

Monday 8/28

Related Verses**Rom. 9:4-8, 11-16**

4 Who are Israelites, whose are the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service and the promises;

5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

6 But it is not as though the word of God has fallen away, for not all who are out of Israel are Israel;

7 Neither is it that because they are the seed of Abraham, they are all children; but, "In Isaac shall your seed be called,"

8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are accounted as the seed.

11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),

12 It was said to her, "The greater shall serve the less";

13 As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

14 What then shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? Absolutely not!

15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Related Reading

We have covered Romans 1 through 8. We may consider chapters nine through eleven as a parenthesis and chapter twelve as a continuation of chapter eight. In the sense of the life process or life practice it is correct to say this; however, I do not think that in Paul's concept these chapters were parenthetical, for in them are some elements which are a continuation between chapters one through eight and twelve through sixteen. Therefore, these three chapters, in a

sense, are a parenthesis, but, in another sense, they form a continuation between Romans 8 and 12.

God's selection is our destiny. Our eternal destiny has been fully established by God's selection. This selection and destiny are of the very God who calls, not of those who work. Our selection is absolutely of God who calls. In order to grasp this point we need to read 9:1-13.

Verse 5 says, "Whose are the fathers, and out of whom according to flesh is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." The fathers were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. Also, according to His human nature, Christ came out of the children of Israel. Paul says that Christ is "over all, God blessed forever." When Paul came to this point in his writing, he was so filled with the glorious Person of Christ that he poured out what was in his heart—"Christ is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." We all have to be deeply impressed with and fully realize and appreciate the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is the very God who is over all and blessed forever. Though He came out of the Jewish race in flesh, He is the very infinite God. Thus, Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is born...and his name shall be called...The mighty God." We praise Him for His deity and we worship Him as the very God forever.

"Not, however, as though the word of God has come to naught. For not all are Israel who are out of Israel" (v. 6). In verse 3, Paul prayed out of his desire for his kinsmen to be saved. As he came to verse 6 he spoke of God's economy. In verse 3 he uttered a prayer out of his desperation, even willing to be "a curse, separated from Christ." In verse 6 he said, "Not all are Israel who are out of Israel." God's economy is that not all who are out of Israel, that is, all who are born of Israel, are the true Israel. All Jews have been born of Israel, but not all of them have been selected by God. All of them are of the Jewish religion, but not all are saved even though outwardly they have all the good things, including Christ, promised by God in His Holy Word.

"Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but, In Isaac shall your seed be called" (v. 7). In verses 6 and 7 Paul is in the light of God's economy and sees things clearly. Only that part of Abraham's seed which is in Isaac is called. Besides Isaac, Abraham had another son named Ishmael. Though Ishmael was born of Abraham, neither he nor his descendants, the Arabs, have been selected by God. They are the children of the flesh and cannot be reckoned as the children of God. Only Isaac and a part of his descendants are selected by God and reckoned as the children of God.

Verse 8 continues, "That is, Those who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as the seed." According to God's economy, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise who are reckoned as the seed. Not all the seed of Abraham are the children of God. The natural birth is inadequate to make them children of God; they need to be born again (John 3:7). The phrase "children of the promise" denotes the second birth, for it is only by the second birth that they can be the children of the promise and thus be reckoned as the seed.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (vv. 14-15). When God says, "I will," we should not argue with Him. We are not God and we do not have His sovereignty. We may reason with Him, asking, "Why do you love Jacob and hate Esau?" God may reply, "Don't argue with Me. I will to do it. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Everything depends on My will."

What is the difference between mercy and compassion? It is difficult to distinguish. Although compassion is very close to mercy, I would say that compassion is deeper, finer, and richer than mercy. Putting compassion together with mercy in this verse strengthens the fact that God is merciful.

“So then, it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God, the One Who shows mercy” (v. 16). Mercy goes farther than grace. If when I am in a good condition and my standing matches yours you give me a gift, that is grace. However, when I am in a poor condition and my standing is far removed from yours and you give me something, that is mercy. If I come to you as your dear friend and you give me a Bible as a gift, that is grace. However, if I am a poor unclean beggar, unable to do anything for myself and you give me ten dollars, that is not grace, it is mercy. Thus, mercy reaches farther than grace. Grace only extends to a situation that corresponds to it, but mercy goes much farther, reaching into a situation that is poor and unworthy of grace. According to our natural condition, we were far removed from God, totally unworthy of His grace. We were only eligible to receive His mercy. Thus, 9:15 does not say, “I will have grace on whom I will have grace.” No, it says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” You may think that there was nothing good about Jacob, that he was altogether a subtle, crafty person, and that Esau was much better than he. You are right. That is how God has shown His mercy. Jacob was pitiful, but God had mercy on him. God’s mercy does not depend upon man’s good condition; rather it is shown in man’s pitiful condition. It reaches beyond His grace.

It is God’s mercy that has reached all of us. None of us was in a condition that corresponded to His grace. We were so poor and so pitiful that there was the need for God’s mercy to bridge the gap between us and God. It was God’s mercy that brought us into His grace. How we need to realize this and worship God for His mercy! Even now, after being saved and having participated in the riches of His life, we still, in some ways, are in a condition that needs God’s mercy to bridge the gap. This is the reason that Hebrews 4:16 says that firstly we need to obtain mercy and then we can find grace for timely help. Oh, how much we need His mercy! We must treasure God’s mercy as much as we appreciate His grace. It is always God’s mercy that qualifies us to participate in His grace.

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 22)*

**Tuesday 8/29**

### Related Verses

#### **Rom. 9:20-24, 29-33**

**20** But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?

**21** Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?

**22** And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,

**23** In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

**24** Even us, whom He has also called, not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?

**29** And as Isaiah has previously said, "Unless the Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah."

**30** What then shall we say? That the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have laid hold of righteousness, but a righteousness which is out of faith;

**31** But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not attain to that law.

**32** Why? Because they pursued it not out of faith, but as it were out of works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling,

**33** As it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense, and he who believes on Him shall not be put to shame."

#### **Rom. 10:1-3**

**1** Brothers, the good pleasure of my heart and my petition to God for them is for their salvation.

**2** For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to full knowledge;

**3** For because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own righteousness, they were not subject to the righteousness of God.

### Related Reading

Paul continues, “You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His purpose? But, O man, who are you that replies against God?” We all have to realize who we are. We are God’s creatures, and He is our Creator. As His creatures we should not say anything to Him, the Creator. So, Paul asks, “Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me thus? Or has not the potter authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?” (vv. 19-21). God is the potter, and we are pieces of clay. As the potter, God has authority over the clay. If He wills, He can make one vessel to honor and another vessel to dishonor. It does not depend on our choice—it depends on His sovereignty.

Romans 9:21 discloses God’s purpose in creating man. This verse is unique in its revelation of God’s purpose in the creation of man. Without this verse it would be difficult for us to realize that God’s purpose in creating man was to make him His vessel to contain Him. We all must thoroughly understand that we are God’s containers and that God is our content. Second Corinthians 4:7 says that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” We are earthen vessels, and God is the treasure and the content. God has sovereignly created us to be His containers according to His predestination.

“And what if He should make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has also called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the nations?” (vv. 23-24). All depends upon God’s authority. God has the authority to make us, whom He has selected and called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles, vessels of mercy to contain Him, that the riches of His glory may be made known, that is, manifested. According to His sovereign authority, He before prepared us unto this glory. We were predestinated by His sovereignty to be His containers, vessels of honor

to express what He is in glory. That is not only a matter of His mercy, but also of His sovereignty.

God's selection has a goal—to have many vessels to contain God and to express Him eternally. So many of us have missed the mark of God's goal, thinking that it was simply to show His love in saving us. Yes, He loves us. However, His love is not only shown to save us, but to make us His vessels. God created us in such a way that we are able to take Him into us and contain Him as our life and life supply, to the end that we be one with Him to express what He is and that He be glorified in us and with us. This is the eternal goal of God's selection. It is also our eternal destiny.

This portion of the Word also unfolds the climax of our usefulness to God, which is not to be used by Him as servants, priests, and kings, but as vessels to contain Him and express Him. If we are to be used as God's vessels, surely He has to be one with us. We are His container and His expression; He is our content and our life. He lives in us that we may live by Him. He and we, we and He, eventually will be one both in life and in nature. This is the goal of His selection according to His sovereignty. It is also our destiny according to His selection, a destiny which will be fully revealed in the New Jerusalem.

God's selection is also by the righteousness of faith. "What shall we say then? That the nations who did not pursue righteousness have attained righteousness, but righteousness which is out of faith" (v. 30). The nations, meaning the Gentiles, have obtained righteousness, although they did not pursue it. This righteousness is not the righteousness of the law, but that which is out of faith. The nations have shared in God's selection by the righteousness of God which is out of faith.

"But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because it was not out of faith, but as it were out of works; they stumbled at the Stone of stumbling, as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a Stone of stumbling, a Rock of offense, and he who believes on Him shall not be put to shame" (vv. 31-33). We can never arrive at righteousness by

pursuing the law of righteousness. The Israelites sought to establish their own righteousness, but stumbled at the "Stone of stumbling," which is Christ, the "Rock of offense." Nevertheless, "he who believes on Him shall not be put to shame."

In this connection we also need to read the first three verses of chapter ten. "Brothers, the delight of my heart and my supplication to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to full knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, did not submit to the righteousness of God." It is possible to be exceedingly zealous for God while lacking the proper knowledge of His way. The Jews have missed and continue to miss the mark of God's selection because they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, have attempted to establish their own righteousness by trying to keep the law and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, which is Christ Himself. Hence, they have missed God's salvation. Any attempt to keep the law or to do good to please God, being man's efforts to establish his own righteousness, will cause people to miss the way of God's salvation.

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 22)*

**Wednesday 8/30**

### Related Verses

#### **Rom. 10:4-13**

**4** For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes.

**5** For Moses writes concerning the righteousness which is out of the law: "The man who does them shall live by them."

**6** But the righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?" that is, to bring Christ down;

**7** Or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.

**8** But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of the faith which we proclaim,

**9** That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

**10** For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.

**11** For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes on Him shall not be put to shame."

**12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

**13** For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

### Related Reading

Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes." Christ is the end of the law. This means that He has completed and terminated the law. He came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17). By fulfilling the law He ended and terminated the law. The result of Christ's terminating the law is that God's righteousness is given to everyone who believes in Christ. When He died on the cross, Christ completed and terminated the law. The law ended in Him. Since the law was terminated on the cross of Christ, we should be under it no longer. We may simply receive God's righteousness by believing in Christ.

The Jews treasured the law and tried to keep it that they might establish their own righteousness before God. They did not see that the law had been fully completed and terminated by Christ. If they had seen this, they would have stopped their attempts to keep the law. They would never again have tried to establish their own righteousness before God, but would have taken Christ as their righteousness.

The principle is the same with a great many Christians today. After being saved, they make up their minds to do good to please God. As a result, they spontaneously make regulations for themselves,

regulations which may be considered as their self-made laws, and they endeavor to fulfill them in order that they may be pleasing to God. Like the Jews, they do not see that Christ is the end, the termination of all regulations and that they should take Him as their life that they may live righteously before God. Furthermore, they need to see that the genuine righteousness before God is Christ, the One who has terminated the law that He might be the living righteousness to everyone who believes in Him. Romans 10 unfolds so much of Christ that we may know how to participate in and enjoy Him as our real and living righteousness before God.

We need to read verses 5 through 7. “For Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness which is out of the law shall live in it. But the righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down. Or, Who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from among the dead.” Paul’s writing is very deep. Apparently these verses do not mention the incarnation and resurrection of Christ; actually both are included in this portion. Although Paul did not use the words incarnation and resurrection, he nevertheless had both of them in mind when he wrote this part of Romans. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12 saying, “Do not say in your hearts, Who will ascend into heaven?” He then points out that this means “to bring Christ down” and that this refers to Christ’s incarnation, for Christ came down from the heavens in His incarnation. Furthermore, Paul says that we should not ask, “Who will descend into the abyss?” To “descend into the abyss” means “to bring Christ up from among the dead,” and this refers to Christ’s resurrection. To descend into the abyss means to die and to enter into hades. When Christ died He descended into the abyss, and in resurrection He was brought up from among the dead, that is, out of the abyss. Christ is the One who has passed through incarnation and resurrection. Therefore, we may say that He is the “processed” Christ, Christ incarnated and resurrected.

Christ has passed through a long process from incarnation through resurrection. In this process He accomplished everything that is required by God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory and all that is needed to enable us to partake of Him. He was God incarnated to be a man, and, as a man, He was transfigured through resurrection into the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Now in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit He is so available to us that we may receive Him and take Him in at any time and in any place.

Please pay attention to what Paul says in verse 8. “But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of the faith which we preach.” The resurrected Christ as the living Word is near us, in our mouth and in our heart. In this verse Paul suddenly uses the term “the Word” interchangeably for Christ, indicating thereby that this Word undoubtedly is Christ Himself. Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit is the living Word. This corresponds to the New Testament revelation that the Word is the Spirit.

After being processed through incarnation and resurrection, Christ today is both the Lord sitting on the throne of God in heaven and the life-giving Spirit moving on the earth. Thus, He is near and available to us. He is so near that He is even in our mouth and in our heart. No one can be nearer than this. He is so available that whoever believes in Him with his heart and calls on Him with his mouth will partake of Him. He has accomplished everything and He has passed through every process. He is now moving on earth, ready for and available to anyone who will receive Him.

We need to read verses 9 through 13. “That if you confess with your mouth, Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from among the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth man confesses unto salvation. For the scripture says, All who believe on Him shall not be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the

same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him. For, Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul says that with the heart “man believes unto righteousness.” “Unto” is an equivalent of a Greek preposition which, in many instances, means “resulting in.” Therefore the result of believing with the heart is righteousness, while the result of confessing with the mouth is salvation. If we want to be justified, that is, to have the righteousness of God, we must believe in the Lord Jesus. If we want to be saved, we need to confess the Lord Jesus, that is to call upon Him.

In order to be saved we need to call upon the name of the Lord. However, calling upon His name is not only for salvation; it is also the way in which we receive the riches of Christ. The Lord is rich to all who call upon Him. When we call upon Him, we participate in and enjoy His riches. Do you want to participate in and enjoy the riches of Christ? If you do, do not be silent; open your mouth and call upon Him. In recent years the Lord has revealed very much to us regarding this matter of calling on His name. Even as late as ten years ago we knew little about this. We thank the Lord that He has made us clear. We appreciate Romans 10, especially verse 12. “For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him.” Verse 13 has been used a great deal in gospel preaching. But we also must use it with verse 12, not for gospel preaching, but for filling up all the empty vessels with the riches of the Godhead. If you will open your mouth wide and call upon the Lord, the riches of divinity will be your portion. Now, we have the way to fill the empty vessels. We have a mouth to call on Him that we may be filled with Him, and we have a heart to believe in Him and to retain Him.

The Bible reveals clearly that calling on the Lord is the way to partake of and enjoy the Lord. Deuteronomy 4:7 (ASV) says that the Lord is “nigh unto us whenever we call upon him.” Psalm 145:18 says, “the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him.” Psalm 18:6 and 118:5 say that David called upon the Lord in his distress. In Psalm 50:15 the Lord asks us

to call upon Him in the day of trouble, and in Psalm 86:7 David did it accordingly. Psalm 81:7 says that the children of Israel did the same thing (Exo. 2:23) and that the Lord told them, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (v. 10). Psalm 86:5 says that the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and is plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him. Psalm 116:3-4 says, “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord.” Verse 13 of the same Psalm says, “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” In order to take the cup of salvation, that is, to participate and enjoy the Lord’s salvation, we need to call upon the name of the Lord. Isaiah 12:2-6 tells us that the Lord is our salvation, our strength, and our song, and that we can draw water out of the wells of His salvation with joy. The way to draw water out of the wells of the Lord’s salvation, that is, to enjoy the Lord as our salvation, is to praise Him, to call upon His name, to sing unto Him, and even to cry out and shout. In Isaiah 55:1-6 we find God’s wonderful calling to the people. He calls the thirsty ones to come to the waters, to enjoy the riches of the Lord’s provision, such as wine, milk, and good food, and to delight themselves in fatness. The way to do this is to seek the Lord and to “call upon him while he is near.” Isaiah 64:7 shows us that by calling upon the Lord we can stir up ourselves to take hold of Him.

Lamentations 3:55-57 makes it clear that when we call upon the Lord He draws near to us and that our calling upon Him is our breathing, our cry. By this we can realize that to call upon the Lord is not only to cry to Him, but also to experience a spiritual breathing (Exo. 2:23) in which we breathe out all that is within us, whether it be agony, pain, pressure, etc. Jeremiah did this when he called upon the Lord out of the low dungeon, that is, out of the lowest pit. Whenever we are in a spiritual dungeon or pit, under a certain suppression, we can call on the Lord, breathing out the heaviness within us, and thus be delivered from the lowest pit. This kind of calling on the Lord not only enables us to breathe out the negative things from within us, but also to breathe in the Lord Himself with

all His riches as our strength, enjoyment, comfort, and rest. In this way we partake of the riches of the Lord. Hence, here in Romans 10:12 Paul tells us that “the Lord is rich to all who call upon Him.” Today in resurrection the Lord is ready and available for our participation in Him and He is rich for our enjoyment of Him. We simply need to call on Him all the time. Calling on Him, we partake of and enjoy all His riches.

Calling on the Lord is different from merely praying to Him. The Greek word for “call on” or “call upon” means to invoke a person, to call a person by name. Although it is possible to pray to the Lord silently, calling on the Lord requires that we cry out to Him or address Him audibly. The Hebrew word for “call” in Genesis 4:26 firstly means to “call out to” or to “cry unto.” Isaiah 12:4 and 6 show that to call upon the Lord’s name is to “cry out and shout.” Lamentations 3:55 and 56 reveal the same thing—to call upon the Lord’s name is to “cry” to the Lord. Hence, David said, “I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God” (2 Sam. 22:7). To call upon the Lord is to cry to Him.

In addressing his first epistle to the church at Corinth Paul said, “All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2). This indicates that all the early believers practiced this matter of calling. In his second epistle to Timothy Paul charged him to pursue spiritual things “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2:22). So, we must practice it too. The Old Testament saints called on the Lord daily (Psa. 88:9) and throughout their entire life (Psa. 116:2). How about us? We should practice it more, calling on the Lord “out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22) and with “a pure lip” (Zeph. 3:9, Heb.). If we practice this, we will certainly partake of the Lord’s riches and enjoy them. To call on the Lord is not only for salvation, but also for the enjoyment of the Lord with all His riches.

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 23)*

<b>Thursday 8/31</b>
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### Related Verses

**Rom. 11:2-5, 16-18, 29, 32, 36**

**2** God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage concerning Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

**3** "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars; and I am left alone, and they are seeking my life."

**4** But what does the divine answer say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

**5** In the same way then at the present time also there has come into being a remnant according to the selection of grace.

**16** Now if the dough offered as the firstfruits is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are also.

**17** But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow partaker of the root of fatness of the olive tree,

**18** Do not boast against the branches; but if you boast, remember that it is not you who bear the root, but the root you.

**29** For the gracious gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

**32** For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

**36** Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

### Related Reading

Regardless of how far Christianity has degraded, we believe that among the thousands and even millions of Christians there are a number, a remnant, that have been reserved by God.

I am not speaking proudly, but I consider myself as one whom the Lord has reserved. How do you feel about yourself? A number of times in the past years my thought was the same as Elijah’s. But I praise the

Lord that eventually I discovered that the Lord had reserved a good number to Himself. God has reserved a remnant for His eternal purpose. Do not be disappointed.

In Romans 9 the chosen ones of God are likened to clay and in Romans 11 they are likened to a lump of flour used for making cakes. Which do you think is better? Would you like to be a piece of clay or a piece of dough? Although I prefer to be a piece of dough, it is still good to be clay because clay is used to make vessels of mercy to contain Christ. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 4:7 we are told that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” Furthermore, 2 Timothy 2:20 says, “there are...vessels of gold and of silver...to honor.” We have seen that the clay vessels in Romans 9 are filled by calling on the name of the Lord as revealed in Romans 10. The same is true for the vessels in 2 Timothy 2:20. In verse 22 of that chapter we are told that the seekers of the Lord need to call upon Him out of a pure heart. Therefore, the way in which the vessels of honor are filled is by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Romans 9 shows us that we are pieces of clay made into vessels which contain Christ. This is wonderful. However, I am even happier to be a piece of dough, a part of the lump. Clay has no life, but the lump is a matter of life, being made from fine wheat flour. Although clay is useful in making vessels to contain Christ for the glory of God, the lump is for the satisfaction of God; it is offered to God as food for His satisfaction. A piece of lifeless clay cannot satisfy God. Only in the lump do we have the living element which satisfies God.

While the dough is for God’s satisfaction, the root is for our satisfaction. Romans 11:17 says that we, “being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree.” When we come to the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in our life-study of Genesis, we shall see that they were the root of the fatness of the olive tree. The entire olive tree depends upon their fatness. Praise the Lord that we, the wild

olive tree, have been grafted into God’s cultivated olive tree that we might be fellow-partakers of its root of fatness! This is our enjoyment. God enjoys the dough; we enjoy the root. Both the dough and the root are of the plant life, the life which satisfies God and man. Both the wheat and the olive produce enjoyment and satisfaction for God and man. Praise the Lord! Once again we see how deep a writer was Paul. Nothing in Romans is superficial.

In verse 17 Paul says that we, the Gentiles, “being a wild olive tree, were grafted and became a partaker of the root.” Grafting is a matter of life. For the branch of a wild tree to be grafted into a cultivated tree is for it to receive the life of the cultivated tree. Hence, it is not a matter for us Gentiles to change our religion, but to receive the life of the root, which life is Christ. Many Gentiles have turned from their heathen religions to the Christian religion without ever receiving the life of Christ. They have never been grafted into the olive tree cultivated by God with Christ as life. But we have been grafted in to enjoy the riches of Christ’s life with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Praise the Lord!

At this point Paul lifted up a praise to God, a praise for God’s selection. “O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments and untraceable His paths! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him? Because out of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (vv. 33-36). It seems that in Romans 9 through 11 Paul has given us a map by which we may trace God’s paths. God receives praise and glory in three stages: in the past, for all things have come out of Him; in the present, for all things are through Him; and in the future, for all things will be to Him. All things came into being out of God in the past, all things exist through Him in the present, and all things will be to Him in the future. God’s selection is according to Himself, according to His choice, not according to anything else. All things are of Him, by

Him, and for Him. “To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 24)*

### Friday 9/1

#### Related Verses

#### **Rom. 12:1-8**

**1** I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

**2** And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

**3** For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.

**4** For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

**5** So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

**6** And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

**7** Or service, let us be faithful in that service; or he who teaches, in that teaching;

**8** Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.

#### Related Reading

Why did Paul write the book of Romans? He did not write merely for justification, sanctification, or even for glorification. Romans was written ultimately and consummately for the church life. The consummation of the book of Romans is the church. Praise the Lord that Paul was so strong and rich in the matter of the church that he took five chapters to emphasize it. He took five chapters to cover the church life in a wonderful way. In Romans Paul does

not present the church life in a doctrinal way, but in a very experiential and practical way. As we come to Romans 15 and 16, we shall see that Paul describes and presents the churches in the way of experience and practice, not in the way of doctrine.

If you fail to probe into the depths of Romans 12 through 16 you will consider these five chapters merely to be chapters filled with exhortations and teachings concerning the behavior of Christians. If you think this way, it proves that you still hold a natural concept in understanding this portion of the Bible. We should not understand the Holy Word according to our natural concept. Most of the Christian teachers say that Romans 12 through 16 describes the behavior of believers. They say that after we are saved we need to exhibit good Christian behavior. I must admit that when I conducted a thorough study of Romans more than twenty years ago with almost a thousand people I still clung to this natural concept. In that study I also said that Romans 12 through 16 depicts the behavior of believers. It was not until recent years that, after studying Romans again and again, I said to myself, “Man, how natural you were in understanding the holy, divine revelation.”

Apparently the last five chapters of Romans describe the behavior of Christians. However, what is the main item, the main aspect, of a believer's behavior? It is the church life. The church life, the Body life, is the main structure of a Christian's behavior. After he has been saved a believer's behavior is primarily concerned with the church life. Do you realize that our church life is ninety percent of our living? We have even coined a new word—“churching.” Day after day we are churching. We are churching people. I can testify to you that I am churching day and night. We spend a great deal of time, money, and energy that we may continue churching. We do not care for time, the cost, or the energy—we only care for the church. We are churching all the time. The Apostle Paul held this concept of churching when he wrote the book of Romans. He did not care only for so-called behavior; his main concern was the church life. We need to

practice the processed life, which is unfolded in the section on sanctification in chapters five through eight, in the church life, and for this we need transformation. Therefore, the transformation in life is for the practice of life, and the practice of life is conducted mainly in the church life.

Before we consider 12:1-2 I want to give a definition of transformation. Transformation is a good word. In Greek this word includes the meaning of change, to have a change. Thus, the King James Version rendered this word in 2 Corinthians 3:18 as “changed” instead of “transformed.” However, the King James Version translated the same Greek word as “transformed” in Romans 12:2. To render the Greek as “changed” is very inadequate. Transformation does not merely denote a change; it means that a substance is changed both in nature and in form. In English the words transformed or transformation also mean a change in both nature and form. This type of change is a metabolic change. It is not just an outward change, but a change in inward constitution as well as in external form. This change occurs by the process of metabolism. In the process of metabolism an organic element filled with vitamins comes into our being and produces a chemical change in our organic life. This chemical reaction changes the constitution of our being from one form into another. This is transformation.

Suppose that a person has a very pale complexion and that someone else, wishing to change his colorless complexion, applies some coloring to his skin. This, no doubt, produces an outward change, but it is not an organic change, a change in life. How then can a person truly have a colorful face? By daily absorbing into his body healthy food with the necessary organic elements. Because your body is a living organism, when an organic substance enters into it a chemical compound is formed organically by the process of metabolism. Gradually this inward process will change the coloration of your face. This change is not outward; it is a change from within, a change resulting from the process of metabolism.

According to the Bible, this metabolic change is termed transformation. In the process of transformation the life of Christ is added to our being. When His life, which is organic and filled with vitamins, permeates our being, a spiritual, chemical compound is formed. This changes our constitution both in nature and in form. This is transformation. It is not outward correction or external adjustment. It is absolutely an inward metabolic change in our organic element, a change in life and with life by the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). In the process of transformation the divine element is wrought into us. If we keep in mind this proper understanding of transformation as we approach Romans 12 through 16, we shall realize that this portion of the Word is altogether different from what our natural concept would lead us to believe it is.

To offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is our most reasonable service. The words “present” and “sacrifice” mentioned above indicate that the “reasonable service” is a priestly service. If we have a sober mind and if we intend to be reasonable, fair, and logical, then we certainly must have the church life. People who do not like to have the church life are the most foolish of people. To practice anything other than the church life is foolish, but to give up everything for the church life is logical and reasonable. Nothing is more reasonable than churching. To spend two dollars on a worldly item or amusement is foolish, but to spend two million dollars on the church life is reasonable. If I had a hundred lives, I would give them all for the church life. However, I would not give even the smallest fraction of my life to the worldly things, for to do that would be stupid. What a reasonable service it is to give ourselves to the church life! I can testify that I have been in the Lord's work for more than forty years and that I do not have the slightest regret about it. Whenever I think about the church I am excited. Every time I think about the church life and about my ministry for the church life I am in the heavens. What a reasonable service it is!

When Paul began to speak about the church life, he implored the believers to present their bodies because as human beings nothing is more real and practical than our body. If your body is not in the church life, please do not say how much you yourself are for the church life. In the past years many people have said to me, “Brother, I stand with you. Because the burden of my business is so heavy I cannot be in the church life, but I am one with what you are doing.” Others have said, “I’m too tired to attend the meeting. You go to the meeting and I’ll stay home and pray for you. I can’t go to the meeting physically because I’m so tired, but my heart and spirit will be there with you.” These words sound pleasant but they are a deceit. We must realize that we are in our bodies. Where our bodies are, we are. Suppose that all the saints should say that they are too tired to attend the meeting. What would happen to the meeting? Thus, Paul begged the brothers to present their bodies. If you mean business for the Lord’s purpose, you need to present your body.

It is good for you to come to the meeting even if you sleep through most of it. It is better to come to a meeting and sleep than not to come at all. You may attend a meeting and sleep through it all except for the last few minutes. Perhaps during the last five minutes you will be inspired and receive a great help. I am familiar with a number of cases in which this has happened.

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 25)*

**Saturday 9/2**

### Related Verses

#### **Rom. 12:9-18**

**9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

**10** Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.

**11** Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

**12** Rejoice in hope; endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer.

**13** Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.

**14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

**15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

**16** Be of the same mind toward one another, not setting your mind on the high things but going along with the lowly; do not be wise in yourselves.

**17** Repay no one evil for evil; take forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men.

**18** If possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with all men.

### Related Reading

“For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another” (vv. 4-5). We need to realize that the many members of the one Body have different functions. Two young sisters may be very close to one another in age, but still have different functions. What one sister can do the other sister cannot do. If we would all realize this, we would not think so highly of ourselves, but would respect others. I hope that so many of the young brothers could say to one another, “Brother, what I can do, you cannot do, and what you can do, I cannot do.” We all have different functions.

The different functions of the members of the Body are illustrated by the human face. Look at your face: you have eyes, ears, a nose, and lips. The eye may say to Brother Nose, “Do you know that I cannot do what you can do and that you cannot do what I can do?” Brother Nose would reply, “Yes, Brother Eye. That is wonderful. And we all must understand that neither of us can do what Brother Ear can do.” Then perhaps Brother Ear would respond, “Brothers, you are right. But Brother Lips can do what none of us are able to do.” The face illustrates what is true of the entire body: we have many members and each has a different function. This is the way it should be in the church life. As I see the members functioning in the meetings, I am very happy because they can do what I

cannot do. Of course, it is also true that I can do what they cannot do.

Verse 5 says, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members of one another.” This means that though we are many yet we are one Body. We are many members, not many separate units. As members, we have to coordinate with each other that we may be a living, functioning Body. If we do not cooperate with each other, then we are detached members, and the Body life cannot be practically realized. When it says in verse 5 that we “are severally members one of another,” the word “severally” does not mean separately; it means differently. It means that you are one kind of member and that I am another. Perhaps you are a nose, I am an eye, and another sister is an ear. Hence, we are severally members one of another. This needs a full cooperation.

We need to read verses 6 through 8. “And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them accordingly: whether prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; or service, in the service; or he who teaches, in teaching; or he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.” In verse 6 Paul says that we have “gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” What is grace? As we saw in a previous message, grace is simply God in Christ as our enjoyment. When this grace, this divine element, which is the divine life, comes into our being, it brings with it certain skills and abilities which are the gifts. The gifts, the spiritual abilities, come from the divine element which we have enjoyed. As you enjoy God, receiving and assimilating His divine element into your being, out of this divine element proceeds some gift, skill, or ability. These gifts differ according to the divine element which we have enjoyed and which we have assimilated into our being. The grace given to us refers to the grace we have enjoyed and assimilated. Therefore, the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 are the gifts of grace in life.



I want to speak a little more about the gifts that proceed out of the growth of life. Before Paul talked about the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, he spoke strongly about the growth in life in chapter three. Paul said to the Corinthians, “Ye are God’s farm, ye are God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). As we have pointed out many times in the past, the farm grows the materials for the building. All the materials that are necessary for the building of God’s house are the product of the growth on the farm. Then Paul said that as a wise masterbuilder he laid the foundation and that we all need to be careful how we build thereupon (1 Cor. 3:10). We should build with gold, silver, and precious stones and not with wood, hay, and stubble (v. 12). If you put together all these verses from 1 Corinthians 3, you will see that Paul was telling the Corinthians the proper way to build up the church in their locality. The proper way of building the church is not by miraculous gifts, but by the genuine growth in life which will transform the saints into precious materials for God’s temple. Furthermore, Paul said that he fed and planted them and that Apollos watered them (1 Cor. 3:2-6). The feeding, planting, and watering are all for the growth, the growth which will cultivate the talents and gifts that are useful in building up the house of God with the proper transformed materials.

Consider a newborn child. At the time of birth the child has every necessary organ. However, few of the organs can function at the time of birth because the child lacks the necessary measure of growth in life. The more the mother feeds her child, the more the child grows. After a certain length of time, the child will be able to walk and after another period of time, he will be able to speak. Eventually, he will be fully grown, and all of his talents will have been completely cultivated for practical use. When he has matured, he will have the required skills, and these skills are the gifts that come out of the growth in life. This is what Paul meant by gifts in Romans 12.

In verse 15 Paul says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” We must be transformed before we can rejoice and weep with others. Some people were born in such a way that they

are unable to weep or to rejoice. Regardless of how happy or joyful you are, they remain expressionless, resembling the statue of Mary at the entrance of a Catholic church, which never changes its expression. Some brothers and sisters are like this. They do not know how to rejoice or to weep with others; they seem to be stones without human affection. However, the church life needs emotional people. We all must be properly emotional and full of expression. I would like to have a face that can express all my emotions properly and adequately. We cannot put together people with stone faces and call it the church life; we must be living stones, stones full of affection. We must learn to rejoice and to weep with others.

*(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, msg. 26, 27)*

**Lord's Day 9/3****Related Verses****Gen. 4:26**

26 And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.

**Psa. 50:15**

15 And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.

**Psa 81:7, 10**

7 You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you from the secret place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah

10 I am Jehovah your God, Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

**Psa 86:5**

5 For You, O Lord, are good and ready to forgive And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

**Psa 116:12-13**

12 What shall I return to Jehovah For all His benefits toward me?

13 I will take up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of Jehovah.

**Psa 145:18**

18 Jehovah is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

**Isa. 12:3-4**

3 Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing From the springs of salvation,

4 And you will say in that day, Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name! Make His deeds known among the peoples; Remind them that His name is exalted.

**Isa 55:6**

6 Seek Jehovah while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

**Lam. 3:55-56**

55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, From the lowest pit.

56 You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.

**Acts 2:21**

21 And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

**Churchwide Truth Pursuit of Romans****Level 1—Romans Sequential Study**

Scripture: Rom. 4:1-25

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msgs. 37-38

**Level 2—Romans Topical Study**

Crucial Point: The Love of Our "Abba Father"

Scripture: Rom. 8:1-39

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msg. 20

Supplemental Reading: None

Hymn: 30

For study questions and additional materials, please visit the church website at [churchinnyc.org/bible-study](http://churchinnyc.org/bible-study)

**Hymns, #839.**

1 Lord, Thou art a potter skilled  
And a glorious builder too,  
Molding for Thy vessel great,  
Building with Thy house in view.  
I am both a man of clay  
And a new-made living stone,  
That Thy vessel I may be  
And the temple Thou wouldst own.

2 Though of clay Thou madest us,  
Thou wouldst have us be transformed;  
With Thy life as purest gold,  
Unto precious stones conformed.  
We shall, through Thy building work,  
Then become Thy loving Bride,  
In one Body joined to Thee,  
That Thy heart be satisfied.

3 What Thy heart desires and loves  
Are not precious stones alone,  
But together these to build  
For Thy glory, for Thy home.  
Thou, the all-inclusive Christ,  
Dost a builded Church require,  
That Thy glorious riches may  
Radiate their light entire.

4 Not the person spiritual  
In an individual way,  
But the corporate life expressed  
Will Thy heart's desire display.  
Members separate and detached  
Ne'er express Thee perfectly,  
But Thy Body tempered, built,  
Ever shall Thy fulness be.

5 Build me, Lord, with other saints,  
Independence ne'er allow,  
But according to Thy plan  
Fitly frame and join me now.  
In experience not my boast,  
Nor in gifts would be my pride;  
For Thy building I give all,  
That Thou may be glorified.