

# PAUL'S LETTER TO THE *Romans*

2023

## Lesson 12: *Israel and the Gentiles, Part 1* Romans 9:1-33

### A Spiritual Sorrow

#### ▲ A personal heartache

Romans 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.

#### ▲ A priceless heritage

Romans 9:4 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.

#### ▲ A persistent heartbeat

Romans 9:6 It is not as though God's word had failed.

### A Sovereign Selection

#### ▲ Consider the children of God

##### ▼ The children of the patriarchs disclosed and described

Romans 9:6 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." [Genesis 21:12; Genesis 18:10]

##### ▼ The children of the patriarchs designated in developing detail

Romans 9:10 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." [Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:2-3]

##### ▼ The children of the promise defined

Romans 9:6 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. [Genesis 21:12]

► Consider Paul's treatment of the identity of Abraham's children in Romans 2:28-29, Romans 4:9-12, and Romans 4:16-17.

#### ▲ Consider their choosing by God

##### ▼ A curious inquisition

Romans 9:14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

##### ▼ A clarifying illustration

Romans 9:15 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." [Exodus 33:19; Exodus 9:16]

##### ▼ A concluding implication

Romans 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. [Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:17]

► Consider God's universal invitation and his grounds for choosing in Romans 11:32 and Romans 11:22-23.

#### ▲ Consider the challenge to God

##### ▼ The challenge delivered

Romans 9:19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?"

##### ▼ The challenge dismissed

Romans 9:20 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? [Isaiah 29:16]

##### ▼ The challenge debunked

Romans 9:14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

► Consider Paul's outlining of God's saving process in Romans 8:28-30 and his open invitation to salvation in Romans 10:5-13.

#### ▲ Consider the charity of God

##### ▼ Patience with the sinner

Romans 9:22 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?

##### ▼ Patience for the sake of spotlighting salvation

Romans 9:23 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.'" [Hosea 2:23; Hosea 1:10]

### A Stumbling Stone

#### ▲ Note the sad state of the faithless Jews

Romans 9:27 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." [Isaiah 10:22-23; Isaiah 1:9]

#### ▲ Note the saved state of the faith-filled Jews and Gentiles

##### ▼ The power of faith

Romans 9:30 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.

##### ▼ The Person in focus

Romans 9:32 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." [Isaiah 28:16; Isaiah 8:14]

# Romans 9:1-33

Romans 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.

9:6 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."

9:10 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."

9:14 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.

9:19 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?

9:22 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.'"

9:27 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."

9:29 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."

9:30 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."

Romans 2:28 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 4:9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Romans 11:32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Romans 11:22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

**Note:** Though the leadership and majority of Israel did not receive and believe in Jesus (John 1:1 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him), there has always been a remnant who believed, including the 120 in the upper room (Acts 1:15), the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the 5,000 shortly thereafter (Acts 4:4), the many thousands in Jerusalem about 27 years later (Acts 21:20), the many Jews converted under Paul's ministry among the Gentile nations, and the many Jews who have believed throughout the centuries.

**Note:** There had always been a believing remnant of Israelites throughout the Old Testament as well. While many turned to idolatry and unbelief, there were always those among Israel who loved God, believed God, and were loyal to God. Paul provides the example of the seven-thousand-strong remnant in Elijah's day (Romans 11:2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? 4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.)

**Note:** Eventually, Paul prophesies that Israel as a whole will be saved when they believe in Jesus (Romans 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.) We believe this will occur at the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation and the start of Christ's Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 19-20).

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Romans 10:5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- ▼ We must consider this mysterious planning and predestination of God in light of the entirety of Scripture.
- ▼ From Genesis 2 through Revelation 22, the entirety of Scripture indicates the free will of humans and the open invitation from God.
- ▼ Humans are presented with the overarching choice – believe God and obey his will or not.
- ▼ Paul has already established in Romans 8:29 that God predestined his sons according to his foreknowledge.
- ▼ 1 Peter 1:1-2 agrees that "God's elect...have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."
- ▼ Samuel declared in 1 Samuel 16:7 about the LORD's choosing process, "The LORD looks at the heart."
- ▼ Solomon prayed to the LORD in 1 Kings 8:39, "You alone know the hearts of all men."
- ▼ Thus, it is God's foreknowledge of the hearts of men upon which his choosing or rejecting of them is based. **God chooses believers.**
- ▼ And Revelation 22:17 sounds out the invitation, "Whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."
- ▼ Jesus warns in Mark 4:25, "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."
  - ▶ So, when God "hardens whom he wants to harden," (Romans 9:18) he is hardening a willfully hard heart.
  - ▶ And, when God "has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy" (Romans 9:18), he is showing mercy on the one who accepts him.
  - ▶ And, when God makes a piece of "pottery for noble purposes" (Romans 9:21), he does so because of a noble heart.
  - ▶ And, when God prepares an object "for destruction" (Romans 9:22), he does so because of a heart that is bent on destruction.
- ▼ The LORD declared in Ezekiel 18:32 (and 33:11), "I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"
- ▼ Ultimately, God is "patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).