

Romans 11

In the words of all our favorite teachers, when presented with a difficult subject which they were unprepared to teach: “Kids, let’s review!”

In chapters 9 and 10, Paul has stated (feel free to challenge my interpretations here):

1. He has anguish in his heart that his own people have not recognized Christ as the only true way to righteousness.
2. The mere fact that someone is a physical descendent of Abraham is not sufficient to be a *child of promise*.
3. God has demonstrated, through His sovereign choices in His dealings with Israel through the ages, that He can and does dispense greater measures of mercy to some than to others. These sovereign acts demonstrate that it is not our actions which are instrumental in our redemption, but rather God’s mercy. They also serve to demonstrate God’s power and authority.
4. The Israelites who have attempted to obtain righteousness through the law can never be successful – Christ, by fulfilling the law, made faith in his sacrifice a requirement for justification. Perhaps we should be content, at least initially, to say that embracing the law while openly rejecting the message of the gospel cannot result in salvation.
5. Although Israel has heard and understood the message of the gospel, not all had accepted it.

QUESTIONS:

Vv. 1-10: Old Testament passages which are references: I Ki 19:10-18, Deut 29:2-6, Ps 69:22-23

- 1) Paul states that at the time he was writing, there was still a faithful remnant in Israel, “chosen by grace.” How did this remnant obtain their status?
- 2) Was the “spirit of stupor” that came over the rest of Israel actively imposed by God, willfully developed over time by the unfaithful, or some combination of the two?

Vv. 11-24:

- 3) These verses may imply that the unfaithfulness of Israel was required to eventually reach the Gentiles, which was, in turn, required for the eventual restoration of Israel.
 - a) Was it?
 - b) If yes, why? If no, speculate on an alternate scheme. (Hoo, boy...)
- 4) What is meant when Paul says the Jews’ eventual acceptance will be “life from the dead?” (And again, I say, Hoo boy...)
- 5) The redemption of the Gentiles is likened to ingrafting a wild olive shoot into an olive tree. There is a lot of breaking off of an regrafting of branches discussed. Note that Paul “grants” that branches were broken off specifically so that we could be grafted in.
 - a) What does “continuing in God’s kindness” (v. 22) entail? What does being cut off mean?
 - b) It seems as though once we have been ingrafted, our status is completely equivalent to that of the Jews. Does this mean that we can be pruned in the same way for the sake of others’ redemption?

Vv. 25-36:

- 6) When Paul says that “all of Israel will be saved” (v. 26), just who is included in that “all?”
- 7) V. 32 states that “God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.” Does this picture God in a perverse way, punishing us in order to save us later? If not, what is the meaning?

Significant help in discussing questions 6 and 7 is found in Manfred Brauch's *Hard Sayings of Paul*, which I have borrowed from Christi and will bring tonight.

Romans 13

This is one of the juiciest chapters of Romans, both because it is directly applicable to our lives, and because it may be hard to swallow, especially for those in a country established through rebellion. The idea is also expressed by Paul in 1 Tim 2:1-2 and Titus 3:1, and by Peter in 1 Peter 2:13-15. The *Jerusalem Bible* has a footnote saying that Paul didn't change his stance even after the start of persecution against the early church. Note that 1 Peter 2:13-15, implies that Peter and perhaps Paul were worried that the early church not give opponents any opportunity for criticism.

- 1) In OT times God used Nebuchadnezzar as a tool to discipline many nations (Jer 27:6).
 - a) Is this parallel to God's using civil authorities to rule the nations of the earth?
 - b) Can the civil authorities, like the king of Babylon, be God's tool while at the same time awaiting their own judgement?
 - c) If so, does this mean that we may *not* use, as a criterion for deciding whether or not to obey civil authorities, whether or not they are righteous?
- 2) In Rom 9:14-18 Paul says that Pharaoh was God's instrument in showing God's glory. Moses' response, though, was the opposite of what Paul advocates, in that Moses opposed remaining subject to Pharaoh. Who was right, Paul or Moses?
- 3) Rom 13:1-7 reads more like principles for a child going off to college than hard-and-fast theology. Give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down depending on whether or not you consider it a matter of disobedience to God to break the law in the following cases:
 - a) going 5 mph over the speed limit on the highway
 - b) how about 10 mph?
 - c) 15?
 - d) breaking copyright laws by making a copy of a cassette tape of music by a secular musician
 - e) copying a tape of "Christian" music
 - f) copying a video tape rented from the video store
 - g) cheating on your taxes (e.g., oh, say, a very small amount of unreported tutoring income)
 - h) downloading shareware and not paying the required fee
 - i) digging a pond on your back yard
 - j) shoplifting to feed your family
 - k) smoking marijuana
 - l) photocopying personal material at work
 - m) kids sneaking into movie theaters
 - n) parking illegally
 - o) murdering your spouse for not doing the dishes
 - p) letting your dog run around without a leash
 - q) cannibalism if you are stranded in the mountains without hope of rescue any time soon
 - r) you and your oppositely-gendered sibling are the last people on earth and you have to repopulate... (You fill in the blanks!)
 - s) insurrection against an oppressive government (and now all say the pledge of allegiance)
- 4) What would Paul have thought of civil disobedience?
- 5) In v. 8 Paul advises staying out of debt. Why? What would Paul think of credit cards? How about house loans?

Romans 13:8ff

- 1) How does loving one's neighbor sum up or encompass all of the Law? What things get in the way of loving one's neighbor? What are some ideas about how to put into practice the Law of Love and to overcome any obstacles mentioned above?
- 2) The Decalogue is a "negative" law (full of "thou shalt nots"). The Law of Love and the Golden Rule are positive laws (thou shalt). Is one BETTER than another – use your own criteria. Bonus: The Law of Love is a wee bit harder to enforce. Does this pose a problem for Christian organizations/institutions/groups etc.?
- 3) Is Paul using a figure of speech in v. 8 (owing) or are we commanded to be debt-free?
- 4) Of what salvation is Paul speaking in v. 11 – are we not saved already!?
- 5) What is the armor (or even armour) of light, what stores carry it in Rochester, and how does one fit into it or put it on?
- 6) Is not the second paragraph really speaking of Hope!? What role does Hope play for us? Does anyone have any good personal experiences that how Hope works wonders in our lives?

Notes on Romans 16

- 1) General Notes
 - a) Apostle is a calling like prophet, teacher, etc.; cf. also I Cor 12:27.
- 2) Question 2
 - a) In part (b), the reference should be to 1 Tim 2:12. Cf. also I Cor 14:22.
 - b) Note that God doesn't oppose female leaders, such as Deborah, Esther (Miriam?), etc.
- 3) Question 4
 - a) Such as Oral Roberts?