

Romans 9:1-13

“God Has A Plan”

The book of Romans seems to be a Theological cross between Mt climbing and cliff diving. From high highs and summit peaks to low lows and diving into the depths of draining issues. Perhaps you recall from Ch 1 the summit peak of Vs 16-17 where Paul declared the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ how it's the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, how that in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” You don't get a much better view than that, that kinda declaration is a summit peak, and just when he'd gripped us with that breathtaking view of the beauty to be found in the gospel of Jesus Christ with out warning he turned and plummeted headlong, deep into depths of the depravity of man, from one extreme to the other.

Of course when we get a good understanding of who we are, it causes the *love* and *grace* of God to shine all the brighter against the blackness of our *sin towards* and *rebellion against* God. and I pray that as we've studied the book of Romans you've come a gain a deeper appreciation for all that God has done for you in Christ.

As we concluded Ch 8 we'd just ascended to another peak on this theological Mt range of the book of Romans. Paul had hit a high crescendo with the declaration and the revelation of the fact *nothing*, be it visible or invisible, death or life, powers/principalities, present realities or future happenings, tribulation, fear, distress, persecution, height nor depth nor *any other* created thing shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I mean, we read of the reality of the Love of God *towards* us, the fact that in Christ He's forever *for* us, and that *nothing* can separate us from His love, it's all we can do to restrain ourselves from a hallelujah chorus. and If that reality does nothing for you, you might want to check your pulse and make sure you're still with us, because we've done nothing to *deserve* it, we're in no way worthy *of* it, but God has *loved* us with an everlasting love, in Christ He is *for* you and as we've been learning on Wed evenings in the book of Esther He refuses to give up *on* you.

Once again with out warning Paul now takes us from this summit peak of scripture to what would seem to be a screeching halt to share with us the unending anguish, and practically unbearable burden of his heart, the Jews, his countrymen according to the flesh.

But don't think that he's side tracked, some see it that way. As if Paul just sort of had an intellectual blow out at the end of Ch 8 having imparted such radical revelation, and then over the next few Ch he just sort of meandered and carried on about the nation of Israel, and then picked his train of though back up in Ch 12. They see Ch's 9-11 as sort of parenthetical to the main point Paul is making, but in reality these Ch's aren't parenthetical to Paul's point, they're absolutely essential.

The argument goes something like this, “Paul, you’ve just shared with us the mind boggling reality, of the absolute certainty of God’s love, the unalterable/inseparable position that God has brought us into in Christ. But if that be true, than what about the nation of Israel? They’re God’s chosen nation, a people of promise, and yet it seems that God has set them aside, has separated them, so if it didn’t pan out for Israel, the chosen nation of God, how can we be sure it’ll pan out for us? You see, how can I be secure in God’s love and salvation to *me* when it seems that *Israel* was once loved and saved, but have now been cursed and rejected, how can I be sure that God won’t one day curse and reject me?” So over these next few Ch’s Paul deals with that perspective ensuring us of the fact that God has a plan.

Israel is an integral part of that plan and will still serve to illustrate the faithfulness of God. There’s a big picture at work, and nothing is going to circumvent or slide outside of the predetermined plan of God be it for Israel *specifically* or for *your life personally*. The emphasis of Ch 9 is on God’s *past* dealings with Israel, Ch 10- God’s *present* dealings with Israel, and Ch 11- God’s *promised* or future dealings with Israel.

Vs1-5

So from the *summit of glory* at the end of Ch 8 to this somber and *sobering reality* at the beginning of Ch 9, the great sorrow and unending anguish of heart that Paul perpetually dealt with.

He says, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying,” there were those who considered Paul a traitor, having left the guild of the Pharisees, he was perceived to have abandoned the law of Moses and taken his side with the Gentiles, teaching them that the law wasn’t important, he just seemed to have turned his back (from their perspective) on everything they held sacred. Paul says, “Couldn’t be further from the truth, I don’t know how to say it any clearer, or make my point any stronger, I’m telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.” and Of course the *affirmation* here being that he’s in no way against Israel, but in reality he’s very much for them, has a deep and unrelenting *burden* for them, would even take his seat in hell if it could save them.

But before we carried away just yet with all that, I want to draw out a very simple, but I believe a very *necessary application* from Vs 1. You’d think that amongst believers it’d be a simple reality, no need to place emphasis on it *specifically* but unfortunately such is not always the case. Paul emphasized the fact that in Christ he was telling the truth, not lying, what’s my point? If you’re in Christ, speak the truth, don’t lie, don’t bear false witness, don’t exaggerate, I find that most believers don’t wrestle too much with flat out bold face lying (though some do), but many are caught in the snare of exaggeration. Just “stretching” the truth a bit for emphasis, that’s called a lie. The bible says, “*Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.*” Prov 12:22 Paul told the Ephesians, “*Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another*” Eph 4:25 To the Colossians he wrote, “*Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*” Col 3:9

A lying tongue is characteristic of the “old man” the old unregenerate nature, the new nature will speak the truth (in love). and That’s a huge key as well, speaking the truth is good, but being rude about it accomplishes nothing, everything we do (including speaking the truth) is to be balanced with in the context of love. Again we read, “...*speaking the truth in love ... grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ--*” Eph 4:15
So a real mark of Christian character is being tactfully truthful.

Paul calls to their attention his transparent honesty before them, his conscience bearing witness in the Holy Spirit. “In the Holy Spirit,” being a key phrase, because the conscience in and of itself is an insufficient guide; it can become seared through non-repentant sin, covered over as it were by insensitive scar tissue. A lot of people do a lot of sinful things and their conscience doesn’t bother them one bit, even a believer’s conscience can become unreliable if they’re neglecting fellowship with the Lord, and/or in disobedience to His word. But a conscience that’s truly surrendered *to* and held captive *by* God’s Word is a conscience that’s subject to the Holy Spirit and that witness therein. Not an imperviousness to mistakes, but the context here is that he is in essence calling God as His witness to the truthfulness of his statement, he’s saying, “My conscience is clear before God in what I’m about to tell you.” Because what he’s about to say is radical, notice Vs 2-3 (read).

Paul is in essence saying here that his burden for the lost; specifically those Jews who’d missed Jesus as the Messiah, was so great that if it were possible for him to trade his salvation that they might be saved he’d do it. Think about that, this was a people that by and large wanted him dead (we discovered that emphatically throughout our study of the book of Acts). This type of self sacrificing love (I have to confess) is something that I’ve yet to realize. I mean, we can think of ourselves perhaps sacrificing ourselves for our family. I’d like to think that I could make the decision to suffer an eternal fate in hell if I knew it were the only way that my kids, or my wife would make it to Heaven. But we’re talking about the people who are the dearest to me in all the earth, I can’t even pretend to say that I’d make that same choice for a people I didn’t even know, much less those who literally hated everything I was about. Think perhaps of the person who grates on your nerves, those people that you “love at a distance” (which I’m not altogether certain even what that means exactly), but would you suffer an eternity in the lake of fire for the people that you can barely stand the sight of here and now? Or for those who made no bones of the fact that they couldn’t care less about you, or your general well being? That’s what Paul is saying, and he’s speaking the truth in Christ, his conscience bearing witness in the Holy Spirit.

It reminds us of that scene there in Ex 32, Moses had been up on the Mt spending time with the Lord, receiving the law, the blueprints for the tabernacle and all of that, but when he delayed in coming down the people began to grow antsy, you know the scriptures (long story short) Aaron fashions for them a golden calf out of the jewelry that they gave him. Moses comes down, finds them committing this horrific sin of idolatry, Moses becomes irate tells them to choose which side of the fence they’re going to stand on, the Levites gathered to him and that day 3,000 people were killed as the “leaven” was purged from the lump.

Moses goes back up the Mt to make intercession for the people and he says, “*Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin -- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.*” Ex 32:31-32 “God if You won’t forgive them, I’ll take my part with them in condemnation.” I can’t even fathom that kind of heart for a rebellious stiff-necked, murmuring and constantly complaining kind of people. Of course God spared them, but not because of Moses’ plea bargain, but because God is merciful.

You see before you make man out to be the hero there and God out to be the mean One who was going to smoke them all, you need to stop and ask yourself how it is that Moses obtained that kind of heart, who it is that put such love and a passion to intercede for them in his heart... You see God is always looking for an opportunity to show mercy, His holiness demands justice, but somehow, and in some way, for some reason He has opted to use humanity instrumentally in the accomplishing of His will on the earth. and I suggest to you that had God not called Moses up on that Mt, had Moses not been spending the intimate time with God that he did, gleaning the heart of God *as* he did, that he wouldn’t have had it in his heart to stand in the gap for those people the *way* he did. But because he spent time with the Lord, he’d captured the *heart* of the Lord for His people, and through that God was able to do what He was wanting to do which was to show mercy, but He was needing an opportunity to do that and Moses gave it to Him through intercessory prayer. What’s the application? Spend time with the Lord, that you might capture the heart of the Lord, and cultivate the heart of the Lord for the lost around you.

You see, how is it that Paul could say this, how did he obtain such a huge burden for the lost (specifically of his own countrymen?) I believe the key is found in the 1st Vs of the 10th Ch, check it out (read).

You see he spent time *with* the Lord, praying and crying out *before* the Lord for the salvation of his fellow countrymen, and through praying on behalf *of* them, he found his heart welling up with love *for* them. and What I’m trying to tell you is this, something happens in *your heart* when you begin to pray (honestly and openly) for a people, or a person who might otherwise get on your nerves, or want nothing to do with you. Your heart will begin to change *towards* them, you’ll begin to find yourself concerned, desiring whatever God desires *for* them. It’s no wonder Jesus said, “*...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;*” Matt 5:44-45 It would seem to me that Paul was wracked with this burden *for* them because of all this time he spend praying *over* them, not only is it good for those whom your praying for, but it challenges and changes your heart as well.

We spoke Wednesday evening about the need we have to be burdened for the lost, how much time do you spend praying for the lost? That God might use you to bring people in to His kingdom? Think about the things that worry you, or the things in life that really bother you and get to you, and I think that if honestly evaluated we'll find that most of the things that trouble us, they're usually not that big of a deal in the grand scheme of things. Generally speaking we worry a lot over fairly insignificant issues, but there is a sure fire way to eliminate insignificant stress from our lives, to wipe out the minor problems that we allow to consume us.

The way to do that is to place our focus on a major problem, the need to reach lost people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The fact that there are people slipping off the planet day in and day out without Jesus only to find themselves in for a rude awakening being eternally separated from God. You see the great passion for souls that Paul had helped him maintain his present perspective. He wasn't troubled by minor things, because he focused on a major thing, and this was a guy who had plenty of tough, and troublesome times (we spoke about that last week). But he didn't let those things get to him. Because there was a greater need out there than his personal comfort, or what so and so thought about him, or that other guy said about him, proper perspective will do amazing things for the stress load of your life. What troubled Paul was that there was a people out there that he knew and loved who didn't know Jesus, and as far as this life was concerned nothing else really mattered.

When what bothers you is someone's eternal destination, then you'll find all the minor issues such as being worried about job security, or being mad because you're the center piece of conversation in the gossip chain, those things just fall to the wayside. Spurgeon said something to the effect of, "Get love for the souls of men," he said, "You'll be delivered from petty worries if you're concerned about the souls of men," he said, "Get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out."

Paul said, "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh." Willing if it were possible to become accursed of God himself, if it meant the salvation of others, sounds a lot like Christ like love to me, who *did* become accursed of God that we might be saved. Paul told the Philippians that he was willing to stay out of Heaven for them (if it made for their *edification*), and for the lost of his own countrymen Paul says that he'd be willing to go to hell for them, if it could make for their *salvation*. Of course it couldn't, Jesus had already paid the price, He's already taken our place, and there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

But this is Paul's burden for his nation, the Israelites, whom God called His own Son, as a nation He adopted them, (Ex 4:22), He caused His glory to reside literally among them, a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day during the wilderness wanderings, then the Shekinah glory that would reside above the Mercy Seat there in the tabernacle. The covenants He made with them, the law He gave *to them*, the ministry of the tabernacle and temple, all given to them.

All of these things culminating in the coming of the Christ Himself who according to the flesh came through them. Then Paul makes this radical declaration, at the end of Vs 5 did you catch it? “Christ...who is over all, the eternally blessed God.” Now you have to do some serious swimming in circles around that in order to not see in that the fact that Paul makes it very clear right there that Jesus Himself is the eternally blessed God. Jesus was fully man, and fully God, He is over all. Paul told the Colossians that He is *before* all things, and in Him *all* things consist, He is Lord over all, the eternally blessed God. Israel has been radically blessed by God, well then what’s the problem?

Vs6-7

Paul says, “Two things you need to consider, 1st of all they are not all Israel who are *of* Israel.” What does *that* mean? Israel means, “Governed by God” this is sort of a play on words and we spent some time on this issue back in Ch 2 around Vs 25 so we won’t here. But what Paul is saying is that not everyone who is of Israel is governed by God. Today we might say, “Not everyone is a Christian just because they go to church, or simply because they *say* they’re a Christian.” It’s not about ascribing a label to yourself, or being as it were “religious” it’s about having a personal relationship with the 1 true living God. and Unless you’re governed by God, you’re not truly Israel.

#2 He emphasizes here in Vs 7 the fact that physical lineage means nothing, just because you may’ve happened to physically descend from Abraham, what does that prove? All kinds of people descended from Ab, Ishmael and his lineage, after Sarah died Ab married again, and Keturah bore him 6 more sons, so being a descendant of Ab in and of itself means nothing. God’s plan was one of promise, Ishmael (who came through Hagar) was a product of the flesh, Ab’s own attempt at helping God out, and it made for a mess, (by the way it always does). Whenever we try to help God along we make a mess of things, but Isaac was a child of promise, and the heir of the covenant. Paul is stressing here the point that the flesh means nothing, just because someone is of certain *ethnicity* or of a specific lineage *personally*, that that doesn’t mean they’re the elect of God *automatically*, because God doesn’t elect for His purposes on the basis of the physical, notice.

Vs8-9

Now we understand the interpretation of Vs 8, Paul is saying this isn’t a physical thing, God’s purpose is bound up in God’s promise, and the children of promise are those who by faith look *to* and trust *in* the Lord just as Ab did. But man there’s *application* all over this Vs, don’t miss it, “Those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” Underline that, highlight it, somehow draw attention to it, the bible is clear that those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh along with it’s passions and desires. If you live *for*, are constantly seeking *after*, and are constantly driven *by* the desires of your flesh, that is *not* the nature of the child of God. The child of God is the one who lives *for* and is seeking *after* the things of the Spirit, desiring to walk *in* the Spirit

Vs 10-13

It's always good for me when we come across passages like this at the *end* of our study time because it means I don't have to say too much about it. ;0) The whole gist of this passage is just this, God has a plan, the purpose of God according to election will stand, and that the purpose of God, the election of God is found in no way, shape or form in me, it's found in Him.

You see some might argue, "Well its obvious why God chose Isaac, he and Ishmael were of different mothers, Sarah was Ab's rightful wife." But you can't say that with Jacob and Esau, they were twins, as a matter of fact Esau was born *before* Jacob so that by all cultural standards, the covenant should've gone to Esau, but God purposed that it should go to Jacob. Why? That God's plan, and His purpose might stand, it had nothing to do with Jacob or Esau as a person, neither of them had done anything good, or evil when God elected Jacob to be the recipient of the covenant, His chosen nation.

A lot of people struggle with Vs 13, "I can't believe that God hated Esau" but that's really not the surprise, the surprise is the fact that God *loved* Jacob, he was a rascal, a conniver, a schemer. A lot like the rest of us whom God miraculously loves.

But I do want to make clear a couple of things, keep the context of what this is speaking of here, there's no indication whatsoever that God ever hated Esau as a person. He was an incredibly blessed man, while living on the earth, and this comment wasn't made until well over 1,000 years later, in regards to the nation of Edom and the way God had rejected them as a nation in regards to the covenant and had elected Israel. The bible is clear that God so *loved* the world, that is *al* of the world, this comment is made with in the confines of the covenant nation. So that God is in essence saying, "Jacob I have accepted with regard to the covenant, but Esau I have rejected in regard to the covenant." He hasn't *esteemed* Esau, but he *did* esteem Jacob, or Israel. So He hated Esau in the light of his inheriting of the covenant, not with respect to the way he'd be blessed in this life, or should he trust in the living God, the next. This isn't a reference to eternal life and death, but God's covenant, what's Paul communicating? That God has a plan, and that plan *resides* entirely in Him and His choosing of one person as opposed to the next with regards to that plan *rests* entirely in Him. It's not of works, but of Him who calls.

My encouragement to you is that if God is calling you to be apart of that plan by either A) Opening your heart initially and receiving Christ, that's where it starts. Or by B) grabbing hold of the plow in an active way, repenting, or being renewed in commitment to Him, or whatever, that you respond to His prompting and His plan for *your* life, today.

Prayer Points:

Lord we Thank You that Your plans, and Your purposes cannot be thwarted by the likes of us. But that Lord You're the One in control, but we want to be an active part of Your plan, and so whatever that may entail and to whatever degree You might want to use us, help us to be sensitive to the leading of Your Spirit. God help us to have the proper perspective of our worries, may You remind us of a greater grief that *should* be concerning us, the need to reach the lost with the good news of what You've done for us on the cross in the person of Your Son. and Jesus we worship You, being over all, the eternally blessed God

If Christ is calling you today, than why not respond in giving your heart to Him? God has loved you with an everlasting love and He displayed that love on the cross of Jesus Christ who shed His blood, and laid down His life for you. But 3 days later Jesus rose from the dead and having defeated death He offers you life. Forgiveness of sin, all you have to do is believe Him for it, and receive Him for it. Open your heart and receive Christ today.