

Dead & Alive – Romans, Part 7

In writing to the Romans Paul states, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16). Literally, “I am not offended by the gospel of Christ.” Why does he say that? **Because the Gospel has to be “bad news” (i.e. you are a sinner) before it can become GOOD NEWS.**

First 3 chapters: The bad news is we are SPIRITUALLY DEAD

CHAPTER ONE: WE ARE “DEAD IN CARNALITY.”

“the wrath of God is revealed” (Romans 1:18)

CHAPTER TWO: WE ARE “DEAD IN HYPOCRISY.”

“therefore thou art inexcusable” (Romans 2:1)

CHAPTER THREE: WE ARE “DEAD UNDER THE LAW.”

“by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20)

Next 2 chapters: The good news is we can be SPIRITUALLY ALIVE

CHAPTER FOUR: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH FAITH.”

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3)

CHAPTER FIVE: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH GRACE.”

“by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:2)

FAITH (“pistis”) = “absolute TRUST” – OUR action toward God

GRACE (“charis”) = “undeserved FAVOR” – GOD’S action toward us

THE BOTTOM LINE: ALIVE PEOPLE MUST BE DEAD!

CHAPTER SIX: WE ARE “DEAD TO SIN.”

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2)

CHAPTER SEVEN: WE ARE “DEAD TO THE LAW.”

“ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ” (Romans 7:4)

THE ONLY HOPE: DEAD PEOPLE CAN BE ALIVE!

CHAPTER EIGHT: WE ARE “ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT.”

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Romans 8:11)

For those of us who are Gentiles, the next three chapters of Romans can be a bit confusing, because Paul takes a **detour** to talk about the **JEWS**.

THEOLOGICAL REASON: Because the church started in Jerusalem and because the first Christians were Jewish by nationality, New Testament Christianity had difficulty separating itself from Old Testament Judaism for a few years. At the beginning, many of these believers had difficulty separating their new RELATIONSHIP with Jesus from the old RELIGION they had been raised in. Even as Christianity began to spread beyond Israel through the missionary journeys of Paul and others, and even as Gentiles began to come into the church in places like Rome, this issue hung on. There was even a group called the Judaizers who followed Paul around from place to place, trying to subvert his teaching by telling people they had to essentially become “Jewish” before they could become “Christian.” Some of these influences had obviously made their way to Rome. That’s why Paul takes time to explain that even the Jewish people never really understood the true role of the Law of Moses!

PRACTICAL REASON: Imagine that you are a Jew in the first century. Throughout your life, your religion has been tied to the Law of Moses and the nation of Israel. Your background has encouraged total separation from the Gentiles, perhaps even hostility against them. Now you’ve obeyed the Gospel and become a Christian – and that is a radical change! Does this mean that suddenly all of your Jewish emotions and viewpoints are erased? Does this mean that you are instantly able to accept all the Gentile believers who have come into the church with all their ‘weird customs’?! Undoubtedly not! You may still feel pressure from your past and from your peers – and maybe you’re even receiving some persecution from your own family. That’s why Paul gives teaching at this point to help converted Jews understand their new status, and to at least be able to explain it to their countrymen who were still unconverted.

Here is Paul’s outline, in a nutshell ...

In the **PAST**, Israel was sovereignly **CHOSEN** by God (ch. 9).

In the **PRESENT**, Israel has willfully **REJECTED** God (ch. 10).

In the **FUTURE**, Israel will be miraculously **RESTORED** by God (ch. 11).

Romans 9:1-3 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Paul’s words here are an expression of anguish and emotion, because he himself is a Jew (“I could wish” – NOT “I wish”). His heart is heavy for his countrymen who cannot grasp the revelation he has received.

Though they have many BLESSINGS, they are spiritually BLIND!

Romans 9:4-5 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Notice all the PRIVILEGES that Israel had: adoption, glory, covenants, law, service, and promises! These things belonged to their fathers, and were a precious heritage. And not only that – the MESSIAH had come to the world through Israel. (**Verse 5 is a STRONG Oneness verse!**)

The Jews had enjoyed “exclusive status” during the time of the Mosaic Law, but when they rejected the Messiah that all changed. And now that the Gentiles are being welcomed into the church some are wondering, “Does Israel’s failure mean that God’s promises to Israel have failed?” Paul’s answer is an emphatic “**NO!**” God is faithful to His promises even when we are not. God had always known that Israel would fail, and He had incorporated her failure into His plan and purposes in eternity past!

Romans 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

God’s Word did not fail! He did promise blessings to Israel, but these blessings were for SPIRITUAL Israel! Paul’s point is that being a PHYSICAL descendent of Abraham doesn’t automatically make someone a recipient of God’s promises. Only Abraham’s SPIRITUAL descendents (i.e. those who have FAITH like he had) will receive God’s promises. And Paul gives two examples to prove this:

1. Abraham had two sons. Isaac, not Ishmael, was the son of promise. (“the children of the promise are counted for the seed” – 9:8)
2. Isaac had two sons. God chose Jacob, and rejected Esau. (“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” – 9:13)

Romans 9:13 is idiomatic language indicating CHOICE, as in Luke 14:26 – “If any man hate not his father and mother he cannot be my disciple.”

Paul anticipates their objection (“But that’s not FAIR!”) and answers it:

Romans 9:14-16 What shall we say then? **Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.** For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

If God were FAIR, we would ALL be destined for eternal death. Thank God that He is not “fair”! He is BETTER than “fair” – He is MERCIFUL!

Paul anticipates their next objection (“But if God does whatever He wants anyway, how can He then hold us accountable?”) and answers it:

Romans 9:19-21 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? **Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?** Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

It is the height of human arrogance to argue with God! Since God alone has FOREKNOWLEDGE, He knows what our choices will be before we make them, and so He can “REACT” even before we choose to “ACT”!

HOSEA prophesied God’s plan concerning the GENTILES:

Romans 9:25-26 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were **not my people**; and her beloved, which was **not beloved**. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are **not my people**; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

ISAIAH prophesied God’s plan concerning the JEWS:

Romans 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a **remnant** shall be saved:

And then Paul sums up his point: Although a remnant of the Jews will be saved, the majority of them did not respond to God like Abraham did. He had FAITH, but they relied on WORKS. He ACCEPTED the Messiah, but they stumbled over Jesus and REJECTED their own Messiah.

Romans 9:30-33 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the **righteousness which is of faith**. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they **sought it not by faith**, but as it were **by the works of the law**. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a **stumblingstone** and **rock of offence**: and **whosoever** believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

John 8:56-58 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Chapter ten begins like chapter nine – with Paul’s burden for Israel to be saved. They were deeply involved in their religion, and they were zealous about good works – but good intentions don’t compensate for bad information! They knew about God, but they didn’t really know God! And before we judge them, realize that we may be exactly like them!

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Everything about the Jewish faith pointed to a coming Messiah!

The sacrifices, the priesthood, the temple services, the feast days, the covenants, the prophecies – they all pointed ahead to JESUS. The Law was given to show them that they were sinners and needed a Saviour. But instead of letting the Law lead them to the Messiah, they held on to the Law in a futile attempt to try and make themselves righteous.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The “righteousness which is of the law” is all about OUR effort. But the “righteousness which is of faith” is all about what JESUS did for us! There is OBEDIENCE in both systems, but one is obedience out of fear and obligation, while the other is obedience out of faith and gratitude.

Romans 10:5-10 For Moses describeth the **righteousness which is of the law**, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the **righteousness which is of faith** speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For **with the heart man believeth** unto righteousness; and **with the mouth confession** is made unto salvation.

The Gospel doesn’t teach that we need to BRING Christ to us and close the GAP through human effort (Paul is quite dramatic and poetic in his description here) – rather, the Gospel teaches that Christ CAME to us, and that He is NEAR to us if we will only call on Him. The Law was about OUR initiative; the Gospel is about responding to GOD’S initiative.

Verse 9 is not just talking about a verbal “profession of faith,” because Matthew 7:21-23 tells us that not all those saying “Lord, Lord” shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven (only those who do the will of God). So how do we “confess with our mouth” the Lord Jesus? We do it when we are BAPTIZED and when we receive the HOLY GHOST!

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be **baptized**, and wash away thy sins, **calling on the name of the Lord**.

1 Corinthians 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can **say that Jesus is the Lord**, but by the **Holy Ghost**.

That’s why Paul says we must “confess with our mouth” AND “believe in our heart” – this is not just about making a CONFESSION, it is about experiencing a CONVERSION! We must believe in the resurrection (“God hath raised him from the dead”), which is shorthand for believing the whole gospel (i.e. it doesn’t take faith to believe in Jesus’ death and burial, so if you believe in the resurrection you believe in all three).

Romans 10:13-15 For whosoever shall **call upon the name of the Lord** shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

These verses tell us why we witness, why we preach, and why we send missionaries – unless people hear the Gospel, they don’t have a chance to obey it, and if they don’t obey the Gospel, they cannot be saved!

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Both MOSES and ISAAH foretold that, although Israel would not respond to the Gospel, the Gentiles would respond and be saved!

Romans 10:19-21 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

BUT GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH ISRAEL YET!

In the **PAST**, Israel was sovereignly **CHOSEN** by God (ch. 9).
In the **PRESENT**, Israel has willfully **REJECTED** God (ch. 10).
In the **FUTURE**, Israel will be miraculously **RESTORED** by God (ch. 11).

Romans 11:1-5 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? **I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.** Even so then at this present time also there is a **remnant** according to the election of grace.

In Elijah's day it certainly seemed like all of Israel had forsaken God, but God let him know that there was a **REMNANT** of people who were on God's side. And it is the same in Paul's day – a **REMNANT** of the Jews will be saved, and it will be by **GRACE**, not by the works of the Law.

Romans 11:11-12 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather **through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.** Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

God's foreknowledge is AMAZING! He used the **REBELLION** of the Jewish nation (i.e. they crucified the Messiah) to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles, and He will use the salvation of the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy (i.e. they will desire the blessings they see on the Gentile church) – all so He can **RESTORE** Israel in His plan.

PAUL GIVES A STERN WARNING TO THE GENTILE BELIEVERS:

Romans 11:19-22 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of **unbelief** they were broken off, and thou standest by **faith**. Be not **highminded**, but **fear**: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the **goodness and severity of God**: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou **continue** in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

God never withdraws His gifts or calling, but we can disqualify ourselves just like Israel lost her spiritual inheritance. However, **REPENTANCE** will bring **RESTORATION**. (**God WON'T repent, so we CAN repent!**)

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

God's foreknowledge is AMAZING! What a God! What a plan!

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

CHAPTERS 9-11: ISRAEL INTERLUDE

There is a final reason that chapters 9-11 are included in Romans. They are not just an **EXPLANATION** to the Jewish believers; they are an **EXHORTATION** to the Gentile believers. If Israel, God's chosen people, could forfeit their position and their promises, then **WE** must constantly be on guard lest the devil deceives us as well.

Israel offered **ANIMALS** as a **DEAD** sacrifice.
We offer our **BODIES** as a **LIVING** sacrifice.

The problem with a "living sacrifice" is that it can crawl down off of the altar! You have to put it back on the altar constantly.

The cure for every spiritual problem is to **STAY ON THE ALTAR!**
The cure for backsliding is to **STAY ON THE ALTAR!**
The cure for worldliness is to **STAY ON THE ALTAR!**
The way to walk in the will of God is to **STAY ON THE ALTAR!**

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.