

# **Paul's Epistle to the Romans**

## **Lesson 14: 9:1-33**

Some have made the comment that chapters 9-11 in the book of Romans seem almost parenthetical in nature. In the first eight chapters Paul has put together a very wonderful explanation of what God has done in order to rescue man from his sin, and the hope that now resides within the Christian. These wonderful thoughts seem to have reached their climax in Paul's discussion of the Christian's hope and eventual glorification, despite tribulations or the efforts of any opponent or force. It would have seemed natural in many ways, for Paul to next pass to the content of chapters 12 and following, where Paul will deal with some practical implications of how the truth of the gospel should affect the way that we live. However, Paul realizes that there would still be questions about how that the Jewish nation, which had been so much at the heart of God's plan, seems to have fallen into disfavor with God, while the Gentiles, who had previously been estranged from Him, had become the focus of so much of the preaching that was taking place. These chapters (in keeping with Paul's main theme of justification without partiality for all who believe and apart from works of law) help sort out what the Jews would have struggled to understand.

As we have had to sadly comment in regard to several passages in the book of Romans, some teachers have failed miserably to recognize the rather obvious meaning of the apostle's words in this text (chapters 9-11) and have promoted ideas about predestination and an eventual restoration of the nation of Israel (cf. 11:25ff). What Paul does reveal is that God was certainly able to use the rejection of Jesus by Israel to enhance its introduction to those with honest hearts among the Gentiles.

The apostle in this section, as with other portions of the book, uses a large number of texts from the Old Testament to show that there has been no inconsistency with God regarding His actions, and to remind all men of His sovereign right to extend either mercy or condemnation in keeping with His Divinity. At the end of this section we should be able to rejoice with the apostle, "Oh, the depth and the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).

### **NJKV Rom 9:1-13**

**1** I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, **2** that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, **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; **5** of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

**6** But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, **7** nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." **8** That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. **9** For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

**10** And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac **11**(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), **12** it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." **13** As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

### **NIV**

**9:1** I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit— **2** I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own

race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. 9 For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls — she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

1. What do the expressions of Paul's grief in regard to the physical nation of Israel indicate is going to be said about their overall spiritual status in the verses that follow? What do Paul's words indicate about the depth of his personal sorrow? Why could Paul relate so deeply to them?
2. What special privileges or blessings had belonged to Israel? Do you feel that much of this section is covering the same basic ground that was covered in 3:1-4?
3. How does Paul illustrate his point that not all of Abraham's descendants are his children? How was the example of Isaac and Rebekah even more powerful? What point is Paul trying to make about God's actions in verses 11-13? What must we recognize about vs. 11-13 so that we do not misunderstand Paul's quote, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated?"

#### 9:14-33 NKJV

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. 28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

29 And as Isaiah said before:

"Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

NIV Rom 9:14-33.

14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"

26 and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."

29 It is just as Isaiah said previously:

"Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." 33 As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

4. Do Paul's words in 9:14-18 indicate that God may sometimes act capriciously in deciding who may receive mercy in the area of God's spiritual reckoning? Do these thoughts seem to literally square with Psalm 103:13, 17-18? What danger obviously presents itself to many Bible readers?
5. What comparisons do you feel it is fair to make in regard to God's use of Pharaoh and the nation of Israel? What comparisons do you think would be unfair to make?
6. What could Paul clearly establish about God's intentions regarding Israel and the Gentiles from the Old Testament? What was really the problem with the majority of physical Israel (9:31-33)?
7. Is there any lesson for members of the church in this area?

