

ROMANS AND ISRAEL

Romans provides the most systematic presentation of the Gospel that we have in the Bible. Its theme is often said to be “***The Gospel of God***”. However, the dominant emphasis is “***The Righteousness of God***” and more fully, “***The Righteousness of God Acquired by Faith***”. The key verses are Romans 1:16-17.

Romans 1:16–17 (NKJV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “***The just shall live by faith.***”

We are saved by believing the gospel of Christ. However, if we have a true saving faith, that will then be revealed in each life of faith – from faith to faith. As Romans 1:17 says, “***The just shall live by faith.***” We have life by faith and then we live by faith.

“***From faith***’ points to the initial act; ‘***to faith***’ to the life of faith which issues from it.” - ***W.E. Vine***

Romans presents the gospel in a systematic way, sort of like a lawyer might do in presenting evidence to make a case. But, right in the middle of this grand GOSPEL presentation is the MOST IMPORTANT text on Israel that is found in the New Testament. It is found in Romans 9-11.

Early in the book, Paul repeatedly intersects with the subject of Israel, but he doesn’t address it at length until he gets to Romans 9-11.

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 2:28–29 (NKJV)

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 of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Paul is emphasizing that true relationship with God is not a matter of mere outward religion, ritual, or heritage. The outward is only meaningful if there is a corresponding heart reality. True relationship with God is an inward spiritual reality based on FAITH.

Romans 3:1–4 (NKJV)

1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. ...

Being Jewish had many privileges, foremost being that they were entrusted with God's inspired revelation. But, with privilege comes responsibility, to which Israel was not faithful. However, Israel's unfaithfulness CANNOT cancel out God's faithfulness. God ever remains faithful and He will yet fulfill all His covenant promises to Israel.

That is the KEY point of Romans 9-11. If God cannot be trusted to keep His covenant promises to Israel, then why would we think we can trust Him for our salvation? God's covenant faithfulness to Israel is the ultimate PROOF that He keeps His Word.

Romans 8 emphasized the security of God's elect related to the Church. The chapter ends with a 10-point crescendo that climaxes in that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. Rom. 8:38-39).

However, someone might ask, *“But what about Israel? Weren't they elect and didn't God set them aside? Does this mean that God's plan concerning the Jews has failed? Has God failed to honor His Word concerning Israel? Is God's election sure? How does God's plan for Israel intersect with His plan for the Church?”*

It is questions of this nature that Paul has in view as he addresses the subject of Israel in Romans 9-11. God's dealing with Israel teaches us much about the nature of God and His sovereign ways related to salvation. And interwoven throughout this section is the mysterious conundrum of the intersecting truths of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.