

How Do I Really Trust God
Romans Summer Sermon Series – August 12th, 2007

Series: Extreme Make Over
Text: Romans 9:15-16,30-33

A sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Stacey D. Jones on August 12th, 2007 at
Northminster Presbyterian Church.

Today we are continuing our study in the book of Romans. As we come to chapter nine, Paul is agonizing over the fact that many of his Jewish people have not responded to Jesus as God's Son and the Promised Messiah. They had the covenants and promises of God. The Hebrew people were chosen and formed to be a holy people, a people that would point to the reality and awesomeness of God. From this sacred lineage came the Christ, the Savior of the world. You would think that they would be primed to see and receive Jesus the Messiah. Many were and many were not. As Jesus discovered, many of his own people, even people from his hometown, did not believe or follow him.

Why were some in the nation of Israel not able to trust Jesus? Paul points out that just because a person is born into a Hebrew family, that fact alone does not make them a child of God, a faith-descendent of Abraham. It is by trusting the promises of God, like Abraham did, that enables a person to enter into God's family. So **"Why were some in the nation of Israel not able to trust Jesus?"** They were set on trusting themselves. They figured they could do whatever was needed to appease God: keep the commandments, offer sacrifices, remind God of their favored status as Hebrews and guardians of the Law of Moses. Paul sums it up in Romans 9:30-33: "What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but Israel who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'"

How can we sum this up? All those people who didn't seem interested in what God was doing actually embraced what God was doing as he straightened out their lives. And Israel, who seemed so interested in reading and talking about what God was doing, missed it. [32] How could they miss it? **Because instead of trusting God, they took over.** They were absorbed in what they themselves were doing. They were so absorbed in their "God projects" that they didn't notice God right in front of them, like a huge rock in the middle of the road. And so they stumbled into him and went sprawling. [33] Isaiah gives us the metaphor for pulling this together: Careful! I've put a huge stone on the road to Mount Zion, a stone you can't get around. But the stone is me! If you're looking for me, you'll find me on the way, not in the way.

What does this passage say to you and me? Plenty! I see two cautions and an invitation. The first caution is: If you never think about God, don't miss God. It is easy to have a self-absorbed life. Your job, your family, your friends, your hobbies, your social activities can keep you pretty busy. They also can keep you from seeing and experiencing God. Good things can prevent us from embracing the best. If you can go through your day and never think of God, you are missing God. Why? Jesus is everywhere you go. Jesus is there eager to help you and guide you on how to help others. As we enter the month of August, this is a good time to re-evaluate our priorities and schedules. What good thing needs to come off our plate so we can make room for the best? Maybe God is calling you to a season of deeper Bible study or service. What will you put aside for a season to make room for this new work God wants to do in and through you?

A colleague of mine told me about a member in his church who was in business for years, but was not really feeling fulfilled. A few years ago he decided to move from seeking success in his life to seeking significance. He planned ahead and left his job so he could be free to serve God. In the last two years he has helped a Christian organization become a solvent, efficient service organization. He also took that church's partnership with the Honduras Presbyterian Church to a whole new level of cooperation and productivity in the name of Christ. He needs to go back to earning money soon to meet the needs of his family, but he is trusting God to guide and help him discover a career where he can do even more to help others. Steve is learning how to see God and follow him. He is determined not to miss God.

When asked for his permission to use him as a person seeking God this was his reply:

"There are so many people in our congregation and the world who are intentional that I hate to be placed on a pedestal. If you think it will motivate others to take a portion of their time to give back, go ahead. The time I have spent giving back has provided me with much more than I could have ever imagined. I have benefited from my experience with a much closer relationship with the creator and would hope every human could feel that relationship sometime in their lives. Thanks for the extreme compliment.

The second caution is: If you are busy in a lot of God-stuff all the time, don't miss God. Like the Hebrews in Jesus' day, you and I can get busy for God and leave God out of the picture. We can come to church, help with fellowship events, attend or even teach Sunday School, be a faithful participant of a small group, visit people in need, go on a mission trip, give of our money, sing in the choir, and even be a leader in the church and still miss God. The activity is one thing, seeing and inviting God to be a part of it is another. A triage nurse mission worker in Honduras provides a great example. As people streamed into the small clinic, she would take their vitals and discern how we could best serve them. One day she was sitting there, doing God's work, and she was getting really annoyed!

It was hot and sticky and the air was thick. Smelly people were crowding her table and the flies were buzzing around her face. She was about at the end of her rope. Then she stopped and prayed quietly, "Help me God." In a moment she was flooded by an unexplainable peace and calm. She was able to continue to serve the way she wanted to, with God present and active.

The invitation implicit in this passage is: Trust me with all the details of your life. Wherever you find yourself, invite God to be a part of your life. The big decision is to invite God to live in you. Jesus promises to come to anyone who is seeking his love and forgiveness. Just quietly ask him to come and dwell in your heart, mind, soul, and will. The next step, or better yet, series of steps, is to learn to trust God with all the details of your life, one at a time, as they present themselves. Give God your career. Hand over to God your relationships. Let God rule your finances. Give God every situation you are in and ask him to use you and to work in you.

When we knew that my position in Michigan was being eliminated and we would have to move we put our house on the market. It's been on the market for 10 months. We had one offer that the financing fell through. But my family prays for God to be present in and through this situation. We trust and believe that God will help us through a financially tight time and do the best thing in our lives.

Please join me in prayer: Mighty God, you sent Jesus to be the solid rock in our lives. Help us not to ignore him or see him as an obstacle in our lives. Rather, help us find and trust Jesus with each detail of our lives. In Christ Name we pray, Amen.