**ROMANS: Chapter 10-11:12**

***SITTING OUT THIS DANCE***

A

s the young mother and her six-year-old son are finishing their lunch, she asks the server, "May I have a bag to take these leftovers home for my dog?" Tugging impatiently at her arm, her son gasps, "Oh, Mommy, are we gonna get a dog?"

***Shrink-wrapping Chs. 1-9***

Equally impatient Saul, a first century Pharisee and high court judge, leads Judaism’s goon squad to silence Jesus’ early followers. He’s stopped in mid-sentence when Christ instantly transforms his life, renames him Paul and assigns him to take the world premiere of God’s “mystery” Gospel on tour to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-31).

In his A.D. 57 letter to Jesus’ believers in Rome, Paul explains how to “be set right with God,” as revealed to him by the ascended Christ. To approach God prior to the cross, Jews and Gentiles had to live up to literally hundreds of Judaism’s laws, rituals and traditions.

In *Romans* God declares us all guilty as sinners, deserving physical death and permanent separation from Him. His Laws, given to Moses fifteen centuries before Christ’s birth, were impossible to fully obey, thus there’s no way to *earn* salvation. Good works are the *fruit*, not the *route* to being rightly related to God. He sent Jesus so that by faith alone we can take this “mystery” Gospel’s religion-free path direct to the pardon, power, peace and inner presence of God.

God’s gift of *eternal* life comes with His total forgiveness, unlimited patience, unmerited grace and unconditional love (1 Timothy 1:15,16). Nothing can separate God from those who love Him.

The unconvinced Jews were angry with God because Jesus had not assumed the throne in Jerusalem, ending Rome’s occupation. Paul rebukes the Jews for questioning God’s right to deal with His creation as He chooses, and for opening His arms to the Gentiles whom they despised and demeaned (Titus 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:4,11). Let’s read **Romans 10:1-11:12 (p 843 NIV).**

***The Self-Righteous Brothers***

***Romans 10:1-4***

Paul yearns for his Jewish kinsmen to know Jesus, that “they may be saved.” Refusing to honor Jesus as Messiah, they choose religion’s highway to heaven, seeing God’s love as a *reward* to be *earned*, not a *gift* to be *received* (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Solomon wrote, “There's a way of life which looks right to a man; but look again -- its end is the way of death -- it leads straight to hell” (Proverbs 14:12).

We can’t become perfect law-keepers (Numbers 20:12). C.S. Lewis writes, “No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet.” God wants us to trust in Jesus’ death and resurrection. When we do, God credits us with Christ’s flawless obedience to the Law and gives us eternal life (Philippians 3:8,9).

As a people, Israel still today stumbles over Jesus who took our sin that we might be given the same standing with God the Father that He has. But like Paul, many individual Jews have trusted Him as their Cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; John 4:21-24).

DISCUSS: What puts people off about Jesus? And why aren’t more believers broken-hearted about those who have yet to trust Him?

***Route or Fruit?***

***Romans 10:5-13***

In the Old Testament being right with God involved faith in Him plus keeping the Law (Leviticus 18:5). One German cleric had long sought to earn God’s love ‘til he found Romans 1:17: “The just shall live by faith.” To be saved, God’s not asking you to DO anything, just BELIEVE in what Christ has DONE (Colossians 2:13-15). Good intentions + good deeds = nice try, but no cigar. The Gospel Christ gave to Paul says good works are the *fruit*, not the *requirement* to be saved. Jesus did the heavy lifting by fulfilling the Law for us.

For 1,500 years from Moses to the cross God wasn’t expecting Israel to zealously obey all points of the Law. He desired that they *trust* Him as their beloved forefather Abraham had done (Psalm 51).

Because Jesus came “to seek and save the lost,” God placed His permanent pardon for your sin on the low shelf, within your reach by agreeing with Him that you’re a sinner, now handing the reins of your life to Him, your only Hope to win against sin (Galatians 4:4,5).

The Jews demanded that Jesus prove Himself by performing miracles; Greeks demanded logic (Numbers 14:11; 1 Corinthians 1:21-25a). They both missed faith’s role: “Abraham *believed* God, and God fully *approved* of him” (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:20-25). But Abraham’s offspring pressured Pilate to crucify the miracle-working Carpenter from Nazareth, their "stumbling stone.”

Most Jews still don’t know that (1) forgiveness of sin is a free gift of God’s grace, accepted by faith (Joel 2:32); and (2) that the Law God gave Moses was not to help us become perfect in this life, but to show us our sin (Hebrews 7:18-19). To follow Christ is to *believe* in your heart and *confess* openly that JESUS *IS* GOD! He’s the *sinless* Sacrifice that God’s justice demanded as payment-in-full for our sins. Failure to believe this is the ultimate and fatal deal-breaker.

DISCUSS: Why do so many cursorily think that living right, “just doing my best,” will get them to heaven? What would convince them otherwise?

***Surprised by Goy***

***Romans 10:14-21***

Saving faith comes from hearing God’s Word. Then the Holy Spirit gives the sinner the ability to respond to God’s loving offer of forgiveness (Ephesians 2:8,9). We all need the Lord plus someone to tell us God’s offer (Isaiah 52:7; Acts 11:14; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

Israel heard God speak to them through their leaders and prophets, through Creation and from their own consciences. They had no excuse. God in His mercy took Israel’s rejection of Jesus and offered His pardon directly to *all* people, ultimately using the Jews’ jealousy to draw Israel back to Him (Deuteronomy 32:21; Philippians 1:6).

In every culture, civilized or not, creation announces that God exists (1:19-20). **Let’s read what David, raised as a shepherd beneath heaven’s starry canopy, wrote in Psalm 19:1-6 (p. 408 NIV).**

DISCUSS: If God’s forgiveness meets everyone’s deepest need, why are so many reluctant to pass along this good news? How could they start?

***Promises, Promises***

***Romans 11:1-1 2***

Wanna know God’s plan for *today* and *tomorrow*? He’s not done with His chosen people yet; He doesn’t wimp out on His promises (1 Samuel 12:22). When Israel blew off Jesus, God set them aside until the Rapture (1) to draw Gentiles to Himself and (2) to make Israel so envious that some Jews will embrace Jesus as Messiah (Galatians 3:14,29; Romans 2:29). Israel’s national sin has allowed millions of Gentiles AND Jews to be saved. Were it not for God’s choosing, no one would follow Jesus. God is the Seeker; we’re the sought.

Today Israel is still sitting out this current “grace dance” with God. But during the Tribulation God will resume working with His chosen people, reinstating animal sacrifices and rituals in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 36:24-28). By then Jesus’ pre-Tribulation followers will have been caught up to be “forever with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Will you be with them? Or still stumbling?

When Jesus returns to earth to end the Tribulation period by defeating Satan and his angels, the Jews as a people will return to God. **Let’s read Ezekiel’s prophecy about this in Ezekiel 36:22-38 (p 647, NIV).**

Does (1) God choose us, or (2) do we choose Him? Paul checks “yes” for both (Romans 9:14-16, 19-21; 10:13). Is this another case of “It takes two oars to make a boat go straight?”

Try this RSVP: “God, thank You for sending Jesus in my place to the cross where You forgave all my sin. Now, Father, I give You my life.”

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