

PROLOGUE TO PRISON

Paul's Epistle to the ROMANS

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Chapter 18 -

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Romans 10:1-13

The message of the 9th chapter of Romans is the sovereignty of GOD and the election of those who are saved. Scripturally this doctrine brooks no argument; quarrel with this, you quarrel with the Apostle Paul and the Word of GOD. Clearly does Paul illustrate the truth with the story of Esau and Jacob whose destiny before they were born when still carried in their mother's womb was determined by GOD before either could do good or bad that he might be justified or condemned. GOD said, "**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.**" No doubt about this.

Paul is very clear in Romans 9 concerning the sovereignty of GOD and the election of those who are saved. Now, however, Romans 10 deals with the responsibility of those who are lost, for Paul makes it equally clear that one is lost because he rejects the truth as it is in JESUS CHRIST, but because he rejects the Word of faith. So if we have GOD's sovereignty in Romans 9, we have the other side of the coin, man's responsibility in Romans 10; man is responsible for his own lostness.

Much more space could be devoted to this theme of the sovereignty of GOD and the responsibility of man, but we would not come to the place where we found a neat compromise between these two paradoxical truths; *the Word of GOD teaches both to be true*: GOD is sovereign, man is free and responsible. We cannot finally resolve these two truths which to us seem to contradict each other, but this is not the only doctrine with which we have this difficulty.

We believe in the unity of GOD because the Bible clearly teaches the unity of GOD, "**The Lord our GOD is one Lord**"; we are monotheists; we believe in one GOD, but the Bible also teaches that the Father is GOD, the Son is GOD, and the HOLY SPIRIT is GOD. The Bible does not teach that each of them is one-third of GOD, the three composing one GOD; but that GOD is GOD the Father, the Son, and the HOLY SPIRIT; they are three, and yet they are one. How can three be one? Men who insist on resolving this paradox do so at the expense of one truth or the other. Either they sacrifice the deity of JESUS CHRIST and the deity of the HOLY SPIRIT to uphold the belief in one GOD, or they sacrifice the unity of GOD. Either way a basic truth about GOD is sacrificed.

So it is with this: GOD is sovereign, man is free and responsible. Both are true. How can both be

true? With this, as with the trinity and other ultimate truths, we must wait until we are able to comprehend more fully. Paul reminds us, "**For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.**" For the present hold both to be true because the Word of GOD teaches both and does not attempt to reconcile them nor to resolve the paradox.

The general theme of Romans 10 is that Israel is responsible for her lostness because she has rejected the word of faith. Paul begins the 10th as he does the 9th chapter, expressing his concern for the salvation of Israel. He is a Jew, a "**Hebrew of the Hebrews,**" as proud of his Hebrew legacy as any Jew. He confesses, "**my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**" Here we have a Jew concerned for the salvation of Jews.

This is important for us to see inasmuch as it is not uncommon for Christians to have the idea that the Jews have their religion and should be left alone; and it is not uncommon for Jews to think that Christians are anti-Semitic when they press the claims of the Gospel. To be sure, there are Christians who are anti-Semitic, but they are less than Christian in such an attitude; they forget that our LORD JESUS CHRIST was a Jew. This Jew, Saul of Tarsus, held in his heart before GOD continually the hope and the prayer for the salvation of Israel, and we can wisely embrace his concern.

In the next two verses he says some very amazing things. He says concerning Israel, "**I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge**" There is such a thing, you see, as being ignorantly zealous; and if there is anything worse than ignorance, it is ignorance mixed with zeal. What was the nature of this ignorance? Paul said they were "**ignorant of God's righteousness**" and they were "**going about to establish their own righteousness.**" He suggests two kinds of righteousness, the righteousness of GOD and the righteousness of man, which are mutually exclusive. Paul declares that the righteousness of man is in direct opposition to the righteousness of GOD, which is the major lesson of the chapter. It is not so much our evil, our wrong conduct that is the enemy of the righteousness of GOD; it is our own righteousness, our obsession to self-justification. "**Going about to establish their own righteousness,**" Paul says, they "**have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.**"

Paul himself, of all men, certainly appreciated this principle because he, more than any of his contemporaries, resented and resisted and rebelled against the righteousness of GOD until he capitulated to the living CHRIST on the road to Damascus. Indeed, he became the chief enemy of the Church in his zeal for GOD, in his efforts to establish his own righteousness, and he declared in his testimony (Philippians 3) that "**If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more**"; after which he lists the reasons for which he could boast: "**circumcised the eighth day,**" etc., etc. He testified "**touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless,**" but he continued, "**But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.**"

The real human dilemma, the most devastating "evil" is man-made righteousness! It is man's religion which is the supreme expression of sin in history, man's congenital, constitutional, compulsive effort to justify himself, man attempting to establish his own righteousness - coming to GOD on his own conditions rather than GOD's.

This was the chief error of Israel. In the last half of the chapter, Paul substantiates this by referring to the Psalms, Moses and Isaiah; Israel heard this word of faith; Israel understood this word of faith, but Israel rejected this word of faith. His quotation from the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy is a graphic illustration of a devout scholar of the Old Testament viewing it in the light of JESUS CHRIST. He says in verses 6 and 7, "**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.**"

In the Old Testament Paul finds the word of faith which Israel rejected. Observe the principle, "**The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.**" What had they done? They had externalized the law and had kept it to the letter but rejected it in spirit. They had the "**form of godliness, but [denied] the power thereof,**" the form without the substance; and "**the LORD looketh on the heart!**"

This is really the essence of the Sermon on the Mount: the law said, "**Thou shalt not kill,**" JESUS said, "**whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.**" The law said, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery,**" JESUS said, that "**whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.**" GOD looks not upon the act but upon the heart. It is possible to keep the letter of the law yet sin inwardly. This is the human device, the Satanic strategy, to resist the righteousness of GOD in JESUS CHRIST and to justify it by keeping the law.

Remember that the serpent's appeal to Eve in the Garden of Eden was not to deny GOD, disobey and go to hell; on the contrary he urged, "**For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.**" The very appeal that the serpent made to Eve in the Garden was the appeal to GOD-likeness, but a GOD-likeness on man's terms.

Through the centuries and the millenniums men have invented one religion after another, "**going about to establish their own righteousness**" and refusing to submit to the righteousness of GOD. This is the root problem in history; it is religion that opposes the grace of GOD in CHRIST; it is man's own self-justification that resists the righteousness of GOD which is a free gift.

Now verse 4, "**Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**" Think of the word "end" in two ways: CHRIST is the end of the law, period; no longer law, now grace. Paul says as much: "**We are not under law, but under grace.**" This does not mean that the person under grace is lawless or licentious; indeed it does not, for grace has infinitely more power to constrain a man to righteousness than has the law. The law has no power to produce righteousness (8:3); it did not have in Old Testament times and it does not have today! The second way the word "end" can be understood is in the sense of destination.

CHRIST is the destination of the law for righteousness; the law was designed for one purpose, to bring us to CHRIST. He uses an interesting analogy in Galatians, the law was "**our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.**" The law is the highway which leads to CHRIST for

righteousness, and thus it had become the enemy of CHRIST. The law had taken the place of GOD. Ethics, morality, works are our modern Gentile equivalent, that is, human goodness.

Two kinds of righteousness, the righteousness of GOD and the righteousness of man, and the two are utterly incompatible because the righteousness of man leads invariably and inevitably to self-righteousness. Having externalized the law's requirements, I do certain things; I refrain from others. I thereby feel superior to the man who does not live by my rules; hence the law or works breed the "superior" person: who is egotistical, self-righteous and pharisaical. But what does the righteousness of faith say? **"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."**

Excluding those who are indifferent to a good life, we are, each one of us, either zealous to establish our own righteousness or to put our faith in the gift of righteousness by grace through JESUS CHRIST; either we have our own righteousness or we have GOD's righteousness. You will know, depending on whether you are trusting CHRIST for salvation or **"going about to establish [your] own righteousness."** Pathetically familiar is the man who has been in the church all his life and is still unsaved because he conceives of Christianity as man doing his best by certain moral and ethical criteria. But he has never received the gift of GOD through faith in JESUS CHRIST. Busy trying to establish his own righteousness, he has not submitted himself to the righteousness of GOD in CHRIST.

Is the righteousness that you possess your own, that which you have managed by your own effort, or is it the righteousness of GOD received as a free gift through JESUS CHRIST? Bear in mind that if your righteousness is your own, it represents enmity to the cross of CHRIST, to the righteousness of GOD; your own good works are not just something less than the righteousness of GOD; they are hostile to GOD's righteousness. Man's own goodness is the enemy of GOD's best, and it is more difficult often to reach such a person than it is a man on skid-row who is already disillusioned about himself and knows he has no righteousness in which he can boast; while the good man clings to his own righteousness and refuses the gift of righteousness in JESUS CHRIST.

Paul gives a wonderful little sequence here. **"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 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?"** Having read this, you have had a preacher. If never before, now you have heard the Gospel, and you may even have believed the Gospel; but have you called upon the Lord for salvation? You have given approval to the doctrine but have you personally appropriated it? ***"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!"***

Paul closes chapter 10 by showing that Israel herself is among those who have heard but have not obeyed. The ignorance of which Paul wrote in the beginning has no excuse; Israel has heard and rejected, a fact which he verifies from both Isaiah and Moses. Using a quote from Isaiah, Paul portrays the unwearying patience of GOD as He extends His offer of love and pardon to His

own rebellious people. In this context Paul introduces one of the uses to which GOD will put the inclusion of non-Jews into the covenant of promise; a fact which will provoke Israel to jealousy and about which Paul will say more later.

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