

# Giving Thanks for God's Mercy

## Romans 9:25-29

This is the time of year when we reflect on God's mercies and give thanks to him. In Romans 9:25-29, Paul gives reasons why we should be grateful to God for saving us. Let me ask you as we begin this morning, is your heart full of rejoicing and gratitude this morning? Remember the good news that we have learned from the scriptures here in the book of Romans. In His amazing grace God has set His love on you, had mercy on you, and saved you from sin and judgment by faith in His Son Jesus Christ who paid the penalty of death for your sin.

Does that cause your heart to overflow with thanksgiving to God who saved you? Does the fact that you were a child of wrath who has now been adopted as a child of God cause you to ask in joy and amazement, "Why me?"

Or has the gospel of Jesus Christ become ho-hum to you? Some of us who have been saved for a long time and have become accustomed to God's grace can begin to take it for granted. When our salvation becomes commonplace we forget to be thankful to God.

Has this happened to you? Have you begun to grumble about life's trials, forgetting that God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for you and that along with Him He will graciously give you all things that you need (Rom. 8:32).

Have you thought that God owes you something because of your faith or your good works, forgetting that everything we are and everything we have is a gift from God in His great mercy? Are you discontent because you think that God should bless you more with the things of this world?

Is your heart indifferent to those who are lost, (Rom. 9:3; 10:1), forgetting that those without Christ are under God's wrath and headed for judgment (Eph. 2:12)?

How thankful are you today?

In Romans 9 today Paul reminds us how God has shown us mercy by calling us to be His people and saving us by faith in Jesus Christ. We did not deserve it, nor could we earn it. God did it for us in His mercy.

Remember that here in chapter 9 Paul is responding to the problem of the unbelief of the Jews. The issue is: If God's promises to save His chosen people are good, then why are most of the Jews rejecting Christ? In answering this problem Paul has shown that God's word of promise has not failed, because He never promised to save all Israel, as he wrote in Romans 9:6, **"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 promises were not to all of Abraham's physical descendants, but only to a select few. He illustrated this principle showing how God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, and Jacob inherited the promise, not Esau. Paul knew that his teaching about God's choosing some but not all would raise questions. So in Romans 9:14-23, he dealt with these anticipated objections. He asks, Isn't God unfair or unjust (9:14)? And he answers

**“Certainly not!”** Because all deserve God’s judgment, God is free to show mercy to whomever He wishes and to harden whomever He wishes (9:15-16).

Since God chooses this way, Paul then asks, How can God blame us? The answer is that because we all have sinned, none of us has the right to blame God for judging us (9:19). God has the right to use the sinful clay for His glory, whether as “vessels of wrath” or as “vessels of mercy” (9:20-23). God does it this to **“make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy,”** against the backdrop of both show His wrath and power in His patience with the vessels of wrath (9:23).

Who are these “vessels of mercy”? He tells us in verse 24: **“even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.”** That is Paul’s theme statement for 9:25-29 where we see that in fulfillment of His word, God in mercy is calling to Himself a people from the Jews and the Gentiles.

Paul is showing that God’s promise to save His chosen people has not failed, because God has prepared vessels of mercy for glory not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles, as His prophets predicted. So we can trust God to keep His word and we can be thankful for God’s mercy to us.

Listen to this passage as I read from Romans 9:22-29,

**22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,**

**23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,**

**24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?**

**25 As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved."**

**26 "And it shall come to pass 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 also cries out concerning Israel: , Isaiah 10:23 "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.**

**28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth."**

**29 And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."**

### **I. Give thanks for God’s inclusive mercy (Romans 9:25-26)**

To prove the faithfulness of God’s Word, Paul turns to the Old Testament prophecy of Hosea, showing that Hosea had prophesied the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul cites from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to show that God long before had promised to make those who were “not God’s people” “God’s people.” Paul uses this text in his argument to

show that God promised in the Old Testament to save some of the Gentiles and not just Jews.

#### A. The Jewish connection (Romans 9:25-26)

Paul means much more than this when he cites from Hosea's prophecy. In their original setting, Hosea's words were not spoken to Gentiles. Neither were they intended to inform the Jews that God was soon going to save many from among the Gentiles. This is clearly taught elsewhere.

Hosea's prophecy was written to Israel. The nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms after the reign of Solomon, during the reign of his son Rehoboam.<sup>245</sup> Ten tribes rebelled against Rehoboam and followed Jeroboam, becoming known as the northern kingdom of Israel. The other tribes followed Rehoboam as their king and became known as the southern kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital. The northern kingdom of Israel was disobedient to God, and her judgment was to be carried off by the Assyrians. These Israelites were carried off and dispersed among the nations, not returning to the land of Israel. The Jews of Judah, the southern kingdom, were later taken captive by the Babylonians, and a remnant of them returned to their land to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The ten tribes of Israel were dispersed, virtually lost or assimilated into the heathen nations where they were taken as captives.

Hosea's task was to expose Israel's sin and to warn this northern kingdom of the judgment of God about to come upon them. He was to inform Israel that because of her sin, God was going to disown her for a time and deal with her as though she were not His people. God dramatically illustrated this through the prophet Hosea. Hosea was instructed to marry a harlot. Although Gomer married Hosea, she continued to live as a harlot and bore "children of harlotry" (1:2). Because of her harlotry, no one could really know who the father of her children were. Jezreel, the name given the first son, meant, "God will scatter." This child was a warning of the impending captivity of Israel. The second child, a daughter, was named, "Lo-ruhamah," meaning "no compassion." God was not going to have compassion on Israel when He sent the Assyrians to devour Israel as His chastening rod. The third child was a son named "Lo-ammi," meaning "not My people." It was as though Hosea was saying, "This son is no child of mine!" So too Israel was no longer God's "son." Her sonship was taken away. Israel would be dealt with as though she was no longer God's chosen.

If chapter 1 of Hosea has a message of doom, chapter 2 follows with a word of hope. After a time of chastening, God promised to restore Israel to a place of blessing. Those who were shown "no compassion" would later receive compassion, and those who were declared, "not My people," would be called, "My people" (2:1).

Those who were "not God's people" would become "His people." Those who were called, "not My people" and who would later be called, "My people," were Israelites, not Gentiles. But in the process of divine judgment, the Israelites were so absorbed into the Gentile nations that they were considered "lost"—the "lost tribes" of Israel. These Israelites were far more than figurative Gentiles; they were literally Gentiles because of their sin and the judgment God brought upon them.

And yet there was hope for these rebellious and sinful Israelites. Though they would become Gentiles, they were still promised restoration to God's favor and blessings. These "non-Israelites" were to become, once again, the people of God. What a word of hope for Israel!

#### B. The Gentile connection (Romans 9:25-26)

Paul simply took the principle underlying God's dealings with Israel and applied it to the Gentiles. If God could declare heathen Israelites to be Gentiles and then later declare them to be His people, He could do the same for Gentiles. God had promised to make "non-Israelites" into "Israelites."

The Gentiles were "not loved" and "not my people" by nature. Think about this, for thousands of years, the Lord was mainly concerned with the Jews. They were God's people and the Gentiles were not. Does this mean that the Lord did not care about the Gentiles? No, God's plan was to reach out to them so that they would be loved as well. In the NT age, when the church goes into all the world, the gospel message reaches Jew and Gentile alike, and the words of Hosea take on a new and expanded meaning. Gentiles who have never had this status as being the people of God may not realize what a great promise this is. To be "God's people" means to come into a special family relationship with him.

Because of gospel, all kinds of people can be members of God's people. Every individual who trusts in Jesus Christ, no matter what their background can become a child of God.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:11-13:

**11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--**

**12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

**13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

Peter expresses this same idea as he writes in 1 Peter 2 using the covenant language that God once spoke to Israel as he writes to both Jews and Gentiles in the church:

**9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

**10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**

#### II. Give thanks for God's exclusive plan (Rom. 9:27-29)

God redeems a remnant from Israel. Not only will Gentiles become full members of God's family, many Jews will be left out. Paul is reminding those with a Jewish background that they might not make it in, and they better repent quickly if they want to be part of the remnant because God is carrying out His sentence with "speed and finality."

So Paul now turns from Hosea's prophecy to the prophecy of Isaiah. Hosea's prophecy was addressed to the northern kingdom of Israel concerning their coming captivity at the hands of the Assyrians. Isaiah's prophecy is directed to the Jews in the southern kingdom of Judah concerning their coming captivity at the hands of the Babylonians. Though the Jews of Judah were many (like the "sand of the sea," Isaiah 10:22), the judgment of God would reduce their numbers to but a small remnant. Only a remnant would return to their land.

This remnant was due to the grace of God and to His faithfulness in keeping His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jews of Judah were judged by God for their sin and rebellion against Him, just as the Israelites of the northern kingdom had been. If God had dealt with the Jews of Judah as their sins deserved, there would be none left; there would be no remnant. Paul quotes Isaiah who compares Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah. Judah's sin was like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Isaiah 1:7-10). If God had dealt with Judah as He dealt with Sodom, there would be no one left. But God preserved a remnant so that His promised blessings might be poured out on the Jews in the future.

Paul was heartbroken that so few Jews had trusted in Jesus as the Messiah. But the good news is that there were some who believed. Even today, there is a remnant of believing Jews left so that God's purposes and promises will be fulfilled. Where there is a remnant, there is hope. God promised to preserve a remnant, and those in Paul's day could rejoice that there was still a remnant in their own day. Divine discipline reduced Israel's numbers considerably. Divine grace preserved some so that God's promises are sure.

To come back to my opening question, "Does the gospel, the good news that God saved you from sin and judgment by His great love and mercy, cause your heart to rejoice and your soul to be flooded with gratitude?"