

Romans 9 Intro

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[0 : 00] Go ahead with me and turn in your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you this day, to the book of Romans chapter 9. I am always and forever dependent on God's favor in preaching. I'm always looking to Him for grace.

And this day, I feel the weight of that a little bit more. This could have possibly been the worst week for us to start at 10.30. I've had a very busy week. We took a bunch of the college students to Tallulah Gorge yesterday, which is a young man's game.

And I am having to admit that I'm no longer a young man. I'm very sore this morning. Last night, I was doing some more studying, and we were watching the steward children, so our family went from 4 to 8 in a day.

And we were downstairs as Sam was going to the grocery store, and I had a book in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other hand at 9 o'clock, hoping to stay up for a few more hours. And I had drank about half a cup of coffee.

And then the next thing I knew, Sam was shutting the door coming home. And I had fallen asleep with a cup of coffee sitting on my chest in a book just like this for about 20 minutes. And so I'm tired.

[1 : 19] I also, I'm a type 1 diabetic, and for the last hour, I've been trying to get my blood sugar level up. And I've drank lots of sugary liquid, so I might be bouncing off the walls in a minute. But I'm also recouping from that.

Beyond that, we have ahead of us just the weight of opening God's word. Lord, it's a privilege to even get to hear these words, as we so often take for granted the fact that we even have it in our language, and that we can read.

More than that, it's a privilege to get to preach it to you this day, to get to spend a good bit of my time each week studying it to bring to you. So I'm saying all that to say, I need grace.

Let's pray together for that. Father God, I pray this morning you'll bless the reading of your word.

You'll bless the preaching of it, and you'll bless the hearing of it. Nothing of any value happens here this morning apart from you.

And so by your spirit that dwells within those who are known by Christ, I pray, Father, this day we will learn and we will grow, we will love you more, and we will be turned to love the world more as a result.

[2 : 27] I pray that in all things this day, Christ is exalted above everything. And I pray this in his precious name. Amen. Amen. So we have taken a pretty big break over the summer from our expositional verse-by-verse preaching of the book of Romans.

We stopped, took a little kind of a topical series break through the summer, and we are back at the time, back to Romans chapter 9. And to this point in Romans, Paul has, in varying ways and kind of over and over again, to our benefit, laid out a case for justification before God by faith alone.

We're not saved by our works, we're not saved by our lineage, we're not saved by any type of status we may have, or anything else whatsoever, but by the goodness and loving kindness of God. God has bestowed that upon those who are his, and it has nothing to do with anything we've done to earn that favor. He gives it to us freely, the very definition of grace itself.

In chapter 8, he speaks to us about God's sovereign goodness that sustains us as we endure the battle that rages within, between our flesh and the spirit that now abides within us, as well as the suffering that will endure from external sources.

[3 : 53] And he hinges all of this upon the sovereign goodness of God towards those who are his. So let's read together verse 28 to the end of the chapter.

Of chapter 8, just to be clear. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God. Who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[4 : 57] Such tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

No. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And if you're a Christian this morning, your heart must be saying amen to something like that. So then we begin chapter 9. And we go from chapter 9 to 10 to 11 to talk about the doctrine of election. And intermixed in all of this, we see Israel and what has happened to Israel. What is going on? If God is sovereign over all things, and Israel was his special people, why is it that all of Israel has not turned to Christ at this point?

And Paul starts out with a lament. In verse 2 of chapter 9, he says, I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart over the lostness of the Israelites.

[6 : 12] And he begins to work that out. It seems kind of random, interjected, where it's at. And I can assure you that it's not, and we're going to come to understand that further in the coming weeks.

But it just feels like, Paul, couldn't you have just skipped from the end of chapter 8 to the very end of chapter 11? Oh, the depths of the ridges in wisdom and knowledge of God. Couldn't you have just jumped over all this really challenging stuff about election and Israel and how that all plays together?

I have had some times this week that I really wish he had. I have been literally studying my brains out for the past couple of weeks on this. And I can say to you, I'm not sure I'm ready yet to understand it in its entirety.

I have sensed in our congregation an eager expectation, a good expectation, for this place in Paul's letter to the Roman Christians, coming to chapter 9 and learning from it.

But my fear is that as individuals, you're either, one, not prepared to learn the truth contained therein, for multiple reasons. Maybe you just need to grow up a little bit, or maybe you don't know me well enough to know my heart, to know that I love the Scriptures, and I love people, and I want to see the kingdom advance.

[7 : 30] This concerns me. But secondly, and I actually fear this most, that you believe that you've already taken hold of all that is offered in the doctrine of election, that you think you've totally wrapped your mind around it, and you hold to it tightly, and what you've been waiting for is for us to get to 9 and me prove you right.

Me to arm you to go out and be self-indignant and tell everybody how very, very smart you are. And for those two reasons, I need another week.

I need seven more days. And what I hope is accomplished in those seven days is two things. I want to better prepare my head. There's some really, I'd encourage you to read 9, 10, and 11.

There is some weighty stuff in here, and some things that even on the surface seem contradictory. There are varying opinions across Christendom from men I highly respect on these issues.

And I labor to do the work myself. I labor to look at the language and to study well on my own. But I also want to look to as many sources as I can, men that are wiser than me, because they're most men are, and glean what I can to properly bring to you what can be understood of the next three chapters.

[8 : 56] So I want to better prepare my head, but mostly I want all of us to better prepare our hearts. The doctrine of election is weighty.

It is taught throughout all of Scripture. I will not for a moment back down that it is in fact the teaching of Scripture, but it has been very divisive. Currently in the Southern Baptist Convention, which we are a part of, it is ripping things apart, and I believe that God's going to put it all back together. I believe this is going to be to the benefit of the convention and not to the detriment of it. But there have been some statements that have come out and signed by a bunch of guys. There's been a lot of positioning.

Much of it is political, and it can be sickening at times for those of us who stand on this side of the understanding of the doctrine of election.

We receive the Scriptures from above. You get that, right? God's Word is breathed out by God. It comes down to us from above.

[10:03] And as Christians, we are to humbly submit ourselves to it. All of your questions will not be answered by this book. Understand that.

It doesn't clarify everything for us. It gives us exactly what we need, though. There are some ends that seem so loose and hanging out there.

If this is so, how can this be so? There are things that appear to be paradoxical, appear contradictory. They're not, but they appear that way as we begin to study.

You will not solve the world's questions from the Scriptures. All of them. But we should humbly submit ourselves to the Scripture.

Let it come down to us. And say to God, when you don't answer something, that's okay. When I can't completely work this out from your inspired Word, that must be for a reason.

[11:09] Let me give you an example of that. Romans 9, 20. Paul says, Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Up to this point, he has been directly quoting God from the Old Testament.

He doesn't use the prophets. He doesn't quote Moses. He's directly quoting God as we work through this doctrine of election. What it means for us. Okay? And then there's a question asked. Which seems to be a very reasonable question in verse 19. It's a question I had asked before I ever read Romans 9, verse 19. Seems very reasonable.

And I want a clear answer to it. In my flesh, I really want to know how it can be then. I want a clear answer to it. I want a clear answer to it. And Paul says, Who are you, Nathan Rainer?

How dare you question God? God says to us, Be quiet. I have spoken.

[12:10] And it is for you to try to understand. Are you with me? We do the opposite so often.

Particularly with this topic. We turn the whole thing around and we stand over the Word of God and have it serve us.

Right? There are fancy terms for this. Right? That is called, when we stand over the Word of God and we read out of it what we want to hear, that's called eisegesis. We pull out, we apply to what we think the Word of God has to say about God and His character.

And we don't practice that. Faithful Christians do not practice that. We practice exegesis. We look at what the Word of God actually says. And we wrestle with it and we come to understand it in that way.

Humble yourself. Submit yourself to God's revelation to us. So we need to prepare our hearts. And I pray that we'll all approach the study of God's holy, inspired, absolutely perfect Word to us with great reverence as we begin this time throughout the fall.

So, let's turn away now from the book of Romans for this week. We'll start next week. And turn with me to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 13. I'll have you know just so you can join me in this chuckle.

[13:40] I decided to change this path when I woke up with a cup of coffee in my hand last night. You have those moments in your life where it's as if God were just a little louder.

He would have been audible. It really felt like God said something to you. You can almost taste the fact that He's telling you to do something different than what you were already intending to do. And that was one of those moments for me.

So, I'm going to begin reading in chapter 13 verse 1. I'm going to read the entire chapter to you. I'm just praying that you'll really listen to these words. Chapter 13 verse 1. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love I am nothing. If I give away all I have and if I deliver my body to be burned but have not love I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

[14:52] It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

As for prophecies they will pass away. As for tongues they will cease. As for knowledge it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part but when the perfect comes the partial will pass away.

When I was a child I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face.

Now I know in part then I shall know fully even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide. These three. But the greatest of these is love.

Not just a passage to be read at a wedding. Right? Paul takes a pause here in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 is that the Corinthians had become over consumed with gifts.

[15:53] Much arguing was going on in the church. Too much emphasis being placed on the gifts of the Spirit. And Paul doesn't belittle the gifts. They're valuable. They're given to the church. They're graces to us for our growth in Christ.

However, here in 13 he shows us a still more excellent way. The very end of chapter 12 he says, and I will show you still a more excellent way.

And I want to draw your attention to the first three verses. It's primarily where I want to sit today. The first three verses. And you see him speak of some gifts. Speaking in the tongues of men and angels.

Being an eloquent speaker. I'm sure you know somebody like that. I don't count myself amongst them who just speaks so well. Has that gift of gab.

Can captivate you with their words. And of angels that speak prophetic things. But if these people don't do so from love, what are they?

[16:52] noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. Not appealing sound at all. Just talk. Prophetic powers.

Understanding all mysteries and all knowledge. Faith to remove mountains. But not love. Nothing. Give away all that you have.

These pious acts. Deliver up your body to be burned. To be martyred for the sake of Christ. But you don't do it from love. You gain nothing. And notice that the gifts themselves are not likened to noise or called nothing or devalued.

The gifts have value but it's the person who exercises it without love who is a noisy gong called nothing. Is devalued.

If your giftedness the things that God has given you is practiced apart from love then it's motivated by selfishness.

[17:55] You're doing it for you. The Christian life should necessarily be characterized by Christian love. The doctrine of election I would just love it if every time somebody really wraps their mind around the fullness of the doctrine and what it means for them I wish we could quickly lock them in a cage with a mirror and let them argue with themselves.

I'd give it a year. I've stood in this place the arrogance that comes from thinking we've arrived at some grand truth that other people don't get and how it becomes our mission to go around informing everybody how stupid they are and how brilliant we are.

It's grace to us if you understand anything I say this morning anything I say this morning that you can even hear me say if you understand anything I say this morning is a grace to you.

Understanding a truth of scripture makes me no better than anybody else. It's just a grace a free gift given to me and how I should use that to be from Christian love.

What I do with that should be from Christian love because the gifts are given for the edification of other Christians. Not for the demeaning of other Christians they're given for the edification for the building up of other Christians.

[19:21] In Romans 1 verse 11 and 12 Paul says for I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is he clarifies that is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith both yours and mine.

And so the gifting that we're given is given to operate from faith for faith. That's how we're meant to operate from a dependency on God to give us proper motivation to use and exercise those gifts for

the sake of faith to increase other people's dependency on God.

Now God may use noisy gongs and clanging cymbals and men who are nothing and men who are gaining nothing by their action.

God in his sovereign will can use their gifts even when improperly motivated. That can happen. So I'm not lessening God's ability here. What I'm telling you is that we rob ourselves of the joy that is given to us when we properly love and use our gifts as such.

Use our knowledge as such. Matthew 27, 21-23 you have a group standing in front of God to be judged and it says not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

[20 : 44] On that day many will say to me Lord, Lord do we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? So these are people who are doing things that are good that are gifts that God could use to advance his kingdom and then I will declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness So our activity in the spiritual gifting in the things that God's given us to turn around and give to the church should be motivated by love because that is the evidence that we are Christ Now we must be careful at this point Our culture has lost sight of what love is If you type into Google definition of love you'll get lots of definitions just look in the feed you'll get all kinds of definitions about love being this emotion this affection for I mean it really misses the point Love is ultimately it's an affection for another but it's an affection that seeks their highest good over yours it seeks their highest good

And so we quickly and I think so many Christians do that we trade love for the truth and we don't think that the two can coincide we think they're mutually exclusive that if we're going to love one another and by that we mean get along and have cozy feelings when we show up to church together that we must dismiss the truth because sometimes the truth hurts but proper love seeks to confront the fallacies in somebody's life proper love helps people grow in Christ so hear me carefully I'm not saying we shouldn't talk about hard doctrines I'm not saying you shouldn't call people out for their sin but you should do so from a motivation to love them not yourself and you know the difference I don't have to give you examples you know when you're teaching somebody something because you love them and you want them to grow and when you're teaching somebody something because you want to be right guess what we are all wrong

God is right so glad he uses us as vessels verse 2 I'm going to shorten the verse just a bit not to be unfaithful to the scripture but I want to talk about specifically having prophetic powers and understanding all mysteries and all knowledge but you don't have love you're nothing and Paul uses himself in this case certainly in my mind if anybody was able to boast in having prophetic powers and understanding all mysteries and all knowledge it would have been Paul he wrote the vast majority of the New Testament certainly if there were things being revealed in a new way to an individual in time it would have been Paul the prophetic powers he's speaking about here I believe are not the way we would refer to prophetic powers now a prophet now is someone who draws people back to the truth of God who shows people the black and white of situations and helps the people of God stay intact and on purpose with God but in this time I think it was a special time when there were new revelations of

God coming to the people of God like these letters Paul himself never calls himself a prophet he calls himself apostle one who is sent but he never calls himself a prophet and I would imagine as he's pinning these letters he's being carried along by the spirit and he never knew that someday they would be canonized and they would be in millions and millions and billions of which to be sure copies of the scripture and that they would be used by God to guide Christians for ages he didn't even call himself a prophet surely but he could have and he said in Ephesians 2 20 that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets something to be desired the prophet speaks directly from God the prophet receives messages straight from the source what an amazing thing that would be and on top of that this hypothetical person Paul speaks of understands all mysteries and all knowledge he has all the facts and all the meaning he has a mind filled with God's truth and all of its outworking you could say this man is theologically omniscient he gets everything if there was ever a gift to be envy this would be it I can as a guy that has to prepare sermons every week boy do I wish I had all wisdom all understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge that would make life phenomenal just in my study of the beginning of Romans chapter 9 as Paul laments over the

Israelites he speaks of the benefits that they had received from God and one of the things they received was the glory to them belongs the glory and I spent a good portion of this week studying the Old Testament because when he talks about the glory he's talking about the physical manifestation the dwelling of God with the Israelites which started in the Exodus when he went before them as a cloud in the day and as a pillar of fire by night and ended in the book of Ezekiel when his glory his physical dwelling in the temple was lifted up and taken from the Mount of Olives we're going to talk about that more next week so I've been reading a lot from Exodus to Ezekiel this week what do I wish I just already had all that information in my head wouldn't that be phenomenal to know it would be incredible but what Paul says is I have all that do you know what kind of preacher I would be if I had all that I could pull stuff out of my head at random I could just take you through all of the scriptures at any moment of any day but I don't have love I'm nothing so what is a guy like me who is a very very far degree from that what am I if I have not love less than nothing I'm less than nothing because I can't be this guy this hypothetical character so I'm less than nothing if I don't have love the equation he gives us is gift knowledge minus love equals nothing [27 : 42] Matthew Henry said on this a clear and deep head is of no signification without a benevolent and charitable heart and John Calvin said love alone is the rule governing our actions the only guide is the right way to use the gift of God God approves of nothing that lacks it no matter how magnificent man may think it without love the fairness of all virtues is mere veneer it is empty jangling it is not worth straw in short it is rank and offensive so at this point you might say why should we even study such topics wouldn't it be a lot easier if we just skipped let's get to the end of the glorious end of chapter 8 in Romans and let's just skip over to the practical outworking in chapter 12 let's just jump right over the top of it some of you might say if knowing things causes us to be responsible for teaching those things with love for proving and rebuking people in love and that's such a hard thing to do then why do it do we focus too much on doctrine on the truth of God as a church and and

I'm going to tell you that the answer to that question is no and I hope you never ask the question again there's no such thing as over emphasizing doctrine there is such a thing as under emphasizing love Paul's not saying to us that love is better than all these things and all these things should be dismissed Paul saying that all these things are valuable to us and they should always be accompanied by love do not fall prey to the lie that the truth and Christian love are mutually exclusive it's not a choice we don't have to choose between the truth and love he's not saying choose between truth and love choose love he's saying combine truth and love for the sake of Christ's church this teaching Romans 9 10 and 11 has great value for us you might say okay well you've kind of been talking like it's gonna be really challenging how is it that it has great value for us it shows us a greater picture of Jesus

Christ any study of scripture ought a greater magnify Jesus Christ our vision statement Wes said it this morning Christ the only church exists to experience proclaim and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things and you know how we do that we preach the Bible because if you preach the Bible that happens the Bible is constantly uplifting Jesus Christ even some of those boring parts in the old Testament that you don't understand someday we'll get there I hope you understand I hope you understand how everything in the scriptures points to Jesus Christ this church is about the centrality of Jesus Christ to all things we must be careful this is why we we as a general habit preach verse by verse expositionally because we must be careful not to allow the enemy to set our agenda for us he'd have us avoid this kind of teaching the enemy wants us to feel like we're dangling out on the end and anything we might do on any given day will push us off the edge will no longer receive the goodness and loving kindness of God the doctrine of election teaches the opposite it teaches us that nothing can take us out of God's hand there is no thing even yourself that can remove you from the hand of almighty

God he is sovereign over all things I can't fully work that out there are some things of questions that pop up in my head and I go what does that mean what does that mean for this what about this I don't know I don't know but there are things taught to us the doctrine of election being one of them that are supremely valuable for us and cause us to live proper Christian lives during all of our cromwell's reign as Lord protector over all of England a young soldier was sentenced to die as a result of some egregious offense the young woman to who he had been engaged pleaded with cromwell to spare the life of her fiance all to no avail the young man was to be executed when the curfew bell sounded at the appropriate moment as he had done for many years the sextant of the

church grabbed the rope and pulled on it repeatedly but unlike any time before the bell made no sound the young woman had climbed into the bell tower and had wrapped her body around the clapper said it could not strike the bell with every pull of that rope her body was pummeled and smashed against the sides of that giant bell but she refused to let go until the clapper stopped swinging when the sextant finally stopped tugging on the rope the young woman managed to climb down from the bell tower and stepped out to meet those who had gathered to watch the execution she was bruised from head to toe and was bleeding terribly when she explained what she had done the overwhelmed cromwell commuted the sentence a poet who was there that day gathered with the crowd to see the execution captured the scene with these words at his feet she told the story showed her hands all bruised and torn and her sweet young face still haggard with the anguish it had worn touched his heart with sudden pity lit his eyes with misty light go your love lives said cromwell curfew will not ring tonight the doctrine of election is the blessed truth that for the church of Christ the curfew bell will never ring that's why it's a value to us that's why we're gonna spend three chapters talking about it and the implications for Israel and I hope that you will come and learn that you'll come up underneath the word of God not me but underneath the word of God humbly let it speak to you you won't stand over it passing judgment on it as if you are God but you will learn from the most holy who stays the ringing of the curfew bell let's pray together together together