

## Commentary on Romans Chapter 9, by Chuck Smith 9.12.21

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Friday October 1, Dr Michael Youssef, Northfield, MA see Terry or Lisa for tickets

### September memory verse, Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Paul has just closed the eighth chapter of Romans in which he has taken us into the very peaks of the spiritual experiences that are ours in Christ Jesus. Showing us that we have this glorious place in the Lord where nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or peril, nor nakedness, nor sword, for he is persuaded and in all these things we are more than conquerors. And that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Oh, what a glorious, beautiful place. Now as Paul sees what God has done for the Gentiles in bringing them into this glorious relationship with God, and as he considers these blessings that God has poured out upon the Gentile believers, his heart now turns toward his brethren according to the flesh, the Jews. Paul is going to show how that God in His sovereignty, for the time being, has set aside the Jew as a nation of divine favor. The Jew today is no different than the Gentile as far as God is concerned. They do not have, at this point, a favorite nation status with God. But that if they are going to enter into the richness and the fullness of God's love they must come as the Gentile through Jesus Christ.

Now because this is considered treason as far as the Jew is concerned, and because Paul knows that he is going to be accused, no doubt, by the Jew, of bitterness, because of his rejection, he seeks to point out to them that he is not bitter against the Jew. And as he is going to talk to them about these issues of God's grace being poured out upon all and any who will believe Jew or Gentile, he seeks to show from the scripture that this was prophetically declared and also seeks to declare from his own heart there is no animosity or bitterness against his brother. And he makes that plain in the strongest of statements beginning with chapter 9.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also is bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit ([Rom 9:1](#)),

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So how much can you affirm that what you are about to say is in reality the truth of your own heart? I say the truth in Christ, my conscience also bears me witness in the Holy Spirit.

That I have a great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ([Rom 9:2-3](#)):

That is an extremely strong statement that I do not believe that I could honestly make, and yet Paul affirmed that it is true. In his own case his conscience bears him record in the Holy Spirit. That he has such a great heaviness, such a great burden for his brothers, the Jewish people, that he could even, if possible, wish himself to be accursed from Christ for their sake if it would bring them all salvation.

This causes us to recall a statement by Moses in [Exodus 32](#), after Israel had utterly failed God. God said to Moses, "Stand back, Moses. I am going to wipe them all out." Moses interceded for the nation and he asked God to show mercy. Then Moses said, "If not, then I pray that you will blot my name out of the book of remembrances." Now lest we exalt man and make God the villain and man the hero of the story, it is important that we recognize that these men could not have this great burden for Israel unless they had received it directly from the heart of God. It was God who put in Moses' heart this intercession, because God was looking for an excuse to show mercy. And so when Moses made this great declaration, "And if not then, God, blot my name out of Your book of remembrances." God then said, "I will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy." God retreated into His sovereignty so He could forgive them and show His mercy to them. But it was God who prompted the heart of Moses.

It was God who prompted the heart of Paul for this great burden for the people. Yet, that which Paul was expressing is not possible nor necessary, for there is one who has already been accursed by God in order that the Jews might be saved.

For Christ became a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs upon the tree." And Jesus already took the curse of God for man's sin and provided for Israel's salvation

I'm sure that after Paul made this kind of statement the Lord probably said, "Paul, that is a foolish statement." Noble? Yes. Expressing a deep burden and heart? Yes. But yet, to wish yourself accursed for their sake is not necessary, nor would it do anything for them, as Paul realized. But he just expressed the depth of his burden for those people. We are standing, really, before a giant. It is hard for us to understand this kind of a statement. Paul goes on to speak of his kinsman, his brothers according to the flesh. He said,

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption ([Rom 9:4](#)),

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That is, they were God's chosen race of people. God had said to them, "You will be My people and I will be your God." God adopted them as His family. And then belonged to them the glory, that Shekinah presence of God. When the tabernacle was completed and all set up and they began the service, the glory of God, or the Shekinah came down in the temple and the presence of God's glory was so great that the priest could not even stand to minister there in the temple. It was just the presence of God's glory, the Shekinah. Unto them belong the Shekinah which dwelt in the Holy of Holies. Unto them were the covenants made.

God established His covenant with Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee," and then He repeated the covenant to Isaac, and later to Jacob, and then later to David, and to them belong the covenants. Unto them God gave the law, and unto them God showed them how they were to worship Him in the temple worship. And finally, unto them were the promises that God had made throughout the Old Testament to this people and to these nations, and especially the promise of the Messiah. They have the patriarchs,

the fathers [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], and of whom as concerning the flesh the Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen ([Rom 9:5](#)).

That is an unfortunate translation. If you translate that literally, this is the strongest statement made by Paul the apostle concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. For this particular verse, translated literally from the Greek, declares, "and of whom as of concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed forever." So the declaration that Jesus is indeed God over all, blessed forever.

Now they had received the Word of God, they had received the covenant, they had received the promises, they had received the law, and so Paul said,

Not as though the Word of God did not take effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel ([Rom 9:6](#)):

Now, that is using Israel in a spiritual sense. The word literally means "governed by God," and it was the name that was given to Jacob after he had wrestled with the Lord all night long. And in the morning when the light began to break and Jacob was a broken man. In a little while he is going to be meeting his brother Esau with 200 men, and the last time he saw Esau he was threatening to kill him. He is a broken man. The angel of the Lord finally touched his thigh and made him a cripple. And in this crippled, broken state, defeated, the angel said, "Let me go, the day is breaking," and he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Really, that isn't quite as it sounds, because Hosea tells us that he said that with weeping and tears. He wasn't now coming from a position of advantage, but from a position of desperation and defeat and really should probably be, "Please don't go without blessing me," as he was weeping and crying, a broken man. And the angel said unto him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Heel catcher." And the angel said unto him, "Your name will not longer be Heel catcher, but Israel, Governed by God."

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Now, just because a man says, "Well, I am an Israelite," does not necessarily mean that he is governed by God. So not all who are Israel are really Israel.

Not all who say, "I am a Christian," are really Christ-like, which the name is supposed to imply. Christ-like, "Well, I am a Christian." You are more like the devil. So it's not the name. And so there were those that were boasting. They thought because we are Israel, we are of Israel. We are descendants of Israel. Well, not all are Israel who are of Israel; not all of them are governed by God who descended from this man.

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they necessarily the children of God: [for God said,] In Isaac shall thy seed be called ([Rom 9:7](#)).

Just being a physical descendant of Abraham did not entitle you to the promises and the covenants and blessings of Abraham.

For God was developing not a physical fleshly seed, but a spiritual seed, and Ishmael was the son after the flesh and God would not recognize Ishmael. Isaac was the son of promise, the one after the Spirit, and God recognized Isaac. And later on God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac," as He refused to recognize the works of the flesh. Isn't it interesting that we so often are seeking to offer to God works of our flesh, hoping that God might recognize them? He won't. I am really sort of grateful that He doesn't recognize the works of the flesh. Because I have some works that I just as soon He not make note of. He only recognizes that work of the Spirit. He only recognized Isaac, so God said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

That is, They which are the children of the flesh, are not necessarily the children of God: but the children of the promise are the ones who are counted the seed ([Rom 9:8](#)).

So Ishmael and his descendants, the children of the flesh, are not the children of God, but those who are of the promise Isaac.

For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca [now just taking it one step further,] also had conceived by our father Isaac; (and the children not yet born, and thus they had not done any good or evil up to this point, in order that the purposes of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him who calls;) it was said unto her, [while she was still pregnant] The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less ([Rom 9:9-13](#)).

Immediately we might say, "Well, that isn't fair." And Paul does anticipate that reaction. In verse 14, he says,

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? [God not fair?] God forbid ([Rom 9:14](#)).

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How can God make that statement of children before they are ever born? Declaring I love one and hate the other, and I have chosen the one over the other. That does seem unfair, doesn't it? Don't look so sanctimonious, of course it does.

However, what we must take into consideration, and we don't always take into consideration in these things, is that God knows all things from the beginning. And God knew the entire life history of Jacob and Esau before they were ever born, even as He knew your life history before you were ever born. And because He knew that Esau would be a man of the flesh, and Jacob would be more a man of the Spirit, though he was a deceiver, a conniver and everything else, God knowing all of these things, and it is through the foreknowledge that God made that decision and that choice, the elder shall serve the younger. So we can't really fault God and say, "Well, they didn't do anything and God made the choice." No, God already knew what they were going to do, even as God already knows what you are going to do. That is why we are told in Ephesians that one of the blessings we have is that we were chosen in Him before the foundations of the world. How is it that God could choose me before He ever created the world? Because He knew me then. He knew all about me then, because God is omniscient. He knows all things, and known unto Him from the beginning are all things. And so on the basis of that foreknowledge, God made His election or His choice. Thus, that we are standing not by our works, but by the fact that God has elected us, even as Jesus said to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciples, that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain" ([John 15:16](#)).

So the Lord can say to every one of us tonight who are in Christ, "You have not chosen Me, but I chose you." Now when the evangelists have you raise your hand and choose Christ, I thought that I was choosing the Lord. But in reality, He had called me. He had elected me and had chosen me already, and I was only responding as He knew from the beginning that I would respond to His love. It didn't surprise God and he didn't say, "Wow, look at that. Can you believe that? He is going to join with us." No surprise to God. He knew all the while and that is why He elected me and chose me, because of His foreknowledge.

So is there unrighteousness with God? No, God forbid. Perish the thought. For God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" ([Exodus 33:19](#)). And remember, God said this when in righteousness He should have wiped them all out. They had rebelled against God and the authority of God, and God should have at this point wiped them all out and was even saying to Moses, "Stand back so that I can." And God was looking for the excuse to show mercy, and so He placed it upon Moses' heart to intercede and God responded and said,

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and compassion on whom I will have compassion ([Rom 9:15](#)).

And God had compassion upon Israel and showed mercy.

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So then it is not of him that wills, [it is not by our resolves,] nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy ([Rom 9:16](#)).

The sovereignty of God, in His divine election, in His predestination, in His choosing. It isn't that I made my great resolve, that I have willed, nor is it my works that I have run, but that it might stand by election God chose me.

Thus, I can't really boast in what I am or what I have done, or even what I hope to do. All I can do is boast in the grace and mercy of God that chose a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found. I was blind, but now I see. Oh, that amazing grace of God.

For the scripture says concerning Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth ([Rom 9:17-18](#)).

Now that doesn't sound fair. However, using Pharaoh as the example as God declares, "I will harden whom I will harden." As we go back to the story of Pharaoh, we read, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord... and Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord." And we read that ten different times that Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord. And after declaring ten times that Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord, it said, "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."

Now it is interesting that two different Hebrew words are employed here. The one that says, "Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord" is just as it is translated. But where it said, "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh," the Hebrew word literally is "the Lord made firm or stiffened the heart of Pharaoh." So that here is Pharaoh hardening his heart, hardening his heart, hardening his heart, and finally God moves in and He firms Pharaoh in... and He sets him really in that hardened condition.

Now I do believe that if a man hardens his heart over and over and over against God that is a possibility that God will then go ahead and make firm that person's choice and decision. He will stiffen him in it and that, of course, is a tragic day, because I believe that constitutes, really, the unpardonable sin. When a man has gone so far in hardening his heart against God that God then makes firm his heart. In [John 12:39](#) we read, "Therefore they could not believe," not, "they would not," "they could not." They had hardened their heart against Jesus. They had seen miracle after miracle, demonstration after demonstration. He said, "If you don't believe Me, believe the works that I do because they testify to you."

Thus, every miracle that Christ did was a testimony to them that He was indeed the Messiah, but they hardened their hearts and they hardened their hearts and they hardened their hearts, until finally John tells us, "Therefore they could not believe." Be careful if you are hardening your heart against God, lest you come to that place where God will make firm your heart. Thus, God declared, "Those I will I will harden and those who I will have mercy upon, I will show mercy."

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Then you say, [Paul said,] Well then how can God find fault with me? ([Rom 9:19](#))

If it was God who hardened my heart, then how can He find fault with me for having a hard heart? Because if it is God's will that I live like I do and am opposed to Him.

How can I resist God's will? ([Rom 9:19](#))

He said,

Oh come on O man, who are you to reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? ([Rom 9:20](#))

There are a lot of people who do not want to take responsibility for what they are or what they do. Thus, they seek to blame God. They say, "Well, God just made me this way," and they seek to blame God. Adam sought to blame God from the beginning when God said, "Adam, what have you done?" He said, "It is that woman that You gave to me." Your fault! And man, it seems, seeks to blame God for what he is. "Who can resist His will? If God made me this way I can't resist His will."

Has not the potter the power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? ([Rom 9:21](#))

Paul now introduces the figure of the potter and the clay to express to us God's relationship with man in demonstrating that awesome sovereignty of God over man. As the potter has the power over a lump of clay from the same lump to make a beautiful, honorable vessel or to make a vessel of dishonor fit to be thrown away.

What if God, willing to show forth his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath that were fitted for destruction ([Rom 9:22](#)):

Now God is long-suffering. He was long-suffering to Pharaoh. He let Pharaoh get by with so much before He finally struck with power. There are people, unfortunately, who misinterpret the long-suffering of God. Some of them interpret it as weakness, because God let's you get by with so much evil and He hasn't already smitten you. You think, "Well, He isn't able to, you know." Or even worse, there are some people who misinterpret the long-suffering of God as approval. "Well, if God didn't like the way I am living, why didn't He wipe me out? You know, He could have. He had every opportunity, and thus, because He hadn't wiped me out, it must mean that God approves the things that I am doing." That is a tragic mistake when a person misinterprets the long-suffering of God. God is long-suffering even with the evil those that are prepared for destruction. He let's them live their span of life so often. Even though they are destined for destruction. He is patient. He is long-suffering with them. He puts up with an awful lot.

But on the other hand,

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that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory ([Rom 9:23](#)),

So God has prepared us for glory that we might experience the riches of His glory, vessels of mercy.

Even us, whom he has called, not just Jews, but also Gentiles. And as God said in the prophecy of Hosea, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and I will call her beloved, who was not beloved ([Rom 9:24-25](#)).

As God speaks through Hosea, the fact that the door of His mercy and grace will be open to the Gentiles and He will call them His people who are really not His people, who are not the nation of Israel. And He will call them beloved who were not beloved.

And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You were not my people; there shall you be called the children of the living God. Now Isaiah also cried concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved ([Rom 9:26-27](#)):

So not all are Israel who are descendants of Israel, though the number as God promised Abraham would be as the sands of the sea, innumerable. Yet, Isaiah said, "Only a remnant and only a part of them are going to experience salvation."

For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabbath had left us a seed, we had been destroyed like Sodom, and Gomorrah. What shall we say then? The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; [which was Jesus Christ] As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him will not be ashamed ([Rom 9:28-33](#)).

So if Christ became a stumbling stone for Israel and continues to be such today, and thus, Israel who sought righteousness through the law never did attain it. However, the Gentiles who did not seek righteousness through the law, but sought that righteousness through faith have attained the righteousness of God. Jesus said to His disciples in [Matthew 5](#), "Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." That is a very alarming, shocking, statement and I am sure that the disciples just were really taken back by that, because no one, but no one followed the righteousness of the law more circumspectly than the Pharisees.

And yet, Jesus said, "Unless you are more righteous than those fellows you can't make it in." And I would imagine that the immediate effect of that would be, "Well, forget it."

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There is no way I can do it." That would indeed be so if you were seeking righteousness by the law. You might as well forget it, because you will never be able to exceed what these fellows were doing. But the Gentiles who were not seeking after this righteousness through the law did attain to that righteousness. Why? Because they sought it by faith. Now Paul the apostle who had attained the righteousness through the law, in his own eyes but not in God's eyes, as he spoke of his past in his Philippian epistle said, "If any man thinks he has wherein to boast, I can boast more than all of you, for I was born of the tribe of Benjamin. I was a Hebrew of Hebrew. I was circumcised the eighth day. Concerning zeal I was a Pharisee and I persecuted the church. And concerning the righteousness which came by the law, I was the blameless. But those things which were gain to me I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for whom I suffered the loss of all things. I count it as refuse that I may know Him and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of Christ through faith" ([Philippians 3:4-8](#)). I would gladly chuck the past, count it as nothing, that I may know Him and be found in Him, not having that righteousness which is of the law which I once had. But now this righteousness which is of Christ through faith.

So the Gentiles achieved that which the Jews could not achieve, because they were seeking to find it by the law, but the Gentiles accepting by faith attained to the righteousness of God through faith. As the Jews stumbled over Jesus Christ, we have accepted Him. We have received Him, and because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God imputes our faith for righteousness, and He accounts us righteous even as He is righteous. For the righteousness of Christ is imparted to me through my faith in Jesus Christ. So I am now clothed, not in my own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of Christ through faith. Paul is saying, "How do you like it? I could have never done this myself, though I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees and zealous and all, I could have never done this for myself. But look what God has given to me. Look how God has clothed me. And the rest of it is just junk as far as I am concerned, the past glories and credits. Nothing that I may know Him."