

Redemption in Romans
The Election of Grace
Lesson #11 for September 11, 2010

Scriptures: Romans 10, 11.

1. In Romans 1-8, Paul spelled out clearly his understanding of salvation. In Romans 9-11, Paul focused on the spiritual history of the Jews and the implications it has for Gentiles. He went on to describe how in the future the Gentiles might, in turn, be able to help the Jews.
2. Read Romans 10:1-4. The history of squabbling between Jews and Christians has a long history. There are many parts of this story that Christians seem to know little about. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the fight was over the Greek Old Testament (The Septuagint-LXX). The Jews regarded the Old Testament as their national history. They believed that the Old Testament was their book. The Christians regarded the Old Testament as the first half of the salvation story which was to be matched by the New Testament and fulfilled by it. A war of words took place over a couple hundred years regarding this issue. The Jews wanted the Old Testament to be interpreted as their book. The Christians wanted the Old Testament to be interpreted in ways that showed its relationship to the New Testament. As it turned out, the rapidly growing number of Christians greatly exceeded the number of Jews. As a result, the Christians commandeered the Greek translation of the Old Testament for their purposes. In response, the Jews went back to the original Hebrew text as being their reliable history.
3. Another area of conflict was over the Sabbath. In the early days after Christ, Christians and Jews universally observed the seventh-day Sabbath. But, after the wars with the Jews culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the final conquest of Masada in A.D. 74, Christians began to try to distance themselves from the Jews. In the early years of the 4th century, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire; and over the next 100 to 200 years, the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday because Sunday was the “venerable day of the Sun” which came to be celebrated as the day of Christ’s resurrection. Of course, the Jews remained faithful to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Unfortunately, the animosity between Christians and Jews persisted through the Protestant Reformation and was at least partially responsible for the Holocaust during World War II.
4. In Romans 9-11, we have already seen that Paul turned his attention to his fellow countrymen, the Jews. In Romans 10,11, he wanted to show how the spiritual ups and downs of the Jews have resulted in the gospel of grace spreading to the Gentiles, and he predicted that, eventually, those Gentiles would turn and once again spread the gospel to the Jews. In this discussion Paul’s overall theme was that God’s calling or election is open to all, Jew and Gentile, free and slave, male and female. (Galatians 3:28)
5. Read Romans 10:1-4. Most Christians in our day regard Romans 10:4 as a key text for the rejection of the Ten Commandments as still binding and especially their rejection of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. How should we read these verses? Carefully notice that in Romans 10:3, Paul was talking about the Jews’ attempt to establish their own righteousness, and then in Romans 10:5, the process of establishing a true way of righteousness. In effect, Paul suggested that the Jews rejected the true Messiah because He did not fit their preconceived ideas about what the Messiah should do and be. J. B.

Phillips seems to have captured the true significance of Romans 10:4 in the words, “For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes [has faith, or trusts] in him.”

6. Looking back on the 1800 years following God’s call of Abraham and the promises that were given to him, as well as to Isaac and to Jacob, it is easy to see how the Jews came to the conclusion that they were God’s special people. Some of them even believed that salvation was guaranteed to them because of their heritage. Might we fall into a similar trap? Don’t Christian groups today claim that we have “the truth”? Don’t Seventh-day Adventists claim that we keep all of the Ten Commandments? Don’t we abstain from eating impure foods? Don’t we keep the Sabbath very carefully? Think of all the bad things we do not do and the good things that we do do. Are we inclined to have at least a subconscious feeling that we are superior to those who do not do those things? Does a pastor need to exude confidence to inspire confidence? Was salvation ever based on all the things we do or don’t do?
7. Another way to explain Romans 10:4 is to point out that when it says Christ is the “end” of the law, the word *end* comes from the Greek *teleos* which can mean the “goal” or “purpose” of something. This is suggested by Paul’s argument earlier in Galatians 3:19-24 that the purpose of the law is to protect us until we know the truth and develop a correct faith; and then, in trust the law will bring us to Jesus Christ.
8. Read Romans 10:9-13 (GNB).

⁹If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved. ¹¹The scripture says, “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.” ¹²This includes everyone, because there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; God is the same Lord of all and richly blesses all who call to him. ¹³As the scripture says, “Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.”

These statements can seem to be almost *carte blanche* for salvation. But what about Matthew 7:21-23? What was Paul trying to say? It is clear that he regarded faith as the only requirement for salvation. (Compare Acts 16:31) If we do not trust God, we cannot hope for salvation. But, if we do trust God, He can heal all the damage that has been done by sin. Can people tell by looking at us that we are real Christians? (Matthew 5:16)

9. Read Romans 10:14-17. Notice especially Romans 10:17: “So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ.” Why didn’t Paul mention Bible study? They did not have Bibles. They could not afford them. This is one of the clearest verses in Scripture about the source of faith. It must be based on the solid foundation of Scripture. And anything which is not based on faith is sin. (Romans 14:23) Thus, the Scriptures are our only source of correct and true information about God. It is our faith relationship with Him and our friendship with Him that makes us candidates for the kingdom of heaven. Thus, we come to accept the idea that faith is based on evidence—the evidence from Scripture.
10. What did Paul have in mind when he mentioned “preaching Christ”? If you look at the New Testament sermons that are recorded, they follow a certain pattern. First, they mention the prophecies from the Old Testament that they believed pointed to Jesus as the Messiah or Christ. Then, they showed how His life fulfilled those prophecies. Then, they mentioned

how belief in Him had impacted their own lives. Then, they appealed to their audiences to repent and accept Jesus. Was that what Jesus taught to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? (Luke 24:13-35)

11. Read Romans 10:18-21. By quoting three passages from the Old Testament, (Psalms 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1) Paul made it clear that the truth has been available to all peoples at all times. Does that seem fair to you? How much of the gospel can you learn from nature?
12. Read Romans 11:1-7. What is implied by the election of grace? Paul wanted to make it very clear that although many of the Jews rejected Jesus Christ when He came as the Messiah, that was not true of all Jews. Virtually all of the early converts to Christianity were Jews. While the Jewish leaders essentially all rejected Christ, we have exceptions in Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Simon the Pharisee and former leper, for example. Acts 15:5 tells us that many of the Pharisees actually became Christians, and some of them wanted to bring many of their old rules along with them.
13. Read Romans 11:7-10. In the traditional translations, it says that God “blinded” the Jews. The word *porosis* in Greek would be more correctly translated *hardened*. The passage which Paul cited is in Psalm 69:22-28. If you look at Psalm 69, you will notice that other portions of that chapter are regarded as Messianic prophecies. We are reminded by those verses of the experience of Pharaoh in his dealing with Moses and Aaron and the children of Israel. (Exodus 9:34-10:1) Pharaoh’s heart was hardened not directly by God but by his own continually saying, “No” to God.
14. Many Christians have had very negative attitudes toward the Jews because of what happened to Jesus Christ. While those who were responsible were leaders of the Jewish nation at the time, they were only a relative handful compared to the whole of the Jewish population. Unfortunately, these attitudes have persisted in anti-Semitism and resulted ultimately in the Holocaust. Is it possible that the attitudes of Christians have been at least partially responsible for the rejection of Christianity by many Jews?
15. Read Romans 11:11-15. What do you think Paul was referring to? In what sense did the Jews stumble? Historically, we know that in addition to crucifying Christ, they tried to stop the apostles and finally launched an all-out persecution against Christians following the stoning of Stephen as described in Acts 7. That resulted in a scattering of the Christians and the gospel being preached to the Gentiles. (Acts 8:1)
16. Read Romans 11:16-24. What do the symbols in this passage represent? The tree that was cultivated must represent the Jewish nation. The roots and the trunk must represent the fathers of that nation. Despite their foibles, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were loyal to God on a consistent basis. Furthermore, the Scriptures that came through the Jewish nation must be the foundation—the roots and trunk—for all the rest of us who have come later. We must never think that the roots and the trunk depend upon us. It is we who depend upon them.
17. Furthermore, there is no place in this text for a “once saved, always saved” understanding of the plan of salvation. The only basis for salvation is a continuing relationship with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and through continued Bible study and prayer to become more like Jesus. At all cost, we need to avoid the entitlement attitude that the Jews had. This entitlement attitude permeated the Roman Catholic Church and now is permeating Protestantism as well. Could it infect us as well? Instead of feeling entitled, we just need to be very thankful for what God has done for us!

18. Read Romans 11:25-27. Christian scholars have puzzled over these verses for generations. In what sense will the Jews come back? When is the “fullness of the Gentiles” to take place? Does this mean that near the end of time when the gospel has spread to the whole world, that it will once again encompass a significant number of Jews? Notice these words from Ellen White: “In the closing proclamation of the gospel . . . many of the Jews . . . will by faith receive Christ as their Redeemer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 381.

There is a mighty work to be done in our world. The Lord has declared that the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and not the Gentiles only, but the Jews. There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and through whom we shall see the salvation of God go forth as a lamp that burneth. There are Jews everywhere, and to them the light of present truth is to be brought. There are among them many who will come to the light, and who will proclaim the immutability of the law of God with wonderful power.—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 578.

19. Consider how Paul must have felt to recognize that some of his worst enemies—those who followed him around and tried to undo the gospel that he preached (Galatians 1,2)—were his own countrymen. Paul rejoiced in the fact that God’s mercy is open to everyone. The stumble of the Jews had led to the gospel going to the Gentiles and God’s mercy being shown to them. In the future, true Christians will turn once again to evangelize Jews and that will lead to the acceptance of many of them into the Christian fellowship.
20. Are there people that Christians have rejected unfairly because of prejudice? Are there people that need our Christian witness that we are unwilling to share with?
21. Among the Jews are some who, like Saul of Tarsus, are mighty in the Scriptures, and these will proclaim with wonderful power the immutability of the law of God. . . . As His servants labor in faith for those who have long been neglected and despised, His salvation will be revealed.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 381.
22. Do those of us who espouse the larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing model of the plan of salvation have any prejudices? Are we doing our best to reach out to people of all races, genders, and beliefs? Or, do we just have a comfortable club that we attend on a weekly basis?

© 2010, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know.

Info@theox.org

Last Modified: August 13, 2010

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Romans\SS-11-Romans-2010_09_11-2010_06_21-Fin+.wpd