

Scripture Commentary Romans 9

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For our Scripture reading before the message, let's look together in Romans 9. This is a chapter that, for those of us that are the LORD's people, we find great rejoicing in it, while others, who do not want to give God the glory and are left to their own devices find reason to cavil at what we read here. But God is God and He is sovereign and in the matter of salvation, it is His to save as it is His to condemn. If that's not your view of God, then you have a wrong view because just the word "God, in the beginning God," it means "Supreme Magistrate; the Chief Magistrate who determines all things." And to question God is to question, then, His veracity, is to question His justice, is to question His holiness because He's holy, He's just. It's like Abraham when it was determined that Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed, even after he pled with the LORD and realized that it was determined, what he said is what I believe the LORD gives any one of his children regardless of the situation, "Shall not the Judge of the earth do right?"

Several years ago I heard it expressed this way: that everything that God does is right and it's right because God does it. So that's what we see here in Romans 9, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." There are some that think, well, if you believe God saves whom He will and damns whom He will, then you're somewhat robotic in how you approach things, fatalistic, you have no thought. But certainly that's not what we read here of the Apostle Paul who had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart over the unbelief of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, that is, the Jews. I don't know about you but it grieves my heart to be around people who are yet in darkness that cannot rejoice in this God and in Christ, the Savior. There is a heaviness. There is a weight that is upon your soul.

Now, for years, I thought what verse 3 was saying was that Paul was willing to take the place of these accursed brethren if God would but save them. I've heard that preached that way but that's not what he's saying. We know there is only One Substitute for sinners, that's Christ. There's no way that Paul would ever have wished himself accursed, in other words, "LORD, even though you've put the curse on Christ for a particular people, now put the curse on me for these others." That would be foolishness. What he's saying is that he understands their hardness and their unbelief when he says, and here it says, "I could

wish that myself were accursed," in the original you can read that, "I had wished myself accursed from Christ." In other words, those that oppose Christ wished themselves accursed from Christ. I've had some tell me that, "I would rather go to hell than believe in a God who saves whom He will and damns whom He will, and a Christ Who died for certain ones and not others, I would rather go to hell." I've had people tell me that. Well, you just wished yourself accursed from Christ.

And such was Paul's unbelief in his religion as he ran headlong and sought to persecute any that named the name of Christ, he's saying, "I was in that blindness just like these others." So that's what added to his heaviness. He said, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." He's saying these are people, just like we hold this Bible in our hand right now, these are people who had the Scriptures, God gave them the Oracles, they saw through the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God, every day they saw pictures of Christ, and through Whom Christ did come Who is over all, God blessed for ever, and yet they didn't see Him.

When it says here in verse 6, "Not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect," some might say, "Well, God wished one thing and it turned out otherwise." No. It's not as though the Word of God had taken none effect. Why? "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." And to me as a preacher over the years, this has brought me great consolation because you preach an awful lot of messages, you point an awful lot of sinners to Christ over time, but you see an awful few that it seems the LORD ever opens their eyes. Well, does that mean, then, it's futility to preach Christ? No. They're not all Israel which are of Israel.

There could be masses listening to this message right now but it's not destined for everybody. You see, the world today wants to open the so-called gospel up and just make it appealing to everybody, "If you'll just accept and receive it, then god could do what he's going to do." That's a message that is conditioned upon man but it's not of God. God never purposed that all of Israel should be saved. Now, He showed them the types and the pictures that pertained to Christ but it was not for everyone.

And He says there in verse 7, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." I liken that to people that fall back on their denomination and I would say even people that attend Shreveport Grace Church. "Neither, because they are at Shreveport Grace Church, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall Thy Seed be called." People come even to a place where the Gospel is preached for many reasons: maybe they don't like sitting at home by themselves; maybe they kind of like Grace people because, for some, they seem to look at us as being a little more tolerant, they're not getting hammered all the time because we know that it's by Grace we're saved and we're instructed in Scripture to receive sinners knowing what we are ourselves.

"But, In Isaac shall Thy Seed be called." In other words, this Seed which was to come from Isaac, which is Christ, because it says there in verse 8, "That is, They which are the

children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." We don't become children of God by outward form, profession, or even birth in a so-called Christian family.

"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the Promise are counted for the Seed." And I don't know who they are. You find out about it as you preach Christ. Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself," in other words, "all that I have purposed to draw from every tribe, kindred and tongue." That's how you find out, exalt Christ.

But it's, "the children of the Promise are counted for the Seed. For this is the Word of Promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac," not this, verse 11, "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." They were both twins, both of the same mother but that the purpose of election might stand before any of them had done anything, not of works, but of Him that calleth. Who makes the difference? God does.

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." It's like one lady said to a preacher one time, "I don't understand how God could hate Esau," and he said, "Well, I don't have any trouble understanding how God could hate Esau, the marvel is that he could love Jacob," for we know that if He loves any one of us, it's in Christ. It's from eternity. He purposed to save us in Christ. That's it.

"What shall we say then?" Paul anticipates every objection in the book. The Spirit directed him for these questions.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" That's what people say, "Well, then, God's unrighteous if He chooses one over another."

"God forbid." Remember I just said a little while ago, it's right because God does it and God does it because it's right.

"God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth." That's all we hear preached today is man willing, it's conditioned on your will. Nope.

"Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." If I just strive a little more. And I will tell you there are even some grace preachers that will preach in that manner to get down on your knees and don't get up until god saves you. Somehow he's expecting you to do something. Nope.

"Nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." And that's what that Publican did in that temple, beat upon his breast, dared not even to look heavenward and said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner."

"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up." You think about Pharaoh, he was a hardened sinner but the Scripture says even for this purpose, God raised him up, "that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." What kind of power? The power to destroy him, raise him up. And I'll tell you, when the LORD was raising him up, he didn't have a problem with that. He loved being king, dictator, ruler. All the while, though, God had raised him up and then brought him down, destroyed him and his army in delivering Israel out of Egypt.

Verse 18, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." All God has to do to harden a sinner is just take His hand off Him. It's like in the winter time, the sun still shines but it's just further from the earth so as that sun is removed, what happens? It gets cold. You keep moving further and it gets colder, it is hardened. It's not that the sun isn't shining. That's the way it is with God and it is God giving sinners over to what they want anyway because they don't want this God and God says, "Have at it," and they become hardened.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault?." You see every objection. "For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?" You think about before the LORD manifests His Grace in us, how often we've thought that in different situations. That's rebellion and, I dare say, people in the world today that make a profession, even know God and believe God, when He directs their lives in a different way other than what they think He should, whether they say it or not, it's in their heart, "Why hast Thou made me thus?"

But, "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Think about a king's palace in the old days, there were vessels of gold that would sit on the table whenever the king would invite guests to come and eat and drink, those were vessels of honor. But there were also vessels that were made for nothing other than to carry out the dirt or waste or whatever it is. And you never confuse the two. There were vessels of honor that were made for the honor of the king, and there were the vessels of dishonor that were used for common purposes. So if it's that way in life, why would we find fault with God in Him ordaining, purposing that it be that way spiritually?

"What if God," verse 22, "willing to shew His wrath." You see, we can talk about the attributes of God, He's just, He's holy, He's true, He's truth, but He's merciful and gracious and He's love. So how do you put that together? You say, "Well, if He's just and holy, then is He not just in exercising wrath?" Absolutely. Why would you find fault with Him exercising His wrath? The fact is that His holiness is the hub of everything He does. Even when it comes down to how He shows Grace to any sinner, it's in accord with that holiness. God didn't just look the other way to save sinners, He poured out that wrath on

His Son. He spared not His only Son but delivered Him up that He might fully give us, those that are vessels of mercy, all things freely.

But this is what Paul here by the Spirit is arguing, "What if?" Are you going to find fault with God? That God, "willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known," here's the word, "endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." This is where we're going to see in our message in 1 Samuel, how David had Saul in the spot where he could have taken his life and he didn't. Even though his men were encouraging him to do so, he refused. It's a picture of God's longsuffering. God is longsuffering even toward the vessels of wrath, that He does not take men out or women out as soon as that rebellion pops up in their heart. In fact, most people running around today that are vessels of wrath, they're happy with their life: they're making money; things are going along the way they like it. But unless they're vessels of mercy, if they're vessels of wrath, notice, "fitted to destruction." All of that is just heaping wrath upon wrath against the day of wrath.

"And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy." Wrath on the vessels of wrath, riches of His glory, those are riches of Christ because Christ is God's glory.

"On the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." People try to argue around it and say, "Well, He doesn't really fit any vessel to destruction." What I'm reading says He does. Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory.

"Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" You see, this is God's Israel.

"As He saith also in Osee, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." He's talking there about Gentile nations whom God purposed to save. He passed by the Jews and brought in these Gentiles.

"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea," notice, "a remnant shall be saved." Think about Noah on the ark, there were only eight persons saved alive. You say, "Why were they saved?" Well, it says Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. That's it. There was plenty of room in that ark but there were no vacancies and that's the same in salvation.

"A remnant," it doesn't say might be saved or hopes to be saved, no, "shall be saved. For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the LORD make upon the earth." That work of righteousness was what was accomplished at the cross. It's called a short work because when Christ died, it was finished. The debt was paid and the people whom God purposed to save saved.

"And as Esaias said before, Except the LORD of Sabaoth," that means "the LORD of Hosts, had left us a Seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha." Except the LORD had left us a seed. Stop and think about it: if you're the LORD's, it's because God purposed that you be His. It's not because you're any better than anybody else but purposed to save a seed.

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." When you see that word "faith," don't think of their belief. "Of faith" has to do with it's an object, it's Christ. So you can put that, "which is of Christ." It's of His Faith that sinners are saved, His Faithfulness. There, again, "That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness," they weren't even looking. I dare say, none of us were looking either. We thought we had it, whatever "it" was.

Back in 1973, that was a campaign, "I found it." You wore these buttons and that meant that you got it, you made your profession. They called it Key 73. We were calling all over, everybody. Cold call and walk somebody through a plan of salvation and if you could get them to make a decision, then you sent them this little button, "I found it." You wear this, you found it. "It" could mean a lot of things because it's not salvation. Salvation is not us finding it, Salvation is being found of Him, of God in Christ; not having our own righteousness but that which is of God by Faith.

"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness." It's like so many today, they're proud of their works. They're working at it.

"Hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Do you know why? Because it requires perfection, something you and I could never work out.

"Wherefore? Because they sought it not by Faith," and you could put there, "they sought it not by Christ, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that Stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a Stumblingstone and Rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

Gracious Father, thank You for your Word. Thank You for bringing us here. Thank You for what we're about to hear also in 1 Samuel, and I pray that even what we've heard thus far would be a preparation of our hearts and that You would not leave us to ourselves. Make us beggars of Mercy to cry unto You, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." LORD, by Your Spirit of Grace, we know that that is what You do for those who are vessels of Mercy. So I thank You for the hope that is in Christ and that as you are pleased, LORD, to draw our hearts, we will be drawn; as You are pleased to turn our hearts, we will be turned. And for that we give You the praise, honor and glory in our Dear Savior's name. Amen.