

# ***Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans***

## ***The Elect***

Lesson #11 for December 16, 2017

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 that has for Gentiles. He went on to describe how in the future the Gentiles might, in turn, be able to help the Jews.
2. 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 or *LXX*). The Jews regarded the Old Testament as their national history and their own book. But, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew; and very few Jews in New Testament times could read or write Hebrew. They spoke Aramaic and Greek. 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. 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 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. 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 the impetus 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 9, he pointed back to the Old Testament and showed that it was very clear that God intended for the gospel to go to everyone. 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. 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. These two chapters [Romans 10&11] have been and remain the focal point of much discussion. One point, however, comes clearly through them all, and that is God’s love for humanity and His great desire to see all humanity saved. There is no corporate rejection of anyone for salvation. Romans 10 makes it very clear that “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek” (*Rom. 10:12*)—all are sinners and all need God’s grace as given to the world through Jesus Christ. This grace comes to all—not by nationality,

not by birth, and not by works of the law but by faith in Jesus, who died as the Substitute for sinners everywhere. Roles may change, but the basic plan of salvation never does.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sabbath, December 9. [Content in brackets is added.]

6. So, how did Paul feel about his countrymen, the Jews?

**Romans 9:1-3:** <sup>1</sup> I am speaking the truth; I belong to Christ and I do not lie. My conscience, ruled by the Holy Spirit, also assures me that I am not lying <sup>2</sup>when I say how great is my sorrow, how endless the pain in my heart <sup>3</sup>for my people, my own flesh and blood! For their sake I could wish that I myself were under God's curse and separated from Christ.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Romans 9:1-3). New York: American Bible Society.

**10:1-2** <sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, how I wish with all my heart that my own people might be saved! How I pray to God for them! <sup>2</sup>I can assure you that they are deeply devoted to God; but their devotion is not based on true knowledge.—*Ibid.\** Romans 10:1-2.

**11:1:** I ask, then: did God reject his own people? Certainly not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.—*Ibid.\** Romans 11:1.

7. After reading Romans 1&2 one might come to believe that God had rejected the Jews permanently. Paul certainly did not hesitate to point out their sins! But, Paul made it clear in these chapters that God has not rejected the Jews at all. The gospel is still wide open to believing Jews. He was one! And he himself had a great burden for them, even though many of their leaders were seeking his life! Was it only the Jewish leaders that wanted to kill Paul? Or, did even the Christian Jews—his fellow church members—have reservations about Paul and his work? They still hoped that Jesus would come back and help them to conquer the Romans and make them the rulers of the world! How did they come to such a conclusion? They had taken some of the prophecies in the Old Testament that we now recognize as applying to the second coming or the third coming and they thought that those prophecies were to be fulfilled at the first coming.

8. What mistakes did the Jews make? We are so much like them! Could we make the same mistakes? They had a detailed blueprint of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned! What about us? How many of the details of their blueprint do we still believe and try to follow?

9. **For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.**—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 4,\** 1883; *Ev\** 696.2; *1SM\** 69.1; *LDE\** 38.1; *Mar\** 61.6.

We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 184,\** 1901; *Ev\** 696.3.

**The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. [And it is worse than that;] He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness [98] is loyalty to our Redeemer. **This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*\* 97.3-98.0. [Bold type and words in brackets are added.]

10. Why do we keep the commandments? Do we feel required to do so? “From a sense of obligation merely”? Or, do we really believe that keeping the commandments is the right thing to do?
11. 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 being 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, he referred to 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 these words: “For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes [has faith, or trusts] in him.” [Content in brackets is added.]
12. 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. There are many verses that seem to suggest that. Some of the Jews 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. Are we inclined to have at least a subconscious feeling that we are superior to those who do not follow those restrictions? Does a pastor need to exude confidence to inspire confidence? Was salvation ever based on all the things we do? Or, don’t do? We still have a conundrum to deal with: We are saved by faith; but, we are judged by works!
13. 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 word *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.
14. Read Romans 10:9-13. Could it be any simpler than this?

<sup>9</sup>If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.” <sup>12</sup>This 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. <sup>13</sup>As the scripture says, “Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.”—*Good News Bible\** Romans 10:9–13.

15. These statements can seem to be almost *carte blanche* for salvation. But, what about Matthew 7:21-23? And what was Paul trying to say? It is clear that he regarded faith as the only requirement for salvation. (See 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. God does not arbitrarily exclude people from heaven:

**Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture.** His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy\** 670.2; *4SP\** 486.1. [Bold type is added.]

Can people tell by looking at us that we are real Christians? (Matthew 5:16) How many people do you know who have the light of God shining through them.

16. Look at **Romans 10:13-17**: <sup>13</sup>As the scripture says, “Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? <sup>15</sup>And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, “How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!” <sup>16</sup>But not all have accepted the Good News. Isaiah himself said, “Lord, who believed our message?” <sup>17</sup>So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ.—*Good News Bible\** Romans 10:13-17.

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, and only a few of them were able to read! 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.
18. 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 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)
19. Read Romans 10:18-21. By quoting three passages from the Old Testament, (Psalms 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:21; and Isaiah 65:1-2) Paul made it clear that the truth has been available to all peoples at all times, not just the Jews. Does that seem fair to you? How much of the gospel can you learn from nature? (Romans 1:20)

20. 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 essentially all the Jewish leaders rejected Christ, we know of exceptions in Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Paul, Barnabas, and Simon the Pharisee and former leper. 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.
21. Read Romans 11:7-10. In the traditional translations, it says that God “blinded” the Jews. The Greek word *porosis* would be more correctly translated *hardened*. The passage which Paul cited is 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 Pharaoh’s own continually saying, “No” to God.
22. 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, as we noted earlier, those 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? Martin Luther thought that Jews would be as excited as he was about the gospel. However, they were not. So, he turned against them. Luther once stated in his “Table Talks” #1795 that if he were to baptize a Jew, he would tie a millstone around his neck and throw him into the River Elbe.
23. 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)
24. 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.
25. 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. That entitlement attitude permeated the Roman Catholic Church and now is permeating Protestantism. Could it infect us as well? Instead of feeling entitled, we just need to be very thankful for what God has done for us!**
26. 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:

27. In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected, God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts of the earth. As the Old Testament Scriptures are blended with the New in an explanation of Jehovah's eternal purpose, this will be to many of the Jews as the dawn of a new creation, the resurrection of the soul. As they see the Christ of the gospel dispensation portrayed in the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, and perceive how clearly the New Testament explains the Old, their slumbering faculties will be aroused, and they will recognize Christ as the Saviour of the world. Many will by faith receive Christ as their Redeemer. To them will be fulfilled the words, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 47*,\* 1903; *The Acts of the Apostles*\* 381.1; *GW*\* 398.2; *6MR*\* 326.2.

**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, *Manuscript 87*,\* 1907; *Evangelism*\* 578.1. [Bold type is added.]

28. 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.
29. Are there people that Christians have rejected unfairly because of prejudice? Are there people who need our Christian witness with whom we are unwilling to share?
30. **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.** The God of Israel will bring this to pass in our day. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. 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*\* 381.2. [Bold type is added.]
31. 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?

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