

Romans 9

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Tape #8128
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Now to Romans, chapter nine, as we continue our through the Bible study, going from Genesis to Revelation. We've now come to Romans, chapter nine. In which the next three chapters, Paul inserts this discussion concerning the sovereignty of God especially as it relates to the nation of Israel and to the Gentiles being brought in and being made a part of the family of God.

Now Paul considered himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a zealous Jew, zealous for the law, zealous for the people. But because Paul had taken the gospel to the Gentiles and because Paul had declared the righteousness of God, in saving Gentiles, many of the Jews looked at Paul as a traitor. And they looked upon him with suspicion because of his ministering to the Gentiles. When he had come to Jerusalem and was in the temple area preparing for the Jewish holiday, he created a riot because there were some Jews from Asia who knew of his ministry to the Gentiles. And so they stirred up all of the people. They said this man speaks against the law of Moses. And he is going to the Gentiles. So it created a huge uproar. Paul did believe that the gospel of God was not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles. That the Lord had opened the door of salvation to all men, Jew and Gentile alike, who would believe in Jesus Christ. So because of his affiliation with Gentiles and taking the gospel to the Gentiles, the Jews were more or less accusing Paul of being a traitor and not really having a concern for the Jews.

So he opens the ninth chapter because he's been talking about God saving the Gentiles and how it is righteousness through faith. That it doesn't matter concerning the law, it is the faith in Christ that God accounts for righteousness. And so lest he misunderstood he said, *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,* So Paul expresses his love for the Jews in terms that are so deep that we can not comprehend them. He speaks about this continual heaviness and sorrow that he had for the Jews, his brothers according to the flesh. And to the extent that he could wish himself accursed from Christ, if it could mean their salvation.

Now in the Old Testament we have the story of Moses interceding for the nation of Israel. When they had committed that great sin when Moses was bringing the ten commandments down from the mountain. And the people had made the golden calf and were dancing and worshipping the golden calf. The anger of the Lord was kindled against the people. Moses went to intercede. And in his intercession he prayed, Lord, forgive, and if not, then blot my name out of Your book of remembrances. I frankly confess I don't understand that depth of love. I do not have that depth of love. I could not wish myself accursed from Christ in order that our nation be saved. When I see the direction they're going, I sometimes feel, well let them go to hell if they want to. I don't want to go to hell for them. Now though this was not a possible thing, though it was sort of, almost well, it was just something that can't be. Jesus died for all sins. Now Jesus loved like that. He loved to the extent that He was willing to give His life. Greater love has no man than this than to lay down his life for his friends. Now here is Paul exemplifying that kind of self sacrificing love that I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake.

⁴*who (he said) are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption,* That is, these are the people that God said you will be my sons and daughters and I will be your God. They were known as the children of Israel. God's children. God had adopted them. God had adopted the family of Abraham. God promised Abraham that through your descendants, the nations of the world will be blessed. God had chosen Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people that they might bring the Messiah into the world. And so they were adopted.

But not only adoption but *the glory*, They were led by God out of Egypt. And the presence of God, the glory, the Shekinah, was present with them in their wilderness journey. It is interesting when you look at the camp of Israel, the Tabernacle was in the center of the camp. And all of the tribes were camped around the Tabernacle. All facing, the tents facing the Tabernacle in the center of the camp. At night there would be this glowing fire above the Tabernacle, reminding the people of God's presence with them in the wilderness. In the day there would be this cloud above the Tabernacle, the glory of God's presence with them. And when they would come

out of their tent, night or day, they would come out facing the Tabernacle, they would see the fire or the cloud. They would be reminded that they were God's people. The presence of God was with them. There was always that continual consciousness every time they came out of their tents. The glory of God's presence among the people.

the covenants, the giving of the law, And God gave to them the covenant when God established the law. He said, now if you will keep the statutes and the commandments, the ordinances, then I will be your God and you will be My people. God made this covenant. You will be My people. And so the glorious covenant that God had established with them. And then the giving of the law, where God laid down for them the way in which God would have them to relate to God and relate to each other. And the law of the Lord is perfect. And God gave to them this perfect law.

the service of God, and the promises; But not only that but He gave to them the services. That is the way by which He could be approached. He established for them their approaching God through the sacrifices. Thus the service in the Tabernacle, the offering of the sacrifices. The bringing of the incense and all of these services within the worship system whereby these people could come and be forgiven their sins and draw close to God. And then the promises, oh, the wonderful promises that God made to these people. What God would do for them! Wonderful promises! Promises of the future. The things that God has prepared for His people.

Whose are the fathers. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. And ⁵*of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.* From this nation, the Messiah came. Now, a literal translation of the Greek, would be, who is God, over all, blessed forever. One of the strongest statements that we have concerning the deity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. It's interesting the way many translations try to water this down. They try to make it, who is blessed of God, forever. But literally who is God overall, blessed forever.

⁶*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.* In other words, look at Israel today. Look at the conditions, Paul is saying. They were under the Roman rule. Here they had all of the covenants and promises that God made. But it wasn't as though God's word didn't have any effect.

For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷*nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham;* They have not all been adopted into God's family. All of the descendants of Abraham are not accounted in God's covenants and promises. Abraham had another son, Ishmael, from which came the Arab people. And the promises were not to them.

but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." The Lord said, through Isaac shall the seed be called, the blessing come.

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.* So if it were just Abraham's descendants, then it would include Esau and his descendants, the Edomites. But again through Jacob, so the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the promise came down through them. Of course then Jacob's twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel, and these are the people through whom the promises will be fulfilled, the Messiah shall come.

⁹*For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."* So not all of the children of Abraham. Not Ishmael. But it is through Sarah. Now Ishmael, you know, was the product of the flesh. It was a lapse of faith. Abraham and this is in a way, I mean there is a perversity in me that I get comfort from this. Abraham is called the man of faith and the father of those that believe. And whenever you want to talk about faith, you talk about Abraham. There's the guy who had the faith. That God honored. That accounted his faith for righteousness. Wonderful. But you are prone to say, who can be like Abraham? The interesting thing is that Abraham also had lapses of faith. And in a perverse way that comforts me. Because I sometimes have lapses of faith too. And whenever there is that lapse of faith, Satan gets on me and says well how can you expect God to, you didn't trust. You didn't have faith. And so you can say, well, Abraham, he had lapses also, but God calls him a man of faith. You see they were waiting for this promised son. Finally one day, Sarah said, hey Abey, give up man. It's not going to happen. You know we have been trying for so many years. It's just not going to happen. So take my handmaiden, Hagar, the Egyptian girl. Go in unto her and let her be the surrogate mother. And when the child is born, I'll be there to receive it as it is being delivered. I'll nurse it and I'll take it as my child. So they went through this as a lapse of faith. And when Ishmael was about thirteen years old, the

Lord said to Abraham that He was going to give him a son, bless him with a son. And Abraham said, oh Lord, let Ishmael live before you. In other words, that's all right God, I understand. And you know, Ishmael. God said, no, through Sarah shall thy seed be called. The child of promise. The child of the spirit. So you always have the flesh versus the spirit. Ishmael was the type of the flesh. The fleshly activities. The fleshly endeavor to fulfill the will of God. And we've all been guilty of that. Trying to fulfill God's will with our fleshly endeavors. It is interesting when Isaac was perhaps as much as thirty years old, God said to Abraham, take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest. Wait a minute. What do you mean, your only son, Isaac? What about Ishmael? Thirteen years the senior. Ishmael was the product of the flesh, the works of the flesh. And interestingly enough, God doesn't recognize the works of the flesh. He only recognizes that which is wrought by the spirit. And thus thy only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, the one that God recognized. So the word of promise. This time the Lord said, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.

¹⁰*And not only this, but when Rebecca (the wife of Isaac) 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."* So this is that God's purposes might stand by Divine election. Not by works or by rewards of works. The children hadn't done any evil or good. But that God's purposes might stand by divine election. God said to Rebecca, the older shall serve the younger. Now immediately in our minds, we think, wait a minute. That isn't quite fair that God should choose that Esau should serve Jacob. That isn't quite right. It isn't fair. I mean they are not even born yet.

One of the problems of our challenging God and oftentimes faulting God, is that we don't take into consideration that God is God! And as God, He is omniscient. He has precognition. He has foreknowledge. And so before they are ever born, God knows their life.

God said to Jeremiah, before you were ever conceived, I knew you. While you were still being formed in the womb, I ordained that you should prophesy before the kings and all. God knows all about you. He has always known all about you. Nothing that you do ever shocks or surprises God because He has always known you.

Now God then by the basis of His foreknowledge, makes His determinations or declares what He knows shall be. So God declared. He knew it was going to be that Esau would be a man of the flesh. That he would be a man who was interested only in material things, not in spiritual things. That he would despise the birthright. That is the birthright that came because though he was a twin yet he was the first one out of the womb, but he despised that. He didn't care about that at all. God knew that Jacob that would be a man after the things of the Spirit. That he would desire the birthright and desire the blessings of God. Now Esau only wept when he found that he had lost the blessing, the material blessings of his father that were pronounced upon Jacob. And he wept and was just wailing over the fact that Jacob had deceived his father and had received the blessing, the material blessings from his dad. But he was only interested in material things. And thus before they ever were born, God said the elder will serve the younger because God knows that the man who walks after the spirit will always prevail over the man who walks after the flesh. And so that it might by divine election stand, that we might know the sovereignty of God and the precognition of God. God determines things before they ever exist.

Then he goes on a step further. But now this was not said before they were born. This was said after their lives. But God could have said it before they were born. But ¹³*As it is written, (This was written in Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament.) "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."* God hates the things of the flesh. God loves for us to walk after the things of the spirit. But God hates the deeds of the flesh.

¹⁴*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? (Is God not fair? Is there unrighteousness?)* And Paul answers, *Certainly not!* God forbid! Or perish the thought! 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.* Now, mercy is something that you don't deserve. It's not a divine right. You can't say, well I deserve the mercies of God! You don't! The mercies of God are sovereign. God said I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Now, it's interesting to note that when God said this, when Moses had come down with the ten commandments and he found the people dancing, having a great kind of a party. When he

entered into the camp he saw them dancing nude around this golden calf. He was appalled. He took the two tables of stone upon which God had written the ten commandments. He threw them on the ground and broke them, signifying the broken commandments. That before he could even give them the commandments, thou shall have no other gods before Me. Here they were dancing around this golden calf. And so God said to Moses, stand back I'm going to wipe them out. And Moses said, oh no! And he went up and he began to plead with God for the people. God said, I'll raise up another nation and you can lead them, but Moses was pleading. It was at that place where he said, oh God, forgive and if not then, blot, I pray, my name out of Your book of remembrances. Now at that point God said, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Now, the righteousness of God, the righteous judgment of God would necessitate God wiping them out. They had broken the commandment. And God, according to the commandments, should have wiped them out because of what they had done. So God just retreated into His sovereignty and said, well, I'm God and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Otherwise He would have to wipe them out. So the sovereignty of God in the showing of His mercy. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. He did that so He wouldn't have to wipe them out. He retreats into His sovereignty. He said, well, I am God. I can do what I please. And thus I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. But I'm glad for that because He has had mercy on us! And He says, well, I can have mercy on whom I will have mercy. You say, but look, Lord, on what You did for someone else. He says, hey, I'll have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And so you see, I don't deserve the mercy. I can't say, well Lord, You've got to be merciful to me. No, He doesn't! It's not something that I've got that is owed to me. It's a favor of God! And by His loving favor, He has compassion. He has mercy on me. So there's not unrighteousness with God. He can have mercy upon whom He pleases. Because He is God. He is sovereign. So, it's not of Him that wills nor of Him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

¹⁷*For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose (or cause) 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.* So God said to Pharaoh, look, I've raised you up for this purpose, that I might demonstrate My power that My name might be declared to the earth. And so we read that Moses came to Pharaoh and said, the Lord hath said, Let His people go. And he said, and whom is the Lord that I should obey Him? So the plagues began. In these plagues, God was striking out against the gods of the Egyptians. Destroying them. Making them loathsome and detestable. And we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord. And so another plague. Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord. And so another plague. Again, finally we read, and God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. The Hebrew word there is different. It literally is God made stiff the heart of Pharaoh. And thus God began to stiffen Pharaoh in that resolve against the commandment of God. In order that God might show His power in bringing destruction upon the Egyptians in order that the power of God might be known throughout the world. So that when God destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, word of what God had done in the destruction of the Egyptians traveled through all the world. And people began to fear the God of Israel. God set up the scene, hardening the heart of Pharaoh, demonstrating that he might be known and declared throughout the earth. Therefore you have the case of God having mercy upon whom He will have mercy. And God hardening those whom He will harden.

¹⁹*You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"* In other words, here I am, if I'm a mortal human being and God has hardened my heart, then how can God really, find fault with me for having a hard heart? How can God judge me for having a hard heart, if God has hardened my heart? Then how can He find fault with me? For who has resisted His will? I mean, look, He's God and I'm just me. You know, He made me like this. And if He made me like this, then how can He find fault with me because this is the way He made me?

So Paul answers that by saying, 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?"* In other words, God can do what He pleases because He is God. And I'm just something that has been formed and I can't really say to God, why have You made me like this? God can do with me whatever He pleases.

²¹*Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?* Now this is a figure which shows to us the awesome sovereignty of God over man. God is likened

to the potter and man is likened to the clay. And the potter has absolute power over the clay to make of the clay whatever He pleases. And the thing that is formed really has no right to say to the one who has formed it, why did you make me like this? This picture of God as the potter and man as the clay is used by Isaiah in chapter forty five.

It's used by Jeremiah where the Lord told Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house. Watch him as he works on his wheel. And I will speak to you there. Jeremiah went down. He watched the potter as he was forming the vessel on the wheel. The vessel was marred in the hands of the potter. So he stopped and he started over again. He made another vessel that pleased him. And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and said is not Israel like clay in My hands? And though the vessel has been marred I will make of it a vessel that pleases Me.

Now you see, one side of the coin, we look at the awesome sovereignty of God. He is God. He can do what He pleases. He can have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He can harden whom he hardens. He is God! He can take of this lump of clay and make any kind of vessel he wants. Of the same lump of clay. He can divide the thing in half and make one half of it a beautiful vase. To set in the entry of your home to hold flowers and to be admired of your friends. The other half of that clay, He can make a spittoon. The same lump of clay. He can make whatever He wants. He is sovereign. But He also has given to us the capacity of choice. I can yield to God in faith, trusting God to do what is right. And make of me what is right in His sight. Or I can harden myself to God. I can say I don't like that shape. I don't like what you are doing. I can stiffen and harden myself to God. And as I do the vessel becomes marred in the hands of the potter. The reason why a vessel becomes marred in the hands of the potter because there is a lump in the clay. A hard lump. And as the pressure from the potter hits that lump, it grabs hold of it and the lump spins around and it leaves a scar, a mar in the vessel. So when that happens, the potter stops the wheel and he takes and begins to knead the clay again, working out the lump. Getting a uniformity again of the elasticity so that the clay will be pliable. But you see, I can harden myself to God. That's what God has allowed me to do. And many people have hardened themselves to God. And as a result their lives have become marred. You're not what God would have you to be. The beauty that God is seeking to develop is not there. The vessel has been marred. God in His love, rather than just taking the clay and throwing it across the field and saying, well, you know, enough of that. He works the clay, to work out the stiffness, the hardness in order that He might shape the vessel that pleases Him.

Now I realize that these are almost scary truths. When you just look at the awesome sovereignty of God, He can do what He pleases. He can have mercy upon whom He will have mercy. He can harden whom He will harden. And that can be very frightening if you don't know God! But when you really know God, you know that He is love personified! God is love! And He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He said I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. So turn ye for why will you die, saith the Lord? God said, I know my thoughts concerning you. They are not evil. They are good! I have glorious plans for your future. And so when I know that the potter loves me, I know that what He has in mind for me is the best that could ever happen to me. I find then it is easy to yield although I don't always understand the pressures that He puts on me in order to shape me a certain way. And I have to admit there are times when I have said, why have You done this? Why have You allowed this? Why have You made me thus? There have been times when I have resisted the touch of God on my life. But in His patience and love He started over again until He was able to make the vessel that pleased Him. So the potter has power over the clay to make, if He wants out of that clay a vessel of honor or to make a vessel that is used for garbage or dishonorable purposes.

And so 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,* In other words God knowing the Pharaoh's resistance, put up with it for a long time. He didn't wipe him out the first time. The first time that Pharaoh defied God, God didn't wipe him out. He put up with him. He allowed him to defy God. He was very patient. He endured with much longsuffering this vessel that was to be destroyed, but He wanted to show to the world, His wrath against rebellion and His power to bring down the highest and the strongest, who tried to stand against Him. So He put up with him for a good period of time before He brought the destruction that was already determined and deserved.

²³*and that He might make known (the other side of the coin) the riches of His glory* Oh! If we only knew the riches of His glory! Paul the apostle, prayed for the Ephesians, that you might know the exceeding riches of the

inheritance of the saints in light. If you only knew the hope of your calling! What God has for you who love Him.

Make known the riches of His glory *on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory*, I love that! God has already planned for me to be with Him. He's got the reception all planned for my arrival! The glory of His kingdom which He had prepared beforehand for glory. Now let me say that this subject of God choosing and God knowing in advance. And according to His foreknowledge, predestinating and so forth. This bothers a lot of people. And they say that's not fair. That's not right, you know. Well, tell you what, it thrills me! Because God chose me. I'm blessed by it! I'm thrilled by it! You say, but, what if God hasn't chosen me. Well, He opened the door and He said whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely. The door is open for you. You say, well, I don't think I want to come. Well, you want to harden your heart against God? Yeah. I'm not going to yield. I'm not going to submit. I don't want to. Well, it's possible He didn't choose you. But you can't really blame God because He still has the door open. And says hey, come in, if you want. I don't want to. Well, here is the door. It's open. You see, God doesn't exclude men. He desires that all should be saved. He opens the doors to all people. And the door is opened to you tonight. And if you want to come in, you'll discover that God has chosen you. And then you'll like this doctrine, too! Oh, bless the Lord. He's chosen me. Yes, I've entered in. And the very fact that I've entered in, shows that I was chosen of God. He says, look, I loved you before the foundation of the earth and I've chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciple. On the outside of the door it says, "Whosoever will, may come". You see that and you say, wow, looks good! I'll enter. When you get inside of the gate and you look back, it says, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciples. That you should bring forth fruit." One of those great mysteries that we don't fully comprehend but you should enjoy it. God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world! It's wonderful to know that God loved you and chose you! Tongue in cheek, Spurgeon used to say, good thing that He chose me before the foundation of the world, before I was ever born, because He would have never chosen me afterwards. But that was tongue in cheek.

What is God that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He has before ordained unto glory ²⁴*even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?* Now you see the accusation of Paul is hey, you hate the Jews. You love the Gentiles. You know, you are a traitor to the Jewish cause and so forth. But Paul is saying, look, this is not just true of the Jews. It is also true of the Gentiles. God has chosen to show mercy upon the Gentiles. God has chosen that He might extend the riches of His grace and His love. The riches of His glory to the Gentiles also. Not just to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also. As God said, and it's interesting to me, you know, look how much Paul has already in this chapter, quoted from the Old Testament. Quoting from Deuteronomy. Quoting from Genesis. Quoting from Malachi and all. And now he turns to the Scriptures again, now to the prophet Hosea.

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."* Now in Hosea, God was using the prophet to be sort of a living illustration of God's marriage to Israel. God told Hosea to go down to the house of prostitution and marry one of the gals, which he did. And she had a son and called his name Jezreel. And God said He was going to take vengeance upon the house of Jehu because of what the house of Jehu had done to the house of Jezreel. And then he had a daughter, Lo-ruhamah. And then he had another son that he called, Lo-ammi, but his wife had gone back to her old practices and so Lo-ammi means, not my child. Not of mine. And so in the place where God had said, not mine, not my child, shall the Lord say, they are mine. And to that which was not loved, He would call her the beloved.

²⁶*"And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' (Lo-ammi) There they shall be called (or declared) sons of the living God."* God would come back and minister to these people. His people. He's not going to forsake them. God will keep His covenant with Israel.

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."* Now not all of Israel are going to be saved. Not all of the descendants of Abraham are going to be saved. Not all who are of Israel are Israel. For Israel is a spiritual sea. We saw that with Ishmael and with Isaac. Isaac was the spiritual sea. And so the spiritual Israel, the people who are children of Abraham by faith. Who have put their faith and trust in God. They are the true Israel of God.

Now there is the nation and God is going to deal with the nation and this is not to say that there is a remnant of the Jews that God is going to deal with, but we read that during the great tribulation period, only one in three survive it. There will be the remnant but not the whole, who will be saved. So Isaiah spoke of that remnant. Though the number of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, only a 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.*" Now he is talking about this future when God is going to deal with the nation of Israel again. It will be just a short time, just seven years, that God will be dealing with the nation once more. A very short period of time. And there is going to be a time of such great tribulation upon the earth as weapons of destruction are unleashed upon humanity. The biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in a war that is unparalleled in the history of mankind. Jesus said except those days be shortened, no flesh would remain on the earth. So for the elect, the Jews' sake, these days shall be shortened. So God said, I'm going to do a short work with them. Finish that work and cut it short in righteousness.

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."* We would have been totally wiped out! Unless God had left this remnant, this seed.

³⁰*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;* So what shall we say? You Gentiles who have come to believe in Jesus Christ have attained to the righteousness. For God has imputed righteousness to you through faith in Jesus Christ even as Abraham believed God and God imputed it for righteousness. You who have believed in Jesus Christ, God looks at you and accounts you righteous because of your faith in Jesus Christ. You tonight, have a righteous standing before God. But you say, I have sinned. In Christ, God sees you as righteous. Through your faith in Christ, you have that righteous standing before God. As we were back in chapter eight, therefore is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. So the Gentiles, we haven't kept the law. We haven't kept the commandments of the law, but God has accounted us righteous through faith, so we have attained it.

However, ³¹*but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.* That is, they haven't lived up to the law. Now the law is righteous. It tells you what God would have you to be and how God would have you to act towards Him and towards your neighbor. And the Jews who sought to live after the law did not attain to the righteousness of the law.

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.* Jesus is the stumbling stone. They stumbled over Jesus. They still do today. And thus we Gentiles have obtained righteousness because we believe in Jesus. Whereas the Jews who are still trying so hard to attain righteousness by the works of the law, never attained it. They haven't attained it. Why, because they won't come by faith. They stumbled over Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to me today that even the most devout Jews, who you see bobbing at the Wailing Wall as they are going through their prayers, are not really living according to the law. For under the law, God had made a provision for their sin. You see, sin always separates a man from God. God said My hand is not short that I cannot save. My ear is not deaf that I cannot hear, but your sins have separated you. And sin does separate a man from God. So for a man to come to God, the sin issue has to be taken care of. And under the Old Testament, God made the provisions. You would bring an animal. You would lay your hand on its head. You would confess your sins on it. The animal is slain. The blood is placed on the alter and thus your sins are atoned for they are covered. And now you can come to God because the sin issue has been taken care of.

But they don't have sacrifices. The Bible says without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. But we have the shed blood of Jesus Christ by which we enter boldly into the presence of God, into the Holy of Holies. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice once and for all. So we Gentiles, by faith, have entered in and we are accounted righteous by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. Where as the Jews, who were trying and still are trying to keep the law of righteousness, have not attained to the righteousness because they haven't come by faith. They have stumbled at Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to me today that Yom Kippur, the day when their atonement was made for the sins of the nation, when the two goats were offered. The one set free and the other goat offered for the sin. The sins of the nation on Yom Kippur. What is it now for the Jews? No sacrifice. But there is a day of contemplation. Of

what? My good works versus my bad works. And because Yom Kippur now is a day when I sit down. I think of what I did that was good and what I did that was bad. And I sort of add up, you know, the score. And hopefully as I sit and think upon the past year and my good deeds and my evil deeds. Hopefully the good will overbalance the evil, hopefully. And thus I can sort of rest while, yes, I gave to charity. I helped this person and all. Well, yeah, I did that. But I did this, you know. And it's a balancing act of works. It's all predicated upon works. But by the works of the law, the Bible said, no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:16) And thus because the Jews have rejected Jesus. They have stumbled over Him. The stumbling stone. I will lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and thus Jesus is a stumbling block to the Jews. And thus unfortunately they have not attained to the righteousness of God.

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."* Faith in Jesus Christ. God accounts me righteous as a Gentile! I've come to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. God accounts me righteous through my faith in Jesus Christ. And God has mercy upon me for He will have mercy upon He will have mercy. And God has made to me, made of me a vessel of honor to serve Him even as He desires to make of you. A vessel of honor to serve Him, to trust in Him.

So this is the beginning of this little parenthetical part in Romans, chapters nine through eleven, when he is going to talk to us about the Jew and the Gentile relationship to God and the sovereignty of God. And this position that we have as Gentiles, through faith, but a warning to us as he gets to the close of this section in chapter eleven, of not boasting against the natural branches. So fascinating, a portion of Scripture, as we deal with issues that pertain to the infinite, Eternal God and issues that we cannot reconcile, but we have to accept by faith that God has opened the door wide for all men to come. And tonight you can come and receive the forgiveness for your sin. You can receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. You can attain the righteousness of God through faith and be accounted as righteous by God. And you can enter into the family of God and the kingdom of God. God will have mercy upon you. And you will begin to make of your life, a vessel of honor for His glory.

Or you can harden your heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can live after the flesh. You can be a vessel of dishonor, fit for destruction. Now God knows that I can't change. God knows the end result of all of our lives, but that doesn't preclude your coming. If you come, Jesus said whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise, cast out. When you come, He doesn't go down the list and say, OOPS, I'm sorry. A slip up here I guess, you're not on the list. I won't let you in. No. He's never closed the door to anyone. And yet He has chosen the ones that should come. But I don't know. I don't either, but I believe it, because God didn't require that I reconcile the truth, only believe the truth.

Thank You, Father, for choosing us. For showing us mercy. For making us, Lord, vessels of honor, fit for Your use. Thank You, Lord, for using us. Thank You, Lord, that we have attained to that righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. That we are accepted by You in Him. Oh Lord, You are so good! And we rejoice, Lord, that You've chosen us and ordained that we should be Your disciples and bring forth lasting fruit. Help us to become everything You want us to be as we yield, Lord, to Your touch. In Jesus' name. Amen.