2nd grade, Tues, 7/16—Thurs 7/18; 3rd—5th grade, Thurs, 7/18—Sun, 7/21
Haiti Mission Trip, August 10—16

- Next Bible Scan - May 5, 2002 - Romans 12-16

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” - Romans 10:9

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

OUR DEBT TO ISRAEL

But in verse 18 Paul worries about reverse discrimination – about the Gentiles thumbing their nose at the Jews. He says, “do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.” The Jews brought us both the written Word, the Scriptures – and the living Word, Jesus. How can we be anti-Semitic when our Lord was born a Jew?

In Germany, a church hosted a visit from Adolph Hitler. To prepare the room the leader said, “Everyone who has a Jewish father please leave.” Then he said, “Everyone who has a Jewish mother please leave.” That’s when a statue of Jesus leaped off the front wall of the church, and with tears in His eyes, left the church.

It’s been said, “How odd of God to choose the Jew, but not so odd, as those who choose the Jewish God, and hate the Jew.” As Christians we owe the Jews a debt of gratitude. We should love, support, and pray for, and witness to the Jews.

CONTINUE IN YOUR FAITH

Paul says in 11:20, the Jews were broken off because of unbelief, yet we Gentiles “stand by faith” – that sends us a message... “For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

Faith is not a one time, sign-on-the-bottom-line proposition. We have to continue in our faith if we expect to be saved... otherwise we’ll be cut off.

Recently I read of a woman in Toledo, Ohio who was guilty of manslaughter. She shot her boyfriend. The article said it happened as they were arguing over the Bible. It wasn’t reported... but I’d bet you the couple had been discussing *once-saved-always-saved*. Hey, the most hostile, vehement discussions I’ve ever had with other Christians have arisen over this idea. Which is a real tragedy...

I want to clarify what I believe, but before I do, let me admit there’re good Christians on both sides of the debate. It’s not a subject worth dividing over...

Having said that, here’s my position... it’s never anything you do or don’t do that earns salvation – neither is it anything you do or don’t do that forfeits salvation. The only requirement is faith! But if salvation is by faith, and you renounce your faith, how can you expect to be saved? Thus, you have to continue in your faith. Faith is not a date on the calendar – it’s an attitude I cultivate and keep... I do believe in eternal security... you’re secure as long as you keep trusting in Jesus.

JEWES FOR JESUS AND A GENTILE BRIDE

Romans 11:25-26 are prophetic, “...blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...” For two millenniums Jesus has been calling out a Gentile bride, but when “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” - the last Gentile saved - the Church will be raptured. God will turn His attention to the spiritual condition of the nation Israel. He’ll use seven years of great tribulation to purify the Jews. In the end, when Jesus returns to rule the world, “all Israel will be saved...”

Zechariah 12:10 tells us the Jews alive at the time, will see the Savior’s scars and be moved to repentance and faith. One day all Jews will be *Jews for Jesus*.

The expression, “the fullness of the Gentiles” refers to a specific number. I believe when the last Gentile gives his life to Jesus – at that moment the Lord will come in the clouds and snatch away His Church. We’ll enter His glory. Heaven will be home. If you’re the last hold-out- do us a favor, and come to Jesus tonight.

Devotion Box - Humility Helps

God has *no colleagues, no counselors, no creditors!* God is in a class all by Himself. This is a problem for the proud, but it’s a comfort for the humble.

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” The humble need to take heart... “*what’s over our head is still under God’s feet.*”