

Ron J. Bigalke, Ph.D.
P.O. Box 244, Rincon, GA 31326-0244
(912) 659-4212
ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

Justice and Mercy

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

monthly (interim) schedule

*** 1st Tuesday of the month ***

TUESDAY, 6TH OF OCTOBER

12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Studies are held the *first* Tuesday of each month at 12 Noon, in accord with the Public Service Commission devotional at 9:55am. The *monthly* Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. We are currently studying the book of Romans, chapter-by-chapter, and verse-by-verse.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I labor to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

— Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

is
Tuesday, 6 October 2015

Romans 9 – “Justice and Mercy”

Jesus told a parable concerning laborers in the vineyard. The purpose for the narrative was to illustrate that, within the kingdom of heaven, “the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matt 20:16). In other words, operations within the kingdom of God often function in a manner diametrically opposed to those procedures within human kingdoms. Jesus’ parable illustrates the relationship between generosity (mercy) and justice, and provides a relevant context for understanding Romans 9.

Although the parable of Matthew 20:1-16 does not concern salvation, it does illustrate principles concerning generosity and justice within God’s kingdom, which are concepts addressed in Romans 9. In his illustration, Jesus’ landowner selected all available workers for his vineyard, and these laborers were added to the workforce each time that he went to seek more.

Our text in Romans 9 addresses similar concerns (as Matt 20) since it references the entire mass of humanity (just as Jesus’ parable referenced all available laborers). Matthew 20 and Romans 9 communicate the parallel concept that individuals lacked certain abilities, and were entirely dependent upon the generosity (mercy)

of another to alter their destinies. Both the landowner (Matt 20) and the potter (Rom 9) have the prerogative to prosper from among a larger mass, in accord with their particular intents.

According to Jesus’ parable, the landowner displayed justice because he paid the first group as he promised. He demonstrated generosity by paying whatever was right to the last group. He is also merciful because he gave the final group what they did not deserve. While grace is receiving what we do not deserve, mercy is not giving us what we do warrant. *How does Jesus’ parable relate to Romans 9?*

In the previous section (Rom 8:28-39), the Bible emphasized God’s sovereign control to save his people, in addition to the absolute impossibility that any other power could separate us from his love “in Christ Jesus.” Some believers perceived an apparent contradiction in regard to Israel. If the chosen people of God had been rejected, how could believers today know that He will not also reject them? If God was unable to save Israel, how can He be trusted to save believers today? The answer to those questions is the subject of chapters 9—11 of the book of Romans.

Romans 12:1 – Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Unless one understands the association between God’s justice and mercy, it will be impossible to understand his plan of salvation. Romans 9 introduces mercy as the primary concept in “God purpose according to His choice” (cf. 12:1). Scripture explains why it appears that God has been unfaithful, yet He has not, which is evident in the remnant of Israelites who have believed, and in consideration of Israel’s predominance in the future.

GOD’S WORK

(Rom 9:1-13) Romans 9 explains that, even in Old Testament times, God never outpoured his promises upon all Jews indiscriminately; rather, his assurances were granted only to those whom He chose sovereignly. Nevertheless, in these New Testament times, the mercy of God is evident in the salvation of individual Jews. When reading Romans 3:1-2, which affirms there are advantages to being Jewish and that the Jews were “first of all . . . entrusted with the oracles of God,” one could almost anticipate the truths affirmed in the latter chapters of Romans (specifically 9:1—11:36).

The phrase “first of all” indicates that a second assertion should have been provided in Romans 3, yet one was not given there. Romans 3 postponed the discussion regarding the Jewish people and focused upon the universal unrighteousness of all humanity. Chapter 9 of Romans resumes the dialogue concerning the Jews and emphasizes the advantages of being Jewish. The expansion of this topic is logically related to the preceding eight chapters, for there the Bible proved that all people indiscriminately are sinners.



Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

1st Tuesdays (monthly) @ 12 Noon - 12:45 pm, 123 CAP
lunch provided from ministry partnership by Capitol Commission donors



Enhancing Trust

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23); therefore, God’s provision is the same for all people indiscriminately, whether they be Jew or Gentile. The fact that stipulations are the same for all people arouses a question regarding the promises that God made to Israel in the Old Testament times. *Are those promises now void?*

A GOVERNING AUTHORITY MAY BE ELECTED TO OFFICE BECAUSE OF HIS OR HER WORK; HOWEVER, A BELIEVER IS ELECTED AND FITTED FOR HEAVEN BECAUSE GOD WORKED ON THEIR BEHALF.

The question is crucial because if God’s promises to Israel are no longer binding, then the Word of God cannot be trusted. If the Lord has rescinded promises to Israel, it is possible that the promise of justification by faith may be equally tentative. The assurance of justification by faith, which was so plainly articulated in chapters 1—8, is contingent upon the question regarding God’s promises in Romans 9—11.

God will never abandon those who are chosen according to his purpose. Suppose that God abandoned his elect nation, Israel, and one may inquire how it is certain that He will not abandon his church. The answer revealed in Romans 9—11 is that God has not abandoned Israel; rather, God is faithful to his promises and can be trusted absolutely. Romans 9—11 provide a theodicy, that is, a vindication of God’s character and a defense of the manner in which He interacts with all people.

Romans 8 concludes with a tremendous crescendo. The truth resounding throughout those verses is that the believer can never be separated “from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” A governing authority may be elected to office because of his or her work; however, a believer is elected and fitted for heaven because God worked on their behalf. God’s work on behalf of the believer provides a “double cure” (as Toplady penned in his hymn): salvation from the wrath of God *and* by means of the Holy Spirit to be made pure (cf. 1 Pet 2:24-25).

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee;
let the water and the blood; from Thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.

The contrast between the close of Romans 8 and the beginning of chapter 9 is evident in the Apostle Paul’s sorrow for Israel (Rom 9:1-5). Romans 8 emphasized the believer’s destiny, and yet many of the Apostle’s own “brethren” would not experience that hope, in spite of the many advantages they enjoyed in Old Testament times. The spiritual blindness of his own people was a colossal burden.

The deplorable spiritual condition of his “kinsmen” demanded the statement in verses 6-7, which assert that the Word of God has not failed. God did not fail to maintain his promises; rather, many of Abraham’s descendants did not understand the nature of those pledges. Scripture uses two Old Testament illustrations – Ishmael and Isaac; and, Jacob and Esau – to explain how God distinguished between ethnic Israel and the remnant to inherit spiritual blessings.

GOD’S MERCY

(Rom 9:14-23) Romans 9:14-23 defends the thesis asserted in verses 8-13, namely that God’s election is not on the basis of works; rather, God elects based upon his sovereign choice. Two objections typically arise in protest against the biblical teaching with regard to election. The *first* objection is that God is unjust (vv. 14-18). The answer that the Holy Bible provides is that God’s election is an expression of his mercy, not favoritism.

Romans 9:16 – So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy.
[Shakespeare, “The Merchant of Venice,” Act IV, Scene I, lines 198-200]

The *second* objection is that God cannot hold people accountable (vv. 19-23). Scripture answers that favor with God can never be earned; rather, it must always be given in mercy. God is similar to potters who have the prerogative to do as they please with the clay (vv. 20-23). Fallen, created humans can make no claim upon God (which was true of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and is true of us). God would be entirely just in condemning all humanity and saving none. The amazing aspect of God’s sovereignty is not that some are lost but that any are saved.

GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

(Rom 9:24-33) The concluding verses of Romans provide an application of the biblical teaching with regard to election. Two assertions are made. *First* is that many Gentiles are vessels of mercy. *Second* is that many Jews are vessels of wrath. Israel is like the sands of the sea in number, yet only a remnant is saved. Verses 30-33 explain how this outcome is possible: they pursued righteousness, yet not by faith, and “stumbled over” the Messiah.

Therefore, “*it is* not as though the word of God has failed” (v. 6) because God has been faithful to his promises toward Israel; indeed, He has been more than dependable. He demonstrated mercy when only judgment was deserved, and because God has been faithful, believers today may know that God will likewise be faithful to keep his promises for us (e.g. 1 Tim 2:1-4).

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the nobility to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through verse-by-verse Bible teaching. In the Bible, we see God’s love for the world, especially those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four primary areas of discipleship: (1) *evangelize* those who have not known saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION (INTERIM) BIBLE STUDY:
Tuesday, 3rd of November @ 12 Noon in 123 CAP
(always the 1st Tuesday of each month, during interim)