

Romans
Faith, Family, and Fullness
Part 8
Romans 9

Sanctification

- Set apart wholly for God and His purposes.
- Filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What the sanctified life looks like.

1. Anything for the lost.
 - *Romans 9:1-6*

2. Everything for God.
 - *Romans 9:7-29*

3. Always only Jesus.
 - *Romans 9:30-33*



Romans: Faith, Family, Fullness Part 8: Romans 9¹

We are just about in the middle of our summer long series exploring the Bible letter to the Romans, written to the church in Rome from the Apostle Paul. Let me just remind you of the context of his letter. Unlike the other churches that Paul wrote letters to, he had not yet been to the church in Rome, but he had always sensed that God was calling him to go there and help grow the church. He also wanted to use it as a sort of launching pad to Spain and plant churches there. The church in Rome had begun with Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, but then, as God intended, the Good News message of God's love through Christ spread to the Gentiles (the non-Jews), who also were becoming Christian. Then the emperor drove all the Jews out of Rome, and the church was left with only non-Jewish Christians. In a few years, the Jews were allowed back – including the Jewish Christians – but when they returned, they found that the church was no longer adhering to the rules and rituals of the Jews; things like what meat to avoid, how to wash their hands, circumcision...all kinds of things, and conflict grew. So in anticipation of going there, Paul writes this letter in order to get them to stop their divisions, to embrace the grace that each have received from God that they could never get from Jewish laws but that was free to all who believed: that grace is God's unconditional love, his forgiveness for their sins because of Christ's death and resurrection, and the transformation of heart that was theirs through the Holy Spirit who would make them holy. Trying to obey the Jewish laws would never make them sanctified, or holy, or like Jesus. Paradoxically, it was only by humbly submitting to the Spirit of God and not the law, that they would actually *fulfill* what the law always intended: which was a people who are a multi-cultural, united family who love God and love others.

So we are justified by faith, and we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification has always been God's plan for us. It is the abundant life that Jesus talked so much about, and it is the point of Romans.

Remember our definition of what the Bible calls...

Sanctification.

¹ Resources:

NT Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004)

William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, 3rd ed. fully rev. & updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002)

William M. Greathouse and George Lyons, *Romans 1-8: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2008)

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Fourth American Edition. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1818)

Clarence L. Bence, *Romans: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1996)

John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016)

God uses that word in the Bible to explain a significant life change: that as Christians we can be free from that wrestling match with sin that Paul described in chapter seven, that we can fully live in God's love, that his love can consume us and be what drives what we do. From our study so far in Romans, we've learned what sanctification involves: there's really two parts to it; our part and God's part. The first part is ours, and it is this – sanctification means to be:

- Set apart wholly for God and His purposes.

Okay, let's say it together...That is *your* part in sanctification, or being holy, or becoming like Jesus; to set yourself apart for God and His purposes. That means you must die to yourself and your desires and ambitions, humble yourself, and let God be in charge of your life. But to truly be holy – to truly think and act in this life like Jesus, we need heart transformation. That's where God comes in; the second part of sanctification is to be:

- Filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Would you repeat that second part with me? ... Those are the two parts of our sanctification – how we become like Jesus in the things we think, say, and do. We submit (dying to ourselves) and he fills and empowers (by the filling of the Spirit in us).

Remember I told you that if Romans is a door, the hinge is between chapters 7 and 8. Everything in 1-7 led up to the reality that the Spirit can fill us and set us free from sin and the resulting dysfunction and death. In chapter 8, we see that reality and the fullness of that great news.

Our series is called "Faith, Family, and Fullness." We are justified by faith – we're put into a forgiven place of relationship with God as our loving father, thanks to Jesus. From those who believe, God is making a new, multi-cultural family of faith. We live that out by the fullness of the Spirit within us. So from today's chapter – chapter 9 – on, we are seeing what that sanctified life looks like.

I'd like to read chapter 9 for us, and, like every other one of Paul's chapters, it's a doozy – it's kinda long, it's hard to follow sometimes, and it's filled with run-on sentences. But, as usual, to help us honor God's Word and to focus our ears of faith, can I ask you to stand with me as I read?

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

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 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." In other

words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For 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." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? 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—even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."

It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written:

“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.” (Romans 9:1-33, niv)

Thank you for standing. I’d encourage you to keep your Bible open as we go through this so you can follow along. We won’t have time to cover everything, which of course there’s always a lot of everything in one chapter, but we will cover the most significant things that are being said here, and that should make a significant impact on our lives.

Remember, now, Paul is beginning to show us...

What the (Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered,) sanctified life (of a Christian) looks like.

He’s showing us what our motivations are when we are sanctified, and how God will work in and through us. And it’s interesting to see where he starts. He starts out by telling us, through his own example, that a sanctified person must be willing to do...

1. Anything for the lost. (vv. 1-6)

Did you hear Paul’s heart for his own people, the Jews, and how desperately he longs for them to be saved? Paul says he is wracked with deep and chronic emotional pain over those who don’t know Jesus. Paul says something extreme, and clearly, he means it: he would willingly give up his own salvation and be condemned to hell for eternity if it meant his people, the Jews, would respond in faith to Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul knew, and we know, that it wasn’t possible for him to be cursed and die in their place for their salvation. Someone Else had already died for them, gone to death and Hell for them, and then rose from the dead so they could be saved; only the Holy One himself can be accursed on behalf of others. So if they won’t respond to Jesus, Paul’s sacrifice wasn’t going to persuade them either. But that’s not the point. The point is that Paul genuinely, sincerely wanted lost, unchurched, non-Christian people to be saved *so badly* that he would give up his salvation for theirs. God loves it when we have this attitude of heart toward non-Christians – it’s just like his own! It’s the same thing that Moses prayed. Remember when he came down from the mountain with the stone tablets with the ten commandments inscribed by the finger of God, and he found the people worshipping a golden calf they had made? Have you seen the old movie, “The Ten Commandments” that’s on TV every Easter? It’s actually in the Bible, too. But when Moses came down with this great news of God’s instructions for them to be his own people, and saw that they were sinning, Moses prayed this in Exodus 32:32 –

“But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” (Exodus 32:32, niv)

The very first example of the sanctified life is a profound, self-sacrificing desire for non-Christians to be saved.

I think that sometimes, we are attracted to this idea of being holy because we think it means we will be free from the stress of sin and bad things in our lives, and it will all be

filled with wonderful love. Here's the problem with that thinking: it's selfish. Anyone who tries to enter in sanctification with that mindset is missing it. That's why it's about setting yourself apart wholly for God and his purposes – not your own well-being. This is why Jesus said that if anyone comes to Him and does not hate their own life, they can't be his disciple, (Luke 14:26) and Jesus also said, that if anyone wants to follow him, they must take up their cross, die to themselves, and then follow him. (Luke 9:23; John 11:25) If you seek sanctification for your own benefit, here's another reason why that thinking is wrong: love is actually very painful at times. If you truly love, it doesn't always feel good! You hear the anguish in Paul's heart over the lost. That isn't pleasant. Jesus was tortured and died on the cross *because he loves you and wants you saved*; not so he could reach some state of self-enlightenment. Holy love hurts for the lost.

This attitude is what led Paul to say later:

“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, niv)

Is your first and greatest desire to see other people know Jesus? If not, you and I better pray about that and get ourselves sanctified. This is why West Valley Church's mission statement has always started with the line: “introduce people to Jesus Christ.” That is our first and most important attitude and ambition as Spirit-filled, sanctified believers.

This sanctification stuff is getting pretty serious, isn't it?

Okay, so the next section is very long and can be confusing, so I'm going to need to give you a broad overview of it, which is basically this: the sanctified life means that in all we do...

2. Everything (is) for God. (vv. 7-29)

Like I said, this is a very lengthy and confusing passage. If you don't dig into it, and put it into context of the rest of Romans and the rest of the Bible, you'll read something on the surface that is not at all what it means.

Here's what it sounds like Paul is saying in this section: that God decides who gets saved and who doesn't. That God will harden someone's heart and soften someone else's. That God hates some people and loves others. Right? It sure sounds like that. But let's put those statements in the context of Romans, and then in the context of the rest of the Bible. Remember that one of the reasons Paul is writing to the church in Rome is because there are these divisions between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. The Jewish Christians are having trouble accepting that God would save these Gentiles and let them be in God's family. They don't want to accept that God saves other people – especially people who have a different ethnicity and religious background than the Jews. So Paul is correcting their attitude. Paul is basically saying, “God can do whatever he wants. God can

save anyone he wants. God can save a rock if he wants to.” Paul is also saying, “We’ve already said that we are saved by faith, not by our ethnicity or obeying the rules – justified by faith in God’s love and mercy. Without God’s love we are all lost.” So the examples of Jewish forefathers prove it: some of them were in God’s family, and some were not. Make sense? It’s not that God chooses some people to be saved and decides that some won’t be saved. We talked about that last week. Just remember, Jesus said that “God so loved (*what?*) THE WORLD that he gave his one and only son, so that *whoever* believes in him will not perish...” (John 3:16, niv, emphasis added). Paul will say in the next chapter that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved...” (10:13, emphasis added), and when writing to Timothy he’ll say that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, niv) and Peter writes in the Bible, “God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9, niv). So we know that Paul is making the point to the Jews that God is not obligated to only save Jews; he can offer salvation to anyone he wants (and he offers it to everyone because of his love and mercy!).

Then Paul writes about hardening Pharaoh’s heart during the Exodus story. Do you remember that in the movie? Hopefully you remember it from Scripture. Each time Moses approached Pharaoh about letting God’s people go, Pharaoh’s heart got harder. Sometimes Exodus says that God hardened his heart, and sometimes it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. What do we do with that? We’ve already established that God gives us free will; that he offers salvation to everyone. So it doesn’t make sense that God would choose to harden someone’s heart against their will and they have no choice in the matter. Let me ask you: in the Exodus story, could Pharaoh have chosen to have a soft heart and let God’s people go? Of course he could have. But he didn’t. And each time he disobeyed God, his heart got harder against God. But – God *knew* that Pharaoh was going to harden his heart. *Just because God knows something, doesn’t mean God made it happen.* And God won’t break his own rule about giving us free will. So God didn’t stop Pharaoh from hardening his heart, either. God knew it would happen, but God *still* got the glory and accomplished his purposes. Just because God knew what would happen doesn’t mean he made it happen; but it does mean he will work in the midst of all of it for the sake of his purpose.

Here’s the point: God will be glorified. His purposes will be accomplished. He wants more than anything to work with you to accomplish his purposes. He wants to be glorified *in your life*. That’s his joy is to work with you. When you are sanctified, you have set yourself apart wholly for what? For God and his purposes. *Everything for God.* But God will accomplish his purposes either with you or despite you or in spite of you. God will accomplish his purposes in this world, for his Church, for West Valley Church and for the multi-cultural West Valley community, either with you or in spite of you. The choice is yours; don’t harden your heart to God.

Instead, the sanctified life is...

3. Always only Jesus. (vv. 30-33)

Paul closes this chapter with an unusual section about stumbling stones.

What Paul is saying here combines imagery that is found in two Old Testament passages from the prophet Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14. The first says this:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.” (Isaiah 28:16)

And the second says:

“He (talking about Jesus) will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.” (Isaiah 8:14)

Isaiah was predicting that the very One who would be the cornerstone of their salvation and relationship with God, would become a stone that they stumbled over. The stone or rock refers to Christ, whom most Jews rejected as the Messiah. (Psalm 118:22 says, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...” which Peter also teaches about in 1 Peter 2:4-8). Jesus’ death by crucifixion offended Jewish people because, according to Deuteronomy 21:23, a person hanged on a tree is under God’s curse.² But that was the point: *Jesus was cursed in our place*. Still, the One who should’ve been the Jews’ cornerstone of this new temple of the Holy Spirit within them, became instead something they stumbled over because of their hardened hearts.

Listen: Jesus is the proof of whether your heart toward God is hardened or not. He is either the foundation of your entire being, or you’ll continue to trip over him. Your life will stumble over and over again and again. Jesus himself taught about this in Matthew 21:42-24 – Jesus said to them:

“Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. (*he’s talking about the Gentiles*) Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” (Matthew 21:42-44, niv)

In other words, if you accept Jesus, it means you will humble yourself and set yourself apart wholly for God and his purposes (“broken to pieces”), or else you will be judged by him at the end of your days (“anyone on whom it falls will be crushed”). Either way – ultimately, it is always, only, Jesus. You will either set yourself apart wholly for him – being willing to die for those who don’t know Jesus, allowing him to accomplish his purposes in and through your life, proving that your heart is his – or not.

This sanctification is serious business.

Because ultimately, it is always, only, Jesus.

² John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ro 9:33.

Prayer

Benediction:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, niv)