The Book of Romans

Chapter 9

 I would like to start off this section with a paragraph taken from Dr. J. Vernon McGee's Bible Commentary series on the Book of Romans part 2 .

 *"We now have come to the second major division of this epistle. Romans chapter 1 through 8 is doctrinal. Romans chapter 9 through 11 is dispensational. Romans 12 through 16 is duty. The first 8 chapters emphasize faith. Chapters 9 through 11 emphasize hope. Chapters 12 through 16 emphasize love. There is another way to view Romans: the first section deals with salvation, the second section deals with segregation, and the last with service".*

 Now before we get all excited with the word dispensationalism, let me explain that in this case all that means is Paul's remorse over the failure of Israel to stay true to the Scripture. And also notice, and I love how preachers are able to do this, McGee categorizes this book in various ways and twice using a letter of the alphabet.

 So as we enter this chapter, I first want to repeat the last two verses 38 and 39 of chapter 8,

*"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

 Remember one thing, God loves His creation, He does not reject His creation, but Man, who is part of His creation, has rejected Him. That was mankind’s’ choice, and through all the way back to creation, God has come to man with covenants and promises, which man over time came to despoil. But as Paul states here, God does love, UNCONDITIONALLY, His whole creation, including man, and in this love (and remember this is that agape love we are talking about) God gave of Himself to save man from his own destruction. With this in mind, we must realize that although there is nothing in this whole universe that can separate God's love from mankind, mankind can and has separated himself from God. Also note here, mankind seem to have this ability to reshape his idea of God into man’s image of what he feels God should be. How silly is that?

 This truth is now where Paul heads for next. Paul, being a Jewish Pharisee to begin with, now aims his arrows at the Jewish believers.

 A] Romans 9: 1 through 5; (read)

 1] "*I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow, and continual grief in my heart."*

 First, Paul is bearing his heart. He is a Jew, and he does love his people, but there is a truth he must tell them. So this tells me that he is now aiming this at his Jewish Christian readers, and the Gentile reader must read and understand the hurt Paul feels for his kinsmen.

 2] "*For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises;"*

 Actually, Paul seems to be saying, that he once was estranged from God. The translation of this passage has puzzled scholars from the beginning, Primarily because is seems to be in direct opposition to what he stated in Chapter 8. Paul, as Pharisee Saul, was a Jewish, religious, fundamentalist, zealous Pharisee, and he held strictly to the beliefs and the literal Law as well as the written traditions, and as that Pharisee, he says he could (note the word ‘could’) feel for the Jewish people and their attitude, but, He is saying God did favor or bless the Jew with all these things. He has to remain true to all these things he now knows through the work of the Holy Spirit.

 3] "*Of whom are the fathers and from whom, overall the eternally blessed God. Amen."*

 We know how God singled out Abram and Sara to be the father and mother of the Jewish people. These were a blessed people because God through Abraham did make a nation of people who would be a blessing to Him and to the whole world. They have been and frankly still are God’s chosen people. But now things have changed as the relationship between God and His people changed.

 B] Romans 9:6 through 13; (read)

 1] "*But it is not that the Word of God has taken no effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but In Isaac your seed shall be called."*

 One thing to keep in mind here, is many in the Arab world are the offspring of Abraham. As we recall that Abraham, at the urging of Sarah, I might add, had a child with Hagar named Ishmael, and then had children with Ketura after Sarah died. It was with Isaac, then, that the Israelites came from, and even then the Edomite people came from Isaac also.

 2] "*That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God. But the children of the promise are counted as seed. For this is the promise:"At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."(Genesis 18:10)*

 Paul uses the single point where God made a specific promise. Just one son from Sarah and Abraham would fulfill the promise. The other sons of Abraham were not counted in the promise.

 3] "*And not only this but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac, (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil for the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). As it is written, "Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated.”(Malachi 1:2)*

 So we know that Isaac had twin sons Jacob and Esau, and Esau lost his birthright over a bowl of porridge and Jacob being the younger twin gained the birthright. Now most commentators will point to God predetermining that Jacob should be Israel, and Esau would be an enemy of Israel. Well as we noted last week, God is over time and knew from the beginning, the paths both would take, so did He predetermine? Why not?

 Friends, let’s segue here for a minute. God is God, creator of all things and God has the right and ability to do as He pleases and make the choices He does. He doesn't need our approval, does He? We seem to feel we should put limits on God just because He doesn’t fit some preconceived idea, of what we think He should be. God does what He does, and we have no right to question His motives, do we?

 C] Romans 9: 14 through 21; (read)

 1] "*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!"*

 Paul asks another follow-up question and then answers it. One thing we seem to forget regarding the power of God is; 1, Who He is; and 2, What He is. God created all that we can see from the minutest thing we see through the microscope, to the farthest thing we can see through the telescope and beyond. This whole universe is His to do with as He wishes. Sometimes He does manipulate events, and other times He lets events play out on their own. When you plant your garden, do you not rake the soil and pull the weeds or thin out the plants as they grow?

 2] "*For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." (Exodus 33:19) So then, it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows mercy."*

 What he seems to be telling his Jewish readers, that there are reasons for God's choices with Israel, why Jacob was chosen and not Esau, and Paul explains something we all seem to forget from time to time. God Is omnipotent, Omnipresent, and is to be held is highest awe and praise. Don't you think we tend to get too familiar with God? When we should be on our knees in great reverence before Him? When we sing a hymn or praise song, where is our worship?

 3] "*For scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My Name may be declared in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16) Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills and whom He wills He hardens*"

 In essence God exerts His authority over the evil as well as the good. He doesn't make Pharaoh harden his heart, but He set in motion the events that Pharaoh's own attitude hardened his own heart.

 Now as many writers and commentators are ready to explain, we look to the judgment of man throughout our lives and call it good, but when we are brought to the judgment of God, we question His fairness, don't we? Mankind does have a problem with the sovereignty of God, don't you think? Our collective egos sometimes have an aversion to anything thought to be superior to mankind. I can remember, vaguely, a Captain Kirk outsmarting a purported god, in one of the original Star Trek TV shows.

 4] "*You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"*

 Again we go back to the beginning of Romans and look at the situation between the Jew and Gentile believers and see the contention arising and this in effect is Paul's explanation of the Israelite rejection and the acceptance of the non-Jew.

 So why, they might ask, is God still finding fault, because they are being good and faithful now? We have already seen God at work so if God is directing the show, what blame do we have for our already programmed actions?

 5] "*But indeed, Oh man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have the power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"*

 First; human reasoning is not the answer here, but the sovereignty Of God is. Second; who are we to question God's motives anyway? But Paul seems to be getting away from self determination, doesn't he? All this is saying is God has things all lined up through the timeline. He does sometimes interject His will on events, we see evidences of that throughout the Old Testament. He did select from all the people who lived during the time of Abraham, one person to begin a specific people He would call His Own.

 God also, as Paul explains, was the Potter who formed man out of clay. The potter forms the pot and works at it until it is ready for the fire. God formed the pot and now the question brought up is will the pot be used for drinking purposes or as a chamber pot.

 D] Romans 9: 22 through 28; (read)

 1] "*What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessel of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His Glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for Glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles."*

 HUH????? Well, for one thing this shows that God, who is fully capable of wrath on mankind for forsaking Him, seems to be also capable of great restraint, doesn't it? Using the potter again as the example, I have known potters and if a particular pot doesn't make the standard, he breaks it up and tries it again. Ot he takes the wet pliable clay and remolds it.

 Next Paul explains for them and for us, the crux of the issue and that is, The Jews having rejecting Jesus now face oblivion as the Gentiles who had been excluded are now in the mix. The believing Jews and the believing Gentiles are now on even footing.

 2] "*As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people, there they shall be called sons of the living God." (Hosea 2:23)*

 Here he further explains by an old prophecy from Hosea, that God will indeed turn to the Gentiles. Now you would think the Teachers and Priests of the Law and the Prophets would know this one, wouldn't you?

 3] "*Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved, for He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth." (Isaiah 10: 22&23)*

 Oh, if only these folks knew their own prophets and believed them. Do you see what Isaiah is saying? For the millions of Jewish people over the centuries, only a remnant and small amount of them will be saved. God will bring His work to an end, and many will lose. What Paul is saying to the reader, these are the prophets warning you, and you did not pay attention.

 4] "*And as Isaiah said before, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:9)*

 The work of God was to take Abraham and his family, separating them out from all the other peoples of the earth, to be His own special people. Had He not done so, they all would have been just as evil as the evil cities of Abraham's time.

 E] Romans 9: 30 through 33; (read)

 1] "*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness even the righteousness of faith? But Israel pursuing the Law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.”*

 Paul is then, after his history lesson, points to the Jewish reader and asks the question, "Do you think the Gentile, who did not pursue righteousness, get righteousness because of their faith, whereas you, the Jew, who pursued righteousness through your belief in the law, have not attained that righteousness? Do you follow this question? They were the children of the promise, but somewhere along the line, lost their way. There was the one thing they were lacking.

 2] "*Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone."*

 What they lacked was FAITH, friends. The Jewish nation led by their spiritual leaders lived soly by the law given to Moses but forgot God in their lives. Remember what the law does as we discussed earlier. It only points out what sin does, it cannot save you. The Law simply became their stumbling stone.

 3] "*As it is written, "Behold I lay in Zion, a stumbling stone and a rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." (Isaiah 8:14 & 28:16)*

 The Law was their stumbling stone. And frankly, to the Gentile who does not believe, the cross is their stumbling stone. With this whole chapter Paul has explained to the Jewish believer that the law cannot save them even though they have lived by the law over thousands of years, that only belief in God and His atoning Gift on the cross can save them. And that is why the Gentile is now equal with them and that is by faith.