**Romans**

**Lesson 4: God’s Sovereign Choice! Romans 9 through 10**

Let’s begin by reviewing the many theological truths found in Romans 1-8:

* *For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by   
  faith… This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe* (1:17; 3:22). Salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone to all who believe. This is the simple gospel. When a man hears and believes the gospel, God credits him with his perfect righteousness.
* *There is no one righteous, not even one…no one…seeks God. All have turned away…there is no one who does good, not even one…for all have sinned and fall short   
  of the glory of God* (3:10-12, 23). We are all sinners who must be clothed in the righteousness of God before we will ever see heaven.
* *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin* (3:20). The law was never meant to save anyone, nor can it. It was given to reveal our sin and lead us to Christ.
* *What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”* (4:3). The gospel is not new; it was revealed to Abraham centuries before the birth of Christ (Galatians 3:8). Old Testament saints were saved in the same manner as New Testament saints—they believed the gospel. God credited it to them as righteousness.
* *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (5:8). This is the gospel. Christ died for sinners and his death was an expression of the love that God has for the world (John 3:16).
* *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (6:23). Sin results in death. Belief results in life. Jesus came into this world to offer the free gift of eternal life to all who believe.
* *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life* (6:4). Through the believer’s union with Christ by faith, he is given a brand-new life to live in Christ.
* *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do: no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing* (7:18-19). The Christian life is not easy. There is a war taking place within every believer—the ongoing battle between the sinful nature and the spiritual nature. Often, it may seem like a losing battle, which is why Paul says, *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (7:24-25). In what or Whom is the believer’s hope? Paul provides the answer in chapter 8.
* *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of   
  God lives in you* (8:9). Believers have the Spirit of God living within them to help them win this internal battle. The Spirit is the power of the gospel to which Paul referred in chapter 1. The Spirit has the power both to give life and to win spiritual battles. Thus, Christians can and should live victoriously in this newfound power.
* *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord* (8:38-39). In other words—once saved, always saved. When God rescues a man from the dominion of darkness and brings him into the kingdom of the Son he loves (Colossians 1:13), nothing can reverse it. *For those God foreknew he also predestined…And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified* (8:29-30). When God calls a man to belong to him, that calling stands forever. Believers have been adopted into God’s family. And once you belong to the family, you belong forever. Nothing can ever separate you from God’s love—not even death.

These are some of the most important truths we need to understand about authentic Christianity. Christianity is not about what *we* *do* but what God *has already done for us*. Those who believe they are saved due to church membership or denomination affiliation have missed the point. In addition, those who point to baptism, confirmation, or beliefs in creeds and denominational doctrines have also missed the point. They are just like the Jews of Paul’s day who believed that their association with the Temple and their identification with Abraham through circumcision guaranteed their inclusion in God’s family. However, they, too, missed the point. All religions miss the point. Keep in mind that Christianity is not a *religion*. It is a *relationship* with the God who created us, which brings us to Romans 9-11. In these three chapters, Paul takes us into the deep end of the theological swimming pool. Before you dive in, you need to understand that we are delving into God's mysterious, infinite mind, and our finite minds are incapable of understanding God completely. Scripture tells us,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Thus, we must approach Romans 9 to 11 with great humility. Remember, God is God, and we   
are not. We must humbly accept some truths that we *do not* understand and *will not* understand until heaven.

**DAY 1. God’s Sovereign Choice!**

1. Read Romans 9:1-21 (Optional) and pages 85-92 in *How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious*. Answer the following questions based on Romans 9:4-5.
   1. What are some of the many privileges that the people of Israel enjoyed over   
      other people?
   2. What will be demanded of those who have been given much (Luke 12:48b)?
   3. What spiritual privileges have you been given? What sort of accountability do you think God expects of you?
2. Answer the following questions based on Romans 9:6-13.
   1. Explain what is meant by “two Israels.”
   2. To which Israel do you belong and why?
   3. Read Hebrews 11:11-12 along with Genesis 17:15-19 and 21:1-7. Explain the kind of birth Sarah had (natural vs. supernatural).
   4. Read Galatians 4:21-31. Paul is teaching a difficult concept. God promised Abraham many descendants. Those descendants would come not by man’s work (Hagar/Ishmael) but by God’s work (Sarah/Isaac). The “children of the promise” are reckoned, or regarded, as God’s true children. Explain.
   5. Explain the phrase: *in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works, but by him who calls.*

* *God’s purpose in election might stand*
* *not by works* (Ephesians 2:8-9)
* *but by him who calls*

1. Salvation is based not on God’s justice but on His mercy. Explain.
2. How did God use Pharaoh to display his glory and power to the known world at that time (Exodus 14, 15:13-18)?
3. Verse 18 states, *Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.* 
   1. Do you have a problem with this? If yes, why?
   2. What is Paul’s answer to those who have a problem with God doing as he pleases   
      (verses 19-21)?

**DAY 2. God’s Glory Revealed in Judgment!**

1. Read Romans 9:22-33.
   1. Read Genesis 6:1-8 and 2 Peter 3:9. Has God been patient with the world? If yes, why?
   2. Do you think God will someday reach the end of his patience? If yes, what do you think God will do at that time? (Revelation 19:11-16)
   3. Explain how God, in displaying his wrath and power against unbelievers (the objects   
      of his wrath), will make “the riches of his glory” known to believers (the objects of   
      His mercy)?
2. How have many Gentiles and some Jews obtained righteousness? Explain your   
   answer (verse 30; Ephesians 2:8-9).
3. How have many Jews and Gentiles failed to obtain righteousness (verse 32)?   
   Explain your answer.
4. *They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.” As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”* (Verses 32c-33)
   1. Why is Jesus a “stumbling stone” to so many Jews today (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13)?
   2. Why is Jesus a “stumbling stone” to many Gentiles today (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)?

**Israel’s Rejection of the Gospel!**

Many people ask, “Why do the Jews not believe that Jesus is their Messiah?” Great question! The apostle Paul, self-proclaimed “Hebrew of Hebrews,” was more concerned about this particular issue than any Gentile (Philippians 3:5). In Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul responds to this Jewish problem. These three chapters are included in Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome to help them understand why there was widespread Jewish unbelief, which continues to be prevalent today. John Stott writes,

Chapters 9 to 11 of Romans all address the problem of Jewish unbelief. In chapter 9 the emphasis was on God’s purpose according to election; the emphasis of chapter 10, however, is on the human factors, on the need for an understanding of the gospel (5-13), for the proclamation of the gospel (14-15), and for the response of faith (16-21). With chapter 10 Paul turns from the past to the present, from his explanation of the Israelites’ unbelief to his hope that they will yet hear and believe the gospel. This vision for the future he will elaborate further in chapter 11.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Understand that there are many Jews around the world today who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. However, the vast majority of Jews are still blinded by their stubborn hearts. Likewise, the vast majority of Gentiles are blinded by their stubborn hearts. In this lesson, we will uncover and explain what it means to truly believe and why unbelief stems from the refusal of people to embrace the gospel.

Paul loved his fellow Jewish brothers and wanted nothing more than for them to be saved. Paul writes in chapter 9, verses 2-3, “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.” It is amazing to consider the extent of Paul’s love for the Jews. He was willing to forfeit his own salvation in exchange for the redemption of the Jewish race. God feels the same love for the Israelites as He does for all people. First Timothy 2:3-4 says, “God our Savior… wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” This is God’s desire.   
So, why do so many refuse to come to God on His terms? Let’s see!

The Jews were zealous to know God, but according to Paul, their zeal was not based on knowledge. In other words, their pursuit of God was not based on true knowledge of the only way to have a right relationship with God. Thus, they sought their way. This is what people do all over the world. Instead of coming to God on His terms, people from diverse nations and religions attempt to come to God on their terms. They try to establish their righteousness through their “so-called” good works. Understanding that every religion outside biblical Christianity is based on works is important.

True righteousness before God can come only from God, not from human beings. This is Paul's main point in Romans 1:17: “For in the gospel a righteousness *from* God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith.” Throughout Romans, Paul explains that righteousness comes from God as a gift to those who truly believe. His main theme is the gospel—the good news to the world that righteousness from God is available to all who truly believe in Him. The theological term for God’s gift of righteousness to those who believe is known as *imputed righteousness*—a righteousness from God ascribed to men and women the moment they truly believe. This happened to the thief on the cross the moment Jesus saw faith born in his heart! Faith in Christ is the only way to stand righteous before God.

**Day 3. Paul’s Incredible Heart for His People!**

1. Read Romans 10”1-13 (Optional) and pages 89-92 in *How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious*. Verse 1 states, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”
   1. The Israelites (Jews) were the most religious people on the planet, so why did Paul feel the need to pray for them that they might be saved?
   2. Concerning the Jews’ lack of salvation, what does this have to say about religious striving (Romans 3:20)?
   3. Can you see how Gentiles make the same error today? Explain:

Dr. M.R. De Haan (1891 – 1965) founded the Radio Bible Class, a worldwide ministry of radio, literature, and television. In addition, he was a physician as well as co-editor of Our Daily Bread, a daily devotional. De Haan writes,

**Ye Must Be Born Again!**

From a religious, moral, or ethical standpoint, Nicodemus towered over others like Saul of old physically stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people…In John 3:1 we are told that he was a Pharisee. Today we associate this term with hypocrisy, but originally, and in Jesus’ day, there was no such connotation. The Pharisees were a religious party, originating in the silent years between the close of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. Because this party arose as a protest to the growing unbelief and infidelity in the nation of Israel, it was first of all a revival movement. These people gave themselves to the defense of the Scriptures and the traditions of the fathers and gradually they rose in power. Their standards of membership were progressively narrowed down, until to be a Pharisee in the days of Jesus meant that one had passed very rigorous tests both for orthodoxy and education. The people looked to the Pharisees for their teaching of the Scriptures and interpretations of the traditions of the fathers, and to this party Nicodemus belonged. He was the very flower of religious correctness; yet to this man Jesus spoke the words, “Ye must be born again.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. How does one submit to God’s righteousness (Romans 1:16-17; 3:22; 10:4, 9-10)?
2. Focus on Romans 10:9-10. How would you define “the word of faith?” (1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 1:16, 15:16 and 20.)
   1. Explain how the gospel is near to everyone. (Hint: R.C. Sproul writes, “Understanding the gospel does not require a Ph.D. in theology…The gospel is ‘near you,’ a Hebrew idiom meaning that it is within our grasp. It is right in front of us. The word of faith is simple.”)[[3]](#footnote-3)
   2. What does “believe in your heart (your heart includes your mind, will, and emotions; your innermost being where values and beliefs are formed) mean?”

**DAY 4. Call on the Name of the Lord!**

1. Read Romans 10:14-21 [Personal Question] Take each of the following actions and explain how you have witnessed these in your personal salvation experience. Try to provide general dates and names of people involved in your life. For example, if you first heard the gospel from a friend, try to remember your friend's name and the time in your life when he or she shared the gospel with you.
   1. Jesus **sends** out people as heralds!
   2. These people **preach/share** the gospel!
   3. The gospel is **heard**!
   4. Some of the hearers of the gospel **respond by faith**!
   5. Those who truly believe **call** on the Lord Jesus to save them!
   6. Those who truly respond are **saved**!

Warning: If you have difficulty remembering these events in your life, then perhaps they never occurred. Perhaps you are one of those people Jesus had in mind when He said, “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand” (Matthew 13:13). If so, what should you do right now? (John 1:12, 3:16, Romans 10:13)

In these concluding verses, 16-21, Paul shows that the Jews heard the gospel and understood   
it, but for some reason, they (most of the Jews) refused to believe. Let’s see why they   
refused to believe.

1. In verse 16, Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who has believed our message?”  
   (Isaiah 53:1). Who did believe the gospel? Jews or Gentiles?
2. Verse 17 states, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message   
   is heard through the word of Christ.” Explain how this works (Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14).
3. According to Romans 10:21, why did the Israelites reject the gospel?
4. [Personal Question] Have you heard the gospel message? Have you understood it? Have you received Jesus Christ into your heart by faith and placed your trust in Him to save you?

1. John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. M.R. De Haan, M.D., *Ye Must Be Born Again,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Radio Bible Class, 1972), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. R.C. Sproul, *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith ROMANS,* (Wheaton Illinois: Crossway, 2009), 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)