

Unashamed (12): Did God Break His Promise?

(Romans 9)

I. Introduction

- A. It's funny the things you remember about childhood... or some can remember childhood!
1. I remember screaming Mom broke her promise (and lied) to me. *Get fuzzy after that!*
 - a. She promised that my friend Ricky could eat dinner with us— abut then he couldn't
 - b. A deal is a deal! She promised! If you can't trust your Mom, who can you trust!
 - 1) Sure, there was some nonsense about "*If you clean up your room first...*"
 - 2) She might have also said something about taking out the trash or something
 - 3) She was always saying stuff like that; how was I to know she meant it?
 - c. Kids, let this be a lesson to you— sometimes the "IF" really does mean "IF!"
 2. Rock-solid, count-on-it, take-it-to-bank promises can always be **CONDITIONAL**
 - a. We want **BLESSING** without **RESPONSIBILITY**, so we tend to hear the **PROMISE**
 - 1) We hear God's promise of a harvest in heaven, but there is an "*if*" (**Gal 6:9**)
 - 2) Hebrews promises we will share in Christ, but there's condition (**Heb 3:14**)
 - 3) Last week we saw one of Paul's solid **CONDITIONAL** promises (**Rom 8:17**)
 - b. We can't just point to promise and claim the prize—we have to look to for the "IF"
 - c. It's not that we must earn anything, for that's not possible; we are saved by grace
 3. Two-sided promise is a "**covenant.**" Ours is new one, but it's covenant nonetheless!
- B. As we continue series *Unashamed: Message of Romans*, we enter part two of Romans
1. **Romans 1-8** introduces the basic problem and theological foundation for the solution
 - a. The problem was the struggle between Jewish and Gentile Christian at Rome
 - 1) We haven't mentioned that much lately, but I am convinced that was the issue
 - 2) It's why Paul keeps pointing the gospel as being for all (**Rom 1:16, 2:9-10**)
 - b. Neither Jew (*with Law*) nor Roman (*as citizen*) gets any advantage in God's order
 - c. We are saved by grace, not who we are or what we do— he's been fleshing that out.
 2. **Romans 12-16** will Paul's practical application—*how to together as one body*
 - a. He starts with the need for holiness, living transformed lives differ from world
 - b. We must bless each other with our gifts, practices hospitality, forgive others, etc.
 - 1) We're not just saved by grace, but we must live gracious towards one another
 - 2) This is the "*so what*" part! Grace becomes real when it starts getting lived out!

3. **Romans 9-11** is the part we are beginning today. What's the point of this section?
 - a. N.T. Wright says, "*It is as full of problems as a hedgehog is as full of prickles*"
 - 1) Some scholars all but ignore this section rush on to the good stuff in chapter 12
 - 2) One thinks that this is one of Paul's unrelated sermons that he stuck in the book
 - 3) Others take the opposite tact and treat this as the most important part of book.
 - b. What Paul deals with is a hard question at center of things for Jewish Christians
 - 1) These Jewish Christians dedicated their lives to central place of the Law
 - 2) Paul essentially argued that Law is useless and powerless. *So what gives?*
 - a) What about all of the promises that God has made to Jews through the Law?
 - b) What about being the chosen people? What about a special covenant relationship?
 - c. Abraham was father of faithful because trusted God to keep promise (**Rom 4:3**)
 - 1) Jewish Christian now wonders, "*Can we still trust God to keep his promises?*"
 - 2) If God changes His promises like we change socks—*isn't that problem for us?*
- C. *Paul takes question seriously*; here's how he sets up the problem (**Read: Romans 9:1-5**)
1. Paul accepts the Jews as the true chosen people of God in the Old Testament
 - a. He mentions some of the ways that God used Israel as his special people in OT
 - 1) It was Israel who had the covenants with God and received Law from God
 - 2) It was Israel who had presence of God represented in the Temple worship
 - 3) It was Israel who had the patriarchs and through came the Messiah
 - b. There's was the "adoption to sonship," the same word he just uses for the church
 - c. That just highlights the fact Israel is no longer the chosen— that's the problem
 2. Paul agonizes over that and offers to be cut off from Christ "*for sake of my people*"
 - a. Hyperbole? Paul spends his life as apostle to Gentiles, but always goes first to Jews
 - 1) Most of his troubles in Acts is caused by Jews—insists on starting with them
 - 2) Why? Maybe he won't go to hell for the Jews, but he'll go thru hell for them!
 - b. Does Paul understand the problem of the Jewish Christian here? Sure he does!
 3. It's not just their problem. We all must be able to trust God to keep His promises.
 - a. This is indeed a difficult text; we won't smooth out all the hedgehog prickles
 - b. What we'll do is try to summarize briefly Paul basic four-part argument here
 - c. The we'll what it means for us as Gentile Christians in the twenty-first century

II. Did God Break His Promise?

A. **First**, not every Jew is born equal (**Rom 9:6**)

1. What if real Jews are the ones that are not of flesh but of the Spirit (**Rom 9:8**)
 - a. Prophets has promised that Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles (**Isa 42:6**)
 - b. It was always God intent to include the Gentiles—that was part of his promise
2. Paul made this basic argument earlier in Romans from circumcision (**Rom 2:28-29**)
 - a. When the Gentiles were included into the promise, that did not break God promise
 - b. And when the Jews failed to accept Messiah, it wasn't God's word that failed

B. **Second**, God's grace always seem unfair (**Rom 9:16**)

1. Essentially what the Jews were says was that God was not being fair in this deal
 - a. But the last thing that we ever want God to be is fair, because fair means hell
 - b. Fair is destruction. Fair is Jesus stays on his throne and we go to our own cross
2. If God shows mercy on someone we'd rather He'd drop the hammer—unfair! (**9:18**)
 - a. He brings up the Pharaoh here. So did Pharaoh harden his heart or did God?
 - 1) Genesis, both are true! Pharaoh is totally responsible; God is totally sovereign
 - 2) God displayed his power over all the earth (18). And Pharaoh made a choice!
 - b. And it's important we see both of those as true because of the next point he makes

C. **Third**, does God still blame us? Yes! (**Rom 9:19**)

1. If we're pawns at God's pleasure, why does He hold us responsible for our choice
 - a. Imagine God's face looking a bit like DeNiro, "*You talking to me?*" (**Rom 9:20**)
 - b. We're dealing with things that are way, wat above our pay grade here!
2. Paul does give us an explanation— though squarely in the context of his argument
 - a. There's plenty of Jews and Gentile that God chose and who chose God (**9:23-24**)
 - b. There's series of quotes from prophets of both Gentiles of Jews being chosen
 - c. In other words, God hasn't broken Hos promises to anyone—promise is still there

D. **Fourth**, the unchosen one rejected the Chosen One (**9:32**)

1. Israel is no longer the chosen people of God. Why? They rejected the Messiah
 - a. The Gentiles were accepted but they found the righteousness that is by faith (**9:30**)
 - b. Jews cling to the Law, and because of that, they reject the Christ. And are rejected.
2. Paul concludes that God did not break His promise at all—He kept it to the letter!
3. God always keeps his promises. Everyone. Every time. You can take that to bank!

III. Conclusion

- A. You and I are standing on the “*very great and precious promises*” of God (**2 Pet 1:4**)
1. Like the Jews, there are times that we don’t like the way that God keeps His promise
 - a. God sent them the Messiah, but they didn’t like the kind of Messiah that He sent!
 - b. They wanted a conqueror to beat Rome; they rejected Jesus. *We do that sometimes.*
 - c. We know in theory God keeps His promises, we want Him to keep them our way
 2. Last week, we saw one of those promises— God in the middle at work (**Rom 8:28**)
 - a. We want that to mean that God will take every bad thing and turn it around for good
 - b. In Paul’s context, what God is doing is working for the restoration of all things
 - 1) May not see the good until we understand suffering can’t compare (**Rom 8:18**)
 - 2) That’s not how we want God to keep promise; somehow that’s how He does!
 3. **Last Week:** It’s OK to groan now; God will groan with you! Only be glory then!
- B. What are some other great and precious promises that we can KNOW God will keep
1. God hears us when we pray—when we knock, the door will be opened (**Matt 7:7**)
 - a. Does that mean that we always get what we ask for? Absolutely not and no way
 - 1) Jesus asked for cup to be taken away; God let him drink it to the bitter dregs
 - 2) If God told Jesus “No,” we can expect same. But imagine this— God listens!
 - b. We have Christ’s promise that God hears and opens heavens door when we pray
 - c. We don’t understand it; we certainly don’t know it works. We can trust God it does
 2. We can trust that our intercessions for others make a difference (**James 5:16**).
 - a. We are told to pray for one another—when we’re sick and when we confess sin
 - 1) We’re much better at confessing when we’re sick. Does prayer work better?
 - 2) Do we think it does any good to pray for the sick? Why don’t we confess sin?
 - 3) Do we really want to get any better in our struggles with temptation
 - b. God promises that when we pray for one other, there is power and healing
 - c. That’s His promise, and God can be trusted to always keep his promise, riught?
 3. God promises to Himself provide a way of escape in temptation (**1 Cor 10:13**).
 - a. We want to say “*I can’t help it*” or “*that’s just how I am*” or “*devil made me do it*”
 - b. Why? Relieves us of all the responsibility. God doesn’t let us get by with that!
 - c. Paul says, “*God is faithful.*” He keeps his promises. He will provide the escape
- C. We sing “*Praise the Lord*” and affirm “*Never shall His promise fail.*” Never! Never!