

Romans: A Study on Reformation
Lesson 33 “What Opens Heaven”

I. Introduction and Review - We are continuing our series on **Romans** today. Our focus in this series reformation, specifically reforming our relationships.

A. The first thing we need to reform about our understanding of **Romans** it isn't just a letter about how we are justified by faith. While that's true, the context of the letter is human relationships and bringing together different people groups with different belief systems around the centrality of Jesus.

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. Modern example would be if all of the traditional people were banished from town and the church was turned over to Millennials/Gen Z who brought in a more contemporary vibe to service.

4. Each side had an aura of superiority. The Jews thought they were better 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.

II. What Opens Heaven - One of the main themes we've dealt with in this series is the Jews rejection of Jesus, which Paul deals with heavily in **Romans 9-11**. This literally **closed heaven** for themselves and others. We'll read next week, what they did was so egregious, God literally gave them a spirit of stupor (slumber) so He would eventually be able to wake them up.

A. What caused all of this then and what causes people to close heaven for themselves and others today? **Matthew 23:12** - hypocrisy, legalism, and tradition.

1. These 3 things caused the Jews to reject Jesus and not embrace grace.

2. These 3 elements are some of the biggest hindrances to revival historically and today, which is why we must learn lessons from the past so we don't come against the next move of God.

B. I want to share a story from recent church history to illustrate this point. Revival hit the Hebrides (region of Scotland in 1949). This revival last four years and people said it was like God opened the heavens over Hebrides. Thousands of people were saved and radically transformed by the power of God. Ironically, however, those that opposed this move of God were religious/legalistic Christians (not the world). Exhibit A.

1. Prior the the revival, the Hebrides was a very religious legalistic community. They prided themselves on theology, but was little practical experience, few salvations, a lack of joy, and no young people in the church.
2. How did the revival begin. Two 80 year old women were distressed that no young people came to church and they began to pray **Isaiah 64:1 (God tear open the heavens and come down)** over their community.
3. The women prayed and eventually had the pastor of the church invite others to pray with them. Seven elders joined in prayer. As they all prayed together in a barn, one young elder read **Psalm 24:3-5**. He then said, *“It seems to me to be so much humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God.”* He then prayed, *“God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?”*
 - a. God broke through one cold, insensitive religious/hypocritical heart and when He did, everyone in the room and the village was simultaneously gripped with the presence of God.
 - b. Shortly after that, Duncan Campbell came to minister. Not much happened the first night, but the elder said, told Duncan, “He sensed the presence of God hovering.” He then prayed **Isaiah 44:3**. A short time later over 700 people were outside the door of the church at 11:00 at night. The Holy Spirit called a spontaneous revival through the prayers of many.
4. What’s the point to all of this and what does it have to do with **Romans**. When you aren’t transparent with God and then feed on a diet of rules and tradition to make yourself feel good, you will miss what God is doing in the earth and effectively shut heaven in your life. This is what the legalistic Jews and those who opposed the revival in the Hebrides did.
5. So how do we open heaven?
 - a. **Psalm 24:6-10** Seek His face. He’s a person, not a set of rules. When we do, the king of glory comes in and fills us and makes us a gate of heaven. Gates are transitional places where we pass from one realm to the next.
 - b. **Genesis 28:10-19** God gives Jacob a dream and shows him angels ascending and descending on a latter from an open heaven. Jacob declared, This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven.”
 - c. The New Testament (**John 1:51**) reveals we are now a house of God and we are gate of heaven. We are a transitional place where heaven invades earth. Know who are are and live like it’s true.

III. Conclusion - God needs us to do 2 things to see revival.

A. He needs us to be hungry for Him. Jacob was. Esau wasn't. When we hunger for Him, He'll fill us with His spirit. That's what gives us the power to set down traditions, hypocrisy, etc).

B. He needs us to pray. We are a a gate of heaven and when we'll cry out and declare God's promises, the open heaven we individually have will expand over the Triad.

C. Pray Closing Prayer

Exhibit A

Impact of the Hebrides Revivals

Results

- ▶ There were 20,000 salvations during the first five weeks.
- ▶ Like what is common in every revival, many hymns were composed.
- ▶ When the news of the revival came to people of Lewis who were living in various places throughout the world they would come under conviction of their sins and give their lives to Christ.
- ▶ The hunger for the Word of God was intense. It was no longer read out of tradition or duty, but it became alive.
- ▶ Bars were empty.
- ▶ Many ministers and missionaries received their calling.
- ▶ Duncan Campbell indicated that 75% of those saved during the Hebrides Revival were saved before they came to church. That was similar to the [1904-1905 Welsh Revival](#).
- ▶ Old debts were repaid.
- ▶ Several police courts became idle, with no cases to try.
- ▶ How many backslid? According to Duncan Campbell, it was practically unheard of.

Manifestations or Phenomena that Occurred

- ▶ The conviction of sin was overwhelming, and though some attempted to run from that conviction power, it followed them wherever they went, into bars and even across the channel to the mainland.
- ▶ There were prostrations. This is not what is commonly referred to as being “slain in the Spirit,” but prostrations due to the overwhelming presence of God.
- ▶ There were times when large groups of people froze in place, and some appeared as though they were having epileptic fits. Duncan Campbell soundly declared that this was not demonic, but that it was the overwhelming presence of God resting upon people (Daniel 10).
- ▶ Many had visions that provided divine guidance that led to many people’s salvation.
- ▶ There were visions and trances, of which Duncan Campbell said “We dare not speak against them because we might be speaking against God.” Campbell also said we shouldn’t seek visions and trances, and that they were incidental. The focus should be on Christ and on the Word of God.
- ▶ Numerous people confessed to having heard angels singing, and it was from many different locations where this took place.
- ▶ Some saw demons flying out of the church buildings.
- ▶ One man testified that while praying in the church, he saw a white dove resting on people’s heads. The dove named the individuals one by one, and those who were named were all converted that night.

- ▶ One of the houses in the [village of Arnol](#) shook while people in it were praying.
- ▶ When leaving the church one night, out in an open field, a ship was seen by everyone there. It was a navy ship and it was shrouded in light. It was a vision, and it left everyone present mute. They couldn't say a word.
- ▶ Some people, when walking along the roads, would be enshrouded in light.
- ▶ There were lights overshadowing some of the homes.
- ▶ Many sailors gave their testimony that while their ships were passing the island they would feel the presence of the Lord.

Opposition/Those That Closed Up Heaven was due to:

- ▶ Cessationist Doctrine. Other ministers opposed Duncan Campbell's teaching on a subsequent filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was not about speaking in tongues, as that was never heard during the revival. This was a baptism, or filling of power, like what Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, J. Edwin Orr, and other revivalists experienced and taught.
- ▶ Duncan Campbell's brown shoes. The ministers had traditionally worn black ones.
- ▶ Unexplained Phenomena