

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Romans 9:1-11:36

The Revelation of the Gospel

In Paul's Introduction we see something of a thesis statement for the book of Romans where he writes:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." --Romans 1:16-17

One of the most important things to know is that the Gospel (or Good News) is a **revelation**. That means that the message of the Gospel is not something that Paul is making up, rather it is a message that God is giving to the people of the world through the apostle. Over the course of his letter, Paul will systematically work through the major themes of this thesis statement.

First, he establishes the universal human need for salvation from the just judgment of a Holy, Holy, Holy God. Every person on this planet desperately needs the message of salvation held out in the Gospel. This is why Paul is not ashamed to bring this message. This was covered in the first 3 chapters.

The Literary Structure of Romans

Topic	Passage
Introduction to the Revelation of the Gospel	1:1 - 1:17
The Revelation of the Justice of God	1:18 - 3:20
The Revelation of the Grace of God	3:21 - 8:39
The Revelation of the Plan of God	9:1 - 11:36
The Revelation of the Will of God	12:1 - 15:13
Concluding Greetings and Benedictions	15:14 - 16:27

Having laid the ground work and basis for human need for salvation, Paul will expand on how God has revealed his salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul calls this salvation "righteousness" or "justification", and it is a gift offered to all humanity. He then explains that the way a person receives this righteousness is by responding in what he calls "the obedience of faith" in Jesus. In chapters 3-8, Paul shows how this righteousness works and is appropriated in our lives through belief, or faith in the revelation of the grace of God. Chapter 8 reveals the tremendous blessings of the believer's calling to be a child of God in Jesus Christ. Paul will now build on the concepts he has introduced in chapter 8 regarding the initiating actions and sovereignty of God through the Holy Spirit.

After reading in Chapter 8 on the eternal security and assurance given to those in Christ, the reader may be wondering: “But what about the rest of the people of this world, particularly those of the Jewish people who have rejected Jesus?” Paul now turns his focus to the revelation of the plan of God.

The Revelation of the Plan of God (9:1 - 11:36)

Chapters 3-8 are about God’s revelation of grace and righteousness for believers in Jesus Christ, chapters 9-12 reflect on the larger plan of God’s salvation for all people in the world.

The structure of this section breaks into four parts:

1. Israel’s Fall: God’s Purpose of Election (9:1-33)
2. Israel’s Fault: God’s dismay over her disobedience (10:1-21)
3. Israel’s Future: God’s long term-design (11:1-32)
4. Doxology (11:33-36)

In this section, Paul will teach about the revelation of the mystery of Divine Sovereignty and Human responsibility with a focus on the rejection of the Messiah on the part of some of the Jewish people. He will discuss how ultimately the hardness of the human heart in Jew and Gentile alike will be overcome through the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the internal calling of the Holy Spirit of God to the praise of God’s glory.

Israel’s Fall: God’s Purpose of Election (9:1-33)

Ultimately, salvation is entirely dependent on the sovereignty of God. Paul reflects with “great sorrow” over the rejection of the Messiah by many of the Jewish people. For Paul, this is a very personal and difficult truth. He has “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” (9:2) for the members of his own family who have rejected the Messiah Jesus in spite of their unique role in redemptive history. Using the story of Israel’s history, he demonstrates that salvation has always been the prerogative of God’s election and choosing. (9:6-18)

Paul anticipates that the reader will be left with a question of the justice of divine election of some and not all without any basis other than the mysterious divine purpose.

“What shall we say then is there any injustice on God’s part? By no means!”

--Romans 9:14

Paul argues that mercy does not have to be fair. God will have mercy on whom he has mercy. (9:15) Fairness means justice and no one ultimately will want that. But, equally God is completely just in exercising judgment on those he determines, such as Pharaoh. (9:17)

We are the Lord’s creation and he will ultimately determine who and who is not saved. God is in control. Does this somehow negate human responsibility? (9:19) Not at all! We are on the horns of a logical mystery. God is sovereign and in control of determining his elect unto salvation “from the Jews and Gentiles (9:24) and human beings are held responsible for our rebellious choices and actions.

Israel's Fault: God's dismay over her disobedience (10:1-21)

The question may be raised: "does God's sovereignty in election somehow negate human responsibility?" Not at all! It is precisely because of the willful stubbornness of the Jewish people that they have rejected the Messiah. "They sought to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (10:3) And again he says of the Jewish rejection: "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." (10:21)

Paul holds out hope for the Gentiles and the Jewish people in the Gospel. Quoting the promise from the prophet Joel, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 9:13; cf. Joel 2:32) Paul argues for a chain of causality leading to salvation which includes both the human responsibility of preaching, hearing, believing, calling on the Lord, and the divine sovereignty in sending out messengers of the Gospel and quickening hearts in election.

So, what of the Jewish people? Is there any hope for them that they would hear and believe? Yes of course! God currently is electing a remnant. (Romans 11:5)

Israel's Future: God's long term-design (11:1-32)

The ultimate plan is that while Israel is going through a time of hardening, the Gentiles are being grafted in by God's grace. However, he warns gentile believers not to be too haughty in their salvation with regard to Jewish unbelief. God can just as easily judge the haughty.

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. --Romans 11:22

God has a larger plan that includes all the people of this world and it is mysteriously unfolding in his time. It is this unfolding plan which requires a certain trust and fear of the sovereign Lord. Salvation is according to his plan. For this reason, Paul calls the Christian to marvel in the glorious wonder of God:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

*"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"
"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"*

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. --Romans 11:33-36

Manifesto on Evangelism

Based on Romans 10-11, John Stott, in his commentary on Romans¹, delineates an eight-point evangelism manifesto, which is summarized as follows:

1. The *need for evangelism*: evangelism is necessary because until people hear and receive the gospel they are lost. (Romans 1-3; 10:13-14)
2. The *scope of evangelism*: the whole human race must be given the chance to hear the gospel. (Romans 1:5; 3:22; 9:4; 10:2, 12, 18; 11:23; 16:26)
3. The *incentive to evangelism*: evangelism arises from the love and longing of the heart. (Romans 9:1ff; 10:1)
4. The *nature of evangelism*: evangelism is sharing with others the good news of Christ crucified and risen. (Romans 9:30-10:13; particularly 10:6ff.)
5. The *logic of evangelism*: evangelism demands the sending out of evangelists, so that people may call on Christ for salvation. (10:13ff.)
6. The *result of evangelism*: evangelism brings such blessings to those who believe, that it arouses the envy of others. (10:19; 11:11, 4)
7. The *hope for evangelism*: evangelism has hope of success only if it rests on the election of God. (10:1, 14, 17, 21)
8. The *goal of evangelism*: evangelism introduces converts into the people of God, and so brings glory to God. (9:17; 22ff.; 11:30ff.)

¹ John Stott, Romans: God's Good News for the World (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) p. 313-14.