Romans Class 6

Notes

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Romans

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--9.3 We should likewise wish to be accursed for the sake of those who hate us. Are you willing in this life, as Christ demands, to be cut off from blessings and praise and benefits, heavenly or earthly, for the sake even of those who hate you and despise you? Do you react as Jonah did to call Ninevah to repent and to rejoice when it happens? If not, then you need to repent and soften your heart. How do you do this? Begin keeping regular prayer times. But not only this: but for the first Thirty-three consecutive nights in the middle of the night awaken yourself to say a simple prayer three times: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages," and your heart will soften. Why? Because you have chosen a time to sacrifice thinking of anything but the glory of God. During this brief time, you break your sound slumber and ask nothing for yourself, but only glorify our Blessed God. And once you have gotten into the thoughtful practice of not thinking about effects upon yourself, the lines between friend and enemy fade away and your sun will begin to shine on the just and the unjust, as it is with your Father in Heaven.

--9.6-8 The Israel of God is the Church. As we read in chapter 4.13, it is the faithful who are the spiritual seed of the first-faithful Abraham.

--9.11 God's sovereignty stands. And each is given gifts beforehand, not according to any good or evil that is accorded to him, for up to that point they had done nothing good or evil.

--9.16 If it depended upon man's will or exertion, then no one would be saved, for all have fallen short. And if man's will were able to save a man, then the Law and Prophets would not have needed to fortell of a Messiah who would be the deliverer of mankind. Nevertheless, though salvation is not dependant upon works, nevertheless works of faith (not of the OT Law) are an integral part of salvation. Not in that they produce salvation, but in that they enable one to participate in the Mercy of God. It is upon the mercy of God that salvation is dependant, but we still need acts of love to participate in that upon which salvation is dependant.

--9.19-23 One of the most mis-interpreted passage of Romans. We know from earlier that St. Paul said that we should not let evil abound simply because more glory abounds as the result. St. Paul is letting us know that the justice of mercy under the incarnation of Christ is very different from justice under the Law of Moses. Mercy is freely given by God according to His knowledge. "who are you to reply against God" says St. Paul. "He says this" St. Chrysostom says, "to take down the objector's unseasonable inquisitiveness, and excessive curiosity, and to put a check upon it, and teach him to know what God is, and what man is, and how incomprehensible His forknowledge is, and how far above our reasoning, and how obedience to Him is in all points binding...for our business is to obey what God does, not to be curious even if we do not know the reason of them." We have no right to question "why have you made me thus" because our salvation is not dependant upon our will, but on Christ's mercy. St. Paul says this "not to do away with our free will, but to show, up to what point we ought to obey God." Now the fact that He gave us from the beginning free will, and under the New Covenant the ability to practice to virtues of mercy, is itself a form of mercy.

--9.25-27 One large argument in opposition to Christianity from the anti-Christian Jews was that if Christ was the true Christ (i.e. the true Messiah), then why didn't the Messiah's own people follow after them? St. Paul points out the prophecy fortelling here that only a remnant would accept him.

--9.30-31 The Gentiles did not seek righteousness as did the Jews. But the Jews sought to earn it of themselves, not seeing the Messianic and prophetic purpose of the Law, which directed the saints of old to Christ the Lawgiver.

--9.32 Again, 'works' here refers, as St. Paul gave reference to earlier, to works attempting to fulfill the (Mosaic/Old Covenential) Law. Christ already did this, so there is no need to try to fulfill the law again since Christ already did this. This is one reason why St. Paul emphasises Christ as the fulfillment of the Law so much to the Romans, to underscore the fact that we are to rest our hope on Christ in His grace, and not try to do something that was already done. Now, we seek not to do works in order to fulfill the law, but to do the works which are the fruits of the Spirit of Grace in order to abide in Him and allow Him to abide in us, not to receive judicial merit.

--9.33 How so a "stumbling block and rock of offense?" St. John Chrysostom says that "We must not mind insulting men, if by respecting men we offend God" (On the Priesthood, 2.7). This refers to atheists or others who reject the Apostolic Christian faith. On the other hand, we are not to do anything which is an offense to our brethren in Christ in their walk of faith (Rom. 14.23). Also, God Himself has established kindness as prerequisite to winning others over to Christ. This St. Paul says differently in another place when he states "Brethren, do not be children in understanding, however, in malice be babes" (1 Cor. 14.20). And so, if someone is offended by God, then let them be offended. But let nothing in the ordinary of life not be accepted for the sake of humankindness and the absence of malice.