

LESSON #6B - Romans 9-16

Before starting this lesson, read **Romans 9 - 16**

Paul is writing the local churches in the city of Rome. His topic is **SALVATION** - how to be right with God.

The first eight chapters are about **PERSONAL SALVATION** for individuals.

Paul explains that whether people are pagan Gentiles, cultured and educated Gentiles or religiously trained Jews...

All are guilty before God.

No one can ever be good enough to meet His standard of holiness.

Holiness and unholiness are not compatible. As a result, we are separated from God.

This is why Jesus came. While on the cross, all the sin of everyone was put on Jesus and He was separated from the Father in our place. His payment is now offered to everyone.

If we reject His payment, we must pay it ourselves. We will be separated from God forever.

If we accept His payment, we are declared *righteous*, we are right with God. Another word for this is *salvation*.

We are saved or free from the **penalty** of sin. This means we **can** live with God thruout eternity.

We are saved or free from the **power** of sin.

Because we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we have the ability to say *yes* to God and *no* to Satan.

We are also saved or free from **condemnation**.

Nothing can separate us from God's love or from God's presence.

Everyone who accepts the payment of Jesus, automatically becomes a part of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Romans 1-8

Personal salvation for individuals.

Romans 9-11

National salvation for the Jewish nation.

It is so easy to start reading chapter 9 and think Paul is still talking about individual salvation. But instead, Paul is talking about the Jews as a people and nation - their **national** salvation.

Because of this confusion, I will spend most of the lessson with these chapters. Paul is dealing with national salvation in all three chapters, so there is a lot of repetition. But he is also looking at it from various points of view.

In the local churches in Rome, Gentile believers are teaching...

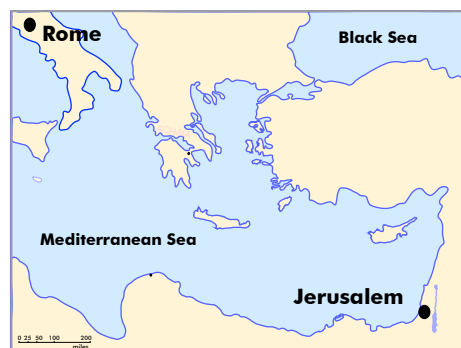
- > God is finished with the nation of Israel because their leadership rejected Jesus as their Messiah.
- > God has replaced the Jewish nation with the Church.
- > The Jewish nation is no longer God's chosen people.
- > Even tho they were God's elect in the past, they are now rejected by God forever.
- > They have no future and God will never again use the Jewish people in ministry or for His glory.

This is what Gentile believers are teaching in the local churches. Sadly, these ideas are once again being taught in our day.

Paul wants everyone to know these are wrong ideas. He uses chapters 9-11 to explain the role God gave to the Jews as a nation and people. He writes about their **privilege**, their **choice** and their **future**.

Paul starts by expressing the depth of love he has for his people, the Jews. He says if it were possible, he would be willing to give up **his** salvation if the Jews would accept Jesus as their Messiah to have national salvation. He knows this is not possible, but it is how strongly he loves them.

Paul has this love because he knows the **privileges** that God has given them as a nation.



THE JEWS - THEIR PRIVILEGE

God chose and adopted the nation as His son.

He revealed Himself to Jews thru the Shechinah glory - the visible glory of His presence.

He gave them unconditional covenants.

He also gave them a temporary covenant which included the laws of Moses.

He gave them the Levitical priesthood to serve Him.

He gave them promises about their Messiah, telling about His first coming, His second coming and His Kingdom.

He gave them Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the founding fathers, so the nation could be uniquely formed.

No other nation was formed like the nation of Israel.

And the greatest privilege of all, God gave them Jesus, their Messiah to live among them.

These privileges are described in Romans 9:4-5.

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

Over the centuries, the Jews had all these privileges. But now the Sanhedrin of the first century rejected Jesus and told the people to reject Him. Does this mean, as Gentile believers are saying, that God's eternal plan for the Jewish nation has now been ruined or come to an end?

The answer is *no*. Regardless of what people do, God's eternal plan can never be ruined. No one can stop it from being fulfilled. But how it is fulfilled is determined by **choices**

THE JEWS - THEIR CHOICES

Paul uses **THREE EXAMPLES** to show how God worked thru choices in the past, and will follow the same pattern in the first century and in the future.

1. The families of Abraham and Isaac.

God worked thru only one of Abraham's 8 sons to develop the Jewish nation.. He worked only thru one of Isaac's twin boys. In the case of Abraham's family, it was based on the faith that Abraham and Sarah **chose** to have in God's promises. In the case of Isaac's family, it was based on God's mercy to a man who was deceitful and dishonest, but **chose** to follow God..

Now in the first century, because the nation, thru its leadership, rejected Jesus, God would have been fair to reject the whole nation. But in mercy, He will continue to work only thru the believing Jewish remnant. These are the Jews who with **faith** in God's promises, **choose** to believe Jesus is their Messiah. Like with the families of Abraham and Isaac, God will continue with the Jews as a people, based on faith and mercy.

2. Moses and Pharaoh

In the past, the Jews were slaves in Egypt. It looked like they would be destroyed or be assimilated. It looked like they would never enjoy the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But God had predestined - He had predetermined whom He would use to get the Jews out of Egypt. He decided to use Moses and the Pharaoh who was ruling at that time. That was God's **sovereignty** – meaning He has the supreme authority, power and right to work thru the people He wants to use.

However, free will and human responsibility were also involved.

Moses **chose** to co-operate with God. As a result, he became a vessel of honor.

Pharaoh, after saying, *I know this is the finger of Yahweh God*, still **chose** not to co-operate. He became a vessel of dishonor - the one thru whom God's judgment came.

If Pharaoh had chosen to co-operate, he would have become the most famous Pharaoh in history. All of history would have known his name and the amazing things that happened. But in refusing, he is only known by his title of Pharaoh and the judgments that happened to him and his people

God had a right to use only those 2 men - Moses and Pharaoh - to determine the course of Jewish history.

So in the future, God will use specific Jews to determine the fulfillment of Jewish history. (see end note)

3. Pharaoh's rejection

Because God is sovereign, Pharaoh's **choice** to reject God did not stop God's plan. It brought greater glory to God. So in the first century, the Jew's national **choice** to reject Jesus has not stopped God's plan for the Jewish nation. He will have greater glory in how He completes His plan for the Jews thru the believing Jewish remnant.

God's plan for Israel will happen because God is sovereign.

But He also holds the Sanhedrin responsible for their **choices**. This is what chapter 10 is all about.

The Jewish leadership - the Sanhedrin - was unwilling to accept God's plan to give them national salvation. They were unwilling to accept, it would come thru Jesus their Messiah. They wanted to make it happen by keeping Mishnah laws - the man-made Jewish laws. In addition, they could never accept that God's plan of spiritual blessings and ministry would include the Gentiles. So the Sanhedrin would never go and preach God's message to the Gentiles.

The Sanhedrin had seen Jesus and heard His message. They had complete understanding. But in rebelliousness, they led the nation to reject Him. By God's instruction, the Sanhedrin always represented and spoke for the nation. So when they said *no*, it was not only their rejection but the rejection of the nation.

THE JEWS - THEIR FUTURE

So what is going to happen to the Jewish nation? Chapter 11 is about Israel's future.

Gentile believers in the local churches in Rome had said, *because the Sanhedrin and people rejected Jesus, God is finished with the Jews*. Paul now raises this question in 11:1

I ask then, Did God reject His people? By no means. Paul's answer is better translated, *Absolutely not!*

Just because the nation rejected *Jesus* does not mean God will reject the Jewish people. There will always be a believing Jewish remnant just as there was in the days of Elijah in the Old Testament. Elijah thought he was the only one still following God. He was told there were still 7000 who were faithful to God. A believing Jewish remnant is always on the basis of grace. The believing Jewish remnant in the first century is still God's elect, the Israel of God, spiritual Israel.

The Sanhedrin who refused to believe still represent the physical nation of Israel. But they no longer represent the spiritual nation, Israel of God. It is the consequence of their choice. They have become spiritually insensitive so they no longer see their spiritual need - they no longer respond to God's Word. They have become spiritually blind.

To make sure the Gentile believers understand what he has said, Paul repeats the question in 11:11.

Again I ask, Did they (the Jewish nation) stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Absolutely not!

Once again Paul presents the two sides of the issue - human free-will and God's sovereignty.

In free-will, the Sanhedrin led the nation to reject Jesus.

But in sovereignty, God used it as an opportunity to develop the Church, the Body of Christ. Now thru the Church, Gentiles can participate in the spiritual blessings and ministry that belonged to the Jews. They will not permanently **take-over**, but they will take part **in** the ministry.

In addition God will use the Church to make the Jews realize what they have lost. As the Jews see the spiritual blessings and ministry the Gentile believers have in Jesus, they will want to have their blessings and ministry back again as a nation and people.

To put it simply, Paul is saying the *Sanhedrin's* rejection is bringing consequences to them and the physical nation. But **God** is using it for good, to accomplish His greater goals. National Jewish unbelief will lead to salvation of Gentiles as a people. Their salvation, in turn, will lead to salvation of Jews as a people.

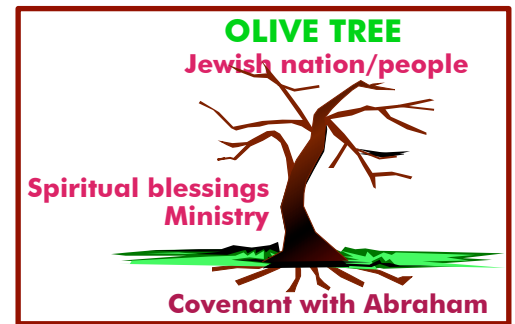
In chapter 11, Paul is not talking about Gentiles and Jews as individuals or their individual salvation. He is only talking about Gentiles and Jews as a people - a unit and how God will work thru them.

In his illustration of an olive tree, he goes a step further. To make a contrast, he uses **Gentile** believers to represent the Church, the Body of Christ. He uses **Jewish** believers to represent the Jewish nation. This contrast is only used in this illustration and in this chapter. His purpose is to correct the wrong teaching of Gentile believers in the local churches.

The **root** of the olive tree represents the covenant God made with Abraham. God said that spiritual blessing and ministry to the world would come only thru the Jews. God's message to the world would only come thru the Jews.

The **tree** represents that blessing and ministry of giving God's message.

The **natural branches** represent the Jews as a people. For two thousand years spiritual blessing and ministry to the world had come only thru the Jews. Then because of national unbelief in Jesus, temporarily, they lost that opportunity - that privilege. They were broken off, meaning that for a time, God will not spiritually bless their nation nor use them as a nation.



The grafted branches represent the Church. For a time, God's message and spiritual blessing will come thru the Church. But there is no room for pride. The only thing preventing the Jews as a people from being restored as the natural branches is their unbelief. And their unbelief - their spiritual blindness - is only *in part* meaning it is only for a limited time.



When the Church changes God's message because of unbelief in God's promises, **her** branches will be removed. To put it another way, when there is nothing more God can do thru the Church - when the fullness has come - God will remove the Church. He will then only work thru the Jews.

From the beginning, He **called** the Jews to be His Chosen People, His elect. Almost always, when the Bible talks about the elect, it is referring to the Jews as a people. It has nothing to do with their individual salvation. It is referring to how God plans to use them as a nation thruout history. God gave them the gift of promises in the unconditional covenants. That calling to use them as His elect along with the promises are irrevocable. They can never be changed. This is why in the future, all surviving Jews on this earth will believe. There will be national salvation.

And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins. As far as the gospel is concerned, they (the Jews as a people) are enemies for your (the Gentile's) sake; but as far as election is concerned, they (the Jewish people) are loved on account of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), for God's gifts (promises) and His call (His chosen people) are irrevocable. Romans 11:26-29

God's election of the Jewish nation Rom. 9-11

Her privilege – chosen to give God's message.
 Her choice – she refused Jesus as her Messiah.
 Her future – national salvation – all will believe.

As Paul thinks of this national salvation for all the Jews living at that time, he marvels at how God will pull everything together - how all of God's Old Testament promises to the Jews will be fulfilled in spite of everything that people have done over the centuries. He writes,

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them? For **from** Him and **through** Him and **to** Him are all things. To **Him** be the glory forever! Romans 11:33-36*

Paul, in the book of Romans says, thru Jesus...

There is personal SALVATION for all who believe - chapters **1-8**.

There is national SALVATION for the Jews - their privilege, their choice and their future as a nation, chapters **9-11**.

There is practical SALVATION for believers to live chapters **12-16** These are the easiest to understand.

Paul tells believers in the local churches in Rome, because they have been declared right with God, they are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. They now have responsibilities. Since we also are members of the Church, the Body of Christ, Paul's instruction applies to us as well. So instead of just talking about *them* and what *they* should do, I am going to use the words *we* and *us*.

Responsibility to God – to have His values – to see things from His perspective

Because of all He has done for us, the greatest way to say thank you and show our love for Him is not with words, but with obedience. The key to obedience is to have God's values - His eternal values.

Our problem is that we live in *this* world. As a result, we pick up the values of society even when they are in opposition to God. These values of society infect our attitudes, our actions and our choices. Instead of wanting to obey, we want our way.

Our goal is to be happy rather than to be holy.

The only way to have God's values - to see things from His perspective - is to spend time reading and studying God's Word. Only Scripture can change our thinking and values. Then we will actually believe that God's way is better than our way. We will still want happiness, but we will not disobey in order to get that happiness.

This is what Romans 12:2 is saying,

Do not conform to the pattern - the values of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's way is—His good, pleasing and perfect way.

Responsibility to other believers

Use our spiritual gifts with humility.

Be careful in our attitudes so we are supportive of each other.

Be generous. And notice where that generosity is to start.

Chapter 12:13 *Share with God's people who are in need.* God's people within our local churches should never lack in the basics of life. They should be taken care of even before the needs in the community or in the world. Share with God's people.

Live in harmony with God's people.

However if others do not want harmony, it is **not** possible.

If other believers want us to compromise our faith or our actions, it is impossible to have harmony.

Responsibility to our enemies – when persecuted for one's faith

Paul says to live at peace as much as possible and overcome evil with good. Unfortunately, some people have applied these phrases to situations of abuse, politics or nations at war. Peace at any price. But Paul is not talking about these things.

He is writing believers of the first century. Their enemies are Nero and the other Roman emperors who will persecute them for their faith in Jesus. When that happens, they are not to plan revenge or find ways to get even. By not retaliating, Roman soldiers will notice. In some cases, when they see what Jesus can do in the lives of their prisoners, they may put their faith in Jesus. These phrases are about persecution for faith in Jesus.

In our day, when we face persecution for our faith, God wants us to use every option we have to protect ourselves - lawyers and the courts. But when we have no options left, we are to accept persecution. We are not to let bitterness or rage build within us. We are not to let our thoughts dwell on what we could do or say to retaliate.

Responsibility to the government

We are to obey the laws of the government unless they violate God's laws.

Now let's look at chapter 13:7.

Give everyone what you owe him. In the Greek it says, *give to all their dues.* So the verse should read, *Give to all what is due them. Give taxes to whom taxes are due; revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due and honor to whom honor is due.*

We are to pay the taxes we owe.

Responsibility to the government continued

We are to give respect or honor to those who deserve it.

I want to emphasize this. God never wants us to give respect or honor to those who practice evil. That would be giving approval of their actions. So for example, children cannot honor parents who have abused them. Adults cannot honor or respect those who abuse them. Respect and honor should only be given to those who are worthy of it.

Responsibility to society - to people living and working around us

We are to have consideration for others.

We are to do what is right.

We are to live in such a way that others can see the difference God has made in our life.

We never know how much more time or opportunities God has given us.

Responsibility towards weaker believers

Paul is referring to believers, who have limitations to their faith because of culture or past teaching. Chapters 14-15

In the local churches in Rome, some Jewish believers feel obligated to still follow Jewish rules of the Old Testament.

They believe they should only meet on the Sabbath - on Saturday.

They still follow all the dietary rules of the Old Testament. Paul refers to them as weaker in faith.

Other Jewish believers have changed.

They do not follow Jewish rules about food.

They are meeting on the first day of the week - Sunday - to honor the day Jesus rose from the dead.

Paul refers to them as stronger in faith.

These difference are causing problems between Jewish believers. So Paul gives instruction about their responsibilities to each other. He says when stronger and weaker believers are together in the local church or visiting in each other's homes, they should not argue or criticize each other verbally or even mentally. They should not look at others and think, *if they were more spiritual, they would do it my way*. Paul says that as a Jew, he has come to believe there is no food that is ceremonially unclean. He is free to eat anything he wants. But then he gives some guidelines.

If people believe they should not eat certain food, they must follow their conscience. Other believers should not try to change them.

People who believe it is OK to eat anything should not flaunt their freedom. This means they should not use their freedom when they are with these weaker believers. It could hinder their spiritual life, cause them to doubt; or be destructive to them. That is about Jewish issues.

Now let me apply this in our day. I have a right to eat meat or drink wine. But if I want to honor God, I am not going to eat meat or drink wine in front of a believer that would be offended by it. When I am with a vegetarian, I order a vegetarian meal. When I am with a person who does not believe in drinking wine, I refrain from drinking wine. I have the right to do it, but out of consideration for their conscience, I choose not to use my freedom.

Our responsibility with others is not to argue about these things. The freedom God has given us is between us and God. We are not to argue or try to convince others to have more freedom. And they are not to force us under their restrictions. Let me emphasize, this applies **only** to matters of conscience - to things **not** mentioned in the Bible – to man-made rules.

Commands that are given to the Church in the New Testament are to be obeyed. We do not have freedom of conscience to pick and choose God's commands.

Responsibility against false teachers

We are to keep away from those who have a false message. We should not listen to false teachers or study false teaching just out of curiosity. It may sound interesting, but we put ourselves in danger of being deceived or leading others to be deceived. It also causes divisions.

SUMMARY OF ROMANS 12-16

A responsibility to demonstrate our salvation in a practical way towards...

God
Other believers
Enemies who persecute us for our faith
Government
Society
Weaker believers
False teachers.

At the end of his letter, Paul has a prayer for Roman believers. It is a prayer we also need in our day.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Romans 15:13

To get the full meaning, we need two definitions. In the Bible...

Hope means **certainty** –

Both in the Hebrew and Greek *hope*, when used as a noun, means *certainty*.

Joy means **inner stability**.

In our English of today, *joy* means *happiness*.

But in the Bible, it means *inner stability* - what we can have even in times of grief and tears.

Now let's read the verse, using the Biblical meaning of these words.

*May the God of **certainty** fill you with **inner stability** and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with **certainty** by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

As things were deteriorating in Paul's world, things are deteriorating in our world today.

Tragedy and sorrow can touch any of our lives at any moment.

In many of our decisions, we face uncertainty.

We have no idea what is going to happen in the coming months or years.

Paul reminds us to put our focus - not on the chaos but on God. **Here are the things we CAN be sure of.**

There is nothing people or even Satan can do that can stop God's plan from being fulfilled.

God is a God of certainty. He always keeps His promises.

He is always with us.

His grace and power are always available to us.

The Holy Spirit is always within us to teach, to guide and to comfort us.

As we overflow with **these** certainties about God, our lives will be filled with inner stability in the midst of chaos.

We will be filled with peace in the midst of conflict.

God's answer for the days in which we live - HAVE CERTAINTY ABOUT GOD.

ENDNOTE

Similarity between those God predestined to be leaders

As Pharaoh was predestined to be a leader but choose not to co-operate –
so the Sanhedrin were predestined to be leaders but they chose not to co-operate.

As Moses was predestined to be a leader and chose to co-operate,
so future Jewish leaders (rabbis) will be leaders and choose to co-operate.