

Romans: A Study on Reformation
Lesson 26 “Reshaping The Future”

I. Introduction and Review - We are continuing our series on **Romans** today. We began this series in January and focused on the theme of reformation. We took a break for several months and spent some time talking about discipleship, but now we are going to finish **Romans** and focus on reformation, specifically reforming our relationships.

A. Here’s a first thing we need to reform about our understanding of **Romans**. Most people think it’s a letter about how we are justified by faith. That is true, but only a small part of the truth. The context of the letter is human relationships and bringing together different people groups with different belief systems around the centrality of Jesus.

1. The religious Jews didn’t think they needed Jesus because they had the law.
2. The Gentiles worshipped everything from rocks, to trees, got into all sorts of debauchery, etc. Paul showed them they needed Jesus in this letter.

B. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome to reform it in 57 A.D. prior to his trip to Jerusalem. He wrote to deal major issues the church in Rome was having issues which related to the banishment of the Jews from Rome in the year 49 A.D.

1. When the church in Rome began it was mostly comprised of Jews who converted to Christianity. The church culture was very much in line with Judaism (keep the law of Moses, focus on circumcision, keep the feast days, etc.)
2. In 49 A.D. the Roman Emperor Claudius banished all the Jews from Rome because of their religious and political disturbances. **Acts 18:1-2**. The Jews were banished until 54 A.D. when Nero became Emperor and said they could return.
3. When the Jewish Christians were banished, the only Christians left were Gentiles (the heathen). They were now in charge in the church in Rome and the culture of the church was completely different. The modern example would be if all the leaders from a very religious traditional church with stain glass windows, teaches from the KJV, sings hymns, has wooden pews, and everyone dresses formally were banished and it was turned over Gen Z. They’d come back and the sanctuary would be redesigned with strobe lights, hazers, Starbucks in the lobby, everyone dressed in skinny jeans, and teaching from the NLT or Passion Translation. How do you get these diverse groups to get along and work together?
4. It’s gets worse though because each side had an aura of superiority. The Jews thought they were better than because they were God’s original chosen people and the Gentiles thought they were better because they were the replacement of the Jews since they rejected Jesus. This is what Paul is dealing with.

II. Reshaping The Future - The context of **Romans 9-11** is the doctrine of election. Many have taught this doctrine means that God elects to save some and elects to send some to hell. This is

not true. What we have found is God elected to bring the Messiah through the family of Abraham and started the Jewish nation, but His goal was to always reach the whole world.

A. Romans 9:18-24

1. **Verses 18-19** Paul is dealing with the Jewish objection about how God hardens who He hardens. We saw previously how God hardened Pharaoh's heart after he first hardened his own heart toward God. God solidified his choice. **There is an implication this will happen to Israel if they don't repent.**

2. **Verses 20-24** These have been some of the most misinterpreted verses in all of the Bible. Ministers have incorrectly taught that God makes some people as vessels of destruction who are doomed to hell. Others have taught some vessels are made to carry cancer, disease, depression, be poor etc. Nothing could be further from the truth. So how do we understand these verses?

a. Jeremiah 18:1-10

i. Was marred is same Hebrew word from **Genesis 6:11** for the earth was corrupt. God found it that way; He didn't make it that way. God finds people in sin, He doesn't make them that way.

ii. In the midst of finding marred clay, the potter remakes the vessel into something useful. Great potters can intend to make a clay for one purpose, but if they find they clay has a defect, they can repurpose and make something different (still useful).

iii. **Verses 6-10** say God can repurpose Israel in the midst of their rebellion in Jeremiah's day. These verses show that God has plans for every nation, but those plans are dependent on the nations actions (serve God or not). These passages support the idea of free will and not that God destines some for destruction.

B. Why Is This Important?

1. God has plans and purposes for everyone, but they don't happen automatically. We have to believe and obey. If we resist, He will repurpose things to bring about His ultimate plan of discipling nations.

a. Paul is an example of this. Right after Paul wrote this letter, God moved on His heart to visit this church in Rome. Paul instead decided He wanted to go to Jerusalem. God sent him multiple prophetic words through Agabus and other disciples to not go to Jerusalem. Paul disobeyed and went anyway and got himself into all sorts of trouble. He ended up having to take a Nazarite vow and shave his head, was arrested and beaten in the temple, was delivered from an assassination plot, and then stuck in a jail in Caesarea for 2 years. None of that was God's plan, yet when Jesus appeared to Paul in prison He said, "Be of Good Cheer. You have preached for me in Jerusalem, you will appear before Caesar

also.” God repurposed Paul’s sin and had him witness before Festus, Felix, and Herod Agrippa. When he was put on a ship for Rome, Paul ended up taking the leadership on the boat when it went through a great storm (even though he was a slave). He then led a revival on the island of Malta where the ship landed and was blessed so much by the people on the island that He was given enough money to rent an apartment in Rome while he was under house arrest while he waited to stand trial before Nero.

b. Paul was marred so God repurposed His plan for Paul’s life to get him to Rome. He’ll do the same for us if we repent and obey.

2. God is for both the Jew and Gentile (God is for the legalist and He is for the woke Christian. God is for the conservative and for the liberal. He is for black, white, Hispanic, Asian, rich, poor. His redemptive includes everyone). The shallow understanding of these passages is the idea of free will. The deeper meaning and the one that Paul’s audience would have understood was that even though God chose Israel, His purpose was to use the Jews to reach everyone.

Romans 9:24 make clear the ones who are called are believers in Christ, not just Jews or Gentiles. Know how Good God is and that He wants each of us in Him family should empower us to extend grace to to others.

III. Conclusion

A. The big idea for today is God is a really good God and He loves everyone. He’s not limited by our sin, our mistakes, or our past. He is only limited in our lives by our faith. If we’ll believe He’s as good as He says is, He can repurpose our lives even if we’ve gotten off track. When we understand this grace, it should also cause us to want to extend it to others who seem off track: ex: the Jews with the Gentiles or in today’s terms, legalistic Christians with woke Christians and vice-versa.

B. Transition to Craig