

08-20-2017

Message: God's Sovereignty Does Not Negate Human Responsibility

Text: Romans 9:30 - 10:21

Introduction

- A. We are known as being a Doctrines of Grace church, a Reformed Baptist church, because we teach those biblical doctrines that give God glory for every aspect of our salvation, including the faith by which He justifies us, unites us with Christ, gives us title to Christ's righteous standing and the forgiveness of sins through Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. We teach what the Lord teaches us in Romans 9, that before any of us is born or has opportunity to do good or evil, and not for anything God foresees us doing or believing, God chooses to have mercy on some by giving them hearts to believe in His Son, and God chooses to harden the hearts of others.

Romans 9:11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, **so that God's purpose according to His choice/election would stand**, not because of works but because of Him who calls,¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

Romans 9:16 So then **it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.** ...¹⁸ So then **He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.**

- B. So if God's Spirit through the Scriptures gives us that "wisdom that leads us to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15), we have nothing or no one to boast in - except the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But **by His doing you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,³¹ so that, just as it is written, **"LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."**

- C. But being a church that teaches such truths from God's Word has resulted over the years in some sinning members or sinning children of members using these doctrines to engage in a kind of blame-shifting or defense of their unwillingness to change and turn back to the Lord - by blaming God for their unwilling heart, for their lack of repentance. (Example of sinning husband, wife, adult child.)
- D. In 9:30 - 10:21 There is an obvious (interlude) shift in emphasis from God's sovereign choice over who will be saved to our responsibility for our choice as to whether or not we will call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. A shift in vocabulary signals this shift in emphasis.

1. Words like "righteousness" and "faith/believe" (Greek: pistis/pisteuo) become as

prominent in this section as they are absent in 9:1-29 and 11:1-36.

- a. faith/believe (pistis/pisteuo, used 13x): 9:30,32,33; 10:4,6,8,9,10,11,14,16,17. Does not occur elsewhere in chapters 9:1-29 or 11:1-36 except for 11:20. Faith is submitting all that we are and have to the person and work of Christ.
- b. righteousness (dikaiosune, used 10x): 9:30,31; 10:3,4,5,6,10 Does not occur in 9:1-29 or 11:1-36. Used here forensically/legally to refer to a right/righteous legal standing before God.

I. 9:30 - 10:4 We are responsible to attain a righteous standing before God by faith.

- A. 9:30 Many in the Greco-Roman world pursued moral excellence, a righteous image in their own or others' eyes, but it was not part of their heritage, culture, religions to pursue a righteous standing before the one true God. Yet, since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the churches in the world were now being populated by a majority of Gentiles, who attained a right standing before God through faith in Christ.

Romans 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained (katalambano = lay hold of, seize) righteousness, even **the righteousness which is by faith;**

- B. 9:31-32 But Israel (as a whole) failed to attain the righteousness the law pointed to and promised in Christ -
 1. because it did not pursue righteousness by faith
 2. because it pursued righteousness by works (of the law). The blame is not on God, but on Israel.

Romans 9:31 but **Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.**
³² **Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.** They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

- a. God's command to Israel to circumcise all your males could be obeyed as an act of faith, or not. Just like you and I can obey Christ's command to be baptized as an expression of faith, or not.
- b. Circumcision, a "work of the law," symbolized the regenerated, transformed heart that all of God's people were to have before Him, similar to what Christian baptism symbolizes. But like baptism, the act of circumcision has no transforming power, and in and of itself, does not make one a Jew, one of God's covenant people, any more than water baptism makes one a Christian.

Jeremiah 4:4 "**Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your heart,** Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem"

- c. But the Jews treated symbolic rites of the law as though they created the realities they symbolized, so that God would not take into account their moral imperfections (Cf. Romans 2:3,17-24).

Psalms 130:3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

Romans 2:28 For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.**²⁹ But **he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit,** not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Luke 11:38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that **He had not first ceremonially washed** (baptizo) before the meal.³⁹ But the Lord said to him, "Now **you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter;** but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.

3. Israel failed to arrive at the righteousness promised by the law because Israel stumbled over the offense of needing to share in the righteousness of a humiliated, crucified Messiah, Jesus.

Romans 9:32b **They stumbled over the stumbling stone,**³³ just as it is written, **"BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE,** AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

Isaiah 8:13 "It is **the LORD** of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread.¹⁴ **Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,** and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, **"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.**

1 Corinthians 1:23 but **we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block** and to Gentiles foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- C. Therefore, in spite of Israel's zeal for God, it stands condemned by God, still in need of His salvation.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them **is for their salvation.**² For I testify about them that **they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.**

- D. They failed to understand that the righteousness of which the law spoke, promised, and

symbolized was pointing to a righteousness that God provides through Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and **seeking to establish their own**, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.⁴ For **Christ is the end (telos) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

1. Israel (as a whole) misunderstood that the end/goal of the law was Christ.

a. The Old Covenant law was not bad, but holy, righteous, good, spiritual, but weak and unable to provide for the transforming of our hearts and the covering of our sins.

Romans 7:12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ...¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

Romans 8:3 For **what the Law could not do, weak as it was** through the flesh,

b. God was not offering Israel a hypothetical yet impossible way of attaining God's righteousness by requiring Israelites to earn that righteousness by their own sinless perfection, so that Israel would try and fail and then be ready to receive the true way of attaining a right standing with God by faith. Example: My grandfather offering my 6 year old father a puff on his cigar as something good to teach him not to smoke.

c. God's law was given to expose sin, incite sin, and to remind Israel that the laws blood sacrifices never truly covered their sins. The law pointed to and promised a covering of sins provided by the offering of the body of Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:1 For **the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.** ...³
But **in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.**⁴ For **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** ...¹⁰ By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

2. Christ has always been to focal point of the Old Testament Scriptures, the law and the prophets.

Luke 24:27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

3. And the law and prophets have always offered God's righteousness/justification by faith in the Lord, as we see Paul quoting both Genesis 15:6 and Habakkuk 2:4.

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "**ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"

Romans 1:16 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.¹⁷ For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**"

4. And the Lord who is the object of justifying faith is now revealed to us in the person of God's Son, the Lord Jesus. John Calvin comments on Romans 10:4, echoing Galatians 3:24 ...

... those who seek to be justified by their own works are false interpreters of the law, because the law has been given to lead us by the hand to another righteousness. Indeed, every doctrine of the law, every command, every promise, always points to Christ.

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

II. 10:5-13 The way of salvation by faith has always been witnessed by the Law and Prophets

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, **being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**²² even *the* **righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** for there is no distinction;

- A. Christ inspires Paul to cite cases of God's calling Israel in the law and prophets to a right standing before Him through faith.
 1. Paul identifies in the law in Deuteronomy 30 as a call to justification by faith.

Romans 10:6 But **the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows:** "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),⁷ or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."⁸ But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART "-- **that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,**⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;¹⁰ for **with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness,** and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Deuteronomy 30:9 "... the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers;¹⁰ **if you obey the LORD your God** to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, **if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.**¹¹ "For this commandment which I

command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.¹² "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'"

2. Paul identifies in the prophets Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32 God's invitation to righteousness by faith.

Romans 10:11 For the Scripture says, "**WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.**"¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;¹³ for "**WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.**"

- a. Calling on the Name of the Lord is another way of describing living by faith in the Lord, something done by OT and NT believers alike, as we see in the case of Abraham and Timothy.

Genesis 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, ... and there he built an altar to the LORD and **called upon the name of the LORD.**

2 Timothy 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, **with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**

- b. Calling on the Name of the Lord does not describe a single moment in life, but a way of life.

Psalms 88:9 My eye has wasted away because of affliction; **I have called upon You every day, O LORD;** I have spread out my hands to You.

III. 10:14-21 Guilt belongs to Israel for not believing what they have heard.

- A. We have previously encouraged believers to share the gospel from Romans 10:14-15, and it can always serve that purpose. If your feet carry you to someone to share the way they can have their sins forgiven through faith in Christ, your feet are beautiful.

Romans 10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

- B. These verses also guard against hyper-Calvinism, which says we don't need to share the gospel, for all of God's elect will be saved. Yes they will, but only through the means He

has appointed - His Word.

Romans 10:17 **So faith comes from hearing**, and hearing by **the word of Christ**.

- C. But in this context, these verses continue to be part of God's prosecution of the guilt of Israel. They can't use the excuse that they have not heard the gospel. The beautiful feet of Jesus and his disciples have brought the good news to the cities and villages of Israel.

Matthew 9:35 **Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues** and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom

Romans 15:19 ... from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ**

- D. The beautiful feet of Paul and other apostles and evangelists have brought the gospel to the synagogues of the diaspora - the dispersed Jews outside of Israel. As comprehensively as the heavens declare the glory of God to all the earth (Psalm 19), so has the gospel has been proclaimed to Israel. They have heard, but have obstinately rejected Christ. The blame falls not to God's non-election of them, but on their non-reception of Christ.

Romans 10:18 **But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."**¹⁹ But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."²⁰ And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."²¹ **But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."**

Conclusion

- A. What about us here today. Every one of us has heard. God will hold every one of us accountable for how we respond to this good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that submits all that we are and have to all that He is and does, and has done.
- B. So call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus as a way of life. Have your sins covered by His sacrifice. Share in His righteous standing before God, and in his inheritance in God's eternal glory.

Romans 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for **the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;**¹³ for **"WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."**

