

Paul has just explored God's past relationship with His chosen nation Israel. Through His personal calling of Abram God sovereignly chose them from among the nations for blessing, finally sending His Son to be born of a virgin from among them. They crucified Him. This after three one half years of faithful witness to them as to who He was and why He was there. After a gracious appeal for repentance, Acts 1-7, God faithfully sovereignly set the nation aside for a while, in fact for many centuries now, but not forever. Meanwhile what is their state and status with God? What is our relationship to them, either Israel as a nation or to them as individual persons of Jewish extraction? Many of them seem to have little interest, or belief, in the Jewish heritage they have lost for the time being, unless it can be used for their advantage. In fact Christians who read their Bibles seem to show more interest now in Israel's future than the Jews themselves. Note here how the Spirit moves Paul's deep affection for his people while revealing to us through him their present status with God. So we believers should share that affection and yearn that they might be saved. But at the same time to be faithful to God we should observe His righteous discipline upon the Nation. More so as we see it reviving and being restored to the Land promised Abraham, and more recently to nationhood.. We can perhaps view this development as a sign of the imminent coming of the Lord for us. But don't forget the subsequent Tribulation that God will bring upon that nation and its people and, yes, the whole earth, introducing the return of the once rejected King to reign. More on this in chapter 11. Meanwhile the nation, though still under the providential care of God, is antichrist and anti Christian, except when it is to its advantage to accept financial aid generously provided by various Christian entities around the United States. Christian care for individual Jewish refugees honors Christ's command to do good unto all, Galatians 6:10. However to support the rebellious nation of Israel seems more than a little disloyal to our Lord, Jesus Christ, who it crucified and who died there for our sins. The cry "His blood be upon us and our children" has brought untold suffering that will actually get worse before it is over. While we should not seek to add to their sufferings in any way we should not go around God and comfort the nation He has put under His measured discipline. And we ought to confess the misguided role Christendom has taken persecuting Jews down through history. On the other hand our nation's accommodation of Jewish immigrants and refugees has brought it, and other nations so doing, God's blessing in accordance with His promise to Abraham. Those nations who have declined to do so or have persecuted Jews have providentially received great harm.

In this epistle to the believers at Rome Paul accounts

the Jews as having religious zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. That is, they were continuing on as if nothing had happened even though their Christ had come and been rejected, they having crucified Him. They remained willingly ignorant of God's righteousness revealed in the cross. They stubbornly continued to go about to establish their own righteousness by works under the Law of Moses as they always had.. When Paul wrote this letter the Temple was still standing as the Jewish center of worship in Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples had frequented there. The Christian believers met there for a while after Pentecost until scattered by persecution by the Jews, of which Saul was a leader. But 3-4 years after Paul was martyred by Nero in Rome, the Romans destroyed the temple while crushing a Jewish revolt, scattering the Jews far and wide. There has been no temple worship since.

But Paul declares Christ is the end of all that law keeping, the end of the Law as far as righteousness is concerned. Not that the Law ended because it was defective in some way but because He has fulfilled it. He fulfilled the Law, Matthew 5:17; Galatians 3:24. Not only has **He** kept it, but has fulfilled all the blessed types and shadows of Him contained it.

But **they** hadn't kept it. They couldn't. End of discussion! They had no excuses. The perfect absolute righteousness of Jesus precludes anyone's hope of being righteous enough to reach heaven on that account. No, Christ was indeed the end of the Law as a means of salvation, of approaching God or as a rule of life. Instead His righteousness is counted for any who put their trust in Him. Salvation rests in Him in personally trusting in His death and resurrection.. God sees me as righteous in Him.

Paul graciously uses Moses' Old Testament scriptures to compare the Old and the New.

Law: *That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.* See also Galatians 3:24, Matthew 5:17, Leviticus 18:5, and many more references.

Grace: He quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11- 20. Please look it up and read it. Paul as an apostle of Christ expands and transforms this Old Testament passage into an example of the ease of hearing and receiving the gospel of grace in this age. Verses 6-8. The righteousness of faith sees no need to ascend to heaven to, as it were, bring Christ down here. He came down before we asked. No need to go into the deep to raise Christ up from the dead again. He is risen. His word is near us, very near. It is the word of faith which Paul preached and is still preached today.

Yes, the Old Testament word was near the Israelites, even right in their mouth, for they religiously memorized

and regularly ritually recited them, without always applying them. (Ritualistic reading of certain selected scriptures is the practice in the services of so-called Christian churches today as well. May God bless His word in whatever circumstances it is read.) Paul cites their intimate detailed knowledge of the Law to point out that the word that Paul preached consistently, the **word of faith**, was just as close and accessible as the Law was to them. Even closer, for Paul preached it everywhere he went whether in synagogues or “on the stump.” What did he preach?

*9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** the Lord Jesus, (JESUS AS LORD) and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved.** 10 For with the **heart** man believeth unto righteousness; and with the **mouth** confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, **Whosoever** believeth on him shall not be ashamed.(Isa 28:16) 12 ¶ For there is **no difference** between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Joel 2:32)*

This statement is momentous for it eliminates “doing” as a way of approach to God and as a way to salvation. Not works of the flesh but faith in the heart and confession of the mouth of Jesus as LORD are the means and availing one’s self of salvation. Furthermore one’s national status has nothing to do with it. Both Jew and Gentile obtain salvation on the **same** basis, through faith in Jesus Christ. Gentiles are not lifted to the level of Israel before God nor are Jews lowered to the level of the Gentiles but both together are now lifted to a status far above anything either ever dreamed of. It is to a heavenly company, members of one body; Christ. This is barely hinted at here but is enlarged upon in chapter 12 and more so in Paul’s other epistles.

There is no longer preferential treatment of Israelites since that nation refused God’s merciful offer of grace by stoning Stephen. Each person must personally repent of his sinfulness and independence of God. There is no difference, Jew or Gentile. It is **WHOSOEVER** just as in John 3:16. The Same Lord is **rich** unto salvation to **ALL** who call upon Him. Not one Jew nor one Gentile is **excluded** from this offer. It is a genuine offer, no strings attached. Quoting yet another Old Testament scripture.

*Joel 2:23 **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Shall be safe!!!! There “saved” may be in the sense of being physically safe from an enemy surrounding the city. Now, we are safe from God’s judgement and hell and destined to everlasting glory with Christ in heaven..

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. In verse 11 “anyone who

believes on Him will not be ashamed.” (From Isaiah 28:16). He will be in settled peace and will not be hurried. No matter what God won’t let him down.

In verses 10 and 11 Paul enlarges upon the two elements of receiving salvation,

★ my faith in the death of Christ for me,

★ my submissive confession of Jesus as Lord.

Nothing here about inviting Him into my life or even inviting Him into my heart.

★ It is HIM inviting ME to trust in His finished work on the cross bearing God’s judgement upon my sins,

★ It is HE moving ME to confess HIM publically as Lord and Savior. My first words confessing Him as Lord are my calling upon Him as Lord for mercy upon my poor lost soul!

This spontaneous initial confession coached by the Spirit is then carried forward in my praise and thanksgiving, prayers and worship, and witnessing. A more formal confession of Christ as God is made by being baptized.

How does His grace reach the sinner? **By preaching!** Simply from the mouths, or pens, of other human beings witnessing to me from the scriptures what God has provided for me. How can I trust if I have not heard? Paul traces the channel of blessing resulting in my conversion back to God, who sends out His word through messengers to lost souls. While He in His sovereignty can, and has, used every conceivable means (including even unsaved persons) to reach souls with the gospel, preaching, personal or public, verbal and written, is His stated means. Use of entertainment to spread the gospel doesn’t seem to appear in the New Testament.

How beautiful indeed are the feet that brought me the gospel of God’s grace. They faithfully brought me the bad news, an awareness of my lost condition. Messengers bringing the gospel of peace, peace with God and the settling peace of God. The glad tidings of good things. Good things now and for eternity, spiritual, emotional and physical. Good spiritual things like the communion with God in prayer and the scriptures through the Holy Spirit dwelling in me. But all is provided for.

In my case the Spirit used my parents, my aunts and uncles, my grandparents, my Sunday school teachers, children’s meetings, many preachers, the beloved adult sister in Christ who noticed the lump in the teen’s throat and approached me after meeting that evening. That night I finally took the step. It was the prayers of many, some whom I won’t know or get a chance to thank until I see them in glory. Not that I was special, or even worth saving, but He saved me anyway. Praise His Name forever! Now let us do our part.

All believers have stories of thankfulness as I do. Don’t you?

By Ron Canner, December 12, 2007