

070701 Why the Sudden Change of Mood? 22/26 July 1, 2007GG Why the Sudden Change of Mood?

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Why the Sudden Change of Mood?

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: 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. ([Ro 9:1-5](#))

At the end of Romans the eighth chapter Paul seems upbeat, incredibly so, fully focused on God's victory over sin, and confident without doubt that God's purpose to preserve His elect from separation from His love in Christ holds every one of them securely in grace. As he begins the ninth chapter, Paul seems somber in mood and openly acknowledges the reason. Some of his Jewish brothers and sisters did not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah when He came. Many of them, himself included prior to his Damascus Road experience, aggressively opposed Jesus' followers after the ascension.

One could pose the question to Paul, given his emphatic conclusion in the eighth chapter, "Paul, God will have the victory in the end. All of His chosen vessels of mercy shall be saved in glory. So what is your problem? Get over it!"

Based on a person's overall theological beliefs, the answer to this question—Why didn't Paul just get over it?—will vary widely. As we move into the ninth chapter, we will see that Paul in no way changed his mind regarding God's victory over sin on behalf of His chosen people. In fact Paul further affirms that truth. If God will ultimately destroy sin's damning effects in every one of His elect so that they shall all spend eternity with him in glory, why should anyone be sad for any reason? Before we engage Paul's teachings that unfold later in this chapter, we will spend some time with the question of Paul's surprising change of emphasis and mood in these opening verses of the ninth chapter of Romans.

If we make human actions, either as cause or as instrument or agent, in any degree a moving factor in the eternal security of God's elect, the theological point that Paul has just completed at the close of the eighth chapter, we will inevitably run head to head against the teachings of Paul and other inspired writers of Scripture, but our synergetic⁹² belief will also lead us to form errant interpretations of these verses. D. A. Carson, highly respected Christian author and professor at Trinity International University, the primary theological school of the Evangelical Free Church, offers an example of this idea.

The lack of a word or phrase to connect ch. 8 with ch. 9 suggests that there is a pause in Paul's argument at this point. With the celebration of God's unchangeable love for Christians (8:31–39) the climax of his argument to this point has been reached. But it is just this assertion of the certain fulfilment of God's promises to Christians that leads Paul now to raise the question of God's promises to Israel. Vs 1–3 show that this question was an intensely emotional one for him. For Paul never lost his sense of identification with his fellow-Jews. He therefore experiences *great sorrow and unceasing anguish* over those who are from the standpoint of the flesh (*kata sarka*) his 'kinsmen' and *brothers* (2–3). Although Paul does not tell us why he feels so badly about his fellow-Jews, the parallel in 10:1 makes clear that it is because the great majority of Jews are not saved; for they have refused to believe in Jesus Christ (*cf.* 9:30–10:21).⁹³

Carson often stands more strongly on the side of grace (as opposed to human works in accomplishing one's eternal security) than most contemporary New Testament authorities. However, in this comment he clearly affirms his view that the individual must "...believe in Jesus Christ" to effect this salvation. Thus his explanation of the passage explains Paul's abrupt change from joy to grief as Paul's realization that many of his Jewish brothers and sisters have not believed in Jesus and therefore, according to this view of salvation, are not saved. Whether Carson makes "believing in Jesus" a cause, an instrument, or a manifestation of all the elect is outside the scope of my study at this time. Indeed we could find respected authorities who hold to all three views of belief in our time. In fact all of these views inherently involve some element of human synergy with God in the salvation process, varying from effective cause to certain manifestation of God's saving grace.

Any of these views will explain Paul's present grief in our study verses by appealing to his sadness at the Jewish lack of favorable response to the gospel—indeed to Jesus.

Is the failure of these Jews' favorable response to the gospel the true reason for Paul's sudden grief? I suggest that it is not. In [Joh 5:24](#) Jesus clearly described the believer as having already passed from death to life, as already possessing eternal life. In [1Jo 5:1](#) John affirms this point with equal clarity. Further, and more related to the context of our study passage, in the tenth chapter Paul will assert that "...the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart..." ([Ro 10:8](#)) In this particular verse Paul's reference to the "word" he defines as the "righteousness of faith." Based on these general teachings of New Testament truth, and based more specifically on Paul's contextual description of the people to whom he refers as "Israel," it is my settled belief that Paul is in fact referring to regenerate, elect, Jews who, despite the workings of divine grace in them, failed to understand and embrace the truth of the gospel that Paul taught.

If this point regarding the spiritual state of Paul's Jewish brothers and sisters be true, we still face the questions, "Why the grief? Why the abrupt change of mood?"

At its heart any theological system that builds the final salvation of the individual on any form of synergetic theology builds its appeal to the human mind on self-gain. The more you must cooperate with God to accomplish your eternal security the more you are gaining benefit for yourself by your actions. This inherent self-centeredness reveals a major flaw in so many systems of belief in our day, even among some folks who strongly profess terminology that appeals to the doctrines of grace. How do advocates of these various ideas reconcile the self-centeredness of their salvation theology with Jesus' emphatic teaching that the first—and foundational—step and attitude in true discipleship requires self-denial, not self-aggrandizement? I suggest that the two ideas cannot be reconciled and made to harmonize with the teachings of Scripture, for one appears clearly in the words of Jesus, while the other is an errant interpretation of New Testament teaching regarding the true objective of discipleship. Until a person removes self from the eternal security equation, thus eliminating synergism from his/her theological belief, his/her view will fail the primary test that Jesus imposed on true discipleship.

Invariably when a believer in grace as the exclusive principle at the heart of God's saving purpose presents grace alone as the basis for eternal salvation, advocates of the various other synergetic views will protest loudly, "Then what is the motive for good works? Why live godly lives? Why even preach the gospel, if all God's elect are going to heaven anyway?" Inherent in their protest is the self-centeredness that lies at the heart of man's sinful desire to do whatever is necessary to gain more and better things for self. In vivid and convicting contrast to this emphasis on gain for self New Testament teachings consistently affirm that every act of faith and obedient, faithful discipleship are to be performed by regenerate—already "born again"—individuals to glorify God, not to gain something for self.

Which motive should more forcefully motivate a true believer in Christ, gain for self or greater glory to Him? As the cliché goes, the answer to this question should be a “no brainer.”

A major theological difference of view regarding the Biblical doctrine of “justification by faith” lies at the heart of most errant views in this area of New Testament theology. In the next chapter we will examine the term “justification by faith” as defined and taught by inspired New Testament writers versus “justification by faith” as defined by various advocates of synergetic salvation that always in some way affirms human involvement in the cause of one’s salvation.

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