

“God and Israel” – Lesson 7
Romans 10:1-11:36

J. B. Phillips is the author of a book titled Is Your God Too Small? That is still a good question for us to ponder in our own minds today. When was the last time you were truly awestruck by the sovereignty and majesty of God? We need to bow to the Spirit of God as He helps us realize that God **IS** as great as we say He is!!

This was certainly no problem for Paul! We have learned in the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul has been laying a foundation. He has said:

1. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” (1:16)
2. The Jewish nation had multiple advantages, but the true Jew is one who is circumcised in the heart by the Spirit, not just in the flesh. (2:29)
3. Just as Abraham’s faith was counted as righteousness, so through our faith we are justified and have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. (4:3, 5:1)

4. And sin shall not be our master because we are not under law but grace. And while it's true we sin after we become Christians because of our sin nature, the greater truth is that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (6:14, 8:1)
5. The Holy Spirit is molding us and interceding for us in prayer and God is working all things together for good to those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose. So we can explode with praise that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!! (8:16, 8:28, 8:39)
AMEN!

Paul was on fire with the Holy Spirit. If there's one adjective we can easily associate with Paul, it's ZEAL. How is your passion for Christ? How is your passion even for daily living? Listen to this . . . There was a very cautious man

Who never laughed or played
He never risked – he never tried
He never sang or prayed.
And when he one day passed away
His insurance was denied
For since he never really lived
They claimed he never died.

Well, Paul was a man who really lived . . . and he lived with a passion and zeal for those who were lost. If the sun rose, he considered it God's green light to get with it. If there was breath in his lungs, he was ready to roll!

Last week's lesson focused on the sovereignty of God. In our zeal to help sinners see that God is love and that His love has provided a salvation that is free, full, and forever, we often fail to explain and exalt His absolute sovereignty. It is in that sovereignty that He says, "There is only one way . . . no man comes to the Father but by Jesus."

Does the fact that Israel had forgotten God's sovereignty mean that God's promises to their forefathers had become null and void? Of course not! God is always true to His Word. And isn't it wonderful comfort to know and trust in God's fidelity?

However, like the Gentiles . . .

First, Israel must recognize the need for God's salvation:

It is not in sincerity, self-righteousness, statutes or signs.

Israel was rejected, but loved; religious, but lost.

Second, Israel must recognize the nature of God's salvation:

It is unmerited, unlimited, and universal.

God excludes unrepentant sinners – He will not forgive those who reject His message and His mercy.

It's a very natural question to ask, "What will happen to the Jewish people who believe in God but not in Jesus Christ? Since they believe in the same God, won't they be saved?"

If that were true, Paul would not have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to teach the Jews about Jesus. Jesus Christ is the most complete revelation of God. The Father appointed Jesus to be the bridge that would bring God and man together through the full atonement for sin by the shedding of Jesus' blood. The Jews, like everyone else, can find salvation only through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me."

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Just as Paul did, we should pray for every unbeliever regardless of heritage and lovingly share the Good News with them. I really hope you had a burden on your heart when we asked that question last week. "Who do I long for to be saved, and am I regularly praying for them?"

We would like to think that Christianity has always reached out to the Jew to draw him to Christ, but you know that isn't true.

There are centuries of misunderstanding, abuse and persecution all of which to them are identified with Jesus Christ. Anti-Semitism is still an ugly part of our culture today. True Christians, however, have a deep and profound respect for their Jewish heritage. Our Lord was a Jew; He is the only way of salvation. . . but to Israel He is still that "stumbling stone" in Zion.

Having passed through chapter 9 of Romans where Paul has affirmed 1) the reliability of God's Word and 2) His divine sovereign rights, now he's going to lay out both the way of salvation and the application of that salvation.

In Romans 10:4 Paul wrote, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

Under the law it was do and live.

Under Christ it is live and do.

Righteousness that comes by faith is finished. We don't need to storm heaven to achieve it. It is fully accessible, so no magic phrases or chants are needed, no deeds to do. All that is necessary is a repentant heart that speaks out in faith.

The experience of salvation requires but two things: consent and confession. Consent to God and confession before men. By consent, we admit our personal sin and delinquency; we repent and acknowledge the adequacy of Christ's blood to cover

that sin. It is more than just believing Christ died on the cross, it directs our faith to the one event demonstrated beyond doubt . . . the resurrection. It says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." Therefore, our salvation rests finally in the resurrection of the Son of God.

So Paul writes in Romans 10:9, 10 . . .

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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

It's a true saying, "The mouth without the heart would be hypocrisy, but the heart without the mouth would be cowardice."

Confession is an experience within the reach of all. It is divinely designed to meet all men and women on a common ground – the ground of a sinner's need. By our confession we identify ourselves before men as belonging to Christ. It is an open and public declaration of the desire to follow Him and His way of life. We confess publicly and we confirm it with baptism. Remember what we learned last year about the importance of the vows we take. It's something we should not do lightly.

Again in verse 12 Paul says, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile." Earlier in Romans it had a grim sound because both were convicted together of sin against God. Now the same words have a joyful sound because they proclaim to Jew and Gentile together that the gates of God's mercy stand wide open for all to receive His free pardon through the merits of Jesus Christ.

It's very true that the Jewish nation had the very words of God in their Scriptures and that it was prophesied that "I will be found by those who did not seek me," but we can still feel Paul's heart bleed when he says, "how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

We have been talking about building foundation faith through this book of Romans and in lesson 10 we're going to spend some time learning how to share and witness from this book. Maybe yours will be those "beautiful feet that bring good news" to someone else, just as someone brought it to you.

In chapter 11 Paul asks, "Did God reject His people?" The answer? "By no means!" God has preserved a remnant in Israel. Paul is proof that Israelites can be saved. God had a remnant in the past (and Paul reminds us about Elijah at a time when he felt

he was the only one serving God. Far from it, there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to idolatry.) We can identify with Elijah. Some days it seems like we're the only ones who care about God or what He thinks as we work on our jobs, or attend classes, or read the daily newspaper. That's why studies like this are so important. In the fellowship of believers is the real reminder that we're not alone. There are many others who love God and are seeking to know Him and do His will.

Well, just as there was a remnant in Elijah's day, so too God has a remnant in the present. Jews are being saved every day. There are many whose heart is wholly for God and respond to the Holy Spirit when they hear the truth of the gospel. The wonderful thing is that, as Jews come to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, they also enjoy the privilege of being a part of the church – something that was a mystery not revealed in the Old Testament. Just like Old Testament times, God today safeguards and preserves a faithful remnant and their existence is in itself proof that God has not abandoned Israel or given up His purpose for her.

Paul conceded in vs. 11 that Israel had stumbled, but had not fallen so as to rise no more. Through her earlier stumbling the blessings of the gospel had been extended more immediately

to the Gentiles; and in God's plan Israel will be set aside until "the full number of the Gentiles has come in." Did you ever stop and think that the person who's on your heart may be the last one God is waiting for to fill the number of Gentiles? Is your reluctance to share the gospel slowing down the Second Coming of Christ?

Paul paints us a graphic word picture with the parable of the olive tree. Israel was so comfortable in being God's chosen people from Exodus days that they were spiritually blind with a callused heart, insensitive to the call of God. But the root, which was Abraham's faith, was holy. Therefore, Israel is the picture of the olive tree and the Church including Gentiles is a picture of the newly grafted branches.

Regarding the grafting "both the graft and the stock on which it is grafted are affected; the old stock is rejuvenated by the new graft, and the new graft in turn, fed by the sap of the olive stock, is able to bear such fruit as it never would produce alone." However, there's a warning. If a spirit of pride leads the new graft to forget its reliance on divine grace and it starts to exchange faith in God for self-reliance, it will suffer the same fate as the old branches. It too will be cut off. It's important to remember God's sovereignty in this whole process. We can't

become so comfortable we fail in the Great Commission Christ has given us.

Paul goes on to declare in chapter 11 verses 26 – 32 that in God's time Israel will be saved and He will have mercy on them because God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. So what does that mean?

The discussion of end-time events is called eschatology. I'm not going delve deeply into that discussion, which may please some of you and disappoint others. I'm not trying to avoid it, but it's a study that should be done on its own and it should include the whole counsel of God – meaning prophecies in Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, the Olivet Discourse in Matthew, and the book of Revelation. We'll be doing that unit year after next.

Briefly, however, I believe the next event on God's calendar is the rapture of the church – that includes believing Jews and Gentiles (all believers) caught up to heaven – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 – "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive

and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

Then a seven year period of tribulation commences as the Antichrist rules. God will seal 144,000 Jews as witnesses during the tribulation. They will believe in Christ either because someone witnessed to them, or God may speak out directly in signs or dreams / visions as He did in the Old Testament.

At the end of the Great Tribulation period, the Second Coming of Christ occurs to defeat the Antichrist. Zechariah 14:4 “On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.” Vs. 9 “The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.”

King Jesus will execute judgment and separate the sheep from the goats. Believers, Jew and Gentile, will go into the millennial reign of Christ on earth (1,000 years) where the Jews will receive the land inheritance promised them in Scriptures. The Apostles will govern the twelve tribes in this period.

At the end of the millennial kingdom (1,000 years of Jesus reigning on earth), there will be a Great White Throne judgment

where the Lamb's Book of Life will reveal all who have claimed Jesus as their Savior after which God will establish of the new heavens and new earth.

There are many who have different viewpoints on the order of events during end times, but that being said, I don't want to lose focus on what Paul was presenting to the Romans. There is a future for Israel.

One thing is clear to me in the study of Scripture and that is if Israel's temporary stumbling was prophetically foretold, so was their ultimate and permanent restoration. Again, verse 29, "for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable." God is a faithful God!!

God has promised the restoration of Israel. Their rejection both wins and warns Gentiles. There is a stern warning against racial and religious pride. God is God and Paul wants to make sure we respect that. But God is also consistent in character . . . the same yesterday, today and forever. His word is His bond. God cannot forsake His people, His promises, or forfeit His integrity. And just as He will be faithful to those promises to Israel yet unfulfilled, so He will be faithful to every promise in Christ that He has made to us!

Clearly Paul did not feel the case was hopeless for the Jews in spite of their conduct in rejecting Christ. The paradox of a

sovereign God and man's free will is just that . . . a paradox. Some things are admittedly hard to understand.

If we were to try and put a definition to God's sovereignty it might be this: Our all-wise, all-knowing God reigns in realms beyond our comprehension, to bring about a plan beyond our ability to alter, hinder, or stop. Think about it. When we cannot fathom why – God knows. When we cannot give reasons – God understands. When we cannot see the end – God is there.

In his book Knowledge of the Holy A. W. Tozer gives us a faint picture of sovereignty. He writes:

"An ocean liner leaves New York bound for Liverpool. Its destination has been determined by proper authorities. Nothing can change that. On board the liner are several scores of passengers. These are not in chains, neither are their activities determined for them by decree. They are completely free to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port.

"Both freedom and sovereignty are present here and they do not conflict with each other. The mighty liner of God's sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history. God

moves undisturbed and unhindered toward the fulfillment of those eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. We do not know all that is included in those purposes, but enough has been disclosed to furnish us with a broad outline of things to come and to give us good hope and firm assurance of future well-being.”

Some things we fully understand, other things we don’t. Isaiah 55:8-9, “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 and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Next lesson we’re going to see what God’s sovereignty does not mean. It is not a release from responsibility. If sovereignty is taken to an unbiblical extreme, people allow themselves to become passive, irresponsible, and lacking in zeal as well as personal excellence. In chapter 12 Paul will urge the Romans to be spiritually transformed, demonstrate their spiritual gifts, develop loving relationships and respond properly to government. God’s sovereignty does not release us from responsibility . . . and that includes the responsibility for choosing our eternal destiny. Within the scope of God’s reign we can say yes or no to Christ

now . . . but we do not have the ability to change destinations once we die.

So Paul leaves God's problem of Israel's future to God and pours out his prayer of praise in the doxology. Romans 11:33-36.

Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

So what about God and Israel? Is there a bottom line? Yes.

1. There is human responsibility in relationship to salvation: it's a free gift, but you must confess and believe to be saved and justified. Christians are responsible to pray for and share their faith with every non-Christian including Jews. It is a universal offer of salvation that carries with it both privilege and responsibility to tell others.
2. Rejection is predictable. Both Jew and Gentile must make their own individual choice. The Jewish nation is currently hardened, but they are still God's chosen and beloved. They may reject Him now, but one day "every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

They will look on Him whom they have pierced.

(Zechariah 12:10)

3. God is faithful. He doesn't give up. God is responsible to save whoever comes to Him through Christ by faith alone. He is also faithful to His entire Word, even to those passages we don't fully understand.

It was by the Jew God gave His Word.

It was through the Jew God gave the Savior.

It will be through the Jew that God manifests His ultimate faithfulness.

Let's pray.