

Mount Sterling Bible Readings 2011, Romans chapters 9 – 12

(Notes provided by Howard Barnes, Westhoughton, England)

Introduction to the epistle

The apostle Paul was coming to the end of his third missionary journey and was looking forward to his fourth, in the will of the Lord. After travelling east from Corinth in Achaia (southern Greece) to Jerusalem to deliver the collection raised in the Gentile assemblies of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he planned to journey back west, going right across to Spain at the western end of the Mediterranean. However, on the way he planned to stop off in Rome to fulfil a long-held desire to visit the saints there. It was to let the saints at Rome know about this that he wrote the epistle, but he also took the opportunity to expound his thoughts on 'the gospel of God', both as it related to individuals and to Israel, the latter being important since there were a good number of Jewish believers in Rome.

He knew also that there was friction between the Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome over such things as special days and special diets, and he addresses these issues. He ended the epistle with some important practical instructions concerning Christian service and behaviour in the assembly and in society.

This epistle has been called Paul's 'masterpiece' and it certainly deserves our close study.

General outline of the epistle

The first eight chapters are taken up with the matters of individual sin and salvation, proving that there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, in that all had sinned come short of the glory of God and all need to be saved through faith. Chapters 9 – 11 are concerned largely with God's dealings with groups of people, especially the Jewish nation and the Gentiles.

Outline of chapters 9 – 11

'The apostle now enters on a new section of the epistle in chapters 9 – 11, the main object of which is to reconcile the indiscriminate call of Gentiles and Jews [in the gospel] with the special promises made to Israel. In this task he overthrows the fleshly pretensions of those who rested on nothing but a line of natural descent from Abraham', William Kelly.

'[Chapters 9 – 11] are a special appendix, for the purpose of reconciling the doctrine that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile with the faithfulness of God to the promises made to the Jew, or Israel. The Jew might say, 'I have nothing to answer to your plea against me by the law. I did break it, and hence must give up my claim under it to be a favoured people. But there were promises even before the law, and not with a legal condition. How do you set these aside, so as to make no difference between Jew and Gentile?', J N Darby.

The thoughts in these three chapters follow Paul's earlier teaching, so chapter 9 parallels chapter 3 (God's righteousness); chapter 10 parallels chapter 4 (faith for salvation) and chapter 11 parallels chapters 5 – 8 (God's grace and mercy). The general movement of thought with particular respect to Israel through these chapters is: Israel's **past riches**, chapter 9; Israel's **present rejection**, chapter 10 and Israel's **promised restoration**, chapter 11.

At the beginning of each chapter the apostle Paul brings in his subjective feelings on the matter of his unsaved fellow Jews, particularly his heart's sorrow and unceasing pain, 9. 2; his heart's desire for their salvation, 10. 1 and his heart-felt empathy since 'I am an Israelite', 11. 1.

Outline of Chapter 12

The word ‘therefore’ in verse 1 connects this chapter with the previous ones. The only intelligent response to the mercies of God displayed in the earlier chapters is a body sacrificed to God and a mind not conformed to this age. Such spiritual intelligence should also be displayed in the realisation and utilisation of individual spiritual gift. Believers have many practical matters to be aware of, particularly in the local assembly, and the various exhortations that end the chapter enumerate them.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 9 – 12

Chapter 9: God’s dealings with men

- vv. 1 – 5 The servant of God is heavy hearted
- vv. 6 – 8 The word of God has not failed
- vv. 9 – 13 The purposes of God are clear
- vv. 14 – 18 The sovereignty of God is defended
- vv. 19 – 24 The dealings of God are righteous
- vv. 25 – 29 The word of God is cited authoritatively
- vv. 30 – 33 The righteousness of God is through faith in Christ

Chapter 10: Salvation for all

- vv. 1 – 4 Paul’s desire and prayer for Israel’s salvation
- vv. 5 - 11 Faith is the present means of anybody’s salvation
- vv. 12 & 13 The gospel to all alike for salvation
- vv. 14 & 15 The importance of the preacher of salvation
- vv. 16 & 18 Faith by hearing and obedience for salvation
- vv. 19 – 21 Israel provoked by Gentile salvation

Chapter 11: Israel’s future

- vv. 1 & 2 God did not cast away His people Israel
- vv. 3 – 5 An elect, believing remnant in Israel now
- vv. 6 - 10 ‘Israel hath not obtained what he seeketh for’ by grace
- vv. 11 & 12 Israel’s present fall brings salvation to the Gentiles
- vv. 13 – 15 The current casting away and the future receiving of Israel
- vv. 16 – 18 Branches grafted into Israel, the olive tree
- vv. 19 – 22 Unbelieving Israel is a present warning to the Gentiles
- vv. 23 & 24 Believing Israel will be grafted in again
- v. 25 Israel’s present partial blindness is a mystery
- vv. 26 & 29 ‘All Israel shall be saved’ since it is beloved for the fathers’ sake
- vv. 30 – 32 Israel and the Gentiles, all shut up to grace
- vv. 33 – 36 The great wisdom of God in His dealings with Israel and the Gentiles

Chapter 12: The Christian’s sacrifice and service

- vv. 1 & 2 The Christian’s body sacrificed and mind transformed
- vv. 3 - 8 The Christian’s gift known and used
- vv. 9 – 21 General exhortations to Christians