

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ROMANS LESSON 5 (Chapters 9-10)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Welcome to our study of the Book of Romans. Today we are going to be discussing Romans chapters 9 and 10. In this section the apostle Paul is dealing with the Israelites' rejection of Christ and their desperate need to obey the Gospel. Remember that the theme of the Book of Romans is that the Gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul ties chapters 9 and 10 into that overall theme by showing that the people of Israel have rejected Christ and thus are lost. If they are going to be saved, it will be only by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul begins this section by showing **how** the people of Israel are lost, and by mentioning his great sorrow because they **are** lost. In Romans 9:1-3 we read,

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.”

Paul has great sorrow and feels a deep compassion for the children of Israel who are going to be lost. He knows that they have not obeyed the Gospel, and he knows that ultimately if they continue in that state, they will not make it to Heaven. This passage expresses to us how we, too, ought to have a great sorrow and compassion for those who are lost, and how we ought to do everything possible to bring them to the Gospel. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus dealt with the people of Jerusalem being lost. He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” It brought the Lord great sorrow that the people of Jerusalem would be lost. I am reminded of the father's love for his son in the parable in Luke 15. A prodigal son went away into a far country and lived a life of sin. He wasted his father's inheritance. How that brought great sorrow to his father! Jeremiah is another example of someone who wept bitterly for the people of Israel because they did not obey God's Word. We need to feel great sorrow for those who are lost. This is a very serious matter. Think about what it does to a family when someone in that family is a child of God who goes astray. Look at the hurt. Look at how it affects the children in that family. But most of all we ought to have great sorrow for such a person because we know that he or she will be lost eternally. There **is** a place called Hell, and people who do not obey the Gospel and live correctly **will** go there. Jesus said that it is a place “where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:44). Because of the horror that is associated with Hell, we ought to want people to obey the Gospel and be saved, just as Paul wanted the people of Israel to do. Sometimes we have the attitude that says, “They have rejected Christ, and they are determined to live in a lost state, so let's just let them.” That was not the attitude of Paul. Nor should it be the attitude of Christians. Yes, there may come a time when we have to shake the dust off our feet.

But we still ought to feel great sorrow. And at any opportunity that arises, we ought to try to take the Gospel to such people.

Another point from Romans 9 is that if we are not careful, we, like the Israelites, can overlook the blessings of having a relationship with God. As a result, we can fall out of that relationship. The Israelites “had it all.” They were God’s children. They had the blessings of God. In Romans 9:4-5 Paul offered a list when he spoke of those

“who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.”

Look at all of those blessings, such as adoption and the promises through which Christ was to come. These people—who should have been the first to obey the Gospel—were overlooking all the blessings they had, and thus were missing out on the most important lesson of all—obedience to Christ. No one in the entire world is more blessed than Christians. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that “all spiritual blessings” belong to Christians. The psalmist spoke of how God loads us down daily with benefits, and how that we need not overlook those (Ps. 103:2). If anything ought to bring us back to a right relationship with God, it is the wonderful blessings and privileges of being a Christian. We have had our sins washed away. We have known the Gospel and have had an environment of peace and safety provided by God. If you are missing out on those blessings, then I appeal to you—just as the apostle Paul appealed to the Israelites—to come back to a right relationship with God.

In Romans 9, Paul realizes that his message **will** have an effect on Israel. It may not be the exact effect that Paul desires (which is for Israel to be saved), but God’s Word always has an effect on the hearts of men. Romans 9:6 says, “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” God’s Word always takes effect in a good and honest heart. Here, Paul’s point is that just because some of the Israelites had not obeyed the Gospel and had not become Christians, that does not reflect poorly on God’s Word. God had taught the Israelites how to live. Of all people, they should have been the most ready for the coming of Christ. There is a very powerful point inside this for application today. If we are not careful, we can allow our hearts to become hardened to God’s Word. Then, when the Word has an effect, it will be a **negative** effect. We need to be like clay in a potter’s hand. We need to be humble enough to do what God wants us to do. God’s Word **is** powerful! Romans 1:16 tells us that it is “the power of God unto salvation.” Hebrews 4:12 tells us that it is living and powerful. In Isaiah 55:7-11 God said that His word would not return unto Him void, and that it would accomplish the things for which it was given. Are we going to do like pharaoh and harden our hearts, or we going to be like clay in the potter’s hand (Jer. 18:1-4) where we can be molded and shaped by God into what He wants us to be?

As Paul continues his discussion in chapter 9, he makes the point that the children of God under the New Covenant are not those who are necessarily of the seed of Abraham, but instead are those who “live by promise.” In Romans 9:6-13 Paul makes the point that not **all** Israelites are God’s chosen people under that covenant. Rather, it is those who “live by promise” who are God’s children. What promise is Paul discussing here? In Genesis 3:15-16, and in Genesis 12:1-3, God made a promise to Adam and Eve and to Abraham that it would be through the seed of woman that salvation would come. Additionally, He made the point to Abraham that through His seed all nations would be blessed. Galatians 3:15ff. teaches us that that seed is Christ. Galatians 6:16 tells Christians that **they** are the Israel of God today. Those who “live by promise” (the promises found in the Bible), and those who are God’s powerful people today, are those people who base their faithful lives on the promises of God, including the promise of salvation in Jesus found in Acts 4:12—“Nor is there

salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” The promise of eternal life is found only in the Gospel. “This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life” (1 Jn. 2:25). Paul wants the Israelites to know that only those who live by the promises found in the New Covenant (which were prophesied in the Old Law) are going to be saved. That is an important lesson for us today, too. If you are not willing to allow your life to be molded by the New Covenant of God, and if are not willing to heed the commands found in the New Testament, there is no way you can be saved. How, then, **can** a person be saved? Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

In Romans 9 Paul discusses a point about pharaoh, about Israel, and about the clay in the potter’s hand that in some ways is rather deep. Yet he actually is discussing something that is quite simple. A lot of people, however, have drawn conclusions from Paul’s discussion that are not warranted. Paul talks about how there are vessels for **honor** as well as vessels for **dishonor**. Pharaoh is an example of a vessel of dishonor. When you think of someone like King David, Paul, or Jesus, you think of how such people are vessels of honor. Sometimes people will read Romans 9 and suggest that it is a text dealing with predestination (or election), and how God, from the beginning of time, chose certain people who would be saved and certain people who would be lost, and that there is nothing anyone can do about that. But that absolutely is **not** taught here! Notice Romans 9:21, which is the key to understanding what Paul is saying. Paul asks, “Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” The principle here is that when it comes to vessels of honor and dishonor, one did not come from a good lump and one from a bad lump. Rather, they came from the same lump. Thus, they had the same potential because they were fashioned from the same basic building block. Both were fashioned in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). They were both made upright (Ez. 28:15). They both had everything they needed to be a vessel of honor. Yet such individuals, by their own choices, decided whether they would be vessels of honor or vessels of dishonor. How do we know that? Let’s examine the example of pharaoh. In this text, Paul discusses pharaoh, and how, even though he was a vessel of dishonor, God was able to use him for His purposes. Was pharaoh somehow “destined” to always be bad or to do such evil things? How did pharaoh harden his heart? There are three texts in the Book of Exodus that I would like you to notice. The first is found in Exodus 4:21, where we are told the God hardened pharaoh’s heart. “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.’” So, here God hardened pharaoh’s heart. In Exodus 7:13 the Bible says simply that pharaoh’s heart was hardened. “And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.” This is merely a general statement noting that pharaoh’s heart was hardened, without anyone receiving the blame for that or being recognized as the source of pharaoh hardening his heart. Then notice Exodus 9:34, where we learn something very important. “And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart.” Here, then, we see that pharaoh is the one who is attributed with hardening his own heart. If God hardened pharaoh’s heart, and if pharaoh hardened his own heart, how are we to understand all of this? Think of it like this. Imagine that a hot Texas Sun is beating down on an asphalt road. On that road there are two objects—a piece of clay and a stick of butter. Under that same Sun, the clay is hardened and the butter is melted. The Sun was the sole source. God hardened pharaoh’s heart, yet pharaoh chose to harden his own heart because instead of being like the butter that could be molded and shaped, he was like the clay that hardened. God was the source, but pharaoh made the choice. That is

all that is being said here in Romans 9. Each person has a choice to make. In Joshua 24:15 we learn that we are all free moral agents. But if we are not careful we can let the source (God's Word) harden our hearts by the decisions we make—just as Israel did. Here is Paul's point. When some of the Israelites chose to harden their hearts against God's Word, that was **their decision**. That rejection was **their** fault, **not** God's. There is a practical lesson in this. In 1 Timothy 4:1-4 Christians are told that they must be careful, lest their consciences become seared with a hot iron. Did you know that it is possible to become so hardened to God and His commands that it is almost impossible (not impossible, but "almost impossible") for your life to be affected? How? It occurs when people make decisions over and over again that they know are contrary to the will of God. Instead of doing that, we need to be molded and shaped by the Word and will of God.

In Romans 10 Paul moves on with this discussion by noting that, yes, the Israelites have rejected Christ and the Gospel, and therefore are in desperate need of being saved. In Romans 10:1 Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Paul's point was that he had a great love for the people of Israel, and he wanted them to go to Heaven. That is God's desire as well. In 1 Timothy 2:4 we are told that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In Luke 19:10 we read that Jesus came "to seek and save that which was lost." Who is lost? All people are (Rom. 3:10). Jesus "tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Just as Paul's desire was for all Israel to be saved, so our desire today must be for all people to obey the Gospel and be saved.

But Romans 10:2 makes the point clear that just because someone is a religious person does not mean that he or she is in a right relationship with God. In Romans 10:2 Paul said, "For I bear them [Israel—the people Paul wants to be saved] witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Just because a person may have a tender heart toward God or may be passionate toward godly things or exhibit an appearance of godliness does not mean that he or she is in a right relationship with God. It is possible to be sincere, yet to be **sincerely wrong**. If people do not have a zeal according to knowledge, they can be sincerely wrong. Just because a person **says** that he loves the Lord and is a child of God does not automatically indicate that he **is** a child of God. That person must have obeyed the right things, and must be on the right track of knowledge. So many in this world—although they may have a great zeal—are so confused about what it means to be a Christian. In Hosea 4:6 God said, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." Saul was a man of great zeal, but his zeal was not according to knowledge. He could say the things he said in Romans 9 and 10 because he had been in the Israelites' position at one point in time. In Acts 23:1 he said of his former life, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." In Acts 7 he had held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, and in Acts 8 he had made havoc of the church. In Acts 9 he had dragged men and women to prison. Paul had a zeal for God, and thought that he was doing right. But his actions were not according to knowledge. Here is the principle we need to apply. Suppose you have a real zeal for God. That is well and good. People ought to be passionate about the Gospel. But understand that zeal alone will not get you to Heaven. You must know and do the right things in order to be a child of God. Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Bible says that we must "search the scriptures daily" to see if what we are being taught is true to the will of God (Acts 17:11). So, I suggest today that you weigh your zeal against your Bible knowledge. Do your zeal **and** your knowledge **both** come from the Word of God? If not, then you need to bring your knowledge up to par by reading and studying the Bible and doing what God says. Then you will have a zeal that is based on knowledge.

In Romans 10:4 Paul wants the Israelites to understand a very important point about Jesus—that He is the end or completion of the Law. The people to whom Paul was writing were still trying to live by the Old Law. In Romans 7 Paul had already told them that the Law was dead. Here, he wants them to understand that not only is the Law dead, but that the Person to whom the Old Law was pointing is Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Law was intended to point to the “new beginning” in Jesus. Romans 10:4 says, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” The idea of “the end” has to do with completeness and fulfillment. In Luke 24:44 Jesus said that all the things that had been spoken of Him in the Law, the psalms, and the prophets had been fulfilled. In Matthew 5:16-18 Jesus said that not one jot or tittle would pass away until everything in the Law had been fulfilled. Jesus did not come to tear down an evil law. Romans 7:12 says that the Old Covenant was a good law. But that law had a purpose (and if you miss this, you will have missed the whole point of the Old Testament)—which was to bring us to the point where Jesus came into the world. When that happened, the Gospel could be preached and the New Covenant went into effect. The Old Testament had then accomplished its grand purpose. Jesus is the completion of the Law. I believe that is why so many people are opposed to Christ. They think that Jesus came with a sledge hammer or mallet to destroy the Law. But that is not true. The idea is that the Law itself brought people up to Jesus, and when Jesus came, He was the completion of the Law. We today, of course, are not living under the Old Law. Romans 7:4 teaches us that we are dead to that Law. Galatians 3:24 teaches us that the Law was a schoolmaster whose purpose was to bring us to Christ. Hebrews 8:13 tells us that we are under a New Covenant because the first “is now obsolete.”

Since Paul makes the point that we are now living under the Law of Christ (the completion of the Old Law), he then tells the Israelites that they must obey the Gospel. In Romans 10:9-10 one of the requirements of obeying the Gospel is that people must be willing to believe in Christ and make the good confession.

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Two of the items associated with salvation are mentioned here. First, a person must **believe**. Jesus said in John 8:24, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Second, a person must **confess** that Christ is God’s Son. The Ethiopian eunuch did that in Acts 8:37 when he said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Jesus taught the essentiality of such a confession in Matthew 10:32-33 when He said,

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

Two of the items association with salvation—belief and confession—are mentioned here. But that is not **all** a person must do to be saved, of course. The Bible is a book that must be examined in its totality in order to understand God’s plan of salvation. You can pick and choose certain passages about things like belief, repentance, confession, or baptism. You can pull those out and say, “**Here** is what God says to do.” But remember that the Bible is a book that must be examined in its totality in order to understand God’s plan of salvation. Not only do we have to believe and confess, but we also must **repent**. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” We must hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). But a person also must be **baptized** in order to be saved. In Acts 22:16 Saul was told, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

When it comes to “calling on the name of the Lord,” we are told in Romans 10:13 that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” This is one of those passages to which people run quickly when it comes to discussing salvation. Many times they pull it out of the context of chapter 10, or even out of the context of the New Testament as a whole, to try to glean some meaning that God never intended. In Acts 2:21 we are told, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” just as Romans 10:13 teaches. But **how** does a person “call on the name of the Lord”? Many denominational people suggest that such a statement means that a person needs to acknowledge in his heart Jesus as Savior. But that is not what Jesus Himself said. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father in heaven.**” “Calling on the name of the Lord,” then, cannot mean what many people today say it means. What, then, **does** it mean? It is always best to allow the Bible to define its own terms. How does one correctly “call on the name of the Lord”? Once again, let’s use the example of Saul in Acts 22:16. In response to his question, “Lord, what would you have me to do?” (Acts 22:10), he was told to go into the city of Damascus where he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6). Acts 22:16 provides the answer. Ananias comes to Saul and says, “Now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, **calling on the name of the Lord.**” The picture is that man is sinking in the muck and mire of sin. He can do nothing to save Himself. He thus cries out to God, “Lord, save me!” God makes a way of salvation, and man then correctly “calls on the name of the Lord” by getting up and doing what God said in response to man’s cry. True faith can come only by the Word of God. It is that faith that challenges us to be obedient to the Gospel. In Romans 10:17 Paul said, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” If we are going to be saved by “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), then our faith must be founded on the Word of God, and it must be willing to get out and do what God says to do. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is based upon evidence and substance. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith, it is impossible to please God. In 1 John 5:4 we are taught, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” Thus, the basic message of Romans 9 and 10 is that Israel had rejected Christ and was going to be lost. But they needed the Gospel to be saved.

Have you rejected Christ in your life? Are you a child of God? Are you like Israel, and desperately need the Gospel to be saved? If so, you can become a Christian today by doing the things I mentioned earlier. Hear God’s Word, believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Christ before men, and be baptized. More than anything, I want you to go to Heaven. Please, today, obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS LESSON 5 (CHAPTERS 9-10)

1. What is the overall theme of Romans 9 and 10?
2. Of whom was Paul speaking when he said in Romans 9:3, "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh"?
3. What sentiment similar to Paul's did Jesus express in Matthew 23:37?
4. What point was Paul trying to get across to the Israelites when he said that they were the ones "to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4-5)?
5. Where, according to Ephesians 1:3, are "all spiritual blessings" to be found?
6. In Romans 9:6 Paul stressed that while the people of Israel were lost, something was **not** to blame. What was that "something"?
7. What did Paul mean when he wrote in Romans 9:8, "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"?
8. What promise did God make to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?
9. What point was Paul making in Romans 9:21 when he asked, "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"
10. What, according to Romans 10:1, was the "desire and prayer" of Paul's heart?
11. Of whom was Paul speaking when he said Romans 10:2, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."
12. What point is made in Hosea 4:6 regarding the importance of an adequate knowledge of God's Word?
13. What did Paul mean when he wrote in Romans 10:4 that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes"?
14. What, according to Romans 10:9-10, is one of the requirements set forth in the Bible for a person's salvation?
15. What, according to Romans 10:17, is another requirement set forth in the Bible for a person's salvation?
16. Romans 10:13 teaches that a person is saved when he or she "calls on the name of the Lord." How, according to Acts 22:16, does a person do that?
17. How, according to Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, is a person forgiven of his or her sins?