

# ROMANS

## 9:1-33

### Romans 9:1-33

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 23rd April 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Romans 9:1-33

### Introduction

This morning we are in the book of Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, Hosea, and Malachi. Or to be accurate, we're going to study Romans chapter 9 which quotes from each of these books. Over the last couple of months we've studied the first 8 chapters of this magnificent book of the Bible, that the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. And like each book in the Bible, it is there for you and I to learn from, and to apply to our lives.

#### Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
  - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
  - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living
  - Practical Christianity

As I've shared most weeks, we can break this letter down into 3 major sections - the first 8 chapters focus on Christian doctrine, chapters 9-11 focus on Israel, and then the final 5 chapters are very practical, speaking of how we should live as Christians.

Another way to summarise it is chapters 1-8 are doctrinal, chapters 9-11 are dispensational (that is, they deal with a historical progression), and chapters 12-16 are about duty. That is doctrinal, dispensational, and duty. One commentator also summarises these sections as faith, hope and love. Or salvation, segregation and service. All helpful ways to remember the layout of the book.

Though however you *remember* the layout, we now come to what is this second major section that speaks much about Israel. And some folks view this as a bit of a non-event compared to the first 8 chapters or indeed the last 5. But Paul wrote this with intent - and all that he'll write here is built on the first 8 chapters, and when we get to chapter 12 he'll begin by saying "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren..." — that is, what he writes *there* will be built on what he writes *here*.

So we can't dismiss these chapters. Indeed, we need them because Paul is asking and answering important questions that should follow the first 8 chapters. Jon Courson explained this well:

*Paul ended chapter 8 with the victorious declaration that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. At this point, the scholar, the Bible student could say, "But what about the Jews? Are they separated from His love? Are they lost? And if so, what hope do we have? If they, who were once God's chosen people, are no longer walking with Him, what chance do we Gentiles have?"*

**Jon Courson**

He goes on to say that "*Romans 9-11 is essential to the flow of the rest of the Book of Romans because Paul uses the Jew as an illustration of the faithfulness of God.*". So then, these chapters are important, and not to be *dismissed* by the Christian because they are there for our understanding, and to demonstrate God's faithfulness and mercy. Likewise, neither are Israel to be *dismissed* by the Christian, because as Paul will clearly say in chapter 11, *God* has not finished with them.

Unfortunately, the nation of Israel is a subject that the church at large gets in a mess. At one extreme Israel is dismissed both as the murderers of our Saviour, and having now been entirely replaced by the church — and at the other extreme some Christians suggest everything in the church must be Judaised — from the blowing of Shofar horns, to eating the passover, saying Shalom, and refusing to say Jesus and rather insist on saying Yeshua. And there are Biblical problems with both these extremes.

The view that is *most* prevalent in the church today is that God has finished with Israel, that the church has replaced it, and that all the Old Testament prophecies toward Israel are now transferred to the church. This is often called replacement theology, and is part of what is known as reformed theology. And it's unBiblical. Because if we do away with Israel, we do away with the very reason for Christ's second coming - as it is *Israel* that He will return for, since the church will have already been raptured by that point.

Also, if we do away with Israel then we must conclude that God can break His promises, that His promise to Jacob was conditional, that we have been grafted into nothing, that Jesus won't sit on the throne of David, that Solomon was mistaken when he declared "For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people *forever*;", and that God's was dishonest when He spoke through Jeremiah saying "Yes, I have loved you with an *everlasting* love;".

Likewise, we would have to ignore what we read in Jeremiah 31:35-36...

### **Jeremiah 31:35-36**

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

We cannot do away with Israel without doing away with the Bible.

I'm not saying that the nation of Israel is perfect, that we must agree with all that is done by it. But, Israel has a special place in God's heart, and therefore it should have a special place in ours.

## **Overview of chapter nine**

### **Overview of chapter nine**

- v1-5 — Paul's heart for an unbelieving nation
- v6-13 — Not parentage, but promise
- v14-29 — God's providence and provision
- v30-33 — Righteousness is by faith, not works

So, as we start to look at the first of these three chapters, we can break it down into a few sections to help us remember what it says. The first 5 verses really show us Paul's heart for his countrymen, for his fellow Jews. But from verse 6 to 13 he'll explain how the key for them was not their parentage or lineage, but the promise that they had been given. In verses 14-29 he addresses God's fairness and character in light of that promise, before the final 4 verses he reminds us once more that righteousness comes by faith in Christ alone.

## **Chapter nine**

So then, Paul has just written in this letter of how there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, how our relationship with the Father has been restored, how our sufferings are not worthy to be compared with what is ahead, how God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, and how nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

But that being the case, what of those who are not in Christ? What of those who are unsaved? And specifically here, what now becomes of Israel? He writes...

### **Romans 9:1-2**

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

Why this grief? He explains...

**Romans 9:3-5**

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Paul was Jewish. He had been a Pharisee. He had a great appreciation of all that they had - that Israel was the only *nation* to be referred to as God's son, the children of the Lord, and whom God's Word called Him their Father. Nationally, they had seen God's glory in the wilderness, were beneficiaries of the covenant He had made with Abraham and later Jacob, and they were the ones to whom God's law had been given. They were uniquely called to His service, and through them as a nation came the line through to Jesus - something he had previously mentioned in the open 3 verses of chapter 1. What blessings!

But Paul also saw what they didn't have, that nationally they had rejected Jesus as their Messiah - the very *One they had been hoping and waiting for*. And we see in Paul the same heart as Moses, whom we read of in Exodus 32:

**Exodus 32:31-32**

Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

Paul's heart is such that he'd be willing to lay down his life for them, that they might accept Christ. Indeed he later did risk his life by going to Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 21. Luke writes there:

**Acts 21:12-13**

Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Paul looked at Israel and concluded "they have all these things, but they don't have Christ." And that agonised him. As we read in verse 2, he had great sorrow and continual grief in his heart.

And wow, what a wake up call that should be to us. For does it bother us at all that people around us don't know the Lord? Does it? What do our actions say? When was the last time you or I shared the gospel with anyone? Not just said "I'm a Christian". Sharing the gospel isn't saying "I go to church" or inviting someone to an outreach event. Sharing the gospel is actually telling them in words what we believe, what Christ has done and why they need Him as their saviour.

How much passion do we have for sharing the gospel? Do we pray for opportunities each day? So often when I have specifically prayed for opportunity to share the gospel, to share my faith at work, I have found opportunity. So frequently has that happened *following* prayer that I'm amazed I don't pray for those opportunities more.

Like Paul, our hearts should ache when we think of those we know who don't know the Lord. And I guess we all know those who, in some sense are like Israel - they have been given so much... they had a Christian upbringing, or Christian values, Christian parents or Christian friends. They may have even gone to church, or have a Bible, or have sung songs. But do they have Christ? That is what should bother us most of all.

Here, Paul writes "For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren" — it was neither necessary that he was accursed or excommunicated for them, nor *could* he have done anything to pay for their sin; that required the sacrifice of an innocent Man. But he writes in effect to say "If it were possible, even though I know it's not, I would give up my own relationship with Christ, that *they* might know Christ as their Saviour". What passion for others!

However, not all was lost. Specifically, not all of Israel was lost. And he continues...

#### **Romans 9:6-7**

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

Right at the moment Paul writes this, there were many thousands of Jews who had put their faith in Christ as their Saviour - including the disciples, apostles, and men like Nicodemus who were all Jewish. But, as Paul will explain in the following verses, it is not the fact they were Jewish that saved them, but rather it was God's mercy in calling them, God's grace in saving them, and by faith in Christ, rather than by works.

It wasn't their parentage, but God's promise that mattered. And Paul takes us back to Genesis 15 to explain that while Israel took their roots back to Abraham, not all Abraham's descendants were Jewish. That is, Abraham had Ishmael through Hagar, an action of his own flesh when he took matters into his own hands. But it was those who came through Isaac (who was God's promise to him and Sarah) that God would call to be His people. Next, Paul quotes from Genesis 18:10...

#### **Romans 9:8-9**

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. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

Indeed, we later see in Genesis 22 we see God say "Abraham, take your son, your only son up to the mount.". In other words, God didn't even acknowledge Abraham had another son as far as the promise was concerned. The children of the flesh, of his own efforts, were not considered the children of God. And so the promise came through Isaac. But it wasn't through all Isaac's descendants either, but specifically through Jacob, and not Esau. We read...

#### **Romans 9:10-12**

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (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), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

So then, God in His sovereignty, knowing in advance all they would do, chose Jacob, and not Esau. We read clearly in the next verse, where Paul quotes from Malachi chapter 1:

**Romans 9:13**

As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

So the promise came specifically through Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and *his* descendants. "But isn't it unfair that God hated Esau?" Paul deals with that very question in the next verse:

**Romans 9:14**

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

There's the answer. Paul says "Certainly not!".

"But how is God *not* unfair or unjust in this situation?", you might wonder. Indeed, many get stuck with these verses wondering "How can God hate Esau?". Yet, really we should be amazed that God loved Jacob. You see, as we've already seen in the opening chapters of Romans, we're all guilty of sin before a just and holy God - and we have no right to expect His mercy at all.

But God, in His loving kindness, has mercy upon those He chooses - as is *His* right as our Creator. "But isn't it unfair to choose one person above another?" Well, Paul continues by quoting from Exodus 33:

**Romans 9:15**

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."

In advance of this, Moses had asked to see God's glory. But in effect God said "I'll show it to you Moses, but not because you are Moses, but because I am God. God owes us nothing because of who we are.

**Romans 9:16**

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Our actions do not determine God's character, but rather God's character determines how He acts. God gets the credit for His mercy, not us. He is sovereign over His mercy. But does that remove free choice? Let's look at the example Paul gives us from Exodus chapter 9 where Moses delivers God's words directly to Pharaoh:

**Romans 9:17**

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."

What we see here is that God, with the foreknowledge of how Pharaoh's heart would be toward Him, and how he would act, raised him up with enormous power and opulence so that God might show His power in delivering Egypt from Pharaoh's hand. Was God unfair in his dealings with Pharaoh? Not at all. At many points Pharaoh could have yielded to God's instruction through Moses to let His people go, but he refused.

And Paul is using him now as an example, showing that in the same way that the same sun melts wax or hardens clay, the heart of the individual responds differently to the same God - not because of partiality on His part, but because of attitude on theirs. And in the case of Pharaoh, we see this play out through many verses in Exodus. We read in chapter 7:

**Exodus 7:22-23**

Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this.

And then in chapter 8...

**Exodus 8:32**

But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

So Pharaoh hardened his own heart. And like we read in Romans 1, where we read that God gave the unrighteous up to their sinful passions, God then hardens Pharaoh's heart. As if to say, "if that's what you want, then have at it." We read in Exodus 9...

**Exodus 9:12**

But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

And as the account goes on, we see that the Lord hardens the hearts of not only Pharaoh, but his servants and the Egyptians too.

**Romans 9:18**

Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

That is, God, in His free choice, determines Himself who He'll have mercy on, and whose heart He will harden. Not at random, but in full foreknowledge of how that individual will think and act. We don't get credit for being likeable, rather He gets the credit for showing mercy.

But Paul sees a question coming, and writes:

**Romans 9:19**

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

In other words, is God unfair because in His own free will He chooses whom to have mercy on? No for He neither forces us to sin, nor forces us to love Him.

Paul continues writing...

**Romans 9:20-21**

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?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?

God has free choice. To presume God somehow doesn't have free choice is madness, for He made everything! And so of course He is free to choose whom He shows mercy to, and whom He doesn't. In fact, He is free to do whatever He likes. He is God, after all. But in that freedom He is not unfair. In fact, it is amazing God shows mercy at all.

And what Paul now writes is staggering.

#### **Romans 9:22-24**

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

That is, God could have justifiably poured out His wrath on mankind long ago, but He endured all the sin mankind has committed against Him and the wickedness on this earth, because He knew how some would act and respond to His mercy. And knowing that, He called them, whether Jews or Gentiles, and showed His abundant mercy to them. That's what He has done for us!

And Paul next quotes from Hosea chapters 1 and 2, writing...

#### **Romans 9:25-26**

As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people,  
And her beloved, who was not beloved."

"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."

Again, that's us! We have been grafted in! And not just forgiven, but adopted as sons, and if sons, then heirs! How wonderful that God sovereignly chose us, just as He sovereignly chose Israel in the past. But does that mean Israel is now done with? No. Paul next quotes from Isaiah chapter 10:

#### **Romans 9:27-28**

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.  
For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness,  
Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

So while Israel rejected Christ as a nation, there was and is a remnant that will be saved. How? The same way that any of us can be saved — and that is through faith alone by grace alone in Christ alone. Salvation is for the Jews *and* the Gentiles — that all might come by faith.

However, Israel had been a special part of God's plan - they were and are God's chosen people. And we read that it was because of this line through to Christ in the first place, that God had spared Israel from destruction, despite their disobedience toward Him. Verse 29 says...



### **Romans 9:29**

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."

That is, it is only because of God's mercy that Israel was not destroyed. Not simply in mercy toward them as a nation, but most importantly because of His mercy toward all those who will put their trust in Him as their Saviour. God spared Israel for our sakes!

And as we'll see in subsequent chapters, God is not finished with Israel yet.

What do we conclude from what we've just read? Paul gives us the answer in verse 30...

### **Romans 9:30-32**

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 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.

So then, although we (the Gentiles) had not gone after righteousness, we are seen as righteous because of our faith in Christ. But as a nation Israel missed the mark of righteousness because they were trying to attain it by their own efforts. And rather than see Christ for who He was — their Messiah and Saviour — they stumbled at Christ and His wondrous grace through their own self-righteousness. Paul says quotes from Isaiah 28 in this final verse...

### **Romans 9:33**

As it is written:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence,  
And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

The gospel is *offensive* to the self-righteous - it says no-one can make it to Heaven by their own actions. In fact their own actions are the problem! And nationally Israel were clinging onto the law with pride, not understanding it was what would condemn them.

## **Conclusion**

There is so much in this chapter. We see both God's sovereignty and fairness, and we see His mercy and grace. And we are reminded that we are saved by faith in what He has done, and not by works that we have done.

But I beg you, consider the heart that Paul had for his countrymen. And consider how you might share the gospel with others. During our prayer meeting this morning, I was reminded of the words to an old song, that are — if we're honest — quite cutting and indicting of us. Let me read them now:

Do you see? Do you see?  
All the people sinking down?  
Don't you care? Don't you care?  
Are you gonna let them drown?  
How can you be so numb?  
Not to care if they come  
You close your eyes and pretend the job's done

"Oh, bless me, Lord, bless me, Lord"  
You know, it's all I ever hear  
No one aches, no one hurts  
No one even sheds one tear  
But, He cries, He weeps, He bleeds  
And He cares for your needs  
And you just lay back and keep soaking it in

Oh, can't you see it's such sin?  
'Cause He brings people to your door  
And you turn them away  
As you smile and say  
"God bless you, be at peace"  
And all Heaven just weeps  
'Cause Jesus came to your door  
You've left Him out on the streets

Open up, open up  
And give yourself away  
You see the need, you hear the cries  
So how can you delay?  
God's calling and you're the one  
But like Jonah, you run  
He's told you to speak but you keep holding it in

Oh, can't you see it's such sin?  
The world is sleeping in the dark  
That the church just can't fight  
'Cause it's asleep in the light  
How can you be so dead  
When you've been so well fed?  
Jesus rose from the grave  
And you, you can't even get out of bed  
Oh, Jesus rose from the dead  
Come on, get out of your bed

How can you be so numb  
Not to care if they come?  
You close your eyes and pretend the job's done  
You close your eyes and pretend the job's done  
Don't close your eyes, don't pretend the job's done

**Keith Green, Asleep in the light**

## Application questions

Please, please think on this chapter as you go home today. And ask yourself these questions:

- Are you going to harden your heart before Him, or accept His mercy?
  - Do you have a desire to see unbelievers saved?
  - How are you going to share the gospel this week?
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