

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

Collect for – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

O GOD, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth ever, one God, world without end. Amen

Questions on Romans 10?

Introduction:

The final part of Paul's argument on the faithfulness of God and the inclusion of Israel into Salvation through Jesus Christ

I. Chapter 10 noted the faithfulness of God

A. God's Freedom to act is absolute – we need not understand or accept

B. The Gospel is given to all people'

1. This action is in accord with the Scriptural Witness of the O.T.

2. It is not God that failed to act, but Israel

II. The Question posed in Chapter 10

What is the status of God's Chosen People who seem to have rejected Salvations through Christ?

Roman 11:1-10

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise

grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day." And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever."

I. God has not Rejected Israel – This is Paul’s answer

A. The Jewish Christian have accepted Jesus as Lord

B. The rest of Israel has had their hearts hardened

1. We remember the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart
2. We remember the stiff necked people that Moses led

C. Paul Notes his Jewish Credentials as proof of his concern

1. He is not indifferent to the situation
2. He is not taking advantage of the situation (God’s Plan)

II. Scriptural Evidence for Jewish Christ Remnant

A. Elijah and the priests of Baal – the contest – God is vindicated but the people are not satisfied. Elijah fee into the wilderness

I King 19:10-18

He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." And he said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Eli'jah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Eli'jah?" He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." And the LORD said

to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, you shall anoint Haz'ael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel; and Eli'sha the son of Shaphat of A'bel-meho'lah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And him who escapes from the sword of Haz'ael shall Jehu slay; and him who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Eli'sha slay. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Ba'al, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

B. Why is this important?

1. God has in the past treated those who would not believe in the same way
2. The Remnant – those who believed have been vindicated

C. The reduction in the number of the Chosen People does not mean that God is unfaithful to the promise rather that they did not respond

D. What is faithfulness? – Trust and Response

II. The Relationship between the Remnant and the Rest of Israel

A. There is a division between the Jewish Christians and rest of Israel

B. The Jewish Christians obtained righteousness in an unconventional method

1. Remember righteousness is obtained by following the Law
2. By Grace the Jewish Christians obtained righteousness – God's Free Gift

C. Those who did not respond to God's Grace are hardened, Why?

1. RE: Pharaoh – to punish him and those who would oppress God's People
2. RE: The non-responders
 - a. To punish Israel for unbelief
 - b. To highlight the stumbling block
 - c. For a yet undisclosed reason – God's Will for all creation

D. Israel is a fulfillment of Scripture

1. All the prophets who have proclaimed universal salvation being offered
2. The use of the Psalms of David – the daily prayer

Psalm 69:22-23

22] Let their own table before them become a snare; let their sacrificial feasts be a trap.

[23] Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see; and make their loins tremble continually.

This portion of the psalms is used by Jesus to refer to the Jews who would not see and hear Him

Matthew 13:13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Luke.16:31 He said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

John.8:47 He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Romans 11:11-24

So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off. And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

I. Is Israel's Reject of the Christ Final?

A. Paul's ministry has and will induce jealousy – follows Jesus teaching

1. I have been faithful under the Law – why not me – The elder brother
2. Building up the Gentiles – Attracting the attention of the Jews

B. The Stumbling Block

1. First image and insurmountable wall – Israel is marching through time and God puts up a barrier they can not cross
2. Second image – Israel is marching through time, but they are off course. God puts up a barrier to redirect them on the proper course.
 - a. Some (like those in the desert of Sinai) will go around the mountains and follow Moses
 - b. Some will build the golden calf and die

II. The Underlying Hope

A. Salvation with Christ - Grace through Christ is a matter of accepting God's promise, His help (Grace) and then living with Him as Lord – worshipping God through Jesus Christ

B. Salvation under the Law – accepting the covenant and then by human means living a life under the Law – worshipping God through the Law

III. The Problems of Interpretation based on Paul's Letter to the Romans and the issue of Israel

A. Free Will – we can accept or reject God

1. Calvin said no – Double Predestination - there are the elect and those who God does not elect
 - a. Christians accepted – the elect selected by God
 - b. Jews who rejected – selected by God to be damned
2. This also related to the effect of Original Sin
3. Paul teaches that God invites all

B. Pelagius

1. Believed in the absolute sense of free will, that we could turn to God
2. This is the idea of Works Theology – That we can choose to do the good and in doing good we are finding our own way to God
3. Pelagius denied that Original Sin was transmitted – Thus after Adam and Eve man returned to the natural state fully able to perceive God, make correct choices and by his own nature seek and find Salvation

The Church has again and again rejected this as heresy. Yes, there are those who follow Pelagius today – can you think of a couple of groups?

How does Pelagius thought connect with the heresy of the Gnostics?

IV. The Section of Letter which clarifies the Issue – Must be ignored if your Pelagius or a Gnostic

A. The Grafting

1. The Root is Christ – present from the beginning
2. God prunes and grafts – we do not choose to be pruned or grafted
 - a. Our role as a branch is to bear fruit – John – vine and branches
 - b. There will be times in our lives when we feel cut off, but it is for the Glory of God and for our ultimate benefit – we may be laid aside only to be picked up later and grafted on.
3. Some that are pruned will be destroyed, because they have already died on the vine

John 15:1-9

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he

is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.

B. The Re-grafting

1. Paul is linking agriculture and eschatology – the practical and the yet to be understood

a. A vine is strengthened by grafting and re-grating into a cultivate that is better stronger and ultimately able to survive

b. The pruning of Israel for a time will be resolved as those who were not already dead are re-grafted into the vine that will survive into eternity

2. It is not about rejection or acceptance in the here and now, but in the eternal fulfillment of God's Plan

C. God does not invite us once into relationship with Him, but He is perpetually there waiting for us to accept His Grace and turn to Him – this is for all men and for all time for their Salvation

The famous painting Hunt, *The Light of the World*, showing Christ waiting outside the door that has no knob on His side.

Do you see how that enhances the Catholic understanding of Free Will, and rejects predestination?

Do you see how that rejects the idea that there are some who have special knowledge?

Romans 11:25-32

Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they

also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

I. Two main sections for this passage

- A. There will be Salvation for Israel
- B. The Mystery is about the when and how not the Who – The Who is Jesus
- C. Scripture reveals part of the mystery

Isaiah 59:20-21

"And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the LORD. "And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore."

- D. The promise to Israel is remembered by God because of the faithfulness of the Fathers

Romans 11:33-36

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

I. The Hymn – from the Book of Job?

- A. The opening – Knowledge of God's wisdom is beyond us
- B. The question – Who can know God's Wisdom – Wisdom itself – The Christ
- C. The Doxology – So that we do not confuse Sophia – Geek worship of Wisdom the Goddess we are reminded of the reality of God