

STUDY NOTES

A LETTER TO THE ROMANS *at* NEW CITY CHURCH

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The following content is based on the message “God’s Plan, Man’s Obedience” on 5/21/17 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective community groups.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 9 *(read throughout as directed)*

STARTING WITH ISRAEL

Read Romans 9:1-5. Thus far in Romans, the Jewish Christians were probably feeling like Paul has abandoned his heritage. Here, he lists some things that talk about how God chose them to play a central role in his story of redemption (see reference page for the list with references).

- *What does it mean to you to hear Paul start this section by saying that he was in deep anguish at the state of his kinsmen?*

ESAU AND GOD’S MERCY

Read Romans 9:6-13. The history of how Abraham’s promised line begins and continues is miraculous. In this section when Paul summarizes the story, he is not building a case for people lacking consent in salvation. Rather he is arguing that the exclusion of so many Jews does not constitute a failure on God’s part. As God chose Isaac, so also does he now choose to bless those who by placing their faith in Christ become the true children of Abraham.

In essence, God says, that: I do my saving work through miracle babies, not by human means. God is faithful to his covenant.

- *What encourages you about the ways that God has intervened within the biblical story?*

Read Romans 9:14-18. This section is hard for us to understand. Sometimes it seems like a cop-out, but we have to remember that God is not like us. “With the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality” (2 Chronicles 19:7). (Exod 33:19). When God bestows mercy on whom he chooses to and has compassion on whom he chooses to, **he does this perfectly, without fault.**

- *Why is it so important to believe that God is neither partial nor unjust?*

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

1. It’s important that theology is not based on personal perceptions of what you think ought to be, but upon the biblical revelation of the character and purpose of God.
2. Although God elects with sovereign freedom, it does not follow that Israel had nothing to do with their rejection. Israel failed to attain a right standing with God because they pursued it on the basis of works (vv. 30–32).

The sovereignty of God does not set aside human responsibility.

- *What are some things that make it difficult to believe that God is sovereign?*
- *How do we often make ourselves out to be the gods in this conversation of God’s sovereignty and our responsibility?*

Read Romans 9:19-21. We, as created beings, have finite minds. We have begin and end. God exists outside of time. This means God experiences past, present, and future simultaneously and not at all. Our separation from God is so great that only he can bridge the gap. He chooses to do it entirely on his own. Our only responsibility is to accept by faith the finished work of Christ on behalf of sinners.

Righteousness comes by faith and faith alone.

- *How has God proven his mercy?*
- *What should be the effect of seeing how God saves people?*
- *How has God saved you in ways you didn't imagine? How did that effect you?*
- *Pray with each other to have the courage to preach for Jesus like Paul.*

REFERENCES PAGE FOR MORE STUDY

REGARDING THE JEWISH PEOPLE

- Israel God's "firstborn son" (Exod 4:22; cf. Hos 11:1).
- The divine presence ("shekinah of God") was with them in desert (Exod 13:21).
- God established covenants with them (Gen 15:18; Exod 19:5)
- God gave them the law (Ps 147:19).
- Their sacred literature was rich with the promises of God (e.g., Gen 12:7; Isa 9:6-7).
- They were descendants of the great patriarchs (Romans 9:5).
- It is from them that the human ancestry of Christ is traced (Romans 1:3).

ESAU

Paul's quote at the end of the section about Esau comes from the book of Malachi. It is a Hebrew idiom to talk about the difference between Jacob and Esau. It doesn't necessarily mean that God hated Esau. However, it should cause us to see the difference between Jacob and Esau.

- Genesis 25 - He hated his own birthright, his family.
- Malachi 1:3 - The Edomites had done unholy things.
- Hebrews 12:6 - Calls Esau unholy.

PHARAOH

Although the text says repeatedly that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it also stresses that Pharaoh hardened himself (Exod 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7)

PREDESTINATION AND JESUS

Acts 2:23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Did God plan beforehand that Jesus be killed? Yes.
Did men act knowingly and of their own volition in killing Jesus? Yes.

FOREKNOWLEDGE IS NOT FORESIGHT

Romans 8 and Jeremiah 1:5, "before I formed you, I knew you." The foreknown are those upon whom God has bestowed his covenantal affection.

- 1 Thes. 1:4 (for we know that He chose you because you received the Gospel)

- 2 Tim. 1:9 (chose long ago)
- Eph. 1:5-6 (before the foundation of the world destined us to be sons/daughters)
- Acts 13:48 (as many as were ordained to eternal life believed)
- Matthew 11:27 (no one knows the Father but the Son and those who the Son determines to reveal him to)
- John 6:44 (no one comes unless the father draws)

CALLED, BUT OBEDIENT

- Matt 11:28 (come to me ALL who are weary)
- Matt 22; (wedding feast)
- Matt 23:37/John 5:40 (refusal to come to him)
- Ezekiel 33:11 (desire that wicked turn from their wicked ways)
- Acts 18:11 - Paul stays to preach so more would come to faith
- Romans...Paul talks about the need to preach.
- 2 Peter 3 (to the elect...none would perish...how could they perish if they didn't do anything?)

HELPFUL QUOTES

"When we carry up the ideas of "choice" and "necessity" to relations between God and Man, has the distinction perhaps become nonsensical? After all, when we are most free, it is only with a freedom God has given us: and when our will is most influenced by Grace, it is still our will. And if what our will does is not 'voluntary', and if 'voluntary' does not mean 'free', what are we talking about? I'd leave it all alone." - *C.S. Lewis*

"I was the object and not the subject of my conversion. In essence, I chose God but it was not possible to for me to choose the opposite." - *C.S. Lewis*

"The very word "chosen" shows that the invitation implies an obedience corresponding to grace. Election is fulfilled only in obedience. Hence we do not have here a static doctrine of election but a dynamic theology which is oriented to the right attitude of those chosen. To receive gifts is of no avail if there is no readiness to obey. Thus the concept of election demands responsibility and decision." - *New American Commentary*