

God's Will and Man's Romans 9:1-18 (ESV) bible-sermons.org November 17, 2013

I am reluctant to leave Romans chapter eight, but I want us all to realize we don't have to leave it. In fact, we will return to it next week for our Thanksgiving message. The essential truths of Romans eight should live in our hearts and minds every day, affecting our attitude, our joy, and our hope, but most importantly our life in Christ each and every day.

At first glance it seems that chapter nine is an abrupt change in Paul's thinking, but it may be that Paul is taking off on the theme of God's love that ended chapter eight. When we are in Christ Jesus, we share His heart. How can we be in Christ and not share His heart for those in darkness? How can we, who have come to the light and seen the joy and hope and transformation that He brings, *not* have the desire to see others know the same?

Paul begins chapter nine sharing his heart for his fellow Jews. Remember, Paul was once Rabbi Saul (Philippians 3:5), a respected up and coming leader of the Jewish faith. He was passionate about his religion and fellow Jews. He still is, but in a whole new way. He writes, *¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit - ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

He is stating it so emphatically because many did not believe he felt this way. He would often end up in disagreements with a local synagogue and even be attacked by fellow Jews for his teaching (Acts 13:50). So he made it very clear that he is misunderstood. He preached in the synagogues and entered into conflict with the Jews because he was so eager for them to see what he has seen. It is love that drives him. It is love that causes him to have great sorrow and unceasing anguish of heart.

He even goes so far as to say that he could wish that he were accursed and cut off from Christ for his fellow Jews. He is following in the pattern of Moses who prayed that God would blot him out of the book if God would not forgive the Jewish nation (Exodus 32:32). The ultimate example of this is Jesus who took upon Himself the sins of the world and did become a curse in our place that we might have life (Galatians 3:13). Only Jesus could actually do that, because He is sinless. Moses and Paul would have if they could have, but they couldn't. God told Moses that the one that sins will be blotted out of the book (Exodus 32:33). We should all be blotted out, accursed, but Jesus had such a love for us that He did what no one else could do (1John 3:5).

Commented [notes1]: Philippians 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;

Commented [notes2]: Acts 13:50 (ESV)

⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Commented [notes3]: Exodus 32:32 (ESV)

³² But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."

Commented [notes4]: Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

Commented [notes5]: Exodus 32:33 (ESV)

³³ But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.

Commented [notes6]: 1 John 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

Have you been willing to share God's heart for your people? You can't die for them, but you can die daily for them (1Corinthians 15:31)? I feel the pain every day for America's slide into selfishness. Almost daily I hear of the heartache that our departure from our Christian foundation is bringing to lives. Paul was looking ahead to the destruction of the Temple and the end of the nation as he knew it, and I wonder if we aren't looking at something similar. I can't say I have a burden to the extent of the Apostle Paul, willing to let myself spend eternity in judgment to save this nation, but I'm asking to share God's heart for this country, our people. Are you willing to share His heart for your people, for your family, city, nation, even for the world? Will you begin to ask God to let you share that burden as much as you are able?

⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. These are the things Paul loved about his nation. God adopted them as His own children (Exodus 4:22). They experienced the glory of God on Mount Sinai and in the Temple (Exodus 40:34). They were the recipients of the covenant that God made with Abraham and with them all at Mount Sinai. They were the recipients of the Law, the sacred Scriptures. They had been given the form of worship that God desired (Hebrews 9:1), which was filled with rich symbolism and teaching. They received so many promises through the patriarchs and the prophets. Perhaps the greatest blessing to the nation was that they were the race chosen to be the lineage of the Messiah.

At this point Paul makes a profound statement. This is only about twenty-four years after Jesus' death, about 57 A.D. Paul declares very plainly that Christ "is God over all, blessed forever." I believe there is evidence that Matthew was written before 50 A.D., at least seven years before Romans, and that Matthew often referred to passages that speak of God and applied them to Jesus. (*Divine Messiah?*) This short time after the death of Jesus, the believers know that Jesus is God, one with the Father. I don't believe there is one seminary in twenty that teaches that today. And yet here we have it in black and white, *the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.*

What Paul is saying is that his nation's history is so rich and so filled with the intervention and blessing of God, that he longs to see them understand that Jesus is the incarnation of Almighty God (John 1:14), the greatest demonstration of God's love for them that they will ever see. His heart aches for them to see what he has seen.

We can list the blessings of our nation, the intervention of God time and time again, though it is being edited from our history books or accredited to the genius of men. We, too, can have this longing for our fellow citizens to see once again the greatest love every displayed for us upon Calvary. Ask God to fill your heart with this desire.

Commented [notes7]: 1 Corinthians 15:31 (KJV)

³¹ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Commented [notes8]: Exodus 4:22 (ESV)

²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,

Commented [notes9]: Exodus 40:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Commented [notes10]: Hebrews 9:1 (ESV)

¹ Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.

Commented [notes11]: John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Now Paul is going to do what he does so well. He is going to use Scripture to explain his theology. *6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."* Paul has already explained in earlier chapters that we become children of God by faith, just like Abraham did (4:16). He is bucking the interpretation of many rabbis in his day who taught that all Jews will be in the kingdom of God. Paul has a good source for his interpretation, John the Baptist. John warned his fellow Jews not to think that they had Abraham as their father (Matthew 3:9).

Paul taught that the promises are for the people of faith. They are the true descendants of the man of faith, Abraham (Galatians 3:29). God promised Abraham that it was the son of promise, Isaac, who would be the line of Abraham's offspring (Genesis 21:12). Paul saw a deeper meaning that he explains in the next verse. *8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.* If it was simply physical heritage then the children of Ishmael would also be called children of Abraham. But God specifically said that title came through Isaac who was the child of a miraculous birth to a ninety year old woman and a hundred year old man (4:19). The children of promise are the children of Abraham. Paul is taking the text and looking at it logically and believing in its inspiration and coming to a conclusion that his fellow countrymen didn't like. Those who come to God by faith are children of Abraham. Paul wants all his fellow Jews to recognize this and come to Jesus by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

9 For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." God met with Abraham and told him that the time to fulfill the promise He had given him many years earlier had come. It was a miraculous work of God, just as is every spiritual birth into God's kingdom (John 1:13). Every spiritual birth is impossible without the grace of God stepping in and drawing us and enabling us to come to Him by faith.

10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls - 12 she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Like Sarah, Rebekah was barren (Genesis 25:21). That makes Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, a child of faith as well. But that isn't Paul's point here. His point is taken from Malachi 1:2-3. Before Rebecca's twins were born, God chose Jacob to be the line of the Messiah and father of the nation.

To understand Paul's point about faith and election, I want us to consider the quotation from Malachi. Commentators have suggested that the word "hate" could be translated "loved less". This is borne out by the blessings God gave to Esau (Genesis 35:9). In the

Commented [notes12]: Romans 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Commented [notes13]: Matthew 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Commented [notes14]: Galatians 3:29 (ESV)

²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Commented [notes15]: Genesis 21:12 (ESV)

¹² But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Commented [notes16]: Romans 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

Commented [notes17]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [notes18]: John 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Commented [notes19]: Genesis 25:21 (ESV)

²¹ And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Commented [notes20]: Malachi 1:2-3 (ESV)

² "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."

Commented [notes21]: Genesis 33:9 (ESV)

⁹ But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

passage quoted from Malachi, God was speaking of the lineage of Esau, the Edomites, who became ungodly. Before they were born, God foreknew the future of Esau's descendants. He knew the older would serve the younger, contrary to the culture at the time (Genesis 25:23).

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!* God can't be unjust. It isn't in His nature. Whenever you think God isn't being just, you are missing some key factor. People are hurt through no fault of their own. We ask why God didn't intervene and spare us from this fallen world, but then we'd all be puppets or in heaven. **Man is often unjust. God never is.** God owes us nothing, though He has chosen to love us and offer us redemption out of His great mercy.

Is God unjust to choose Isaac and not Ishmael or Jacob over Esau? First, Paul is about to explain that the Creator can do what He wants with His creation. It is arrogant for the creation to tell God He should or shouldn't do something. We are invited to humbly come and pray His will into the earth, but to demand He do as we please is prideful in the extreme and dangerous at best.

God is outside of time. He foreknows what we can't yet see. He also sees all the factors and will act in accord with His perfect will. He only does what is right and just (Zephaniah 3:5). He knew Jacob would be a conniving manipulator, and He chose Him anyway. He also knew the descendants of Esau would be idol worshiping reprobates. He also knew that an entire generation of Israelites would die in the desert because of their refusal to believe God's word. God should choose what will glorify Him because that is what is right and good. He is worthy of all glory. Question His decisions if you like. He can handle it. But be careful, for when you question God you are assuming you have the wherewithal to suggest God might be wrong. Remember Job felt like he wanted to question God until God revealed Himself to Job (Job 23:3-4). Then Job put his hand over his mouth. He realized he wasn't just out of his league, but he was being an idiot (Job 40:4).

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."* This is a quotation from God's description of Himself to Moses (Exodus 33:19) When God chooses to have mercy or compassion, He is certainly justified in doing so. He can do as He pleases with what is His, and we are His creation. Whatever He does is good and right.

Paul draws a conclusion from these passages that sets the stage for a great conflict we often come across in Scripture. ¹⁶ *So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* God chose Isaac and Jacob. It had nothing to do with their will or effort. Yet we find God invites all who are willing. Jesus said He longed to have Jerusalem come under the shelter of His wings like a hen protecting her chicks. But they were not willing (Luke 13:34). And whoever desires is invited to take of the water

Commented [notes22]: Genesis 25:23 (ESV)

²³ And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

Commented [notes23]: Zephaniah 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.

Commented [notes24]: Job 23:3-4 (ESV)

³ Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

⁴ I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.

Commented [notes25]: Job 40:4 (ESV)

⁴ "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.

Commented [notes26]: Exodus 33:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Commented [notes27]: Luke 13:34 (ESV)

³⁴ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

of life (Revelation 22:17). And so we have two camps. We have those that say salvation has nothing to do with our will, and those who say we have free will to choose or reject salvation. I agree with both.

God calls us. It depends on God's call and His grace. We can't get to heaven by just desiring or making a great effort. We must be willing to answer His call. I believe God gives every soul the grace to answer, but only those who will act on the grace they have received accept that mercy offered to them.

How does that fit with Paul's next example? ¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."* ¹⁸ *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.* Paul is quoting Exodus 9:16. As an Old Testament scholar, Paul knew that Pharaoh hardened his own heart through the first five miraculous plagues (Exodus 9:7). It was only then that the LORD began to harden his heart (Exodus 9:12). Even after the seventh plague Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 9:34). If God is not willing that any perish (2Peter 3:9), and since He knows the future right now, He only hardens hearts that would soon revert to their old rebellion. That is why both Peter and Paul refer to God's foreknowledge when speaking of predestination (1Peter 1:2; Romans 8:29). God would never permanently harden a heart that would ever be willing to come to Him and trust Him by faith. I say that because He declared that it is not His will that any perish.

God wills to have mercy on all but only a few are willing to receive His mercy (Matthew 7:13). Therefore, He can't continue to extend His mercy to them, and will even harden them further when it serves His purposes.

We trust that He will never be unjust. We trust in His love for mankind that sent Jesus to die for the sins of all (John 3:16-17). Yet, we know that many will choose to reject his mercy and therefore be hardened. He sees the heart of every soul and knows the decision they will make when presented with the choice. He extends His grace to help us choose, but we must be willing to come under His wings (John 5:40).

Let us not forget that Paul is speaking of His desire for his fellow Jews. He would give his own soul if he could, but he is telling them that only they can choose (Joshua 24:15). God's grace and compassion chose them (Deuteronomy 14:2), but they must choose Him. And so it is with us and with our nation. What will we choose?

Questions

- 1 What connects chapter 8 with 9?
- 2 Whose heart did Paul share?
- 3 Do you have a burden for your country?
- 4 What were the Jewish blessings? Ours?
- 5 Who belongs to Israel?

Commented [notes28]: Revelation 22:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Commented [notes29]: Exodus 9:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Commented [notes30]: Exodus 9:7 (ESV)

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

Commented [notes31]: Exodus 9:12 (ESV)

¹² But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

Commented [notes32]: Exodus 9:34 (ESV)

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Commented [notes33]: 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Commented [notes34]: 1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)

² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Commented [notes35]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Commented [notes36]: Matthew 7:13 (ESV)

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Commented [notes37]: John 3:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Commented [notes38]: John 5:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Commented [notes39]: Joshua 24:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Commented [notes40]: Deuteronomy 14:2 (ESV)

² For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

- 6 How did God illustrate this?
- 7 Can God be unjust?
- 8 Why should we trust God?
- 9 Is it God's will or man's will?
- 10 What happened to Pharaoh?