

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Romans Chapter 9: “Being Willing to Teach Justification by Faith”

Numerous times up to this point, Paul reminded the Jewish Christian converts of Rome that Old Covenant and the Law had been made of non-effect through Jesus. He was carrying out the delicate process of whittling away at their former covenant and helping them understand what role the Law played. As Paul would write in Philippians 3:9, Christians do not have a righteousness “*derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*”. It all has to do about justification by faith through Jesus and not through the Law of Moses.

This all leads to a very important question. What about all those promises that God made to Israel from the Old Testament? The next three chapters, 9-11, Paul will provide them the answers to this question. Ironically these three chapters contain nearly one third of all of Paul’s quotes from the Old Testament. He was using the Old Testament to diffuse the Jewish converts’ dependency on the Old Covenant.

Paul’s longing for the lost souls of Israel (9:1-5)

Romans 9:1-5 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Most Jews of the first century did not respond to the gospel call of the Jesus Christ, including many in Rome and throughout the Empire. *Acts 28:24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.* Paul expressed great concern for his fellow brethren who refused to convert to the New Covenant. His heart was broken for them on many levels because they rejected the Savior for whom they long-awaited. He shared the passion of the Old Testament prophets over the loss of souls.

- Hosea 11:8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled.
- Ezekiel 33:11 God said “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?”
- Jeremiah 4:19 My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.

Regardless of this fact, Paul still had a deep passion for the souls of those who did not yet convert from Judaism. He wished he could be cut-off (*anathema*) from God if it meant his Jewish brethren could find Jesus, for God was “*not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). The Lord desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Lineage is nothing (9:6-13).

Romans 9:6-13 But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." ¹⁰ And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." ¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

As in chapter 4, Paul again wanted to prove that the promise of salvation did not come through flesh, but through faith. To do this, he would make the point that not all who descended from Israel were descendants of the promise. What better example could he use than Abraham, the father of the Jews?

Originally the promise was made through Abraham (Genesis 12), but was soon passed down to Isaac. "*Through Isaac your descendants shall be named*" was a quote from Genesis 21:12. This was written directly before the account when Abraham sent out Hagar and Ishmael from the camp (21:13-14). Ishmael was a child of the choice of the flesh, but Isaac was a promised child through the choice of God. He said of Sarah, *Genesis 18:10* "...*behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.*" Just because Ishmael came from the loins of Abraham did not make him the heir of the promise.

Some of the Jews might make the argument that "Ishmael and Isaac had a different mother, therefore this does not apply". To head that off, Paul reminded them that Isaac's wife Rebekah was pregnant with twins, Esau and Jacob. Normally the promise would come through the older son, but in this case it was predicted to be the younger, even while were still in the womb. *Genesis 25:23* "*Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.*" It did not matter that Jacob and Esau had the same father and mother, for it followed the promise of God. God honored Jacob over Esau, for He said in *Malachi 1:2-3* "*I have loved you,*" says the LORD. *But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."*

The point of the passage was the following. The Arabs were the descendants of Ishmael and the Edomites the descendants of Esau. The Jews would have never considered them as the "Chosen People" based on the flesh. The Arabs and Edomites were never going to accept the promises of God as spelled out under the Law. In the same way many of the Jews would not be open to the promises of Christ, choosing rather to accept their pedigree to prop them up. Now there remains the question about God being unfair, unjust and partial. Paul will deal with that as well.

We are special because God says we are special (9:14-18).

Romans 9:14-18 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.”¹⁶ So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Paul cites two more examples from the Old Testament in this section as well. God is not injustice, is He? Of course not. The first example was Moses when seeking for proof that God was with the people of Israel. *Exodus 33:19* And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” God clearly chose to be gracious to the Jews, not because they were AWESOME people, for they weren’t. It was simply God’s choice, having nothing to do with Man.

The second quote concerned Pharaoh and God’s choice to use him as a tool of destruction. That was a quote from *Exodus 9:16* “But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. Pharaoh might have felt in control when he was making his decisions, but he was not. God knew what he would do and allowed him to carry it out to prove His power in the plagues. The LORD predicted that Pharaoh would harden his heart (Ex 4:21, 7:3) and He was right. Six times Pharaoh chose to harden his heart (Ex 7:13, 22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:7) and then six times God finished it for him (9:12, 34-35, 10:20, 27, 11:10, 14:8). God was in control and not the man Pharaoh.

We must trust Him Only (9:19-29).

Romans 9:19-26 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,²⁴ *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.²⁵ As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’ ”²⁶ “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”²⁷ Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;²⁸ FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.”²⁹ And just as Isaiah foretold, “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.”

Now yet another question arose. If God is in control, then how can he find blame with the individual? We must remember that God recognized those people’s choices in life while standing outside of time. He reaches back to Jeremiah 18:1-6 to an analogy between the Potter and the clay. The clay does not get worked up in the creation process. The clay does not tell the potter what to do or how to make it, but the other way around. In His great wisdom God allowed

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

vessels of destruction and mercy to come into the world at the same time. The foremost destruction would lead to the latter's mercy. One would open the door for the other.

He reinforced the argument with some more Old Testament scriptures, Hosea 2:23, 1:10; Isaiah 10:22 and 1:9. Combine those passages together and the following message is revealed. God discusses not only the promise of Abraham, but also the curses of destruction upon those who chose not to follow in pursuit of such. In order for God to be just for the righteous, he must also be just for the wicked with punishment. Just like God delivered the righteous Lot from destruction (2 Peter 2:7), He also spared not Sodom and Gomorrah from their own.

As Jesus said in Matthew 13:30 concerning the tares among the wheat, *“Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’”* He allows the righteous to exist among the unrighteous in order to bring the best among the foremost. There has always been vessels of mercy and destruction side by side in this world. It might not seem like God is in control, but He always is when you look at it closely.

Which path will you take (9:30-33)?

Romans 9:30-33 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;³¹ but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law.³² Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,³³ just as it is written, *“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”*

In the closing of the chapter Paul used two quotes from Isaiah, illustrating the contrast from the gentile and Jewish faiths. The first one is *Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.”* The second was *Isaiah 8:14 “Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”* These were two differing perspectives of contrasting plans.

Throughout the Bible God used the terms “Rock” or “Stone” to describe the characteristics of Jesus, providing implications for both the saved and the lost. Here are a few of these.

Of the Saved:

- Matthew 16:18 referred to the fact of Jesus being the Christ as a “Rock” foundation to His church. *“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”*
- Paul went on to explain it further in *Ephesians 2:19-22 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”*

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

- Paul said of the Jews, who by faith, drank of the Rock of Meribah, *“they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ”* (1 Cor. 10:4).
- Peter said of the faithful, practicing Christians in *1 Peter 2:4 “And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

Of the Lost:

- David warned the ungodly ten centuries prior in *Psalm 118:22 “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.”*
- Daniel warned King Nebuchadnezzar six centuries prior through the prophecy of Daniel in *2:45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*
- Zechariah warned the world in *12:3* of the “stone” on the day of judgment, *“It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.”*
- Jesus warned the Jews who were rejecting Him in *Matthew 21:44 “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”*

The point that Paul was making was there were two types of feelings responses to the gospel message of Jesus. The Jewish plan was to earn salvation through their works and the gentile plan was to appeal to the mercies of God. Many of the Jews looked at the cross of Jesus and did not get the point, rejecting the Messiah. The gentiles saw the same cross and invested faith in God’s mercy. The gentiles who trusted God would be blessed by the “Rock”, but the Jews clinging to the Law would be crushed by the same Rock. Same “Rock” with two different results.

Conclusion: What do we learn from this chapter and how can we apply it? We must have an aching heart for the lost souls of this world. We can no longer pretend that we are surrounded by people who will not be in heaven and not move into action. We must reach out to them with the gospel of Christ. Here is that plan.

- 1) Teach them not to rely on their laurels.
- 2) Teach them they are special in God’s eyes.
- 3) Teach them to trust Christ.
- 4) Teach them to make a decision.