

**I. Jesus de-constructed religion at every turn. Luke 15:1-2; 25-32.**

A. He spoke these parables to and about the Pharisees and Scribes. 1-2

1. The same group he rebuked in Matt.23
2. The same group Paul was a member of.
3. The religious and biblical elite.

B. The Parable of the Prodigal is crucial to understanding the gospel.

1. It is a contrast between Jesus' message and religion as understood by the world—personified in the Pharisees.

C. It contrasts two forms of *unbelief*.

1. The younger brother was a *rebellious* unbeliever.
  - a) *He was an anti-religious unbeliever.*
  - b) But later repented and threw himself on the Father's grace and mercy.
2. The older brother was a *religious* unbeliever.
  - a) *He put huge confidence in his own "obedience" and resented the Father for never throwing him a party!*
  - b) He does not enter the party specifically because he feels so superior to the sinful but repentant brother. (Luke 18:9-14)
  - c) He does not think like or agree with the Father.
  - d) He is using the Father every bit as much as the prodigal did by running away with the money.

D. **What does this have to do with Romans 9-11? Everything.**

1. Israel, following the scribes and Pharisees, became the older brother and did not come into the kingdom party of the Father...

**II. Paul is answering the question of Israel's unbelief in Christ. Has God's promise to Israel failed because Israel has rejected Christ? No. Israel is the Older Brother. (9:6)**

A. Israel's unbelief does not derail God's plan. Ch. 9.

1. There is a remnant, a living group within Israel, that God has chosen (and have chosen Him)

B. Israel's unbelief is their own responsibility. Ch. 10.

1. They should have come to Christ in faith, but failed to do so because of their unwillingness to let go of Torah-righteousness

C. Israel's unbelief is temporary. Ch.11

1. God will regenerate Israel again in the future.

**III. Israel's unbelief was its own fault. 9:30-10:21.**

A. How is it that **Gentiles** attain righteousness **without effort**, and **Israel, with great effort**, has missed it?

1. *This is the big question of religion and it divides genuine saving faith from all forms of religion.*

**B. Answer: Israel didn't just "miss it" by accident—they *avoided* it on purpose. *And they avoided it by using Religion.***

#### IV. 3 ways to avoid saving faith and eternal life by using Religion.

- A. Put more confidence in your ability to obey than in the Lord's ability to forgive. 9:30-33.
  - 1. The idea of *obeying rules in order to be declared good* is exactly the opposite of the gospel.
  - 2. Pursuing the Law by "works" is the opposite of faith in God.
- B. Ignore Christ's fulfillment of the Law (righteousness). 10:1-4
  - 1. Christ has brought the Torah to its culmination and conclusion. Matt.9:14-17; 26:27-29.
  - 2. *The Torah was never a means of righteousness, but a demonstration of faith.*
  - 3. *If Christ was the end of the era of Torah, then all forms of human religion are wrong. No human, works-based salvation will actually save us.*
- C. Mistake elitist effort for real righteousness. 10:6-13.
  - 1. Elite: Adjective: A person or class of persons considered superior by others or by themselves as in intellect, talent, power, wealth, or position in society. (Dictionary.com)
  - 2. "Zeal for God" is not necessarily faith in Jesus Christ. 10:1-4. In fact, it may be the opposite.
- D. Jesus is a stumbling block to anyone who lives in these attitudes.
  - 1. Because he makes us drop our sin and our "goodness" when we come to him.

#### V. Faith (saving faith) is a turn of the heart to God in Christ, not a set of religious actions. 8-13

- A. **Simple:** (Not complex) 6-8
  - 1. Don't look High and Low for Him, He's right here.
- B. **Personal:** (Not institutional) 9-10.
  - 1. From the heart. Circumcised hearts. (Deut.10:16; 30:6; Rom.2:29).
  - 2. Out of the heart the mouth speaks. Matt.12:34
- C. **Substantial.** (not ethereal) the real Jesus.
  - 1. Jesus is Lord. God in the flesh.
  - 2. Resurrected. *Jesus died and came back from the dead so that I could do the same thing*
- D. **Universal:** (Not Elitist) 11-13. Any sort of person can come.
  - 1. *Whoever* believes in Him is not disappointed. (Isa. 28:16)
    - a) Context in Isa is not trusting the world, but trusting God. Not rushing around in a panic.
  - 2. *Whoever* calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (**Joel 2:32**)

#### VI. Calling on the Lord (faith) happens this way. 14-15.

- A. 4 rhetorical questions make the point.
  - 1. How shall they call upon someone they have not believed in?
  - 2. How shall they believe in him if they haven't heard about him?
  - 3. How shall they hear without somebody to tell them?
  - 4. How shall people tell others if they aren't sent?
    - a) Beautiful feet = runners with good news. Isa.52:7
- B. Invert the questions and see the process emerge.
  - 1. Christians are sent. (by the Lord)
  - 2. They announce the gospel (good news). *Who Jesus is and what He did*
  - 3. The listener hears and believes the announcement
    - a) They call upon the Lord and are saved.
  - 4. The Lord uses human voices to spread the gospel.

#### VII. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. 10:16.

- A. Obeying the gospel here means believing/faith in Jesus. Jn.6:29.
- B. Paul: This is nothing new! Isa.53:1. Lord, who has listened to us?

## VIII. Did Israel reject Christ because they didn't know? *No, they did it on purpose. 18-21*

- A. Was it that Israel didn't hear the gospel? No. They heard it. Ps.19:4.
1. *It is as clear as the creation itself.*
  2. The message has been obvious and out there for a long time.
    - a) Jesus taught and did miracles every day for 3 ½ years all over Israel, sending his own men out by twos to all the villages.
    - b) He himself spoke in the temple area many times.
    - c) In three years, he was at all the feasts where Jews from all over the world gathered. (9 feasts!)
    - d) In Acts, the Jewish community was the only place the gospel spread for the first several years. Acts 1-11
    - e) And Paul, for over 20 years, all over the Empire, went always to the Synagogues first (where he was routinely and violently rejected).
- B. Was it that Israel didn't understand the gospel? No, they did understand it.
1. Deut.32:21. A promise to surprise Israel with the salvation of a "foolish" people. (?)
    - a) *If the stupid Gentiles can understand the gospel of grace through faith—the Jews have no excuse.*
  2. Isa 65:1-2. A prediction that God would save people who didn't "seek or deserve" it. (Gentiles)
    - a) *While Israel, with all their connections, simply rejected the free offer.*
- C. It ends with God offering salvation to religious people who prefer their religion.
1. *Full circle to 9:30 again. Believing Gentiles in and Unbelieving Jews out...*

## IX. Closing thoughts on Unbelief in Christ.

- A. It can look very faithful. The Older Brother...
- B. It is always volitional. A decision against repentance and grace.
- C. It is essentially irrational.
1. If you are avoiding simple, radical, personal faith in Christ...Why?
  2. There is no rational reason not to come to God in Christ.
  3. He has done literally everything for you. Do not stumble over the simplicity and transformation of the gospel.
- D. The gospel is so simple and so easy that the only reason for rejecting Christ as the risen Lord is a *decision to not believe. This was Israel's decision—at least for a time...Chapter 11 is coming.*