

## ***Redemption in Romans***

# ***Redemption for Jew and Gentile***

Lesson #10 for September 4, 2010

Scriptures: Romans 9.

1. In Romans 1-8, Paul set out his understanding of the plan of salvation. It is free to all people, Jew and Gentile alike. But, Paul recognized that this approach might alienate many of his fellow countrymen, the Jews. So, in Romans 9-11, he addressed their issues.
2. The Jews had always believed that they were God's special people. They thought they had an inside track for salvation. Some of them believed that because they were Abraham's descendants, they had an automatic guarantee of salvation. So, when they heard Paul spelling out how the gospel was equally for Gentiles and Jews, they were upset.
3. Paul began by saying that he would be willing to give up his own eternal salvation if it would save the Jews. (Compare Moses in Exodus 32:30-32) He acknowledged the fact that God chose their ancestors to be His special people. But, he also recognized that they have had a number of problems. Hosea 4:17 even suggested that the time might have come for God to abandon them completely! Hosea 2:9 says that at that time, they were referred to not as God's own people but as idol worshipers. But as always, God was ready to take them back if they repented and turned to Him. (Hosea 2:14-23) But, God's attitude toward the Gentiles is also clearly spelled out. (Hosea 2:23)
4. Seventh-day Adventists have sometimes had a similar attitude. We have often suggested that "we have the truth," when, in fact, God wishes that the truth had us! Why do many modern Christian churches claim that they are the one true church?
5. Why do you think God chose Abram/Abraham? Was Abraham particularly righteous? Was he the best available? Was Abram the one who responded to God? Or was Abraham called to do a special work for God—a special mission? What about us? (Romans 8:29,30)
6. What is God's "election"? Is that referring to God offering us salvation? Or is it talking about God choosing us to do a special work for Him? Many Christians especially in the Calvinistic tradition have believed that this passage is talking about salvation. If that is true, then we are subject to "predestination." Predestination means that God has already decided who is going to be saved and who is going to be lost, and there is nothing we can do about it. If that is true, is there any role left for human free choice? Is there any freedom of any kind? Does it matter what we believe? And if you say, "Okay, I will do whatever I want since it doesn't matter," they will respond that that is proof that you have been chosen to be lost!
7. But, if this passage is talking about the ones God is calling to do a special work for Him, then, since He is the one responsible for spreading the gospel throughout the universe, He certainly has the right to choose anyone He wants to serve as His agents. Could God have chosen a better method of getting His work done? Wouldn't the angels do a better job of spreading the gospel than we are doing? Why did God choose to give us this job?
8. What does this "calling" or "election" mean? Read Exodus 19:5,6 and 1 Peter 2:9. Notice that God's words about the ancient people of Israel are almost identical with His New Testament words through Peter about the Christian church. But, we must remember that our freedom affects what God can do with us! Without freedom, there is no possibility for love; and God is all about love. (1 John 4:8,16) God cannot force you to love Him.
9. What was God's original plan for the Israelites? Weren't they placed at the crossroads of the ancient world so that they could witness for God? Weren't they supposed to be shining lights to all around them? But, they believed that they had been chosen for special privileges and not for special responsibilities. How soon did Abraham and his descendants fall short of

God's ideal for them? Notice this interesting selection.

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity of the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, which circumcision was a token or pledge of, they would never have gone into idolatry, and been suffered to go down into Egypt, and there would have been no necessity of God's proclaiming his law from Sinai, and engraving it upon tables of stone, and guarding it by definite directions in the judgments and statutes given to Moses.

Moses wrote these judgments and statutes from the mouth of God while he was with him in the mount. If the people of God had obeyed the principles of the ten commandments, there would have been no need of the specific directions given to Moses, which he wrote in a book, relative to their duty to God and to one another. The definite directions which the Lord gave to Moses in regard to the duty of his people to one another, and to the stranger, are the principles of the ten commandments simplified, and given in a definite manner that they need not err. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 299,300 (1864); *Patriarchs and Prophets* 364; *1SP* 264; *The Signs of the Times* June, 17, 1880; compare *PH* 064 p. 19 (1875)

10. Doesn't this passage seem to suggest that even in the earliest generations of Abraham's descendants, they were departing quite some distance from God's original plan? Who did the twelve sons of Jacob marry? Were they being sucked into Canaanite culture and religion? If God had left them there in Canaan, how long would it have been before they just melted into Canaanite society? If they had remained faithful to God, they should never have been in Egypt! It should not have been necessary for God to give them the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai! But, weren't those the "elected" ones?
11. Read Romans 9:1-12. Paul was making it very clear that he had a great burden for his fellow Israelites. But, at the same time, he was pointing out that direct descent from Abraham did not make them automatically God's people. We are not saved by genetics. And he concluded with that challenging phrase, "I loved Jacob . . . but I hated Esau"! It is from this verse and the following verses that Calvin and others came up with the idea of predestination.
12. But, that is a result of not reading the Scriptures correctly. The verse quoted in Romans 9:13 is found in Malachi 1:2,3. That is not a prediction of how God would treat them in the future; it is a summary of their relationship to Him hundreds of years earlier. Now, it is true that Rebekah was given a prophecy about the two children in her womb, but that prophecy simply stated that God had chosen Jacob rather than Esau to be the ancestor of His Son. It was a prophecy about the tasks or work that God had given them to do—not salvation.
13. Did God really hate Esau? What is implied when we say God hates someone? How can a God who is love (1 John 4:8,16) hate anyone? There are many texts in Scripture suggesting that God loves everyone and wants to save everyone. And that would include Esau. So, how are we to read this passage? In scriptural language, *to hate* simply means *to love less*. It is a way of expressing preference for one as opposed to another. God "hates" anything that damages His children.
14. God's response to Jacob and Esau was based on their own behavior and choices. Salvation does not come automatically through genealogy. Clearly, God did not choose as His special agents all the descendants of Abraham through his eight sons. (Genesis 25:1)
15. Notice two important facts: 1) Not everyone who was a descendant of Abraham will be

saved. And 2) God will not even save all the descendants of Isaac or Jacob. Therefore, salvation is based on a relationship with God—not on heredity.

16. As you consider these facts, are you comfortable with the idea that God is fair to everyone?
17. Review the history of God's relationship with human beings from the time of Adam to our day. He chose Adam and Eve, and their descendants ended up in the flood. He chose Noah, and his descendants soon became idol worshipers. He chose Abraham and worked with his descendants for almost 2000 years, and they finally crucified God's own Son. He started over again with the Christian church, and it became the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 and the leopard-like beast of Revelation 13. He worked with the Protestant reformers until their followers became almost as spiritually dead as the church from which they had come. God then chose to work with a small group calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists, and that is where we are. Is it likely that we will accomplish what none of those previous groups have succeeded in doing? This far from the tree of life, shrunken and shriveled as we are, what are the chances that we can be successful against the Devil?
18. Read Romans 9:13-18. What impression do you get from reading these verses? Does God seem at least a little arbitrary? Are we all just puppets? Does God's desire to save everyone (1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11) include people like Esau? Haven't we all been chosen to be saved, not lost? (Ephesians 1:4,5; 2 Peter 1:10) Why have human beings as a group generally failed so miserably to follow God's plan for their lives? God has chosen every one of us to be His eternally-saved, elect children. (See Romans 1-8) Are we going to allow sin to deny us that wonderful heritage?
19. Is there any basis from Scripture or any evidence in God's behavior in more recent times that He regards any race, caste, ethnicity, color, or gender as having any special privilege when it comes to salvation? (Galatians 3:28)
20. So far in Romans, we have seen that: 1) Romans 1-3 spells out very clearly that we are all sinners. If we are all sinners—and on that basis equally lost—there is not much basis for arguing amongst ourselves about who is better! 2) In Romans 4-8, Paul explained why he believed that salvation is universally available to everyone. None of us can claim an inside track or special privileges.
21. Read Romans 9:17-24. Do these verses suggest to you that it is impossible for human beings to understand God? Or, is God telling us through Paul that we may not always understand why He does what He does, but when we see the larger picture, we will understand? Compare Exodus 9:34-10:1 (KJV). How did God actually harden Pharaoh's heart? Did Pharaoh's own choices have anything to do with it? How do we explain the fact that in those three verses it says, "Pharaoh's heart was hardened," "Pharaoh hardened his own heart," and "God hardened his heart." By rebelling against God's wishes, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and God brought it about by sending the plagues.
22. Did Jesus come to teach us about the Father? John 14:9.

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. **Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to**

**make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.**

**Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God.** In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.** *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890 (2ST 351:2-3:1); compare *ST* December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol 18, 359; *RH* August 14, 1900; *YI* November 21, 1883

23. One of the largest issues raised by Romans 9 is the question of freedom versus foreknowledge. Do you believe that God has foreknowledge? If God is able to know in advance even our moral choices, does that eliminate the possibility of human freedom?
24. Read Job 1:6; 2:1; and 41:7,8. Was God able to predict in advance the outcome of that experiment? Did God manipulate the results? How did God know that Noah would only need a boat of a certain size and not a whole fleet of larger boats for all the people who would want to get aboard? Is there any evidence that God refused anyone admission to the ark? How do you understand Isaiah 40-55?
25. In the New Testament when God performed several miracles to get Peter to go to Cornelius’s house and then poured out the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius’ family, wasn’t that sufficient reason for believing that God was willing to save Gentiles too? (Acts 10; compare 1 Timothy 2:4)
26. Read Romans 9:25-29. Why did Paul suggest that only a few Jews will be saved?
27. Read Romans 9:30-32. Who or what was the stumbling block? Is this parable related to Jesus’ own statement in Luke 20:18? In what sense was Jesus a stumbling block to the Jews? Was it that He was not the kind of Messiah they were hoping would come? Could we make a similar mistake? (Acts 2:41; contrast 1 Peter 2:6-8)
28. There is an election of individuals and a people, the only election found in the word of God, where man is elected to be saved. Many have looked at the end, thinking they were surely elected to have heavenly bliss; but this is not the election the Bible reveals. Man is elected to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He is elected to put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. He is elected to use the means God has placed within his reach to war against every unholy lust, while Satan is playing the game of life for his soul. He is elected to watch unto prayer, to search the Scriptures, and to avoid entering into temptation. He is elected to have faith continually. He is elected to be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, that he may be, not a hearer only, but a doer of the word. This is Bible election.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 453, 454.

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