

## Romans Chapter 9 - John Karmelich

Title "What God CANNOT do!"

Paul spent a good portion of this letter criticizing his fellow Jewish brethren for thinking they'll get into heaven by being good enough for God! His underlying point is salvation is only by faith in who God is and we can never be good enough for Him. In Chapter 9, Paul will make a big point about the fact God isn't done with the Jewish nation as an entity. His point is (from God's perspective) He chooses who He does to spend eternity with Him, and we must accept that! I know we're saved when we accept the fact Jesus is God, but that's from our perspective. Since God by definition's perfect, it means He can't learn! We must accept the fact God knows all things! That leads to a classic (quick) discussion of things God cannot do: The first is God can't lie. If He could, then we can't trust Him about anything He says. (See Numbers 23:19). The second is He cannot learn because if He can learn then He is not in control of the world and again we can't trust Him! (Psalm 147:5) The third is He can't force us to love Him because it would make us "robots" if we were forced to love Him.

OK John assume we accept all that as Christians. Why bring it up? Because Paul spent so much time in this letter bashing his fellow Jewish people who thought they were saved by their good works, they can ponder if God can change His mind! The point for us is if we can't trust God to keep His Word, can we trust Him for our own salvation? In effect Chapter 9's here is to remind us He chooses who He chooses to spend eternity with Him! Since He can't lie or change His mind, we must accept that. Of course, He doesn't tell us who's saved. That's why Paul spends so much time in this letter explaining why we can't lose our salvation if we are trusting in Jesus as being God and He paid the full price for all our sins!

I've been told most of my adult life that Romans 9 focuses on the nation of Israel "past tense", Romans 10 focuses on Israel "present tense" (from Jesus first to His second coming) and Romans 11 focuses on the future of Israel after His Second Coming. So, if all of that is true, why should those of us who don't come from a Jewish background care about these chapters? The first issue is to accept the fact God did choose us and that's that. What about all those verses about us accepting Jesus and we become saved! I would argue it's a matter of perspective. From our perspective, we don't know the future, so we need to accept the fact Jesus is God, died for our sins and is raised from the dead to be saved, end of that issue! We can be a bad witness for Jesus by living a sinful life after that, but we can't lose our salvation. What this chapter focuses on is our life from God's perspective! We accept God knows all things as He exists outside of time, and He created time! These 3 chapters remind us He'll keep His unconditional promise that a future remnant of the Jewish nation will be saved. If Jesus is going to rule from Israel one day, that means there must be an Israel nation (who accepts Him as Messiah He'll rule from! With all of that out of my system, I can now discuss Chapter 9 in more detail:

Chapter 8 ends a long session that tells us in effect as long as we believe Jesus is God, died for our sins and God the Father raised Him from the dead we can't blow it! Yes, we can mess up our witness as one of His disciples, but salvation is a free gift from God. Some people wonder why didn't Paul end this at that point, or get into his "what shall we do now" sermon that begins in Chapter 12. In effect, Chapters 9 to 11 are one big illustration that God is incapable of going back on His Word!

Paul starts by saying how much love he had for his fellow Jewish people. He wishes it was possible to lose his salvation for their sake, the same way a parent might do anything for their children, but since it is not possible, he makes some points about how special they are as an entity. Israel as a nation, was to be His witnesses to the world! God appeared to them (e.g., burning bush, the tabernacle, etc.). They got

His laws, His promises and were chosen to worship Him. Paul correctly states it's a special privilege to be a part of the Jewish nation!

Then Paul makes the point that not everyone who was a descendant of Abraham was saved. He gives a classic example of Abraham's two grandsons (twins). The Bible says, "Jacob I loved, and Esau I hated" (Malachi 1:2), the last book of the Old Testament. So how did God decide who He loves before those 2 boys were born? We are back to the classic idea that God knows all things. He knew it was Esau (who became the leader of the Edomites, which is part of Jordan today). The joke to me is if God can justify Esau's brother Jacob, there's hope for the rest of us! Study Jacob's life in Genesis to get that reference!

The next question to ponder is, "If God chooses who He chooses, how is that fair to us? Why will we be judged if God knows all things in advance?" Paul's answer is basically, "Who are we to question God?" It's the old, "He's God, we're not, deal with it!" I also argue God judges us so that we will know why it is we're saved or condemned. I call this the is, "What have you done with the knowledge that He exists or the knowledge we could have acquired in our lifetime?" I believe God will judge all of us fairly and then we must accept He's in charge and that's that!

It leads to another question, if God choose the Jewish nation, why did He push the "Pause Button" as to save non-Jewish people? Why have "the church age", before one day in the future focusing once again on the Jewish nation? (Jesus wants/needs an Israel to rule the world from!) So why not just sky write, "Anybody who wants salvation, keep these laws?" The answer, of course, is no one can keep the law which is why Paul correctly teaches about salvation by faith alone! He quotes two versus from the Old Testament. (Remember the New wasn't written yet and Paul is dealing with Jewish arguments.)

As I stated earlier, (I realize chapter numbers were not added till roughly the time of the printing press) Romans 9 focuses on Israel "Pre-Jesus", Romans 10 focuses on Israel "in the church age" and Romans 11 focuses on Israel after the Second Coming. Keep in mind Romans 9's an incomplete argument as to the salvation of Jewish versus non-Jewish people! Best to see Romans 9 to 11 as a single "unit"!

Paul goes on to point out some Jewish people are saved despite the fact Israel as a nation rejected Jesus by stating in effect, he and the apostles are Jewish. It's the age-old argument that many are called but it is only a smaller percentage who are saved! Paul makes the point that unless some were saved, "Israel" as an entity would be as dead as Sodom and Gomorrah. To this day, nobody knows the exact locations of those two places that God destroyed! This also leads to the question, why did He create people who will spend eternity in hell? The answer comes back to things God can't do, which is to violate our free will! Remember that Romans is in effect is a book of theology, that answers many of the questions we wonder about when it comes to our relationship with God!

Paul ends Chapter 9 by quoting Isaiah. (It's a loose translation of Isaiah 8:14). His point is Israel as an entity tried to please God by obeying His commandments as much as possible. It's the old, "Look God, my good works outweigh by bad mistakes"! As most of us know, that's never worked because God is a perfect being and of course, none of us are perfect, that is why God Himself had to pay the price for all of our sins. Yes, I know that's old news to us, but Paul is in the middle of a three-chapter illustration of the fact God is incapable of going back on His unconditional promises! So just as God can't undo all of unconditional promises to the nation of Israel, then we Christians can trust that no matter how badly is our sin issues we may mess up our witness for Him, but never our salvation. That is the key underlying point of this chapter.

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that one, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff, and again I'm grateful for all of you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!

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