

Lesson 13 ~ Romans 9:1-24

NIV

Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit— **2** I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, **4** the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. **5** Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. **7** Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." **8** In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. **9** For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." **10** Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. **11** Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: **12** not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." **13** Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! **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." **16** It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. **17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." **18** Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" **20** But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" **21** Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? **23** What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— **24** even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

NIV

Romans 9:1 In the presence of Christ, I speak with utter truthfulness—I do not lie—and my conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm that what I am saying is true. **2** My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief **3** for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ! —if that would save them. **4** They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's special children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave his law to them. They have the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. **5** Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

6 Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to the Jews? No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew! **7** Just the fact that they are descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. **8** This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. It is the children of the promise who are considered to be Abraham's children. **9** For God had promised, "Next year I will return, and Sarah will have a son." **10** This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he grew up, he married Rebekah, who gave birth to twins. **11** But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message proves that God chooses according to his own plan, **12** not according to our good or bad works.) She was told, "The descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son." **13** In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau." **14** What can we say? Was God being unfair? Of course not! **15** For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." **16** So receiving God's promise is not up to us. We can't get it by choosing it or working hard for it. God will show mercy to anyone he chooses. **17** For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you, and so that my fame might spread throughout the earth." **18** So you see, God shows mercy to some just because he wants to, and he chooses to make some people refuse to listen. **19** Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not listening? Haven't they simply done what he made them do?" **20** No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to criticize God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "Why have you made me like this?" **21** When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? **22** God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction. **23** He also has the right to pour out the riches of his glory upon those he prepared to be the objects of his mercy— **24** even upon us, whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

The Message

Romans 9:1 At the same time, you need to know that I carry with me at all times a huge sorrow. **2** It's an enormous pain deep within me, and I'm never free of it. I'm not exaggerating—Christ and the Holy Spirit are my witnesses. It's the Israelites . . . **3** If there were any way I could be cursed by the Messiah so they could be blessed by him, I'd do it in a minute. They're my family. **4** I grew up with them. They had everything going for them—family, glory, covenants, revelation, worship, promises, **5** to say nothing of being the race that produced the Messiah, the Christ, who is God over everything, always. Oh, yes! **6** Don't suppose for a moment, though, that God's Word has malfunctioned in some way or other. The problem goes back a long way. From the outset, not all Israelites of the flesh were Israelites of the spirit. **7** It wasn't Abraham's sperm that gave identity here, but God's *promise*. Remember how it was put: "Your family will be defined by Isaac"? **8** That means that Israelite identity was never racially determined by sexual transmission, but it was *God* determined by promise. **9** Remember that promise, "When I come back next year at this time, Sarah will have a son"? **10** And that's not the only time. To Rebecca, also, a promise was made that took priority over genetics. When she became pregnant by our one-of-a-kind ancestor, Isaac, **11** and her babies were still innocent in the womb—incapable of good or bad—she received a special assurance from God. What God did in this case made it perfectly plain that his purpose is not a hit-or-miss thing dependent on what we do or don't do, but a sure thing determined by his decision, flowing steadily from his initiative. **12** God told Rebecca, "The firstborn of your twins will take second place." **13** Later that was turned into a stark epigram: "I loved Jacob; I hated Esau."
14 Is that grounds for complaining that God is unfair? Not so fast, please. **15** God told Moses, "*I'm* in charge of mercy. *I'm* in charge of compassion." **16** Compassion doesn't originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God's mercy. **17** The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, "I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power." **18** All we're saying is that God has the first word, initiating the action in which we play our part for good or ill.
19 Are you going to object, "So how can God blame us for anything since he's in charge of everything? If the big decisions are already made, what say do we have in it?"
20 Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question? Clay doesn't talk back to the fingers that mold it, saying, "Why did you shape me like this?" **21** Isn't it obvious that a potter has a perfect right to shape one lump of clay into a vase for holding flowers and another into a pot for cooking beans? **22** If God needs one style of pottery especially designed to show his angry displeasure **23** and another style carefully crafted to show his glorious goodness, isn't that all right? **24** Either or both happens to Jews, but it also happens to the other people.