**Text**: Romans 3:1-8

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**:

**Date/Location**: Wednesday October 10, 2012 at FBC

Introduction

It is hard to pick “key texts” from the book of Romans because the whole book is key. But I am going to at least work on “selected texts” for a little bit to improve our understanding of the book.

Our approach: first of all we have to carefully *read* the text. Second we have to make sure we understand fairly well the immediate context. Third, we want to know the context of the whole book, and indeed the rest of the Bible. Of course, the problem is when you embark on a study of a book that is new to you, it is hard to know the subject matter of the whole until you investigate its parts.

I. Romans 3:1-9

In the first three chapters, the apostle Paul, superintended by God’s Spirit, goes about to make the case that all humanity is guilty of sin. In the opening verses of chapter 3, he deals with four objections to his line of argument (see Matham, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 14). Each objection is stated as a hypothetical question that expresses the objection.

A. Objection #1: So there’s no benefit to being a Jew or being circumcised?

3:1-2. The question is understood to have this answer: *There* *is no advantage to being a Jew*. That is the objection to what Paul is saying. He is being hard on the Jewish people (saying they are sinners too!), as he should, but this can be interpreted wrongly by a biased Jewish person to go beyond Paul’s meaning.

Paul’s response is: *There is a lot of advantage to being a Jew*. The Jewish nation is the one to whom God committed the Biblical writings, and for that matter, the authoritative verbal oracles. But that alone, obviously, does not save anyone because there were many Jews to whom the oracles were delivered, but who did not mix them with faith (Hebrews 3:19, 4:2).

In a way, the question/objection, IF raised at this point in a real conversation with Paul, would be a distraction from his main point. Why talk about the advantage of being a Jew here? This would only serve to deflect the force of the point. Of course, however, Paul is anticipating the objection and bringing it up himself, so it is not really a distraction. Perhaps we could say that Paul is making sure it does not become a distraction.

Objection #1 struck down.

B. Objection #2: So Jewish unbelief cancels God’s promises? I’m thinking specifically of God’s promises in the OT.

3:3-4. “The faithfulness of God without effect” refers to God’s faithfulness to His promises and to His word. God promised some things to the Jewish people. Does their unbelief cancel out or nullify God’s faithfulness? In other words, if they don’t believe, does that make God just give up or be unable to carry out His word? Paul answers “certainly not!”

In a now well-known statement, he says that God is true even if every man is a liar. God is faithful even IF NO ONE ELSE IS.

The source of the quotation is Psalm 51:4 where David is admitting his sin to God so that there would be no question that God was right when he judged David.

**I am having trouble figuring out how the quotation supports the point.**

C. Objection #3: Since our sin highlights God’s justice, why should God judge us since our sin has that beneficial effect? Isn’t God actually unjust when he inflicts punishment on us who are doing a good thing in highlighting his righteousness? That is, any evil act would serve to make God’s righteousness look even better.

3:5-6. This is a childish kind of twisting of things that ends up in a mess. Even the Jewish moralist who might make this objection recognizes that God has to judge some people in the entire world (Hitler, etc.). But if we took this philosophy to its natural conclusion, God would not be able to judge anyone since all sin would demonstrate his righteousness by way of contrast or juxtaposition.

The fact of our sin DOES highlight God’s righteousness and justifies him when he judges. Far from degrading God’s justice, God’s judgment of sin indicates his righteousness even moreso.

D. Objection #4: Why don’t we sin more so that this good may come out of it?

3:7-8. This carries Objection #3 even farther to a wicked conclusion. “Let us do evil that good may come.” Somehow the thought is that if we keep sinning, God’s righteousness is highlighted more or God can give more grace.

No one who is truly acquainted with God’s grace in salvation thinks that way. Sin is the farthest thing from our true desire.

All Paul can say is that such thinking is worthy of condemnation.

This slanderous reporting is something that trips me up. What were Jewish people saying about Paul’s doctrine? Was grace a bit too free for them and they figured they can sin and keep getting grace and

Conclusion

MAP

**Text**: Romans 4

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: Righteousness can only come to a person through faith.

**Date/Location**: Wednesday October 17, 2012 at FBC

I. Works and Grace are Opposites: Abraham the #1 Example, 4:1-4

Justification and righteousness is the “wage.” How does one get the wage? Look to the Scripture to find out – Genesis 15:6. Belief was Abraham’s “action” and the wage was given in response to that. It had therefore to be given on the basis of grace, since Abraham didn’t “do” anything. It was a gift from God.

Had Abraham worked for it, the wage could not be counted as a grace but rather as a debt that God owed him.

This is why any works-based system is so opposed to the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. It is not just a minor error to say that you are saved in whole or in part by means of works, because that cancels out God’s grace. The Bible says that “by grace you are saved” so the works-system of salvation is at total odds with the Bible-system of salvation. This is the case for Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Judaism, and Jehovah Witness-ism.

II. David the #2 Example: Righteousness apart from works, 4:5-8

Again we are asked to look to the Scripture, this time in Psalm 32:1-2. The point is supported again by David’s writing. No works are mentioned in this context—because there are not works that can cause God to justify the ungodly, give righteousness to a sinner, forgive one’s lawless deeds, cover his sins, and not impute sin to his account.

What is yours is yours and you cannot just drop it (sin) in a nearby trashcan as so much refuse that you don’t want. It belongs to you!

III. Abraham again – Righteousness apart from circumcision, 4:9-12

Again we are asked to look to the Scripture, but this time not to a single verse as a proof-text. Rather it is to a historical, chronological sequence that can be derived by carefully reading the text of Genesis. Paul asks the question “when did Abraham receive righteousness—before or after he was circumcised?” The answer is BEFORE! He was accounted righteous according to Genesis 15:6. We know from Genesis 12:4 and 16:3 that Abraham was somewhere between 75 and 85 years of age at that time. It was at least 14 years later, perhaps as many as 20 years later, when Abraham was 99 years old (Genesis 17:1) that God gave Abram the sign of the covenant, which was circumcision. The point is that Abraham was saved LONG before circumcision ever came on the scene. There is no way that anyone can debate that point. You do NOT have to be circumcised to be right with God!

If you are trusting in circumcision and being physically marked as part of a covenant community for salvation, you are way out of date and way off in your thinking.

And any other religious ritual must be treated the same way. Salvation and the imputed righteousness that comes automatically with it must come *before* baptism, for example.

In verses 11-12, notice that the timing of Abraham’s righteousness apart from circumcision gives the Gentiles a neat solidarity with Abraham. They can also receive the imputed righteousness because it doesn’t depend on a religious ritual or physical marking to get it. It is walking in the steps of faith of Abraham that count – believing God that counts – not performance that counts for righteousness. God arranged it this way ON PURPOSE so there would be no question about it.

IV. Abraham again – Righteousness apart from the law, 4:13-22

Everyone agrees Abraham was a man of God. This passage shows how he was.

Once again, a sort of chronological argument is employed here by Paul to convince us that Abraham did not receive and believe the promise of the Abrahamic covenant under terms of the Law. The Law didn’t come until literally centuries later!

Just like was the case with works, if you have to be under the law or born during the time of the law to be saved, this would make faith of no value.

Law/works/debt versus promise/faith/grace is the key contrast you always want to keep in mind.

Again, this “not because of law” argument is a great thing to those of us who are not Jews...because it means that all we have to do is share the faith of Abraham, and we can be his sons-in-faith (not sons-in-law!).

**Trouble with v. 15 – a tough logic to follow**

Romans 4:17 - The kind of faith Abraham had was well placed because it was in God—who can give a life (= a child?) to a “dead” couple; he creates things out of nothing; He keeps His promises.

Faith = fully convinced. See 14:5 for another use.

V. Righteousness Can Be Ours Too! 4:23-25

This imputation can apply to us today if we believe in God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

We have to see that there is a righteousness from God that comes to us through faith, not works. It is imputed (4:6—credited, reckoned, accounted).

Conclusion

For a Jewish person or anyone who rejects the faith-principle of salvation, we have to challenge them to ask themselves the question: How can they do that in light of the clear teaching of the Old Testament that is elucidated in Romans 4? MAP

**Text**: Romans 5:12-21

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: The Great Comparison – Adam and Christ

**Date/Location**: Wednesday October 24, 2012 at FBC

Did you ever hear that two things can be alike while they are different? That’s what we have in Romans 5:12-21.

I. The Text

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification. 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. The Comparison Between Adam and Christ, 5:12, 18-21

In verse 12, the first part is given but the second part is left out…and a long paragraph intervenes before Paul returns to complete the thought.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Just as** |  | ***So also?*** |
| One man |  | <blank> |
| Sin entered |  |  |
| Death entered through sin |  |  |
| All sinned |  |  |
| Death spread to all |  |  |

After a somewhat parenthetical section in v. 13-17, in verse 18, the apostle picks up the train of thought.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **As** |  | **Even so** |
| One man |  | One man |
| One offense |  | One righteous act |
| Condemnation to all |  | Justification of life for all |
| **As** |  | **So Also** |
| One man |  | One man |
| Disobedience |  | Obedience |
| Many made sinners |  | Many made righteous |
| **As** |  | **Even So** |
| Sin reigned in death |  | Grace reigns through righteousness |

The point of the comparison is this: in both cases, an act of one man had an impact on all/many.

Let us ask ourselves a few questions about this text:

1. Through whom did sin enter? One man, which is Adam. It is not one woman, Eve. Adam had the position of head of the entire human race. God constituted him as responsible. What he did, his family would be marked by.

2. How did sin enter? A transgression of God’s command was committed.

3. How did death enter? Death entered as a consequence and punishment for sin, God withholds that which sustains life. He is the author of life and is able to do that. Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:17.

4. How did all sin? 5:12 says that death spread to everyone because everyone sinned. Just *how* did you and I sin way back then?

We can confidently assert that we did not do it personally, because we did not exist back then. Not until we were conceived did we have existence or even personhood or a spirit.

A key to understanding this is to look at the parallel that is given multiple times in the passage. Somehow one sinned and that got applied to everyone. That is what “all sinned” means. In a similar way, One did a righteous act, and justification came to all and many were made righteous because of it. Somehow one did a righteous thing and that got applied to everyone. We have studied this notion before—the way that the “one” gets applied to the “many” is through what we call imputation, in which a person is constituted righteous based on the righteousness of Christ, then declared to be so, and treated to be so by God. This is the core notion of the word ‘justification.’ Because of the very strong parallels laid out in this passage of Scripture, the way that the sin of one got applied to all is through the same kind of thing—imputation. In this case, it is imputation of sin, counting all as sinners who are in Adam’s race, treating them as such.

The situation is complicated by the fact that we not only have imputed sin of Adam, but we also have the inherited sin nature and sins we commit. (Sometimes imputed sin is called *original sin*, though others use the same term to denote the inherited sin nature .)

5. How did death spread to all? The text says that this happened because all sinned. The penalty due because of sin followed sin into all people.

III. The Contrast Between Adam and Christ, 5:13-17

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Free gift | **is not like** | the offense |
| One man’s offense |  | the grace of God |
| Many died |  | gift of one man |
|  |  | abounded to many |
|  |  |  |
| That which came through the one who sinned | **is not like** | Gift |
| One offense |  | Many offenses |
| Judgment |  | Free gift |
| Condemnation |  | Justification |
|  |  |  |
| One man’s offense | **Much more** | One, Jesus Christ |
| Death reigned thru one |  | Receive abundance of grace |
|  |  | Receive gift of righteousness |
|  |  | Reign in life thru the One |

The point of the contrast is this: the results of Adam and Christ’s acts were completely different. In the first case, an act of one man resulted in death, judgment, and condemnation; in the second case, an act of one man resulted in a grace gift, justification, and life.

MAP

**Text**: Romans 7:1-6

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: Dead to the Law, Freed from Sin

**Date/Location**: Wednesday October 31, 2012 at FBC

It appears that 7:1 is Paul’s explanation and clarification as to the truth of the fact that we are set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the truth that was said at the tail end of chapter 6. For purposes of this message, I will call this the *Christian truth*. It is stated in v. 1 and reiterated in 4-6. It is *illustrated* in verses 2-3.

The truth is true because the law only has dominion over a person (anthropos, generic for human…verse 2 refers to an Andros man more specifically as a male). as long as that person lives. The implication is that after the man dies, the law has no more dominion over him. We should understand that when a man transitions from this life to what comes after this life, he has exited the domain of the Mosaic law and moved into another domain, where another law reigns supreme.

What is “the law” – Mosaic law? Roman law? Paul says, “I speak to those who know the law.” This might mean that the law is the Mosaic law. Furthermore, he gives a quotation of the law in 7:7, which is obviously from the Mosaic Law. The principles that he is giving are understood by people under any system of law, namely that when someone dies, the law does not hold sway anymore.

But Paul’s writing holds a bit of a surprise at this point. The death of a person not only frees *that person* from the demands of the law; it can also, in certain circumstances, free *another person* from the demands of that law.

7:2-3 is an illustration in which the law’s regulation of a woman in a marriage relationship is explained and will be used to demonstrate something else. It regulated her conduct such that she had to stay with her husband as long as he was alive. If the husband died, the wife was released from that regulation regarding her husband. Before he died, she was under the authority of the law so that she would be adjudged to be an adulteress by that law if she was married to another man while her husband was still alive. The last part of verse 3 restates the truth that if the husband dies, the wife comes out from under the dominion of the law and will not be adjudged as an adulteress even if she has married another man. Because of the death of her husband, what before was a heinous sin (being joined to another man) is now seen as a blessing and virtue for her.

I believe the reason that the death of a husband affects the wife in this way is that she and he were one in marriage. What happened to him affected her; and what happened to her affected him. (The same argument can be made for the husband whose wife has not died, at least under a righteous and symmetric system of law where the husband is obligated by law the same way the wife is). In effect, the death of the husband is as close as the woman can get to personally experiencing death as well—since part of her actually died.

The death of a man (her husband) changes the woman’s obligations, and she does not have to physically die in order for that to happen. In both the illustration and the Christian truth, someone’s death affects another person’s obligations to the law. In the illustration, the death of the husband affected the wife’s position under the law. In the Christian truth, the death of Christ affects our position under the law. (It also affects our nature and removes “the flesh” from its ruling power…).

7:4-6 is the application of the illustration, where physical death of the husband is paralleled by the death of Christ, and the woman represents us as individuals who were under the sway of the law but who are freed from it. When Christ died for us, we being identified with that death (see chapter 6), we died with him in ‘spiritual’ terms.

Were we married to the law? Matham, yes, me no. I believe his view comes from the phrase “married to another” and the assumption that if we are married to another, we must have been married first to the previous thing mentioned, which is the law. In fact, the law was authority over us, not married to us, but we were married to sin and the sinful passions aroused by the law, and now we are married to Christ. This is because the end of ch 6 says we were set free from sin. Yes, we were under the law, but not married to it. We are one with Christ, as opposed to one with sin. Law has authority and established an authority relationship whereby the husband had a control of the wife. Law also established or confirmed a sin-domination over us as individuals.

Verse 4 – We died through the body of Christ – that means that we died with Christ when he died for our sins. Thus we can be under a new rule of life (not the law). Now that he is resurrected, he is a candidate for our being “married” to him—wherein we can have a spiritual relationship with Christ.

Verse 5 – With v. 4 ending on a note about bearing fruit to God, there is a question—why could not we bear fruit to God *before* our death to the law? It is simply because when we were in the flesh (another problem that our death with Christ took care of), the law aroused sinful passions in us. When the law said “do not covet” it not only stated the prohibition, but it interacted with our sinful nature and in a backwards way was such that we felt spurred on to do the very thing that was prohibited. That is no fault of the law *per se*, but it is what was happening before we came to Christ. This resulted in bearing fruit to death instead of bearing fruit to God. I take from this that it is impossible in the flesh,

Verse 6 teaches us that in Christ, we have been delivered from the law. Thus the sinful passions aroused by the law are not at work in our members bearing fruit to death. This happened because we died—just as if we had died physically and were no longer in its domain, our death to it through Christ is just as good as that and removes us from the domain of the law. The purpose of this death is that we might serve (live) in a new way in the Spirit; that we would not serve in the old way of the letter of the law. The Spirit gives life; the letter brings death (2 Cor. 3:5-6). MAP

**Text**: Romans 8:5-14

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: Two Ways of Life

**Date/Location**: Wednesday November 7, 2012 at FBC

Theology of “Spiritual Demographics”

Note that there are **two** and **only two** categories of people described in this text. Note that the word flesh and carnal are the same Greek words. So we are not talking about three kinds of people: spiritual, fleshly, and carnal. Rather, the last two categories are the same thing.

The Two Categories Introduced

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **The Unsaved Person** |  | **The Saved Person** |
| 8:4 | Walk according to the flesh | vs. | Walk according to the Spirit. The righteous requirement of the law is accomplished/fully met in these people. |
| 8:5 | Live according to the flesh (what you do) | vs. | Live according to the Spirit |
|  | Mind set on the flesh (what you are) | vs. | mind set on the Spirit (Prov. 23:7 – thinking/heart) |
| 8:6 | Death | vs. | Life and peace |
| 8:7 | Enmity (Romans 5:1, 10)  Is not subject to the law of God  Does not because cannot submit to God’s law. |  |  |
| 8:8 | Cannot please God. |  |  |
|  |  |  | You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit lives in you. |
| 8:9 | The Spirit of God does not dwell in these people |  | The Spirit lives in these people. |

Note: the Spirit’s presence is the litmus test as to whether one is saved and “belongs to Christ.” How do you tell? You cannot do an MRI to find out. You have to work backwards from the evidence (like Gal. 5:22-23). That is the best we can do. The way that a person lives and thinks gives evidence of the Spirit that lives in them. He is the one who gives life.

I had a marginal note that your body is dead, contrasted to your spirit is alive because of righteousness imputed, NOT imparted!

8:10 – So…if Christ is in you (the Spirit of Christ, and of God, v. 11) then:

1. On the one hand your body still suffers the effects of sin (like everyone)

2. On the other hand, you have the Spirit and His life inside you.

And 8:11 adds

3. God will us the Spirit to resurrect your body (like 1 Peter 3:10). In other words, even your body will have life, just like your spirit already does! The Spirit is the earnest / down payment that guarantees this, 2 Cor. 5:5.

8:12

With the change in us that has happened:

4. We are not under obligation to the flesh, to life fleshly

But we understand

5. we ARE under obligation to the Spirit

8:13-14

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **The Unsaved Person** |  | **The Saved Person** |
| 8:13 | If you live according to the flesh, you will die. | vs. | But if you kill the deeds of the body (by the Spirit, of course) then you will live. |
| 8:14 |  |  | Those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. |

Theology of Sanctification

How does sanctification work? Hard work! It is not passive, it is not based on a crisis or series of crises, it is not something that causes you to arrive to perfection. The Spirit gives you power to do this, through obeying the commands of the Bible. One command is here: kill sin!

Conclusion

This message was very well received by those attending prayer meeting.

**Text**: Romans 12:9-13

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: A Christian Health Screening

**Date/Location**: Sunday evening November 11, 2012 at FBC, Lord’s Table Service

I. Introduction

There is a list of 11 virtues here.

Any shortfall in these virtues is a demonstration of less than Christian virtues.

A genuine exercise of these virtues is cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving to God who enabled you to do that.

II. The Screening Points

1. Un-hypocritical Love

“Let love be without hypocrisy”. Genuine, sincere love without pretense is what we are talking about, unlike the example of Proverbs 23:7. Also, you may profess to love someone but if you permit them to continue in evil or not have other Christian virtues, that is no real love.

2. Abhor Evil

To hate it strongly; have a vehement dislike for something.

The thing is evil – anything base, worthless, degenerate, wicked.

3. Cling to Good

To be bound together with things that are good, to cleave to. This word is the root from which “be joined to his wife” is in Gen. 2:24. To be “one” with good, but not in some mystical way. It means you are characterized by that and hold on to it, in opposition to the

4. Kindly Affectionate and Brotherly Love

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love.”

Two words that are from Philadelphia and philostorgos, which mean to have brother-love and to love dearly. A devoted kind of brotherly love, dedicated to one another. I’m afraid we don’t have a lot of this today because we meet briefly and then go our way. You have to spend time together to have this kind of love. Yes, hurts can come from it, but it is also very beneficial.

5. Preferential Honor to Others

“In honor giving preference to one another.”

Admittedly a difficult use of the term “to be in a position of leadership.” The idea is to consider or reckon others above yourselves. It puts others ahead of yourself.

6. Energetic Service to the Lord

“not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”

Lagging = hesitation, laziness, shrinking back from

Diligence = eagerness, earnest commitment, willingness. This happens whenever it comes to cleanup time at our house with the boys. It can just as easily attack us as adults.

Fervent = hot (not cold), stirred up, enthusiastic

Serving = serving!

7. Rejoicing in Hope

Hope = expectation – Christ; glory with Him; living with God; etc.

Rejoicing = be glad, happy. If you are a believer, you should not be persistently glum and ho-hum. Rejoicing! Because of what we look forward to; not that our present circumstances are necessarily so great, although often they are not bad and we shouldn’t be found to complain.

8. Patient in Tribulation

Tribulation = trials of all sorts; pressure.

To be patient = maintain belief or course of action in the face of opposition, to stand your ground, endure, hold out, to be steadfast under affliction, to put up with. Not to become so frazzled that you act out or lose your cool or whatever. We again go back to the example of Christ.

9. Continuing in Prayer

The verb means to be persistent; busily engaged in prayer; devoted to it. Prayer is prayer.

10. Giving to the needs of the Saints

The one who lacks should be supplied, and the one who has more than needed can do the supplying.

Giving to the needs refers to sharing in. Making a contribution. Money. Stuff. Time. Certainly it is an obligation for us to help our family that is in need.

These are NEEDS we are talking about. What is the Bible’s definition of needs? 1 Timothy 6:8 is a start; Matthew 6:31.

11. Pursuing Hospitality

What is it: Here we have the Christian virtue of sharing your home with relative strangers. It has been our blessing to do that many times as a pastor. Some are well known to us, others we have never met face to face before they knock on our door and come in to stay a couple of days with us. Of course we are not foolish about it (due diligence), but we do not put people up in hotels when they come to FBC.

How we should do it: the verb to be “given to” means more than just to “do” hospitality; it means more than just to “practice” it. It means to pursue it, to run after it, to strive, to seek, to aspire to it. This is far more than sort of capitulating to the demand; it is you going out actively to seek doing it. “Pastor, can I house the next missionary that comes to the church?” Now, we might get into a fight over the missionary, but that would be far better than having to pull teeth to get someone in the church to show hospitality!

III. Conclusion

Without help, this list is a tall order. But Jesus came to save us from this perverse generation and sanctify for himself a special people that are eager to do what is good, who have the ability to do good, and who DO what is good.

**Text**: Romans 9-11

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: What About Israel and the Gospel?

**Date/Location**: Wednesday evening November 28, 2012 at FBC

Introduction

My goal with this message is to answer the question "Why are Romans 9-11 here and what do they contribute to the message of the book?"

I. Why Is Romans 9-11 So Difficult?

People tend to skip over these three chapters. Why?

1. Because of how difficult it is to piece them into the big picture.

2. Because they offer very hard theology

9:11, God's election is supposedly unfair

9:15, God's sovereignty is supposedly unfair

3. Because they seem like a big parenthesis with little or nothing to do with what came before.

Then chapter 12 picks up with the "real important stuff” like giving ourselves as a living sacrifice.

4. Because of theological presuppositions that do not allow for the national restoration of Israel in terms of spiritual and material blessings.

Some covenant theologians will say that much of the subject matter, the Jews, if taken literally, doesn't make sense in this age of the church; Israel has been replaced, hasn't it?

11:25-26 talks about all Israel being saved. That supposedly cannot mean a nation-wide salvation because Israel is finished.

5. Dislike for dispensational theology. Some proponents have espoused crazy ideas, and besides, it cuts up the Bible and overemphasizes discontinuity in God’s program as over against the clear continuities.

II. My Responses to the above Difficulties

1. Difficult to piece together? Work harder.

2. Hard theology? Accept it as written.

3. Parenthesis? All of God’s word is inspired, important and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. These chapters too.

4. Theological presuppositions? Re-evaluate them in light of the clear meaning of the text. The Jews are far from outmoded. Consider:

In the first three chapters, several references are made to the Jewish people; much of chapter 4 deals with Abraham and David, two very prominent Jewish men. And each of chapters 9-11 opens with a reference to the Jews. Evidently the Jewish people are not finished, and it is very necessary to consider their place.

NKJ Romans 1:16  For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

NKJ Romans 2:9  tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

NKJ Romans 2:10  but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

NKJ Romans 2:17  Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

NKJ Romans 2:28  For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

NKJ Romans 2:29  but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

NKJ Romans 3:1-3  What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? **Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?**

NKJ Romans 3:9  What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

NKJ Romans 3:29  Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

NKJ Romans 4:1  What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

NKJ Romans 4:2  For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

NKJ Romans 4:3  For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

NKJ Romans 4:9  Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

NKJ Romans 4:12  and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

NKJ Romans 4:13  For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

NKJ Romans 4:16  Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

5. Dislike for dispensationalism?

Some proponents of dispensationalism have said strange things about the law and salvation and a radically separated two peoples of God. But that doesn’t destroy the entire system of theology. There are better proponents that sincerely attempt to recognize both continuity and discontinuity in God’s plan.

We recognize the possibility of seeing too much discontinuity. Hyper dispensationalists and some earlier traditional dispensationalists bifurcated God's people to such an extent that they had nothing to do with one another, despite texts to the contrary.

We also recognize the possibility of seeing too much continuity. Covenant theologians suggest that Israel is replaced by the church and there is just one plan of God, despite texts to the contrary. This view goes so far left that it begins to circle back and look like a discontinuous view of things because they take God's people Israel and bifurcate them off the map entirely and leave just the church.

There seems to be some discontinuity in Romans, in that this systematic treatise of the gospel sets aside the Jews in chapters 5-8 and causes the reader to wonder if there is any continuity in God's plan for the Jews with His present work in the world. Many theologians and Christians lean naturally in the direction that Israel is irrelevant now, so Paul's omission of Jewish themes in 5-8 fits with their theological presupposition and distaste for dispensationalism.

But then 9-11 comes into view and we know that as faithful Bible believers, we have to deal with it. How do we do so?

III. Connections from Romans 9 to Previous Chapters

1. Paul’s Wish for Israel’s Salvation Must be Fulfilled Another Way

The promises of preservation at the end of chapter 8 are so strong that Paul, though he would wish to be, cannot be separated from Christ in order to save his Jewish brethren. That salvation will have to come through another means. Paul explains how in the chapters 9-11, for example, in 10:9-17.

2. Despite a Promising Start, Is Israel “Done”?

The historical nation of Israel was the source of the word of God and of salvation, humanly speaking (3:1-2, 9:4-5). Obviously God was the ultimate source, but God used the Jewish nation to bring these benefits to people on the earth. But now the program of salvation and the church appears to have “passed by” the nation, so that Israel is way behind the times. Are they surpassed in such a way that they are in total eclipse, never to come out into the light again?

Even worse than that, God has actually rejected them according to His sovereign mercy/hardening. Is this situation irreversible for the nation as time goes forward?

Paul's answer is 'no.' He himself has a great desire for the Jews to be saved (9:1-2, 10:1). He himself is a Jew who is saved (11:1-2). There is even now a remnant according to grace, those who are not hardened to the gospel of Jesus Christ (11:5). And further, the entire nation will be saved (11:25-26). But right now, the nation as a whole is stuck in the past, dead in sin, controlled by a law code that could never save. That law was weak in that it could only work with the inherent inability of the people over whom it ruled because of inherited sin.

3. Assurance of God’s Promise of Eternal Life

A. The end ch 8 affirms that nothing can separate "us" from the love of God. So to open chapter 9, what about Israel? Are they separated from the love of Christ?

B. And more to the point for us--God promises us at the end of Romans 8 that we will never be separated from the love of Christ. But there is a big problem looming in our minds: what about Israel? Did God keep his promises to Israel? If he didn't, then there is no reason we can be assured of our promised salvation either.

C. The key is that God’s word has not failed (3:3, 9:6) and chapters 9-11 explain why and how that is the case even though Israel has stumbled badly along the way.

See Wallace, <http://danielbwallace.com/2012/11/24/romans-9-1-and-asyndeton/>  
  
As I was reading Romans 9 recently I noticed that the chapter begins asyndetically—that is, without a conjunction or other marker to connect it with the preceding. This is fairly rare in Greek and, apart from its use in staccato-like commands and aphorisms, almost always means one of two things: either a total disconnect from the preceding or a connection so strong that it would be superfluous to add the conjunction.  
...  
Significantly, Paul’s use of asyndeton for rhetorical purposes often requires the readers to think through his argument and make the connection for themselves.   
...  
A similar thing is going on in Rom 9.1. Paul has just finished his hymn of assurance (8.35–39), letting genuine believers know that their salvation is secure because God always keeps his word. But a nagging question would have stuck in the craw of these readers: “How can we be certain that God will keep his word to us that nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ if he didn’t keep his word to Israel?” The asyndeton that starts off the next section thus has a powerful rhetorical, though subtle, effect. Keeping this assurance to each individual believer is crucial if one is to grasp the full import of Rom 9.  
…  
Paul’s argument in Rom 9–11 is governed by his statement in 9.6: “it is not as though the word of God has failed.” The next three chapters demonstrate this thesis.

D. This ends up being a powerful argument for the dispensational viewpoint of the future for the nation of Israel and the continuity of God's promises in the midst of the discontinuity of God's progressive program.

Theologically, if God fails Israel, then our own individual salvation would be in serious question.

If God keeps His promise to Israel, despite massive sin and unfaithfulness on their part, then we would expect that He will keep His promises to us as well. These include promises of forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation, release from bondage to sin and the enslaving practice of sin, eternal hope and joy, never being separated from Christ, etc.

E. This is analogous to the point I have made before that we as Christians are sitting on the branch of the tree labeled as the 7th promise of the Abrahamic covenant. If we cut off the Abrahamic covenant, we are cutting off the branch we ourselves are sitting on. We are blessed because of Abraham; we cannot just dispense with the very promises that bless us, or say that those promises "gave everything they had and extincted themselves in becoming all and only blessings to the world." So likewise, if we suppose that God is done with Israel, and has decided to abrogate His promises to the nation, there is absolutely no reason that we should think we are secure in our salvation either.

F. SIDE NOTE: Wallace mentions something about the connection between individual and corporate election. Both are used seemingly interchangeably at times in 9-11, where election of a person flows down to the corporate body of people that came out of that person (Isaac, Jacob...) Moses and Pharaoh are mentioned as well. A corporate body is made up of individual people. Wallace’s later statement -- that there must be individuals in view for the section to give any comfort to those questioners of the Rom 8 promises—is hollow because all the questioner would need is assurance that God doesn’t break His promises, no matter if the promises were given to corporate bodies of people or individuals.

IV. Lessons I take from Rom 9-11

God does not leave behind his people or forget his promises. Even those that seem impossible to fulfill He will fulfill.

**Text**: Romans 1:16

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans

**Truth**: To the Jew First?

**Date/Location**: Saturday morning December 1, 2012 at FBC

Introduction

The idea of this study is to understand what God means when He says through Paul, “to the Jew first” in Romans 1:16.

We should note that the first three verses in Romans that use the word Jew, use this same phrase:

NKJ Romans 1:16  For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, **for the** **Jew first and also for the Greek**.

NKJ Romans 2:9  tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, **of the** **Jew first and also of the Greek**;

NKJ Romans 2:10  but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, **to the Jew first and also to the Greek**.

From the get-go, a hypothesis to start with would be to assume that whatever the sense of the phrase “for the Jew first” is in one of these passages, it is likely they all have the same sense.

I. Think About the Context

Contextually we have to understand that Paul is eager to preach the gospel to those at Rome (v. 15) BECAUSE He is not ashamed of it (v. 16a).

Why he is not ashamed of it is BECAUSE it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes (v. 16b). It always is and will be that kind of power.

This phrase is important as it connects to chapters 9-11..

II. What Possibilities Have been Suggested?

A. Historically, with a note of finality for the Jews, that is, that God offered to the Jews first, and now has moved on to the Gentiles and left the Jews behind. The Jews are out. They had the first cut at it, now they have no more cut at it.

But notice that the text says “also” for the Greek, not “then” for the Greek, and certainly it doesn’t have a statement as to the end of the first group before the second group comes on the scene. The clause “Jew first, and also to the Greek” is controlled by the timing of the previous clause—“it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” That is a present-day statement that includes everyone. The Jew/Greek statement divides “everyone” into two groups, everyone that can believe and have the power of God unto salvation provided for them.

B. Historically – the Jews had the first opportunity at the gospel. This is fairly obvious and it is the easiest interpretation to take for this verse. Consider John 1:11-12, Acts 1:8, 3:26 (latter is a key passage since it uses the word ‘first’).

This interpretation seems to fit with 2:9-10 where the Jews will face God’s judgment (for blessing or condemnation) first as well in a historical sense (for instance, the wilderness of the peoples judgment first before the sheep and goat nations of the Gentiles).

Moo has an interesting comment on this subject in his commentary on Romans (p. 68-69): “Some scholars…have sought to remove any sense of priority from the phrase, but without success. Paul clearly accords some kind of priority to the Jew. Some suggest that no more is involved than the historical circumstance of the apostolic preaching, which, according to Acts began with the Jews and moved to the Gentiles. But Paul must intend more than simple historical fact in light of the theological context here. If we ask what precedence Paul accords Israel elsewhere in Romans, we find that his emphasis is on the special applicability of the promise of God to the people whom he chose (3:2; 9-110. However much the church may seem to be dominated by Gentiles, Paul insists that the promises of God realized in the gospel are ‘first of all’ for the Jew. To Israel the promises were first given, and to the Jews they still particularly apply. Without in any way subtracting from the equal access that all people now have to the gospel, then, Paul insists that the gospel, ‘promised beforehand…in the holy Scriptures’ (1:2) has a special relevance to the Jew.”

Is Moo trying to ride the fence here?

What I think he is pointing out is that the historical flow comes out of something more important than just the “happenstance of history.” Not that history just happens by chance, because God is providentially controlling all events of history. But we cannot say simply that “to the Jew first” is ONLY an issue of historical order. It is an issue of divine order. The Jews were the people that God chose, the people to whom God gave His revelation and many other blessings (3:1-2, 9:4-5).

As Gentiles, we have to face up to the fact that it was the nation of Israel that was chosen to bring to the world these things. God sovereignly decided to use the nation this way and we cannot appeal to some flat model of pure equality of all people to say that God cannot do that. What are we to say that God cannot do so?

The issue is not one of the gospel coming from me to a Jew first, and then to Gentiles. The issue is one of the gospel coming from GOD first, through the Jewish nation second, to the world third. Its provenance (origin) and flow are always that way, outward from God, through the nation of the Jews, to all people. As a result of this, the historical “happenstance” was that they had first access to it.

C. Priority today – the Jews should get our first efforts at evangelism, what some call the “Messianic” interpretation. It is not a historical statement but rather becomes a command to share the gospel with the Jew first, before anyone else. Thus the Jews are prioritized today first ahead of the Gentiles. Someone has said something like this before, “If the Jew is not first, he will not be at all.”

The problem is that there is no imperative here. Is it an example? It doesn’t even seem that Paul is asking us to emulate his going to the Synagogue first. What if we live in an area with no synagogue? Or the synagogue has become so closed to gospel preaching that there is none left for us?

So it is not the case that Jews have to be evangelized ahead of the Gentiles in every context. Paul went to the Gentiles…so his main focus was not on Jews, even though he frequently went to be with Jews since that is who he was.

This interpretation does not agree well with the other two statements of Jew first. Do they also have the same kind of priority when it comes to judgment against sin (2:9, 10?)

D. Statement of relative need – that the Jews need salvation more than the Gentiles? Theologically this is not true, for all have sinned and all are equally guilty before God (Rom 3:9, 19). But it does say that the Jews did and do need salvation, because the Savior was presented through them and to them first.

E. Statement of relative value – that the Jews receive the first and best part of salvation? Again, this does not agree with the whole tenor of Scripture.

The Jews are not an afterthought in God’s program. They have a prominent place in God’s mind, if I can say it that way.

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**Text**: Romans 16:17-20

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans: Note and Avoid

**Truth**: Christians must watch out for false teachers and steer clear of them.

**Date/Location**: Wednesday December 12, 2012 at FBC

Introduction

The passage teaches us a number of things very clearly. The question to my mind is this: after we read it, are we going to obey it?

I. First Gleanings

Divisions and differences from apostolic / Biblical doctrine must be **noted** by every believer. This means being on guard, on the alert.

The divisions are factious opposition, like a man with a following who teaches something contrary to Biblical doctrine. The offenses are stumbling blocks in the sense that they cause people’s spiritual walk to be hindered.

The people that bring those different doctrines are to be **avoided**. Not only should spurious teachings be recognized when you hear them because you know the right teaching, but they should be avoided. Turn off the TV, radio, blog, mp3 file!!! Get out of there! Why? Because what you hear affects your thinking. It is not enough to note. You must also avoid. People who are false teachers love to “dialogue” and go back and forth.

The reason for noting and avoiding is given in verse 18: FOR they **serve** their own belly and they **deceive** the simpleminded. That is the reason to stay away from them. That is not the kind of influence you want. Do you want to be taught to serve yourself? Do you want to be deceived?

The text indicates that such false teachers are not true disciples of Christ. But they may still *claim* to be followers of Christ. By avoiding them you are not making some kind of hyper-critical judgment about their salvation status. Rather, you are making a discerning judgment about their teaching, and getting away from them in order to get away from their teaching and the negative effects of that teaching.

False teachers use smooth words and flattering speech and deceive the hearts of the simple, that is, those who are unwise in good doctrine. What they say sounds good, but it is not good. It has enough truth mixed in to deceive those who know some truth, and for those who do not, it doesn’t matter. You can tell them anything and they will believe it (evolution, abortion, financial stability by borrowing your way out of debt, pyramid schemes, etc.)

Noted that verse 19 says, “**for** your obedience has become known to all.” This is a good thing, but sort of an ominous statement because it is an explanation as to why they might be under the attack of false teachers. It is all the more necessary to be on guard when you have a good track record of being a faithful church.

Think of Job 1:8, where God asks Satan if he has considered His servant Job…oh no!...Job’s obedience was known to all, so he came under attack from the evil one. Well-known church = target.

Well-known church = target because if a false teacher can get a foothold there, he can do a lot of damage, or increase his reputation, he can get quite a notch in his belt, etc.

I can’t help but thinking that if your obedience has become known to all, your fall will also become known to all!

Be obedient, but not naïve.

Paul wants us to be wise in what is good—I take this to mean all kinds of good, good teaching included, good behavior, etc.

Simple means pure and innocent. Concerning evil Paul does not want them to be sophisticated in evildoing. As smart as you are on the good side, be just that dumb and even dumber when it comes to doing or knowing about evil.

The connection is that your purity and innocence can be sullied by the influence of false teachers in your life.

God will crush Satan. He is the active agent in the destruction of the evil one; he is pleased to use human agency to resist Satan and to work against the adversary who wants to ruin us.

This does not mean that we crush him ourselves, as is the mantra in some charismatic circles.

This statement seems to come out of nowhere, unless it is that Satan is the ultimate source of the evil that is trying to weasel its way into the church. The crushing is either soon or swiftly. It doesn’t appear to be a near point in time, as many translations put it, but when it happens, it will happen with speed.

This is an allusion to Genesis 3:15. Ultimately Satan will be cast alive into the lake of fire = hell, Revelation 20:10.

II. Examples

1. Rob Bell believes and teaches that the traditional teaching on Hell is “misguided and toxic.” He believes there are other ways of salvation than the Christian gospel of Jesus Christ, and that all people will be eventually saved.

2. Joel Osteen teaches a kind of prosperity gospel; he believes that Mormons are Christians.

For below, reference http://baylyblog.com/blog/2012/12/scandalous-god

3. Rachel Evans doesn't like what the Bible says about womanhood.

4. N. T. Wright doesn't like what the Bible says about women teaching men (MAP: nor what it says about justification by faith alone).

5. Peter Enns doesn't like what the Bible says about inspiration.

6. Tim Keller doesn't like what the Bible says about creation.

7. Andrew Marin doesn't like what the Bible says about homosexuality.

8. Clark Pinnock doesn't like what the Bible says about the exclusivity of salvation through Christ (MAP: nor what it says about God’s foreknowledge of all things).

9. Ben Witherington doesn't like what the Bible says about eternal punishment in Hell.

All these directly teach the opposite of what the Bible says.

The real problem, according to David Bayly, is that they do not like the sovereignty of God over all things. They don’t want to worship the God that is described in the Bible.

So I ask, should we just pass off their teachings as mild variations of the truth that can be overlooked and are not of concern to us?

Paul tells us to *note* these people who are teaching contrary doctrines, and avoid them. *Note* means to pay careful attention to and “look out.” *Avoid* means to keep away from and steer clear of. The unbeliever has turned away from God (Romans 3:12); the word is used of avoiding a prickly shrubs!

These false teaches are doing just exactly what Paul has said—serving themselves and deceiving the simpleminded.

III. Some Harder Questions

A. What to do with believers who are teaching false doctrine?

1. Rebuke them

2. Teach them

3. If they do not listen and evidence real listening by mending their ways, this text requires us to separate from them. It is the case that the teachers mentioned here are portrayed as false, unbelieving teachers. But it doesn’t explicitly limit it to them—it says that we are to note and avoid anyone who teaches contrary to apostolic doctrine.

B. Not-so final greetings at the end of v. 20. This sounds like the end of the letter. But Paul did not have a word processor email, where he could move the cursor up and insert a new paragraph in its “proper place.” Perhaps after he finished writing, he came back later and realized he wanted to add some more text. I do not believe this is inconsistent with our doctrine of inspiration. The Biblical documents were real products of both the divine and the human author, and God used normal writing means to get it written down on paper.

C. As for the placement of the warning in the middle of final greetings, it could also be accounted for by sheer urgency. Paul realized that it had to be said, and he stopped what he was writing to write it. There is also nothing wrong with that.

Conclusion

Have your antennas up, and be prepared to walk away from or turn off false teaching. It is dangerous.

MAP

**Text**: Romans 15:22-33

**Title:** Key Texts from Romans: Plans don’t always work out.

**Truth**: Submit your planning to the Lord, and wait on Him to bring it to pass.

**Date/Location**: Wednesday December 26, 2012 at FBC

Plans Set but Not Fulfilled

2 Corinthians 1:15-24 – Paul’s intention to visit was not fulfilled. It was not because of loose, fickle, or irresponsible planning on his part. Believers aren’t supposed to do that kind of carnal thing but rather are people of integrity because of the way their Lord is. However, he made a change in plans in order to avoid bringing more sorrow and upheaval in the church. There was a good reason, not an irresponsible reason, for his change of plans.

Romans 15:22ff – Paul had hoped to come to Rome for many years, but did not make it because of the work that God called him to do throughout other parts of the Mediterranean region. Now opportunity seemed to be opening for him to journey there, and then beyond to Spain.

Romans 15:25 – Paul planned to go to Jerusalem and present a large offering for the relief of the poor there. This offering was a good and appropriate thing for the Gentiles to offer to the Jewish believers there. Then he would go on to Spain through Rome. However, as we know from Acts 21-28, things did not work out as Paul had hoped. His prayer request to be delivered from those in Judea was not answered affirmatively, and this ‘wrecked’ his subsequent plans.

Worse Yet: Plans Set Apart from God

James 4:13-17. Always planned with “if the Lord wills” built into the planning. You should say often (always is not necessary) it too in order to reinforce the notion to you and those with whom you are making plans.

Application: You May Have Plans Too…

But an illness or tragedy might intervene. Rather, God may intervene with one or more of those events in your life and redirect your plans.

As we set plans in place for our lives, and for our church, we need to Seek God’s face when you make and adjust plans. Remember God is in charge and not us. This time of year is often used for planning. For FBC, we plan things like

1. Budget

2. General ministries like preaching, K4T, etc.

3. Special meetings as for holidays, missionary visits.

4. Special outreaches, mailings.

5. Howell ministry/church plant.

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