**The Book of Romans**

Part Four: God’s righteousness is revealed in in His Sovereign Plan for Israel. (Romans 9-11)

***The Nation Israel and God’s Sovereignty. . . Or, Can God be believed and trusted? Romans 9:1-18***

Paul has explained the gospel, including why salvation was necessary (sin), the way it has come (Cross), and how it is applied (Spirit). However, one dark cloud remains. God’s chosen nation, Israel, have not all embraced their Messiah. Something is wrong. How could it happen? What has come of His promises? If His own people aren’t responding to His plan, is it a believable plan? These questions under-lie Paul’s arguments in chapters nine through eleven, which comprise the most detailed explanation in the entire Bible as to what God has been up to all along in calling out a people for His name. If you read carefully, you will grasp (as much as possible) how it is that God can be sovereign and man still be responsible. The problem is not hypothetical, nor is this section “parenthetical.” God’s very character is in the balance.

***The Concern: In spite of God’s promise to and blessing of Israel, they have not believed.*** vv. 1-5

Paul’s emotions are deep and moving because of the life and death nature of the problem: can God be believed or not? He only intensifies the potential problem by reminding us of Israel’s eight-fold blessing: adoption (God chose them), glory (God was visibly with them), covenants (God made with Noah, Abraham, and David), law (God showed His will to them), worship (God revealed how He should be worshiped under the law), promises (God made hundreds of them), patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and finally, Messiah (Jesus, the fulfillment of it all). With all of that, how can it be that up to this point they are still rejecting God’s plan as they did under the Old Covenant?

***The Issue: What is God’s character?*** vv. 6-18

***Does God keep His promises? vv. 6-13***

Yes, but remember that His promises are not to an ethnic group (Jews) but rather to those who will believe and embrace those promises (true Israel, believers, whether Jew or Gentile). Test cases: Isaac and Jacob did embrace the promises, but Ishmael and Esau (their natural brothers) did not. God prophesied this and decreed it, but both Ishmael and Esau (and all unbelievers) had opportunity to partake of the covenant, but declined because they did not believe. Like many, things of God were near them, but not in them. Gen. 25-27; Gal. 4:22, 23

***Is God unfair? vv. 14-18***

No, but He is sovereign. Test cases: Israel and Pharaoh. God’s choice to have mercy or not is not dependent upon our choices, because in that case, no one would choose God. Again, Israel (at Mt. Sinai) rejected God and chose idol worship, and Pharaoh (during the plagues) knows God’s power but chooses the gods of Egypt. See the stories in Exodus 7-12 and 32.

***What do we know about God’s decrees and choices?***

***God’s choices are not random, but part of a holy, merciful, loving and glorious plan.*** Romans 8:28-30

***God saves no one against His will, nor condemns anyone who is not a rebel.*** Hebrews 12:15-17

***God’s “hardening” of a heart does not create a rebel, but leaves him in his rebellion.*** Exodus 7:20-25; 8:8-19

***God’s choices all are tempered with mercy and love. He does justice, but loves mercy.*** Mic. 6:8; Ezek. 18:30-32

***All who desire to be saved will be saved. It is only those who say “No” to God who are condemned, for they have rejected God’s grace in their pride.*** John 3:16-21