

ISRAEL IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

GOLDEN TEXT

"For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36).

USEFUL PRACTICE

The election of grace is formed, in the present, by born-again Gentiles and Jews, as well as, in the future, by the conversion of the nation of Israel.

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-8; 11:1-5

1 - I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—

2 - I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3 - For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race,

4 - the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.

5 - Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Rm 10.1 - Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

2 - For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

3 - Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

4 - Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

5 - Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."

6 - But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 - "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 - But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:

11.1- I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

2 - God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:

3 - "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?

4 - And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 - So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To understand the "luck" of Israel in the plan of salvation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

I. To show the election of Israel in the plan of redemption;

II. To analyze Israel's stumbling in the plan of redemption;

III. To explain the restoration of Israel in the plan of redemption.

INTRODUCTION

Paul discoursed on the Doctrine of Salvation in Chapters 1 to 8 of the Epistle to the Romans. We will see in this lesson that, in Chapters 9, 10 and 11, he opens a parenthesis to deal with the "luck of Israel" in the plan of salvation. We learn from these chapters that God has a special plan for Israel and that the rejection of them is only temporary until the fullness of the Gentiles is fulfilled, when all Israel will be saved.

I – THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION (Romans 9:1-29)

1. Paul's desire and the unbelief of Israel. The apostle makes quite clear the high esteem that he had for his fellow countrymen. He opens his heart to express his feelings about his people (Rom 9:1-5). He wanted everyone, including himself, to understand the perfect plan of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ. This desire of Paul intensifies when he reminds the Roman believers that the Jews had been given the adoption to sonship, the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the Law, the temple worship and the promises. Paul also reminds them that from them (from the Jews) also descended the patriarchs and Christ himself! But, despite all these blessings, the Jewish people's understanding continued, and continues, hardened.

2. The elected ones and the promises of God. Paul's argument in Romans 9:6-13 reveals that God's promises concerning the nation of Israel did not fail, although most of them have rejected them. The promises will be faithfully fulfilled through the remaining Jews, through the Gentiles who believed and the Israel that will be restored in the future. This portion of Scripture is one of the most debated among theologians. The positions are polarized when the debate is between determinism and free choice. However, Paul is not referring to individual election, but collective. The example of the brothers Jacob and Esau, given to illustrate the apostle's argument, makes this quite clear (Rom 9:10-13). The citation that Paul makes of Jacob and Esau, in this text, is taken from the book of the prophet Malachi 1:2-4. A single look at these passages will be enough to see that the prophet was not referring to the people or individuals "Jacob" and "Esau", who, at that time, had already died a long ago, but to groups or peoples. This is demonstrated in Malachi 1:4, where Esau is

identified with Edom, a people and not an individual. It is, therefore, pretty clear in the light of this context that predestination is corporate, that is, of a group, a people, or nation, and not persons.

3. Election, righteousness and sovereignty of God. In verses 14-29, from the same chapter nine, Paul answers the questions about the righteousness of God and His sovereignty. God could not be accused of being unfair to Israel just because they found themselves in the state they were in. Paul takes Pharaoh to exemplify his argument. The apostle states that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occurred when he resisted the will of God (Exodus 7:14, 22; 8:15,32; 9:7). Similarly, Israel was hardened for not accepting the justification given to them through Jesus Christ. The sample extracted from the metaphor of the potter's vessel serves to further substantiate the argument in favor of the righteousness and mercy of God. The determinist argument, which sees the "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" as a reference to the saved and the condemned, falls before the exposition of the very text. God bore with the vessels of wrath and they themselves became objects of God's wrath; but the vessels of mercy will participate in the glory of God, through faith, by the grace of God, not as a result of their own works.

II – THE STUMBLING OF ISRAEL IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION (Rom 9:30 to 10:21)

1. They stumbled in Christ. Assuming that the church of Rome consisted mostly of Gentiles, the Jewish part would find it hard to understand why the Gentiles had been accepted by God while most Jews had not. Paul argues that Israel's stumbling is due to the fact that they did not believe in Jesus, the promised Messiah (Rom 9:30-33). That which should be the solution for them became a stumbling block. On the other hand, the Gentiles, as they believed in God's grace, were justified, since their justification came as a result of faith and not of their merits.

2. They stumbled in the law. At that point, the apostle emphasizes something he had already been arguing from chapter 3. The Jews, as they sought their own righteousness through the law, ended up rejecting God's righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ (Rom 10:1-4). Wanting to please God by following the precepts of the Law was going in the wrong direction, since Christ is the end of the law (Rom 10:4).

3. They stumbled in the Word. The Gospel of John had already shown that Jesus came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:12). Here Paul will show that Israel's rejection did not happen

for lack of warning, but because they did not want to hear what God had planned for them. They hardened their hearts and stumbled in the word (Rom 10:14-21). On the other hand, the Gentiles responded positively to this same Word and, therefore, were accepted.

III - THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION (Rom 11:1-32)

1. Israel and the remnant. Theologians call attention to the importance that the doctrine of a "remnant" has within the Jewish culture (Romans 11:1-10). In fact, the prophets that rose up against apostasy and religious formalism believed that God had a reservation made by those who were faithful (Amos 2:12; 5:3; Is 1:9; 6:9-13; Zeph 3:12,13; Jer 23:3). In Romans 11:1-10, Paul, who considered himself one of the remnants, cites the example of Elijah. For Paul, just as Elijah remained faithful in the midst of apostate Israel, there was also a remnant who remained faithful through Jesus Christ.

2. Israel and Gentile grafting. Israel failed to understand that God's plan of salvation also included the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:6). They stumbled as they did not accept the righteousness of God manifested in Jesus Christ. It was thanks to this stumbling, Paul argues, that the Gentiles entered as a grafting in the plan of salvation. The Gentiles, therefore, should not assume a position of pride, but fear. They were not the natural branches, but were part of the "wild olive tree" (Rom 11:11-24). If God had not spared the natural branches, much less would he save the grafted branches.

3. Israel and the future restoration (11:25-32). Although Paul was saddened by the spiritual situation of his fellow Jews, his position in relation to them is one of hope, not despair (Rom 11:25-32). Paul was convinced that in the future Israel will be saved. For him, this will be fulfilled when the "fullness of the Gentiles" is completed. The rejection of the Jews brought justification to the Gentile world. When God fulfills his purpose for the Gentiles, He will also fulfill his promises to restore the whole Israel.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, chapters 9-11 of Romans demonstrate the sovereignty of God in the history of redemption. It reveals that God's purpose

concerning the election can never be frustrated. Therefore, the attitude should be of fear, not boasting. The history of Israel, his ancient people, as well as the inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of salvation, shows that God respects choices, even if they prove to be harmful to the one who made them. In any case, repentance and faith are the roads that lead to the gate of God's grace.

