



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 23 Salvation to Jews first

Romans 1:16-17, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

Paul has been endeavoring to contact his audience. He has been endeavoring to make a connection, to get the people's attention.

Having got their attention, he establishes his thesis.

Paul faced death itself for the gospel, but never once did he become ashamed of Christ. He would face anybody, anytime and preach Jesus Christ.

Why not?

Because the gospel is the power of God for unto salvation to everyone who believes.

The power is seen in salvation!

Ephesians 2:1, *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,*

The salvation act of God makes the person to come alive.
To live forever.

Ephesians 2:4-7, *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Cleansed of sin and fit for the kingdom of God.

The word “salvation” is used 18 times by Paul, 5 times in Romans.

Salvation as the verb form 29 times by Paul, 8 times in Romans.

It means “deliverance.”

What does it mean to be saved?

It means to be delivered.

Delivered from what?

- Sin,
- Satan,
- Judgment,
- Death, and
- Hell.

Only the Gospel of Christ has the power to do that.

Man's safe passage through human trials, and his safe passage by divine judgment, and his entrance into eternal blessedness is bound up in his being saved.

It includes,

- Forgiveness,
- Escape from wrath,
- Life in the Spirit,
- Resurrection, and
- Eternity.

The gospel is God's effective power active in the world to bring about deliverance for men from God's wrath, from sin, Satan, judgment, death, and hell.

When Apostle Paul was preaching the people, who lived those times they were looking for salvation.

But people today they are looking for their need economic salvation, or political salvation, or social salvation. They just need to upgrade their lives and their society. They were looking for salvation.

There was a time at the time of Paul when Greek philosophy was turning more and more to that which was internal. They were so deep down into human philosophy which could not save them. They were looking for salvation of their souls.

Epictetus, one of the writers at that time called his lecture room, "The Hospital for the Sick Soul."

Epicurus called his teaching, "The medicine of salvation." They were looking for something to deliver man from the constancy of sin.

Seneca, whose life coincided with the life of Paul, said that all men were looking toward salvation.

"What we need is some hand to reach down and lift us up. Men are overwhelmingly conscious of their weakness and their inefficiency in necessary things."

Men have always needed that. But sometimes when they hear the gospel, they think that as the answer sounds so stupid. But it is the power of God.

Salvation has many dimensions. When a man or a woman is delivered, he is delivered from life's infection.

Acts 2:40, *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."*

We are saved from a crooked and perverse generation. We are coated with a divine antiseptic.

Salvation is not only from life's infection, but salvation is from lostness.

Luke 19:10, *for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Humans are on the wrong road.

Does not know where they are,

- going,
- come from,
- where he is.

Man is lost.

Suddenly, when he comes to Christ, instantly he knows where he came from, where he is going, and right where he is.

It means salvation from sin.

Man is a slave to sin until Christ releases him. It means salvation from the inevitable judgment of God. It is an eschatological salvation that climaxes in a triumphant eternity.

The various aspects of salvation will be unfolded to us throughout the letter to Romans.

It takes divine power to accomplish this salvation because man is so lost, infected, doomed, damned, and so dead in sin.

It takes the power of God to burst him through that. Cannot do it on his own.

God characterizes man in the Bible as grossly, willfully ignorant. As purposely self-indulgent and unwilling to forsake all.

God characterizes men as deep in false religion, as covered and directed in all they do by Satan.

- As filled with wrong motives and self-deceived.
- As trusting in their own good deeds, which are at best filthy rags.
- As loving the passing things of the world.
- As hating the truth.
- As proud, pleasure-seeking, guilty, lustful creatures.
- As such they have no right to enter the kingdom of God.

So, they must be delivered from all.
Only the power of God can do it!

Paul says that the power of God can bring salvation.

How?

Everyone who believes.

V 16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

If the power of God can do it, for whom does it do it?

For everyone that believes.

Salvation power operates only through faith!

That is all.

Where there is faith, there is the power of God operative in salvation.

What is faith?

Faith is believing.

You all live by faith every day of your life.

You turn on your tap, fill the glass, and you drink it. That is faith. You do not know what is in there. You have no idea whose been playing in your pipes.

You sit in your chair. You do not know whether it will break or not but you trust so you sit on the chair.

You go to airport by a flight ticket and sit in the flight trusting that the pilot will be able to navigate and land safely to the destination.

Sometimes you will find the captain of the aircraft walking down the aisle and speaking to people. You must be wondering who is piloting the flight?

You go to restaurant and order the food and you eat without questioning.

We live by faith all the time.

Faith is trust.

We all live by faith.

That is the only way we can survive.

God has put it in the heart of a man that he understands to live by faith.

Faith in the spiritual dimension is far different than that kind of faith, but it is nonetheless the same idea.

It is trusting and believing, and the power of God can save, but it will save only those who believe.

Romans 10:9-10, *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. That means that you believe He is who He said He was, that He died for the reason He said He died, and that He rose again from the grave.

If you believe that you believe.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Faith. Salvation is not professing Christianity.

- Salvation is not baptism.
- Salvation is not moral reform.
- Salvation is not going to church.
- Salvation is not conforming to rules.
- Salvation is not self-discipline.
- Salvation is not restraint.
- Salvation is not morality.

So many people think they are saved for the wrong reasons.

Many people security of their salvation is going to a church.
Salvation does not come through the church.

Salvation comes because a man or a woman recognizes that he has no resources, and he sees himself lost and sees the filthiness and deformity of sin. Perceives the rottenness of heart, and the pollution of their nature, and drawn to Christ as a remedy.

Person sees the One who died for his sin. Who conquered his sin, and paid the price, and wants to give him new life?
Then confesses that "I believe."

It does not matter who that man is?

V16 *"Everyone, whether Jew or Greek, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

The primacy of salvation was extended to the Jews. Salvation has primary relevancy to the Jews since they were God's specially chosen people.

It was for Israel He came for the lines of preparation for the full revelation of the gospel were laid with Israel, and so the gospel is preeminently the gospel for the Jew.

From the days of Abraham their great ancestor, the Jew had been highly distinguished from all the rest of the world by their

many and great privileges. It was their high distinction that of them Christ came, who was overall God blessed forever. They were thus as His kinsmen, the royal family of the human race.

In this respect higher than all others, and they inherited Emanuel's land. While therefore the evangelical covenant, and consequently justification and salvation equally regarded all believers, the Jews held the first rank as the ancient people of God, while the other nations were strangers from the covenants of promise.

The preaching of the gospel was to be addressed to them first, and at the beginning to them alone.

Jesus commanded that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Thus, while Jews and Gentiles were united in the participation of the gospel, the Jews were not deprived of their rank since they were the first called.

The preaching of the gospel to the Jews first served various important ends.

- It fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.
- It manifested the compassion of the Lord Jesus for those who shed His blood, to whom after His resurrection He commanded His gospel to be first proclaimed.

- It showed that it was to be preached to the chief of sinners and prove the sovereign efficacy of His atonement in expiating the guilt even of His own murderers.
- It was fit, too, that the gospel should be begun to be preached where the great transactions took place on which it was founded.

To the Jew first, but also to the Gentiles. The salvation of God was not limited to any nation. To everyone, the Jew or Gentile.

How Jews have Priority?

Why then does Paul follow this exciting word “everyone” with a word that seems to give priority to Jews?

How does he mean, “to the Jew first”?

What kind of priority?

What effect does he want this to have on us?

1. Chosen people of God.

How do they have priority over Gentiles?

Genesis 12, God chooses Abraham and his descendants from all the peoples of the world to bless with his covenant and promise.

Nehemiah 9:7, *“You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham;*

Deuteronomy 14:2, *For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Amos 3:2, *“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”*

Romans 11:28–29, *Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

The Jews have a priority over others because of their special role as God’s elect or chosen people.

God set his favour on them and set them apart from all the peoples. Freely! Not because of any virtue or special value in them, but simply on the basis of his free choice.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8, *The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;⁸ but because*

the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

2. Guardians of God's revelation.

Romans 3:1-2, *What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ²Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.*

In other words, God gave his special revelation and promises to Israel by Moses and the prophets.

Romans 9:4, *who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;*

All the great expressions and foreshadows of the gospel of salvation were given to the Jews in the word of God, the Old Testament.

So, the Jews had priority in having the Scriptures.

3. Jesus came to Jews first.

Romans 9:5, *of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

The Messiah, Jesus, was a Jew, a Son of David.

Jesus focused his earthly ministry on the Jews. They had a priority in his work.

Matthew 10:5–6, *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

It is to the Jew first that Messiah came.

Matthew 15:24, *But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*

During Jesus earthly life, Jesus was focused on the Jews. They had priority in His ministry.

Paul also evangelized the Jews first.

Acts 13:46, *Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first;*

but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

God chose Israel and revealed Himself to Israel and sent the Messiah and Saviour to Israel so that salvation is from Israel, it is fitting that in the spread of the gospel to new places, the Jews hear first of their Messiah and the good news of his salvation.

Acts 17:2, *Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*

So, Jews have a priority in the order of frontier missions when the gospel comes to a new place.

4. Salvation is from the Jews.

These are the very words of Jesus.

Jesus says to the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:22, *You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*

This simply sums up all that we have seen so far.

They are the chosen nation.

The nation with God's special revelation.

The nation with the Messiah, the Savior.

So, clearly, salvation is "from the Jews."

Another way to see that salvation is from the Jews is found in **Romans 11:17–24** where Paul compares the Jewish nation to an olive tree. He says that natural branches are broken off and unnatural branches were grafted in, meaning that Jews by birth were unbelieving and so cut off from the covenant of promise. Gentiles who were believing were grafted in and saved by the covenant of promise.

Romans 11:17-18, *And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

In other words, salvation comes to us Gentiles from the root of God's covenant with the Jews. We are simply grafted in like wild olive branches that have no historical claim at all on being God's people.

God saves us by reckoning us children of Abraham by faith.

Galatians 3:7, *"It is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."*

So, Jews have priority because "salvation is from the Jews." All salvation is salvation through God's covenant with Abraham.

5. Final Judgement & Blessings priority.

Romans 2:9-10, *tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

The priority that the Jews have, if it is rejected and squandered will result in a priority in judgment.

If they are grateful for their priority and trust in the mercy of their Messiah, then they will go first into the final blessing of God. There are definite dangers in having this priority.

Luke 12:48, *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required.”*

How Jews NOT have Priority?

The Jews do not have priority!

1. The Jews do not have priority in righteousness or merit.

Nor do Gentiles.

We are on the same footing.

That is one of the main points of the first two chapters of Romans.

Romans 3:9–10, *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. ¹⁰As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Romans 3:22–23, *even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

2. The Jews do not have priority in how they are saved.

They are saved exactly the way Gentiles are.

Romans 3:29–30, *Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.*

Romans 10:12-13, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

So, neither Jews nor Gentiles have priority in how they are saved.

Both are saved by faith in Christ, not in any ethnic or religious distinctives.

3. The Jews do not have priority in participation in God's covenant blessings.

The mystery of the gospel that Paul preaches, he says, is that Gentiles now are full partners in the blessings of Jewish salvation.

Ephesians 2:12–13, *that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Ephesians 2:18–19, *For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.* ¹⁹ *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*

Ephesians 3:4–6, *by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),* ⁵ *which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:* ⁶ *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,*

So, Jews do not have priority in participation in God's covenant blessings. Gentiles are full fellow heirs of all the promises of God.

Why Paul mentions the Priority of the Jews?

Being influenced by Romans 11:17–32, Paul wants to humble both Jew and Greek and make them deeply aware that they depend entirely on mercy, not on themselves or their tradition or ethnic connections.

To the Gentiles he says, in essence, salvation is of the Jews. You are not being saved by your Greek culture or any other culture. You are being saved by a salvation that comes through the despised Semitic people called the Jews.

Romans 11:18, *do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

We Gentiles are saved by becoming spiritual Jews (Romans 2:28–29).

This should humble us and strip us of any arrogance and boasting in any presumed ethnic superiority. It also should vanquish anti-Semitism and fill us with zeal for evangelism to Jews.

Similarly, Paul says to the Jews, your salvation is not your own. It is God's and he gives it to whom he pleases.

Matthew 3:9, *and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.*

The words "also to the Greek" in Romans 1:16 would have been as offensive to the Jews as the words "to the Jew first" were to the Gentiles.

What they thought were Jewish prerogatives are, in fact, shared by the lowliest Gentiles who believe. Both of us are being humbled. We Gentiles must humble ourselves to be saved through a Jewish Messiah and a Jewish covenant. Jews must humble themselves to receive unclean Gentiles into full covenant membership and share all the blessings of the promise of Abraham.

The whole point is that God is the One who has mercy.

Ethnicity is not decisive here.

There is no merit with God.

We are all sinners.

The emphasis falls back on that word "everyone".

The gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes."

So, whether Jew or Gentile, believe!

Receive the power of God to save you from your sins and guilt and death and judgment and hell and bring you home to ever-increasing joy in his presence forever and ever.