

# BIBLE & BAGEL

## Romans – Our Common Faith

7 March 2016

How do we look at someone who is of a different race or nationality or social standing from ourselves, do we see them as having equal value as ourselves or do we see different people as having different value; some more some less depending on their race, nationality or place in our society. Was this one of the issues that the Apostle Paul was addressing in the church in Rome? Read on ...

### *Romans 11:33-12:2*

*33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD ? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 'Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

*12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. NKJV*

Apostle Paul is amazed at the wisdom of God, exclaiming that His ways are so far above the comprehension of man. He against asks rhetorically whether anyone can know the thoughts of God or whether anyone could advise God or tell Him what to do. He is the source and the sustainer of all things and all the glory goes back to Him. Apostle Paul says all this light after he has spoken about how God set the Jews aside and turned to the Gentiles and saved them to provoke the Jews to jealous. He displayed His mercy to the Gentiles so that the Jews would see and become envious and turn to Him.

Chapter 12:1-2 is actually the conclusion of the argument that Apostle Paul has just made. He speaks to the Gentiles and says that since God has chosen to use them as instruments to show His mercy to the Jews they should live sacrificial lives and change their way of thinking from thinking like the world around them to thinking and looking at things with an eternal perspective. By doing so they (Gentile believers) could discern the will of God. His perfect will in this case is the salvation of the Jews. His ultimate will in the case of the church in Rome was that Gentiles would provoke the Jews to jealousy and be saved.

As human beings we sometimes think that we are smart enough and some would even dare to try to tell God what He should do. In human relations very often we get angry with someone else and we wish that God would judge and punish them, or we look at someone and say "he is a hopeless case; God should not bother with him". God however, has a different point of view, He knows what He wants to do in a person's life and He might choose to use us to accomplish His work. We must always remember that God says that His ways are not like ours<sup>i</sup>, because He doesn't think like we do.

As we saw earlier some of the Gentiles in the church in Rome were getting proud towards the Jews<sup>ii</sup>. One major reason for this was the Roman philosophy that



categorized people into different classes; Romans were considered the highest class and the lowest were the Jews and those who believed in only one God. This came to be known as “Social Darwinism” in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Roman Gentiles who came to faith still had this mindset even though they were already believers, it is because of this that Apostle Paul tell them to change their way of thinking; from the way that the Roman world thought to the way that they should now think because the belong to Christ.

We need to look at ourselves and the way we look at people; I have come across church leaders who reject people because of their race or their social standing. This is what the Bible calls the carnal mind, looking at people of other races or nationalities and feeling that we are better than them or they are less worthy than. Ask God to help us to see others according to His viewpoint, so that we can see them as He does and value and love them as He does.

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<sup>i</sup> Isaiah 55:8&9

<sup>ii</sup> Romans 11:18-24

