

ROMANS 9:1-11:36 | GOD'S WORK FULFILLED THROUGH ISRAEL

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 38

ROMANS 9:1-10:21 | PAUL'S PRAYER & GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL IN THE DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE & BEYOND

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ROMANS 10:1-21 | GOD'S FUTURE WORK WITH ISRAEL

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VERSE 1 - BLACK

After discussing Israel in the current dispensation, Paul now moves to the future. Paul's deep desire is for Israel to be saved. This is a national prayer, and Paul eventually concludes that all Israel shall be saved (Rom 11:26). It is important to consider the word "saved" in context, as whatever is done in 10:1 will affect the interpretation of 11:26. In the context of chapter 9, the word should be taken in a national, kingdom sense rather than an individual salvation. However, Paul would likely also be thrilled to see individual Israelites saved with His mystery gospel. It should be noted that verses 1-4 may seem to indicate an individual salvation, but this is not required and such a view may cause problems when we arrive at Romans 11:26, namely, will every individual Jew be saved?

☞ Paul's mystery Gospel is the gift of salvation to individuals, unrelated to the covenants and commonwealth of Israel and Israel's national demands for Kingdom salvation.

VERSE 2 - BLACK

Paul commended their "zeal for God," but he desired that their zeal would be "according to knowledge." His word for knowledge is ἐπίγνωσις [epignosis], which is the usual word for knowledge (gnosis) with the intensifier prefix "epi" (literally, "upon," giving the idea of "knowledge about knowledge").

It is important not to jump to conclusions that this new knowledge is the mystery. Such an assumption would be premature. The mystery is individual salvation as a gift, separate from the Law. One could surmise that Paul was eager for Israel to drop their zeal for the Law and adopt a zeal for his Gospel. Verse 3 provides definition to the knowledge he would like them to have, and rules out "the mystery" as the content of this knowledge.

VERSE 3 - BLACK

The lack of knowledge concerning the difference between "God's righteousness" and "their own righteousness" is a concern for Paul. He has already stated that the righteousness of God is revealed in "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16-17). That gospel, you may recall, refers to the good news about the Messiah and thus is the Kingdom Gospel (see notes on Rom. 1:16-17). Paul is not stating concern that they have not received the Gospel of grace. He is concerned that they do not know "the righteousness of God."

Paul laments that Israel had "not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." The church, often failing to interpret this correctly, interprets it as "*they have not received the righteousness which is by faith.*" And there certainly is such righteousness (Phil 3:9). However, I argue that Paul is not speaking about this righteousness. Rather, he speaks of the righteousness that is of the law! Those who are ready to shout, "*There is no righteousness of the law!*" should wait until they consider verse 5.

The problem is that Israel did not listen to Peter's messages in Acts 2-3, nor Stephen's in Acts 7, and so on. Therefore, they never came to the ultimate goal of the law, as verse 4 attests.

VERSE 4 -

The reason why Israel has not achieved "God's Righteousness" (v. 3) is that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." By rejecting Christ, they rejected the "end game" in the Law. The righteousness of God could not be achieved, regardless of their zeal for the law. This applies "to everyone that believeth." However, do not assume that this refers to the Pauline Gospel just because faith is required, as both the Kingdom Gospel and Pauline Gospel require faith (see Rom. 1:17, quoting Hab. 2:4). Paul is about to argue the same thing James argued to the scattered tribes of Israel, that both faith and works are required for the Kingdom Gospel, and Israel lacked faith.

VERSE 5 -

For those who in verse 3 argued that the Law has no righteousness, they must argue with both Paul and Moses in verse 5. Paul mentions Moses as describing “the righteousness which is of the law,” then directly quotes Moses saying, “the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” This is cited from Leviticus 18:5 and stated several other times in Scripture.

It seems it would be very difficult to argue that the law did not or could not provide righteousness. Moses, it seems, along with Paul, would be surprised to hear such an argument. But Paul does argue that this is not enough. That faith is also needed, and that it is faith that would lead a person to the “end of the law” (v. 4), which is Christ. The faith argument will be given beginning in verse 6.

VERSES 6-8 -

Verses 6-8 need to be considered together since they compose a single thought, which is largely another quote from Moses, which comes from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. Paul does not quote verbatim, but certainly is referencing the words of Moses.

Paul argued that Moses insisted on a righteousness of works (v. 5), and now he argues that Moses also “the righteousness which is of faith” (v. 6). Paul makes a slight adjustment of the interpretation of the text, from having faith in the law to having faith in Christ. In the original, the context is Moses teaching that the Israelites did not need to wander the universe searching for truth, because “the word is nigh thee” (v. 8). That is, they just needed to have faith that God had spoken through the Torah. Now Paul shifts the emphasis from the Torah to the Christ, giving two “that is” statements that qualify his interpretation.

Paul is not alone in making this interpretive shift. John’s gospel does essentially the same thing in John 1:1, equating “the Word” with Christ. When Paul says “The word is nigh thee” (v. 8), he is also speaking of Christ, and encouraging faith on Israel’s part that Jesus is their promised one.

VERSE 9

Paul takes the words of Moses, “in thy mouth, and in thy heart” (Dt. 30:14, quoted in Rom. 10:8) and carries it to his original conclusion (that Christ is the goal of the Law, v. 4). He teaches Israel that they must confess the Lord Jesus and believe that God raised Him from the dead. This aligns with our consistent argument in this chapter, that Paul is arguing that Israel has not achieved her righteousness because she has not followed the Law through to the end.

This is consistent with Paul’s Israel-centric message of works needing faith, equating the mouth as works and the heart as belief. With both works and faith, he says, Israel shall “be saved.”

In our interpretive work we should ask about the identity of the pronoun (thou) in verse 9. It is often said that the “thou” is referring to any individual who fulfills the conditions Paul is stating. However, this follows the singular pronouns also used in verse 8 (thee and thy). But verse 8 is a quote of Deuteronomy 30:14, where Moses uses the singular to refer to the nation. Paul’s argument is that there needs to be a national confession and a *national belief* on Israel’s part. Such has never come.

Note: for examples of the second person singular pronoun being used of Israel (“Thou Israel”), compare Isaiah 41:8 and Hosea 4:15.

VERSE 10

This verse reiterates Paul’s claims. However, it also breaks it down a bit. He says, “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Remember that it was *righteousness* that Israel was lacking (vv. 3-4), and Paul has been arguing all along that Israel had a “heart” problem, that is, a problem of faith. After taking care of the heart problem they would also need to take care of the “mouth” problem, and make confession (which aligns with Jesus’ words of Matthew 23:39).

Although verses 8-9 are often used in a gospel presentation, they should not be. These verses are directed towards Israel and describe what the nation must do nationally in order to find salvation as a nation. Using these verses to describe individual, grace-based salvation can introduce confusion from the beginning.

VERSE 11 -

As he had done in Romans 9:33, Paul again quotes Isaiah 28:16, a messianic prophecy requiring belief in the Cornerstone. By using this Scripture Paul comes back to the point of the entire passage: Israel did not fail in zeal nor in works, but in belief, causing her to reject the Messiah sent to be her Savior.