

Romans part 39

I want to remind you that this coming week, at 6 o'clock on Christmas Eve, we will be having a Christmas Eve service, right here. The number one reason people do not go to church is because no one invited them, this is the best time to invite your friends and families...

So, it is Christmas time, the best time of the year, the time where we are reminded just what God has done for us. We have been in the book of Romans and no matter how you view the history of the church, you have to admit that there were and always have been ebbs and flows to numbers of true believers.

At certain times there are great revivals, often the result of catastrophic events, and then there are times where it seems the church has gone silent. The patterns of ebbs and flows reflects on the response of people to God, not the other way around... but even in the worst of times, God has been able to overrule man's weaknesses and preserved for Himself a remnant of true believers so that faith never dies out.

No matter how much you think the world is lost it's way this Christmas season, God still has a plan for mankind and you and I as individuals...

God made a covenant with Abraham, and Abraham believed it no matter how the circumstances, against all he saw with his eyes, he believed God... God promised that He would bless Abraham and ALL of his descendants, He didn't promise to convert every one of them, but He promised to bless them and to keep a remnant of faith from one generation to the next, and He promised that Abraham would have so many descendants you could not count them...

But what I want to talk to you today is this, because of Christmas, we have a God that takes prayer, when done in faith, very seriously. When I pray for those that don't yet know Jesus, God honors those prayers, God pursues those people just like He continues to pursue the descendants of Abraham...

I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

² No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, ³ “LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

⁴ And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!”

⁵ It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God’s grace—his undeserved kindness in choosing them. ⁶ And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved. Romans 11:1-6

So the question is; Is it pointless to present the gospel to the Jews since the prophets had said that they would get so hard they would never listen. Did this mean that God’s promises to Abraham had come to an end? Was He finally done with them?

And then Paul answers his own question very emphatically, no way!

At the time this is being written, the Jews were rejecting Christ, but Paul was telling them that there were those and he was one of them! What God did in his life He was willing to do in others... Paul goes on to say, “there aren’t many of us, but the promise goes on.” Moses had told of a day when there would be a season of hardness, but he also wanted us to remember that we are to give up, God is at work!

Remember, Paul is speaking not just to us today, but at the time he was speaking to a church that was in turmoil, there were a lot of problems and hopelessness in the church in Rome, and he is reminding them, using the promises to the Jewish people to not give up, God is at work and is faithful to always keep his promises.

That is to us today, it doesn't matter what it looks like on the news, or in your marriage or your business or your home, God never gives up...

Paul used Elijah as an example, he believed that somehow God had failed and that he, Elijah, was the only one still going strong, and in a bit of self-pity reminded God that only he, Elijah was still on the job... only to be told that God had a remnant, 7000 strong, the point? When all looks lost, God always has a plan, if we will trust and pray...

1. Why is God so faithful?

When you look at the entirety of the gospel, you will see one thing repeatedly; none of us have earned God's grace. God did not remain faithful to Abraham because he deserved it, God was not faithful to Paul because he deserved it and He is not faithful to us when we pray because we have earned it. God honors faith and our believing Him, not our earning anything.

And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:6

God operates on our believing Him, it is what we have talked about for the last many weeks, our right standing before God is not based on anything we have or ever will do, it is simply Believing what He says and acting on it...

Why will He reach your friends or family? Because you cooperate with Him, pray and believe, simple as that.

2. Pray, and keep on praying!

Praying for your neighbors or praying for God to do anything can be frustrating. Have you ever prayed, asked God for something, and then waited, and waited?

During those times we can get frustrated and then try to "help God out". Remember Abraham and the promise of a son? Have you ever been mad at

God because He didn't answer? Have you ever prayed for someone and they just didn't want to hear it?

So let me give you some help.

- a. Don't try to "pray someone into heaven" give up thinking that it has much to do with you, "maybe I have sin, maybe I need to pray harder, maybe if I had enough faith"....
That just leads us to thinking it is up to us. Listen, pray, keep praying, do what He tells you, and leave the results to God.
- b. Pray until you know He has heard you. That is not to say He is hard of hearing, but I have learned to pray until I know He has heard, and He is moving...
- c. Don't take things into your hands. Don't try to argue people into heaven, don't harass or scold. Hey listen, your spouse or kids or friends, God loves them, live like Christ in front of them and leave the rest to God...

******* question; have you given up praying for someone or something because it just seems to have taken so long?**

3. Focus our faith on His faithfulness and His pursuit.

- a. God is relentless, He doesn't grow tired or write people off, He works in lifetimes, not months or years...
- b. Sometimes God will show you how to pray more effectively. Listen, here is a question that I will never understand; why does God need me to pray for people in the first place? Why doesn't He just do what He has to. To reach them?

I don't know! Why does He want to partner with us, maybe because He loves you and I and wants us to be a part of what He is doing!

- c. God is able to do the miraculous! He will bring people into the lives of those you are praying for...
- d. He will speak directly to them. This past week I was having coffee with someone and a guy who I slightly know began to tell us how God gave

him a vision of just how lost he really was.... God knows how to get someone's attention!

4. Stay connected!

Praying for people, partnering with God can be exhausting and at times frustrating, so we need to be connected to the body, there is an emotional price to pay. When we allow ourselves to isolate a couple of things can happen.

- a. We feel isolated and alone
- b. We can begin to feel like we are the only one who is righteous...

God understands that when we partner with Him in the greatest of all things, praying and interceding for others, that we can get tired, and so He calls us to guard our bodies, stay connected, get fresh vision and hope that comes from waiting on Him and staying connected to others...

Remember, we have one small part to play in the kingdom of God, but it is a valuable indispensable part, but resting in and on the Lord can feel lonely and disconnected at times...