

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

## Weekly Edition – June 12, 2015

### Paul's Letter to the Romans

<sup>14</sup> *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."<sup>a</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> *It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. <sup>17</sup> For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."<sup>b</sup> <sup>18</sup> Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.*

<sup>19</sup> *One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?"<sup>20</sup> But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"<sup>c</sup> <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?*

<sup>22</sup> *What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?<sup>23</sup> What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—<sup>24</sup> even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?<sup>25</sup> As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"<sup>d</sup> <sup>26</sup> and, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"<sup>e</sup>*

<sup>27</sup> *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved."<sup>28</sup> For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.<sup>f</sup>*

<sup>29</sup> *It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."<sup>g</sup>*

#### **Israel's Unbelief**

<sup>30</sup> *What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;*

<sup>31</sup> *but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal.*

<sup>32</sup> *Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.<sup>33</sup> As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."<sup>h</sup>*

## Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials**  
(1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
  - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
    - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
    - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
  - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
    - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
    - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
  - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
    - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
    - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
    - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
    - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
  - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
    - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
    - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
    - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
  - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
  - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
  - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
  - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

<sup>a</sup> Romans 9:15 Exodus 33:19

<sup>b</sup> Romans 9:17 Exodus 9:16

<sup>c</sup> Romans 9:20 Isaiah 29:16; 45:9

<sup>d</sup> Romans 9:25 Hosea 2:23

<sup>e</sup> Romans 9:26 Hosea 1:10

<sup>f</sup> Romans 9:28 Isaiah 10:22,23 (see Septuagint)

<sup>g</sup> Romans 9:29 Isaiah 1:9

<sup>h</sup> Romans 9:33 Isaiah 8:14; 28:16

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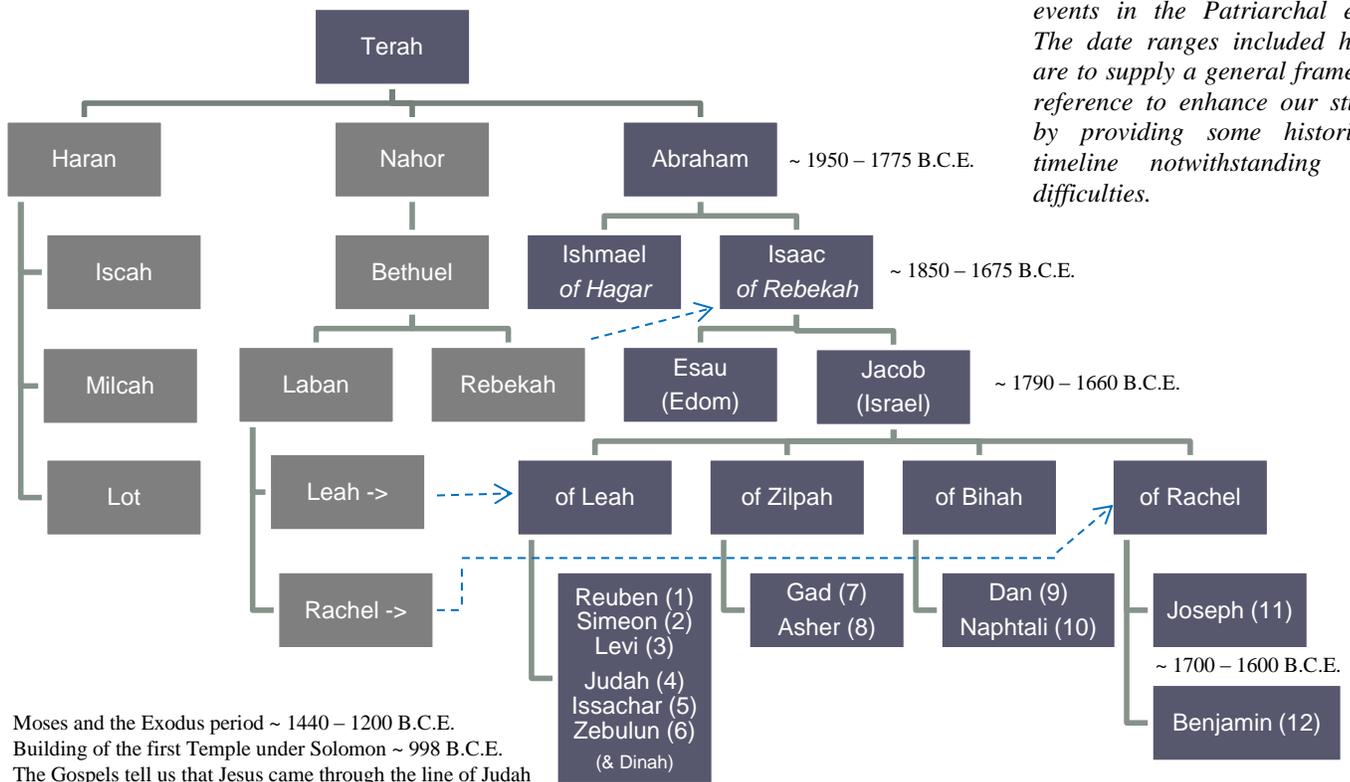
**Recap**

- 1) Our study of Paul's Letter to the Romans has taken us on a journey of learning about God's promises. Along the way we have been challenged to acknowledge and accept that:
  - a) On account of sin, all men and women of every race and language have acute need for salvation;
  - b) We are justified by faith. That is, faith is the provision God has made by which men attain salvation; and
  - c) We enter into a wonderful array of "freedoms" as a result of our salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
  
- 2) Now, in Romans 9 through 11, Paul deals with the problem associated with the condition of Israel.
  - a) What does it mean that Israel has missed its Messiah?
  - b) What does this say about God?
  - c) What does it say about Israel?
  - d) What does it say about our present position in God?

1) *I have created the table below to add context and some historical frame of reference to the events that Paul will now use to prove his argument in Romans 9.*

**The Family Tree of the Patriarchs**

*There is little scholarly and archeological agreement concerning the dating of biblical events in the Patriarchal era. The date ranges included here are to supply a general frame of reference to enhance our study by providing some historical timeline notwithstanding the difficulties.*



- Moses and the Exodus period ~ 1440 – 1200 B.C.E.
- Building of the first Temple under Solomon ~ 998 B.C.E.
- The Gospels tell us that Jesus came through the line of Judah
- The numbers indicate the 12 tribes of Israel

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### Pharaoh and Hardening of Our Hearts

- 1) Holy Scripture says concerning Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up."
  - a) God allowed the Pharaoh of Moses' day to rise to power so that God could show the strength of His judgment against him, and thereby glorify Himself.
  - b) We should not think that God persuaded an unwilling, kind-hearted Pharaoh to be hard towards God and His people. In hardening the heart of Pharaoh, God simply allowed his heart to pursue its natural inclination.
  - c) Holy Scripture records that Pharaoh harden his own heart first, in each of the first five plagues according to Exodus 7:13, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7, and 9:34.
  - d) Paul doesn't point out that Pharaoh hardened his own heart as evidence of Pharaoh's unbelief and rebellion, because he is emphasizing the freedom of God's action, a freedom which God enjoys in all circumstances.
- 2) Hardness of heart wasn't confined to Pharaoh, nor to the Israelites as they rebelled in the wilderness. We, too, can choose to harden our own hearts when we choose our own will over the God's in the unfolding circumstances of our lives.
- 3) Many times these circumstances do not demand of us a choice to seek God's will or our own. But there are key moments in each life when we are confronted with a clear sense of what is within God's sovereign will juxtaposed against something that we really want but know on some level is not right or even potentially harmful for us.
- 4) The example of Pharaoh demonstrates that we can use our free will to harden our hearts by rejecting the guidance or "check" of the Holy Spirit (as in spiritual consolations/desolations) when we choose a selfish or dangerous course.

### Potters Clay Example

- 1) Paul now asks an important question: Does the sovereign right of God to choose relieve man of our responsibility? Paul imagines someone asking, "If it is all a matter of God's choice, then how can God find fault with me? How can anyone go against God's choice?"
- 2) In quoting Isaiah 29:16 which says: *"You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'You did not make me'? Can the pot say to the potter, 'You know nothing'?"* - See Jeremiah's invitation to go down to the Potter's house. (Jeremiah 18:1-23)
- 3) Paul replies by showing how disrespectful such a question is. If God says He chooses, and if God also says that we are responsible before Him, who are we to question Him?
- 4) Does not the potter have power over the clay? Does God not have the same right that any creator has over his creation? Therefore, if God declares that we have an eternal responsibility before Him, then it is so.
  - a) <sup>3</sup> *So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. <sup>4</sup> But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me. <sup>6</sup> He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. <sup>7</sup> If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, <sup>8</sup> and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. <sup>9</sup> And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, <sup>10</sup> and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.* (Jeremiah 18:3-10)

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- 5) God's choices are never inconsistent with God's nature and character as we see in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. He desires that all His creatures love and honor Him, but will leave us to our own devices when we repeatedly and consciously spurn His blessings. He is a God who desires mercy, but we must ask for it.

### **I will Call Them 'My People' Who are not My People**

- 1) That God would re-fashion the ethnic Israel into a spiritual "Israel" of the faithful drawn from among both Jews and Gentiles was foretold by God through the Prophets, among them Jeremiah who watched the potter working clay on the wheel.
- 2) Here Paul quotes Hosea through whom God revealed that those who were not "My people" – that is those excluded from the ethnic tribe of Abraham, would be called by God "My people" – clearly a reference to the adoption of faithful non-Jews into God's family. This was made possible by the obedience of Jesus, who died for the sins of all men and women and in whom all are justified by faith.
- 3) On account of the faithfulness of Jesus, who opened the way of salvation for all men, God foreknew that those who were not "His loved ones" on account of our sinfulness and being at enmity with God, are now called "His loved ones" because in Jesus the guilt for our sins is expunged and we are adopted into God's family as His very own sons and daughters.

### **Sodom and Gomorrah**

- 1) <sup>29</sup> *It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."* (Romans 9:29)
- 2) Isaiah declares God's right to choose a remnant among Israel for salvation. The passage quoted from Isaiah 10:23 speaks first to God's work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed in judgment.
- 3) From Isaiah 1:9 quoted in Romans 9:28 Paul shows that as bad as Judah's state was because of their sin, it could have been worse. It was only by the mercy of God that they survived at all. Sodom and Gomorrah were both totally destroyed, with not even a very small remnant to carry on. Even in the midst of judgment, God showed His mercy to Judah. We should not understand that God *prefers* a remnant; He prefers that all men would acknowledge and worship Him.
- 4) *"Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord."* (Genesis 13:13) And so God doomed them to destruction and raised-up armies to march against them.
- 5) The word translated here as "descendants" is *sperma* in the Greek text. It means: (i) the seed i.e. the grain or kernel which contains within itself the germ of the future plants, (ii) a residue, or a few survivors reserved as the germ of the next generation, and (iii) divine energy of the Holy Spirit operating within the soul by which we are regenerated.
- 6) Israel missed the Messiah because of their lack of faith. They approached holiness on the basis of works as though grace could be earned by following the law. The Gentiles found righteousness even though it did not seem that they really looked for it – but they accepted the Gospel message by faith.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) What are the ways that I choose to harden my heart from time to time? What brings me back to God?
- 2) How malleable and pliable is my life in the hands of the Potter? In what ways can I facilitate being more receptive to our Master's touch?