

Romans: The Saving Activity of God



This will be exit 6 into the New Testament. My executive assistant and her family left the other night to go to Disney World. They were going to spend two days at Disney. I have to be honest with you; I can't fathom that. When we go to Disney, it is at least an eleven to fourteen day trip, and we barely see everything. I can't imagine them covering Disney in two days. Before she left, I told her that if she gets down there and wants to stay longer, not to worry about coming back until they had done everything they wanted to do because we have the office covered. Well, guess what. I got a text three days later saying they were coming home. Oh man, I was disappointed! The next line of her text said, "We are just not as passionate about Disney as the Cunningham's are." That's ok. The last time my wife and I were there was last January when you gave us that wonderful Sabbathical. At that time, Disney was getting ready to open a new ride in Magic Kingdom, called the Seven Dwarf's Mine Train. We really wanted to ride that one, but it wasn't open. So, my next question to her was, "Did you ride the Dwarf's Mine Train?" She replied back, "The line was too long." Now, I didn't text this back, but I wanted to say no, the line wasn't too long; your husband just didn't give you enough time to do Disney the way Disney is designed to be done, amen!

Some of you are going to be disappointed with this lesson like I was disappointed that my assistant didn't get to ride the Dwarf's Mine Train.

This book was not designed to cover in one setting like we are going to do now, so I apologize up front if I leave your favorite part of the book out. But, we are going to do our best. The purpose of the message is to highlight the book of Romans. I think it is obvious why this book was authored by the Holy Spirit and ultimately made its way into the canon of our Bible. If I were to give Romans a theme, it would be, The Saving Activity of God. You don't know how badly I wanted to call this, God's Unbroken Chain of Salvation, but that is just one truth in the book. What the entire book does, amazingly, is cover the saving activity of God.

Scriptures

There will be several verses in our Scripture text that gives us the highlight of the book of Romans. We will start with chapter 1:16-18. Paul said:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Now watch this) For in it (talking about the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, (The ESV says "faith for faith," but most translations say "from faith to faith.") as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

Let's go to chapter 3:21-26. What a paragraph! If you want the nugget of the entire New Testament, here it is. If I had to pick one paragraph from the Bible, especially from the New Testament, this is the paragraph I would choose:

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall

short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace (Look at this!) ***as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

Now, let's look at chapter 8:1-4. This is describing the present state of a believer in Christ who has been justified by grace, through faith, as a gift:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, (Wow, did you hear that? He condemned sin in the flesh) ***in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***

Now let us go to verses 28-30. I don't know how you can read these verses and not believe a true believer is eternally secure. I don't understand how anyone can believe a true believer might not make it. It is unfathomable to me. Listen to this:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified."

Now let's go to chapter 12:1-2:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

This last verses are chapter 16:25-27:

"Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Outline of Romans

I can't begin to tell you how excited, yet nervous, I am to try to cover Romans and give you a chance to respond in this short lesson. If I were to outline Romans so that we get the big picture, I would show you the introduction to Romans, which is chapter 1:1-17. In the introduction to Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he introduces them to the gospel of God. Then, the conclusion to his letter starts in chapter 15:14 to the end of the letter in chapter 16:27, and this with the mission of God. So, in his introduction to the church at Rome, he introduces the gospel of God, and he concludes with the mission of God to bring about the obedience of faith in all nations. But in my opinion, the heart of the teaching starts in chapter 1:18 and runs through chapter 15:13, and I will break it down into four

major sections. Since this is an overview of Romans, there are actually six sections when counting the introduction and the conclusion.

The first major section Paul deals with to the church at Rome starts with chapter 1:18-3:20. Please make note of this. I struggled on what to call this section of Scripture. I am going to call it what Paul deals with first, which is the wrath of God. I thought about calling it the glory of God. I thought about calling it the light of God. But for our outline, we are going to call this section the wrath of God.

Once Paul has talked about the wrath of God, he talks about the righteousness of God in chapter 3:21-8:39. In the righteousness of God, you must break this passage down into three main sections. In those verses, we are going to see the righteousness of God in justification, in sanctification, and in glorification; these are the three tenses of salvation. In this section concerning the righteousness of God, we see the full salvation of God - justification, sanctification and glorification.

1. Justification: The redemption in Christ (Chapter 3:21-5:21)
2. Sanctification: Sanctification of a believer (Chapter 6:1-8:17)
3. Glorification: Our ultimate glorification (Chapter 8:18-39)

In the next section, he begins to talk about the sovereignty of God. Most commentaries call this section the Sovereignty of God or God's sovereign choice. Being a pastor for as long as I have, being engaged in this community, I choose to call this section the free will of God. We live in a day and age in which humanity stresses the free will of man. I pray that we, as a God centered church, never lose focus of what Romans talks about, and that is the free will of God. Beginning in chapter 9:1 to that great doxology in chapter 11:36, Paul discusses the free will of God among Jews and Gentiles in salvation.

Then he closes those three main divisions - the wrath of God, the righteousness of God, and the free will of God - with an exhortation,

perhaps the most famous passage in Romans. It begins in chapter 12:1-2 and does not end until chapter 15:13. I call this section the people of God.

As we tour Romans, we are going to see the gospel of God, the wrath of God, the righteousness of God, the free will of God, the people of God, and then, we are going to conclude with the mission of God. If you understand that Romans reveals the gospel of God, the wrath of God, the righteousness of God, the free will of God, the people of God and the mission of God, you have the big story of Romans. It would be like knowing if you go to Disney World, there is Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Planet, and there is Hollywood Studios. Man, you have to go into Disney World to fully appreciate what Disney has done as an entertainment venture. We have to quickly try to go through Romans, so let me highlight it for you.

Introduction: The Gospel of God

Paul begins by making it clear that he is a slave of God, owned by Jesus Christ. His salvation did not start with an invitation for him to accept, but a command for him to obey. In that command to obey, he understood that God's plan for his life was for him to be an apostle, and he had actually been set apart for the gospel of God.

Then he tells us two unique things about the gospel right in the introduction. First, the gospel had been promised by God through the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures. Secondly, it ultimately concerned His Son, who descended in the flesh from David. But so that you know He is more than just a Son of Man and understand He is the Son of God, it was revealed who He really was when God reached down and raised Him back alive.

Because of Paul's conversion of who he was as a Jew, Saul, now Paul, a Christian, felt like he had a great obligation. When he used the words "Greeks and barbarians," he was talking about having an obligation to the civilized world and the uncivilized world, to the wise and the foolish. He

says, "Therefore, I am eager to come to Rome to preach the gospel." Then he gives us that famous "I am" statement. We have seven "I am" statements of Jesus in John's gospel. Paul gives us three "I am" statements, "I am under obligation...I am eager to preach...for I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Note this in the introduction. The gospel, the good news of what God has done in His Son, Jesus Christ, is actually the power of God that brings about salvation for everyone who continues to believe. To Paul, yes, faith has a moment, but if it is real, if it is saving faith, it issues into a life of faith. Wow! First, it is for the Jew; then it is for the Gentile.

Do you know why Paul believed the gospel was the power of God for salvation? In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. Now, we have to be careful here. In this instance of the righteousness of God, it is not talking about the objective justice of God as an attribute. It is not talking about God being just; He is morally perfect. But, when the Bible says the gospel reveals the righteousness of God, (and that is what makes it the power of God unto salvation) the word, "righteousness," here means that the gospel reveals how God who is just, makes man who is unjust, right with Himself. The gospel reveals the saving activity of God, God making a sinner right with Himself. How can a God who is just make a man who is unjust right with Himself? It is through the gospel. This is why the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

Then, Paul is going to declare to the Roman church that this actually fulfills what is said in the Old Testament, that the righteous shall live by faith. Once a man has been made right with God on the basis of faith, he continues to live by faith. That moment of faith issues into a life of faithfulness.

The Heart of Romans

- **The Wrath of God**

Now, Paul takes up the first major section of the ladder. He starts out with the bad news. Do you know what the bad news is? According to Paul, in his day, the wrath of God was already being revealed. Wow! I think many of us have this concept that because God is merciful, He is letting people get by with a lot of stuff, but one day He is going to get them and cast them into a lake of fire where they will burn forever and ever. At that moment, they will face the wrath of God. Once you begin to understand what Paul is saying in the book of Romans, you need to realize that God's wrath is already being poured out on sinful man. The ultimate result of the wrath of God is that He allows man to be as sinful as man wants to be.

In chapter 1:18-3:20, Paul will reveal that God gave light to the Gentile world. He revealed His glory to them! He revealed His glory to them in creation. What did the Gentiles do with the light of God? They tried to turn it off. Instead of doing what they knew to do, which is to worship God as the Creator, knowing that God had made them in His image, they decided to make God in their image! They began to worship creation rather than the Creator. Paul lists a whole lot of forms of unrighteousness. Then he said that is really bad to be doing these things, but it is another thing to be doing these things and then lead others to do them too.

Paul then transitions into revealing the light that God gave to the Jews. The Jews not only had the light of general revelations, natural revelation, the light of God in the created world, but they also had what we call special revelation. They had the Law. What did the Jews do? The Jews didn't live up to their light either.

At the end of this section, Paul will say that because the wrath of God has been unleashed on mankind, allowing man to be as sinful as he wants to be, then it is obvious that all Jews and Gentiles are in bondage to sin. He said, "None is righteous, no, not one." Did you hear that? In chapter 3:20,

he said, "For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in His (God's) sight..." In other words, once you realize you are a sinner, you can never do anything on your own, under God's revelation, to make yourself right with Him.

Then, Paul says something in the last part of verse 20 that would shake the Jews to their foundation. You see, the Law wasn't given to Israel so they could work out their salvation, or work for their salvation. Ultimately, the reason God gave the Law to the Jews was so that they would understand they were sinners. The Law brings "knowledge of sin." Paul is teaching in Romans that all of humanity is in bondage to sin, separated from God, and there is nothing he can do, in of himself to be made right with the Holy God.

- **The Righteousness of God**

Now we start the next section beginning with chapter 3:21, "But, now the righteousness of God has been manifested..." Now hear this. The way we should read this is, "But now [the saving activity of God is revealed] apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—."

1. Justification

Now in verse 22, he is ultimately teaching what the saving activity of God is; it is for belief "in Jesus Christ for all who believe." When he uses, "all," here, he is including Jews and Gentiles. They are all justified the same way, by the saving activity of God in Christ. He said, "...for all have sinned." Jews and Gentiles "have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This means that both Jews and Gentiles failed to live up to the light (which manifests who God is in creation and in the Law) that He had given them. It would be like an archer drawing back his bow, aiming at a target, and no matter how many times he shoots the arrow it always falls short. He is teaching is that Jews and Gentiles can never live up to the light they have been given by God. But the light they had been given wasn't given to

save them, the light was given to make them aware that they were sinners and they needed saving! They had to look outside of themselves to God.

Then, he reveals the greatest news mankind and sin has ever heard...while we all, Jews and Gentiles, fall short, we are all justified! We are all justified and made right with God by grace as a gift. The saving activity of God is going to be revealed to man is a gift. When it says, "gift," (the King James Version says "freely") it means 'without cost to man and without cause in man.' Do you hear this? When God justifies a man by His grace, it is not because of any cause in man, and there is no cost to man. Wow! It is totally free of man, and it is all about God. Don't ever think there wasn't a cost to Him. Don't ever think there wasn't a cause, but the cause wasn't in you and me; the cause was in Him.

He did this on the basis of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Christ, and what He did on that cross, would ultimately set man free of sin! How could what Jesus did on a cross, set man free of sin? It is because when God put Jesus on that cross, He was putting Him forward as propitiation by His blood. Do you understand that? What Paul is talking about in this first section of the righteousness of God is the saving activity of God in justification. In other words, for God to justify a sinner, for God to make a sinner right with Himself, God has to deal with what was wrong with man, his sin, while he is a sinner. So, He put Jesus on the cross, and on that cross, Jesus became our propitiatory offering before God. On that cross, He paid your sin debt. On that cross, He faced the wrath of God toward you, and not just for you, but for the accumulated sin of the world. By His blood, by laying His life down on the cross, He paid your debt thus releasing you from the penalty of sin!

A sinner who is separated from God has had his debt paid by God, "to be received by faith." Please hear this; reformed theologians have tried for centuries to get us to understand that faith is not something that merits the salvation of God! Do you hear me? Don't make your faith a meritorious work or action. No, God justifies you by grace! Because of God being God,

He dealt with what you and I had done wrong in His Son, and His Son paid the price! God accepted the offering and now the transaction is finished!

When the ESV Bible translators try to say, "...to be received by faith," what they are trying to tell us is that all man can do now, once he has been introduced to the gospel, is to stick out his hand and receive it. But in sticking out your hand to receive it, you don't do anything for it, because salvation is totally outside of you at that very moment. God is not making you and me right with Him based on anything within us. He is making us right with Him based on everything within Him, and based on what He did to satisfy His Holiness. Wow! This was to show God's righteousness.

For a long time, God put up with man's sin. Man would offer the blood of a bull and a goat, but that just couldn't do it. So God was patient, because He knew the day was coming when He would deal with man's sin. Now we know that righteous God is just to declare a sinner righteous. Why is He just to do this? It is because He is doing it on the basis of the work of His Son. His wrath has been satisfied. He is the justifier of the person who has faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Paul goes on to say that when it comes to us being made right with God, can we boast about it? No, we can't even boast about it, because it is totally outside of us. Then, he gives an example of Abraham; what about Abraham, would he have anything to boast about? No, Abraham can't boast because he was made right with God by faith, just as David was made right by faith.

In chapter 5, Paul talks about the effects of being justified. The effect is that you and I have peace with God. The door of faith has now been opened to you. You have access; you stand in the very grace of God. The picture is of you and me wading out into the water. Except by faith, you are not wading out in the water; by faith, you are standing in the grace of the almighty God! You ought to rejoice, because you have the hope of the glory of God, you have the hope of one day seeing God face to face!

We are going to rejoice in that hope, but we are also going to rejoice in this; we are going to suffer. Whoa! Yes, until we get there, we are going to suffer because God has ordained suffering. Ultimately, you do not know if you really have faith until you go through a life of suffering. If you are really in, your hope will never disappoint because you have the Holy Spirit of God inside your heart.

Paul begins to close this section on justification by just reminding us that Adam got us into this mess; and who got us out of this mess, Jesus Christ. Please don't ever forget that. Just as Adam's sin was imputed to man, Christ's righteousness is also imputed to believers.

Now, Paul ends this section on justification with a startling statement. Do you remember that he ended the wrath section by saying that the law brings the knowledge of sin? He ends the justification section by saying God actually gave the Law to increase trespass. This might make you angry, but if you get mad at me, you have missed the boat. Who you should be mad at is Paul and God. Paul actually says that God never gave the Law to make man less sinful, God gave the Law to make man more sinful. Whoa!

2. Sanctification

But then he says, where sin increased because of Law, grace abounded more, and Paul begins the second section of the saving activity of God dealing with sanctification. Now listen to me, I want you to hear what I am about to say. You don't have to agree with this; you always have the right to be wrong, but listen, justification is God declaring a sinner right with Himself because of His grace at the moment of faith. But the moment God declares a sinner right with Himself; God does a transformational work in that sinner and transforms him from a sinner to a saint. He is no longer who he used to be; he is a new person in Christ. I beg you to understand this concept. If you don't understand this concept, you will believe that when God declared a sinner right with Himself, He left the sinner still a sinner. You will believe that He just declares him right because he just

looks at him only through the lens of Jesus. You will fail to recognize that once God has declared a sinner right, he is right. What was wrong with him has been dealt with. What was wrong with him? He was a sinner; he was under the penalty of God, separated from God. What made him a sinner? He was dead to God, alive to sin.

Then, starting in Romans chapter 6:1-8:17, Paul tells us what God is doing for the believer, in the believer's life. At first, he tells us what God did in Christ; that is justification. Now, the Bible tells us what God is doing in the believer; that is sanctification. The first thing God did was put you in Christ. Paul begins to explain with this question: If grace abounded more where sin was, does that mean we can continue in sin?

We hear this argument all the time as believers who believe in the eternal security of the believer: "You believe you can just go out and sin all you want to and still be saved; is that true?" No, that isn't true. It has nothing to do with the eternal security of the believer. It has to do with your identity. You are no longer a sinner. You are a saint of God. When you were a sinner, you were dead to God, alive to sin. Therefore, you sinned. You practiced a lifestyle of sin. Once you came to Christ, God put you in Christ. Paul continues, when you went down into the water of baptism, did you not know that you were saying you were identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? Therefore, when Christ died, He died to sin. When He got up, He lived to God. Therefore, when you go down with Him, and get up with Him, you die to sin and become alive to God. You are a new person, no longer enslaved to sin.

Then Paul tells us that we are to reckon ourselves alive to God and dead to sin. Add it up! When you see what God did in the gospel for you, you are a new person who is now free to live for God, not sin. He actually says we are no longer a slave to sin, but we are a slave to righteousness. He said the reason we don't practice sin anymore is because we are not under Law, but under grace. What does the Law do? The Law makes you more sinful. What does grace do? Grace takes away the power of sin in your life

because the power has been broken. Now, you are not to sin because you are under grace. You have to understand, for the Jewish people in the church, this would have blown them out of the water.

So, starting in chapter 7, he says if you are a Jewish believer, you used to be married to the Law. That wasn't a good marriage, because the Law, your husband, just bore fruits to death. When you died with Christ, you were released from the Law and were no longer married to your first husband. You are now married to Christ. Because of husband number two, Christ, you have now been set free from Law, therefore, sin has no more hold on you, and you can live life in the Spirit of God. You will no longer follow your unredeemed flesh; you will follow the Spirit of God.

Then, in chapter 7:1-8:7, Paul contrasts being married to the Law and being married to Christ. Once you have come to Christ, you might want to blame husband number one because he wasn't a very good husband. Paul says there was nothing wrong with husband number one. The Law was holy, just, and good. The problem was you had a problem; you were not a good wife. You never had the power to live up to what your first husband expected of you, and he couldn't give you the power to live it, to bring about a change. Paul paints a picture of himself as a Pharisee, a Jew trying to be justified to God by the Law. He lived this life of condemnation because he wanted to be right, but couldn't. He couldn't be right because there was something in him that was greater than what was in his mind, and he realized he was a sinner.

In chapter 8:1, Paul talks about marriage to Christ and the work of the Spirit in a believer. He said, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans teaches that if you are a believer in Christ, you have been set free from sin, and you are not condemned to live a life where you come into slavery to sin ever again. You are not condemned to not want to do something, and then find yourself doing it! You are not condemned to want to do something, and find that you aren't able to do it! A believer in Christ has the Spirit of God in him and he is free

to do what he wants to do. What does he want to do? A believer wants to obey God! On what principle do we have this truth? Christ has condemned sin in the flesh. Don't let anyone tell you that you are a sinner that is saved; you were a sinner, but when you get saved, you were transformed to a saint of God. You have the Spirit of God inside you and you have a new nature with a new master, amen! Husband number two gives you the power to do what husband number one couldn't give you. The fault wasn't with the husband; the fault was with you. He ends the section on sanctification with us, the believers, putting to death the sins of the body.

3. Glorification

In chapter 8:18-39, Paul ends the section on the righteousness of God with our ultimate glorification. Even creation is groaning, waiting for us to receive our redeemed bodies. In justification, He dealt with the penalty of sin. In sanctification, He dealt with the power of sin. At the Second Coming, He will deal with the presence of sin. You and I will get a body, just like that of Jesus, a body that can never sin. Now, what assurance do we have? Our assurance is that there is an unbroken chain of salvation that starts in eternity past called the foreknowing of God. Before there even was a you, God made a choice of you. When He set His covenant love upon you, He predestined that you would be just like Jesus Christ. He did this so that when we get to Heaven and Jesus sits down at the family table, the family table will be full of brothers and sisters! Because he foreknew them and predestined them to be like Christ, He called you. "Call," here, is not an invitation to accept, it is a command to obey! Those He called, He justified,—He made right with Him. Because He is God, those He justified, He can already glorify!

What is our hope of glory? What is our hope that we will be like Christ one day? We have been made right because he called us. We called because He predestined us. We predestined because He chose us before the foundation of the world in Christ, knowing what He would do in Christ. He would put Christ on the cross and pour His wrath down upon Him! Without

cost to us or without cause in us, He would make us right by grace. Once that call comes, sinful man will put out his hand of faith, and God will declare him right. At the moment of declaring him right, while he is a sinner, God is just to do that because He has dealt with our sin in Christ. At that moment, He makes us brand new. You are not un-right, or just declared right, you are right. You are right! You are dead to sin, alive to God.

- **The Free Will of God**

Now here is the question: How can we, in the church, trust that God is going to be faithful to us if he wasn't faithful to Israel? You have to answer that question. How can the Church trust that we are really going to make it when God made a promise to all those Jews? Look at them, they are not even believing in Jesus. So if God is going to use the Word to call us, has the Word of God failed Israel? If it has failed Israel, how can we trust it?

In chapters 9- 11, Paul deals with the free will of God. The free will of God means that as God, God has the right to do with sinful man whatever God wants to do with sinful man. Until you fully understand what mankind did in the Garden, in sin, you will never rest in the free will of God. Ultimately, we want to believe there is something in man worth saving. But Scripture teaches that God never failed Israel, because not all of Israel is Israel. God never intended for all of Israel to be Israel.

Just to make sure we fully understand this, He used an example of a set of twins. Now, in history, I can somewhat understand God choosing Isaac and not the other brother, Ishmael. Ishmael wasn't supposed to have been born in the first place. Isaac was the child of the wife and Ishmael was the child of a handmaid. I understand that one, but I don't get this with Jacob and Esau. Oh, but I do get it...There were two boys, and while they were in the womb, before they were ever born, a choice had already been made before they had done good or evil. Don't let anyone ever tell you that God makes His choice of man based on what He knows man is going to do, because this says before they had done good or evil, God made a choice,

and He chose one of them. When you compare Him choosing this one, loving this one, it is like He hated the other one. He rejected him. Why did He reject Ishmael? It was so that we would understand that salvation is not of him who wills, him who runs, or of him who chooses, but of God's purpose in election. Salvation is of Him who calls.

What are we going to say? Is there unrighteousness with God? Isn't that what you want to say? Don't you want to say you thought this book was about the righteousness of God, but this doesn't sound like God is righteous? But Paul basically says who are you to even dare ask that question? Of course, God is righteous! Because God is who He is, He has free will to sovereignly choose to do with the sinner what He wants to do. Therefore, He can harden one sinner like He did Pharaoh, and He can be merciful to another sinner like He did Moses. Wow!

Now, if you are like me, you might be thinking, *God, you are responsible for those who don't get saved...* but then Paul balances this free will of God with the free will of man. I don't call it the free will of man, because I do not believe man's will is free. I think man's will is in bondage to sin. Therefore, I call it the free choice. Mankind has the choice to reject God's provision of salvation. When we read Romans chapter 10, it is exactly what Paul said Israel did. You can't blame God for Israel not being saved. The reason Israel didn't get saved is because they, by their sinful nature, wanted to pursue righteousness by works rather than righteousness by faith. Paul blames their damnation on them, but he gives glory of the elect to God. Then, he gives us that beautiful story of salvation that whoever confesses Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God is raised from the dead will be saved. Wow!

In chapter 11, Paul asks if God has cast away those He foreknew, and he says, absolutely not. He says the elect of God obtain salvation, and the rest God hardened as an act of mercy. So if you have been foreknown of God, God will never let you fall. Based on His fore-choosing you and

predetermining what you are going to be like, (like Christ) you are guaranteed that one day you will be with Him forever and ever.

- **The People of God**

Chapter 12 brings us to the people of God. Are you totally amazed at what we have talked about? Then, your response should be “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” As people of God, the Church, we are living sacrifices! We are not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed.

My wife and I spent a couple of days in Nashville, Tennessee, to visit some members in the hospital. We went shopping while we were there, and while she was shopping, I was sitting in the mall trying to read my iPad to study for Romans. Oh man, I saw a lot of the world! I honestly can’t imagine being a Christian lady going into a store with the admonition of do not be like the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind! Why are we to renew our mind? It is so that we may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. God wants His will to be known in the world and He reveals His will through His Church!

That is why in this section He reminds us we are many, yet we are one. We are diverse. We all have a part in the Body. We are connected together. The ultimate is this—those of us who are strong, are not to put a stumbling block before those who are weak, even to the point we will not eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that causes a brother to stumble.

Conclusion: The Mission of God

He says we are not only to be concerned about those like us, but also for those unlike us. He says I am coming to see you, church at Rome, because I am going to Spain and I need your help. Paul never got to Spain. But the gospel got to Spain, and it came to the States. It went down into South America. It is over in Southeast Asia now. And it is trying to get to those remote parts of the world. The eternal God has decreed that all the nations come to obedience so that He will be glorified forever and ever. Will you

get on the mission of God? To be in on the mission of God, will you present your body as a living sacrifice? Not so that He will do something for you, not so He will bless you. He has already blessed you! He blessed you when you failed to live up to the light you had been given. He commanded the light to shine in the darkness and He justified you by grace, and He has made you a new person.