



R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20

breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LESSON 10

I thought a lot about Romans 8:28 this week. It's the verse we all probably run to when things happen in our lives that we fear, don't understand, or don't like. Seems like so many people are experiencing really difficult circumstances. Paul exhorts us to trust God, hold on to hope, and fix our eyes on the future glory we share with Christ. There's a song on the radio right now that I love called, "Yes I Will" by Vertical Worship. The song reminds us of the same truth found in Romans 8. Some of the lyrics are:

"I count on one thing, the same God that never fails, will not fail me now. You won't fail me now. In the waiting, the same God who's never late, is working all things out. You're working all things out. Yes I will, lift You high, in the lowest valley, Yes I will, bless Your name. Oh yes I will, sing for joy when my heart is heavy, all my days, oh yes I will."

"In the waiting, the same God who never fails, You won't fail me now. In the waiting, the same God who's never late, is working all things out, is working all things out. And I choose to praise You, to glorify, glorify, the Name above all Names, that nothing can stand against."

I pray that you and I choose to praise Him, no matter what we are facing. The dreaded phone call, the broken relationship, the pain of betrayal ... may we still choose to praise Him in our lowest valleys.

Today we're jumping into chapter 9, which most commentators believe should be studied together with 10 and 11. The first 8 chapters in Romans are about how we are made righteous, and how God works in and for His righteous people. The last six chapters, 12-17, talk about how righteous people should live. Also, the first 8 chapters discuss the salvation of individuals, Jews or Gentiles. In chapters 9-11, Paul writes about them as entities rather than individuals. It almost seems like Paul went on a three-chapter rabbit trail. But ... we know that's not how the Holy Spirit works. (The main theme of chapters 9-11 is God's faithfulness to Israel in light of the Jews' rejection of the Gospel.) Swindoll outlines the three chapters this way: "Romans 9: God's sovereignty, Romans 10: God's justice, Romans 11: God's faithfulness." Wiersbe puts the emphasis on Israel's past election in chapter 9, Israel's present rejection in chapter 10, and on Israel's future restoration in chapter 11.

1. Read Romans 9:1-33. List any key words, phrases, or thoughts. What would you say is the main theme of the chapter? Also list any words you don't know the meaning of, or questions you may have.
2. Four questions are voiced in this chapter. Can you rephrase each question in your own words?
 - A. Verse 6: (was written as a statement)
 - B. Verse 14:
 - C. Verse 19
 - D. Verse 30:
3. How does Paul answer each question?

A. Question 1:

B. Question 2:

C. Question 3:

D. Question 4:

4. Read Romans 9:1-5. What do you learn about Paul in these verses? What was he willing to give up? What phrases describe his emotions?

It's so interesting to watch Paul's emotions change from chapter to chapter. In chapter 8, he rejoiced when he looked at Christ, but then when he looked at the lost people of Israel in chapter 9, he wept.

5. Some don't think Paul had a lot of emotions, but I beg to differ. We've seen his emotions throughout the book. Read the verses and list the emotions we see in him.
- A. 1:8
 - B. 2:17-24
 - C. 3:8
 - D. 6:1-2
 - E. 7:18-19, 24
 - F. 7:25
6. Does knowing Paul was an "emotional guy" encourage you at all? Why?

I know that may seem like a weird question, but often Paul is portrayed as this bold, unfeeling, straightforward guy, almost like Superman. When I see his emotions, I can relate to him more easily as a human being and understand that he could do the things he did because of the power of the Holy Spirit. And that encourages me! See you tomorrow!

Memory Verse of the Week: "Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Romans 9:18

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 9 again, focusing on verses 1-5. What were some of Israel's advantages or privileges?
2. Timothy Keller calls verses 1-5 the "tragedy of the religious unbeliever." What do you think he means?
3. Paul is grieved because his fellow Jews don't know Jesus. Nothing mattered more to him than their salvation. How passionate are you about those around you who don't know Jesus? Is their salvation a priority to you?
4. What does Paul say about Christ in verse 5?

To Paul, it must have seemed unthinkable that after having all these benefits of being God's chosen people, they would reject Jesus as the Messiah. It should have been a natural transition for them to embrace Him, so he was grieved when they didn't.

5. Read Romans 9:6-13. In verse 6, Paul is making the point that the Word of God hadn't failed, although most of Israel had not believed in Jesus. God never fails. When people ask why there aren't more Christians, how is this argument the same? Is it God or His Word that's failing?

Not all who "have" the privileges of the people of God really belong to the people of God. That's what Paul meant by "they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Just because they boasted of racial descent from Abraham didn't make them one of His.

God did not base His election on the physical. Abraham had two kids, Ishmael by Hagar and Isaac by Sarah. Because Ishmael was his firstborn, he should have been chosen as the heir, (his natural seed), but God's choice was Isaac (his spiritual seed). Isaac represented God's predetermined plan to bless the Jews and call them to Himself.

6. In verses 10-13, can you explain how the principle was the same between Jacob and Esau? What was different?
7. How do both these examples show us that God's choice is not based on our doing of right or wrong?
8. God chose to elect Jacob to direct salvation history through Jacob's line, not Esau's. What does verse 11 say about this?
9. What does verse 13 say? How would you explain this? Why do some think this is "unfair"?
10. Some think that God is unrighteous because He chooses one and not the other. What did Paul think about that in verse 14?
11. In verse 15, who does Paul use as another example of God's sovereignty? (Sovereignty is the Biblical teaching that God is the source of all creation and that all things come from Him and depend on Him. It means that God is in all and over all.) Read Exodus 33:19 for more details on the reference Paul is using.

Romans 9:13 is a reference to Malachi 1:2-3 and refers to the nations of Israel and Edom, and not individual sinners. John 3:16 makes it clear that God loves all. "The statement here has to do with national election, not individual. Since God's election of Israel does not depend on human merit, their disobedience cannot nullify the elective purposes of God. God is faithful even though His people are unfaithful." (Warren Weirsbe)

12. Do you believe that God is in all and over all? How do we reconcile that with man's responsibility? (Just have a good conversation ... not a fight!)

We'll pick this up tomorrow. For now, can you spend time thanking God for choosing you, loving you, and justifying you?

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 9:1-33, focusing on verses 13-18. Who does Paul use as an illustration in verse 17? Read Exodus 9:16 as well. Can you explain what you think Paul is saying here?

This section is hard to wrap our heads around. I'm going to take the time to quote Weirsbé and a few others about this. Please take the time to read it so you can discuss it with your group. "God is holy and must punish sin; but God is loving and desires to save sinners. If everybody is saved, it would deny His holiness; but if everybody is lost, it would deny His love. The solution to the problem is God's sovereign election. God chose Israel and condemned Egypt, because this was His sovereign purpose. Nobody can condemn God for the way He extends His mercy, because God is righteous. Before leaving this section, we need to discuss the 'hardening' of Pharaoh (Romans 9:18). This hardening process is referred to at least fifteen times in Exodus 7-14. Sometimes we are told that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Ex. 8:15, 19, 32), and other times that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27). By declaring His Word and revealing His power, God gave Pharaoh opportunity to repent; but instead, Pharaoh resisted God and hardened his heart. The fault lay not with God but Pharaoh. The same sunlight that melts the ice also hardens the clay. God was not unrighteous in His dealings with Pharaoh because He gave him many opportunities to repent and believe."

Leon Morris adds, "Notice first that neither here nor anywhere else is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself. God's hardening follows on what Pharaoh himself did. His hardening always presupposes sin and is always part of the punishment of sin. God could kill the sinner immediately when he sinned, but he usually does not. But he shuts him up to the effect of his sin, so that the person who hardens himself is condemned to live as a hardened person. God does not harden people who do not go astray first (James 1:13)."

2. Write your thoughts on the paragraphs above. Answer questions or stir up more?

3. So ... does predestination let us off the hook as far as our own personal accountability for our sins and the consequences of our unbelief? How does Paul answer that question? Read verses 19-21.

4. Paul isn't condemning the asking of questions, but he's talking about the spirit of rebellion behind those questions. God is sovereign and has the right to do whatever He wishes. Can you explain the imagery of the potter and the clay?

Paul is trying to stress the point that God has the prerogative to do as He wishes with His creation. Ok, so just one more great explanation by Keller.... I know, I know, just go with it! He said, "Salvation is about His mercy and gift, not our work and our right. As an example, consider a rich person who decides to choose twenty inner-city kids and guarantee their full college tuition. There are literally thousands of equally worthy recipients. And this rich woman could help a lot more than twenty children. But can anyone say that since she has helped some, she is being unfair to anyone else? No. She has no particular obligation to help any of the children. Since all she has given is sheer mercy, there can be no talk about being 'unfair.' Nobody has any claim on God's mercy. If they did, it would no longer be mercy. Since 'the wages of sin is death' (6:23), the shock is not that God does not extend His compassion to everyone, but that He extends it to anyone!"

5. Let's make this personal, if you haven't already! You are clay. Have you been arguing with the Potter about what He's doing and making out of your life? Is repentance in order? 😊

6. Verse 20 pretty much says, "Who do you think you are, to talk back to God?" I read once that we are so far below God that we have neither the wisdom nor the right to question our Creator. Although I completely agree, I find myself "talking back" to Him at

times. How about you? Do you ever find yourself “standing in judgment” over God rather than remembering He is judge over you?

7. Read verses 21-24. Do you think God “enjoyed” watching Pharaoh? Paul’s question is not why God rejects some, but why does He do it so patiently and slowly? What answers does Paul give for this? (What does His patience reveal?)

It’s important to stress that no one will be condemned who wants to be saved. One of the characteristics of those condemned is that they don’t want to be saved. Salvation is a miracle, which has nothing to do with our merit or privileges. That’s the point of the example of Jacob and Esau. No one deserves God’s mercy, which was also the point of the golden calf. God hardens hearts slowly at times so that more people can see what a great Savior He is. He also has the right to show mercy and to harden, since He is the Potter. His patience reveals His grace.

8. How has God been patient with you?

9. What’s your biggest take-away so far?

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Let’s read Romans 9 again. Focus on verses 25-33. Paul now shifts the focus onto God’s mercy. He quotes four Old Testament verses in this section to establish that God has always worked to make and keep promises. How had the prophets Hosea and Isaiah

prepared the Jewish people for the possibility that belonging in God's family was not simply a matter of biological heritage?

The fact that God would turn from the Jews and call the Gentiles was prophesied long ago. This “new” people would be called “children of the Living God” and only a remnant of Israel would be saved. Why does Paul bring this up now? I believe Paul was trying to prove his point that God is always just; that He has the right to save some and judge others, fulfilling the promises He made long ago. Weirsbe wrote, “At the Exodus, God rejected the Gentiles and chose the Jews, so that, through the Jews, He might save the Gentiles. The nation of Israel rejected His will, but this did not defeat His purposes. A remnant of Jews do believe and God’s Word has been fulfilled.”

2. Read verses 30-33. What paradox do you find?
3. Paul starts this section in verse 30 by changing the focus from God's mercy to the responses of human beings. What does this section say about man's responsibility?
4. Paul borrows two quotes from Isaiah; 28:16 and 8:14. What object does he compare Christ to? Can you explain why? How do people "stumble" over Him?

John Stott wrote, “Everybody has to decide how to relate to this rock which God has laid down. There are only two possibilities. One is to put our trust in Him, to take Him as the foundation of our lives and build on Him. The other is to bang our shins against Him, and so to stumble and fall.”

5. Read Psalm 118:22-24 and Acts 4:11. How do these verses relate to our text? What is a “cornerstone”?

6. Read Matthew 7:24-27. Explain the parable of the two builders. How does it relate to our text?
7. What other “things” do people try to build their lives on?
8. Have you built your house on the “Rock” of Christ or “sand”? When the floods come and beat on the house, have you been left standing?
9. Are there any rains coming down in your life? Any flooding going on? How can you practically protect yourself and keep standing?
10. Explore the ways that Christ can be our “Rock.” (You can use other adjectives to describe it!)

Let’s end here for today. May you continue to build on the Rock of Christ as you weather the storms of life. (I’ve been humming the song, “Don’t build your house on a sandy land...”)

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Let's take a little time to do some review and recap what we've discussed on Romans 9. It was a lot to grasp and think about.

1. How would you answer someone who thinks that if we are predestined, why is there a need to evangelize?

2. Do we ever know who is part of God's elect? Can we tell by looking at people?

Keller wrote, "Paul is showing us that God's sovereignty and human responsibility stand in relationship to each other as an 'antinomy' – as an apparent contradiction. One famous example of an antinomy is the fact that light sometimes behaves as particles and at other times as waves. We don't understand fully how that could be – it is an apparent contradiction of physics. But we expect to understand it in the future as we get more information. So it is here. The Bible never says: This event happened totally in accord with God's plan, therefore the human beings were not responsible for their actions. Nor does it say: The human beings were responsible for their actions, therefore the event was not certain to happen according to God's plan. No. Rather, the Bible holds both of these truths together:

1. The complete sovereignty of God over all history
2. The complete responsibility of every human being for his or her behavior"

On this section of Scripture, Martin Lloyd-Jones continues: "So this is what the Bible teaches. Election alone accounts for the saved, but non-election does not account for the lost ...No one would be saved were it not that God in a sovereign manner has chosen him, as we have seen abundantly from verses 6 to 29. It is God's action alone that saves a man. So why is anybody lost? Is it because they are not elected? No! What accounts for the lost is their rejection of the Gospel."

3. Our prayer lives can reveal what our passions are. How passionate are you about praying for those who are lost? Do you have any friends, families, or neighbors that

don't know Christ? Can you take some time and pray for them? Let's all pray and ask God to give us more of a passion and zeal for the lost. Paul was such a great example of this.

4. Sometimes “religious” believers can be offended by the Gospel. What do you think that means?
5. Referring to the paradox Paul pointed out, sometimes those who know the most about God do not come to know God, while those who know the least about God come to know Him the best. What do you think that means, and how does that happen?
6. Are you presently “questioning” God about something He’s doing in your life or the life of another? How can you grow in this area of trust?
7. From chapter 9, what specifically spoke to your heart?

We'll continue our discussion on human responsibility next week. I am humbled by what God has done for me, the chief of sinners. It'll be amazing when all things are made known to us and there are no more mysteries. I wonder if we'll have the opportunity to ask questions, or we'll just "know." Hmmm

