

What is Faith and What is Works?
Romans 9:30-33

LENT is Observed by many denominations. It is the season 40 days PRIOR to Easter, not including each of the Sundays, which are each to be celebrated as a “min-Easter.” The VALUE of this observation is that it helps our celebration of Resurrection Sunday to be more vivid. It is not a Biblical command, but it is a good time to reflect on the sufferings of Christ. During this season, here are a few suggestions,

- a. Readings from the gospel
- b. If led to FAST, then FAST!
- c. A close friend of mine watches “The Passion of the Christ” as part of his preparation for Resurrection celebration.

But many observe LENT hoping that their sacrifice will be accepted by God as a means of personal merit. This kind of works oriented approach to spirituality is common for many people, and indicative of man-made religion.

Some give up things they really won’t miss, like “chocolate covered grasshoppers.” Imagine a person with a peanut allergy giving up “peanut butter cookies! ”

This Lent season is a very good time for us to come to our this closing text of Romans 9!

Thus far, we have studied the three primary questions in Romans 9. Today, we will examine the conclusion to this chapter.

Romans 9:30-33 is still dealing with the question of God’s choosing. Paul CONCLUDES his testimony demonstrating that GOD IS JUST in how He chooses, by saying that **“God’s choice in salvation is demonstrated by those who believe in Jesus.”** God’s CHOICE is difficult for us to understand.

1. How do we know who is chosen?
2. How is it fair for those who are not chosen?
3. Is God arbitrary in the way He chooses?
4. Is God unjust because some are chosen and some are not?

WE GET INTO TROUBLE WHEN WE TRY AND APPLY THE DOCTRINE OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY WHEN DEALING WITH THE LOST.

“How do we know the ones who are chosen and the ones who are not chosen? The answer is, we don’t, at least not by outward appearance. There is an answer and it’s surprisingly simple. We know who is chosen and who is not chosen by how they respond to Jesus!” (Pritchard, “Stumbling Stone or Cornerstone,” 5/12/2006)

I. Faith and Works Illustrated through the Jews and Gentiles.

A. The GENTILES

1. Did not pursue righteousness. 9:30
2. **(Romans 1:18)** *"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the **godlessness and wickedness** of men who **suppress the truth by their wickedness,**"*
3. **(Romans 2:2-4)** *"Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"*
4. **Romans 3:9**
5. **Romans 3:27-29**

B. The JEWS

1. Pursued a "Law of Righteousness" (Romans 9:31)
2. **Romans 9:4-5. SEVEN Blessings given to the JEWISH people....**
 - a. Adoption
 - b. Divine glory
 - c. Covenants
 - d. Law
 - e. Temple
 - f. Worship
 - g. Promises
3. What did they do?????
 - a. They thought that GOD WAS IMPRESSED.
 - b. *I recently read Psalm 50 in my devotions. I thought about the familiar verse "I own the cattle on a thousand hills..." As I started thinking about this, I realized that the context is vitally important in this passage. The Lord is telling Israel that He does not need their sacrifices. Everything is His! The CREATOR is **NOT SUSTAINED** by our worship! (Or our obedience, our love, our giving, etc) . HE is SELF SUFFICIENT. Our worship brings Him GLORY, but His **glory** does not **depend** on our worship! This truth helped me understand that my acts of obedience and worship are pleasing to God, but that He is not sustained by them. He will be God whether or not I serve, worship or obey!*

God's LAW was given to show us how **SINFUL** we are.

The **Jewish people** used it to **impress THEMSELVES**, and OTHERS as to **HOW GOOD** they were!

They tried to please God through WORKS, instead ACCEPTING GOD'S gift through FAITH.

II. What Makes FAITH so Hard?

A. Good works NEVER SAVED ANYONE!

1. **Romans 4:1-2**

2. Isaiah 1:11 ff *"I am sick of your sacrifices, prayers, festivals..."*

3. (Amos 5:21-22) *"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them."*

4. **What are GOOD WORKS?**

a. **To the JEW.** *"They were zealous to obtain righteousness, but failed."* (Hodge, "Romans")

(1) Circumcision

(2) Ceremony

(3) Keeping of the Law

(4) Eating certain foods

(5) **EVEN TODAY**, there is great CONFUSION over pleasing God by obeying the OT LAW!!

(6) JOEL OSTEEN video

b. To US

Our "good works" are things like baptism, church membership, and giving money.

c. To illustrate this, imagine every human being lined up at the beach in California. A contest begins to see who can swim to Hawaii. The race begins. Everyone wades into the water. Some drown the moment their feet no longer touch bottom. Most swim for a short distance, but drown within sight of shore. The stronger swimmers keep on going, much further than their non-aquatic friends, but they too tire out by the time they are one mile from shore. The best athletes, the ones that swim in the Ironman triathalons, go the furthest. They are alone and still swimming several miles. But the reality is that they too soon tire. Even though they have progressed miles beyond anyone else, their fate is still the same. You see, there is no glory in making it further than someone else. The end result is still the same.

That's how it is in terms of our comparative righteousness with others. There are some terrible sinners (swimmers) who don't make it very far. Others take pride in getting further, but they don't make it either. The Ironman athletes represent the most moral people of our society. These are the ones whose good works outshine everyone else. But of course, their end is still the same. The reason is simple. No one can swim from California to Hawaii. And no one can meet God's standards of sinlessness. Comparatively, we do better than others. But as someone once said, "God grades on the Cross and not on the Curve." We must have complete righteousness to make it, and not comparative righteousness. The good news is that there is a way for us to gain God's complete righteousness. It's not found in good works, but rather in applying the righteousness of Christ to our lives through faith.

B. The STUMBLING BLOCK. Romans 9:32-33

1. "The STONE that causes men to stumble" Greek *lithos*
2. "The ROCK that makes them fall" Greek *petros*
3. "Makes them fall" (NIV).
4. "Rock of offense" *better!!!* (KJV, NAS)
5. *Skandalon*
 - a. Originally the bait stick in a trap
 - b. "trap, probably of the type which has a stick which when touched by an animal causes the trap to shut—"trap." (Louw & Nida)

C. Why do people stumble at the GOSPEL??

1. We trust in our **effort** (God will **accept** my good works)
Illus - Mat 7:23-24 "Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord..."
2. We trust in our **wisdom** (God will accept me on MY terms - *universalism*)
Illus - RELIGION is our attempt to write the rules to dictate why God should accept us
3. We trust in our **justice** (We think we know who is good and who is bad.)
Matt 20:1-16. Those who worked hard object to the owner's goodness.

D. What is left?

1. **Jesus Christ, the CORNERSTONE!**
2. (1 Corinthians 1:18) *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*
3. (1 Corinthians 1:23) *"but we preach Christ crucified: **a stumbling block** to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles"*
4. (Galatians 5:11) *"Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the **offense** of the cross has been abolished."*

III. What Must I do?

- A. (John 6:28-29) *"Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.""*
- B. *"Therefore, sin cannot remain on him who believes just as man's sin could not remain on Christ."* Luther, "Romans," (144)